Lesson Plan

Big-picture Thinking

Understanding Organizational Culture

Objective: Students will explore the relationship between individual employee values and organizational culture.

Workplace Readiness Skill: **Demonstrate big-picture thinking.**

*Demonstration includes*

* *defining* ***big-picture thinking*** *as an understanding of one's role in fulfilling the mission of the workplace and a consideration of the social, economic, and environmental effects of one's actions*
* *identifying the organization’s structure, culture, policies, and procedures, as well as its role and position within the community, industry, and economy.*

Correlations to Other Workplace Readiness Skills:

* Demonstrate integrity.
* Demonstrate work ethic.
* Demonstrate conflict resolution skills.
* Demonstrate career- and life-management skills.
* Demonstrate professionalism.

Correlations to the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL):

English: 6.2, 6.7, 7.1, 7.2, 7.7, 8.2, 8.7, 9.1, 9.6, 10.1, 10.6, 11.1, 11.6

History and Social Science: CE.1, CE.4, CE.14, GOVT.1, GOVT.16

Instructional Steps:

1. ***Introduce the lesson by asking students to list words that describe the school’s culture.*** Record them. Using a site such as [WordClouds.com](http://www.wordclouds.com/) (<http://www.wordclouds.com/>), create and display a word cloud of the terms brainstormed (these can be styled to match school colors and to display in various shapes). Explain to students that every organization, whether it be a school or a corporation, has its own unique culture. While people’s main reason for finding jobs is to earn money and work toward something meaningful, organizational culture can play a large role in whether a particular company is appealing to prospective employees.
2. ***Assess student values.*** Ask students to use the [Virginia Education Wizard](https://www.vawizard.org/wizard/value-assess) (<https://www.vawizard.org/wizard/value-assess>) website to take a values self-assessment. Explain that getting a sense of one’s values helps in finding appropriate career pathways. Finding a company with organizational values and culture compatible with personal values increases the likelihood of job satisfaction. On the site, each student will drag and drop statements into categories based upon their perception of the importance of each statement. Once a student sorts each statement, he/she will click “Finish” (button on the lower right-hand side of the website) to see the results of the values assessment and to see suggested career pathways and occupations.

1. ***Use informational interviewing to learn about the culture of a specific company.*** In this mock interview activity, students will ask and answer questions related to organizational culture. Using the cultural profiles of fictional companies on Teacher Resource #1: Workplace Profiles and the questions on Teacher Resource #2: Questions to Ask a Prospective Employer, assign each pair of students one of the four profiles (others may be added or substituted). One student will act as the company representative in the mock interview; the other will act as the prospective employee. Students will practice asking and answering questions based upon their assigned workplace profile. Ask a few student pairs to demonstrate their interviewing techniques in front of the class. This is a great opportunity to discuss interview etiquette such as looking a person in the eye, offering a firm and appropriate handshake, and using appropriate body language, vocabulary, and a professional tone of voice.
2. ***Reflect upon and extend the activity.*** After the mock interview activity, emphasize to students that, when interviewing, it is important that they be prepared to ask questions of the interviewer. Not only is that an opportunity to glean important information about the culture of a company, it also demonstrates to the interviewer that the applicant has done his/her homework and is interested enough to want to learn more about the organization. Ask each student to compose three additional questions that could be asked in an interview situation. Share. Conclude with the following journal prompt:

*In this lesson we have explored the idea that companies and organizations have unique cultures. You have assessed what values are important to you as a worker. Based upon what you’ve learned, describe your ideal workplace. Include information about the setting/environment, the organizational structure, and the people and daily interactions. Your description should paint a picture of an organizational culture of which you would like to be a part.*

Formative Assessment**:**

* Assess student understanding as demonstrated in the class and small group discussions/interviews.
* Evaluate student understanding of concepts within the lesson as demonstrated by journal responses. Use the Journal Assessment Rubric.

Options for Adaptation/Differentiation:

* To offer scaffolding to students and to complete this activity in a shorter amount of time, choose just one of the workplace profiles on Teacher Resource #1 and complete the mock interview activity as a whole group.
* To extend student learning, ask students to use the Internet to research the relationship between cultural fit in the workplace and employee retention. The following article may be helpful:  
    
  Brent Gleeson, “How Important Is Culture Fit for Employee Retention?”, *Forbes*, April 3, 2017. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brentgleeson/2017/04/03/how-important-is-culture-fit-for-employee-retention/#3b126cac7839>

Suggestions for Follow-up:

* Invite a manager from business and industry to discuss the importance of company culture and how a positive culture is nurtured within an organization.
* Ask students to think about the cultures of various organizations within the school (e.g., student government organizations, clubs, sports teams). Using what has been covered throughout this lesson, challenge each student to identify a school-based organization that he/she feels is compatible with personal goals and values.