Lesson Plan

Demonstrating Professionalism
Clothes with Superpowers

Objective: Students will explore the correlation between wardrobe and attitude in the workplace.

Workplace Readiness Skill: **Demonstrate professionalism.**

Demonstration includes

- *defining **professionalism***
- *practicing punctuality and attendance*
- *adhering to work-schedule expectations*
- *exercising etiquette (e.g., language, manners, and behaviors suitable for the workplace and online; appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication)*
- *exhibiting professional self-representation (e.g., using a firm handshake, introducing oneself, making eye contact)*
- *maintaining professional appearance (e.g., maintaining personal hygiene, adhering to a dress code).*

Correlations to Other Workplace Readiness Skills:

- Demonstrate work ethic.
- Demonstrate customer service skills.
- Demonstrate big-picture thinking.
- Demonstrate career- and life-management skills.

Correlations to the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL):

- English: 6.RV, 6.RI, 6.C, 6.LU, 6.W, 7.RV, 7.RI, 7.C, 7.LU, 7.W, 8.RV, 8.RI, 8.C, 8.LU, 8.W, 9.RV, 9.RI, 9.C, 9.LU, 9.W, 10.RV, 10.RI, 10.C, 10.LU, 10.W, 11.RV, 11.RI, 11.C, 11.LU, 11.W, 12.RV, 12.RI, 12.C, 12.LU, 12.W
- History and Social Sciences: CE.14

Instructional Steps:

1. ***Introduce the lesson by asking students, "By a show of hands, how many of you used to play dress-up when you were younger? How about wearing costumes when playing superheroes or when going trick-or-treating on Halloween?"*** Most hands will go up. Discuss the appeal of dressing up. Explain to students that there has been research conducted that proves that our wardrobe affects our attitudes and behaviors. Tell them that they'll be watching a short presentation by a high school senior about this phenomenon and discussing the impact of this in terms of success in the workplace.

2. ***Watch video entitled Dress Like You Mean It, a TEDx Talk by high school student Michaela Finley.*** Length of the video is 10:46. (You may want to ask the students to watch it once just to absorb the information and a second time to complete Handout #1: Clothes with Superpowers.)

3. ***Ask students to answer the questions on Handout #1: Clothes with Superpowers, based upon the video.*** Students may complete the activity independently, in pairs, or in small groups. Access to the YouTube video while completing the handout will assist students in finding specific answers and examples from the video.

4. ***Hold class discussion.*** Ask, "Do any of you have experience with the topics discussed in the video?" Discuss examples of how various types of clothing affect confidence, behavior, and language. Ask, "What types of clothing will you want to wear on a job interview or in the workplace?"

Formative Assessment**:**

- Assess student understanding as demonstrated in the class and small group discussions.
- Evaluate student understanding of concepts within the lesson as demonstrated by responses to Handout #1: Clothes with Superpowers.

Options for Adaptation/Differentiation:

- To offer student scaffolding for this activity, watch the video in short segments as a class, completing Handout #1: Clothes with Superpowers together as concepts are covered in the video.
- To extend this activity and provide further enrichment, ask students to experiment with the types of clothing they choose to wear to school and report how these choices affected feelings of confidence, empowerment, and overall satisfaction.

Suggestions for Follow-up:

- Invite a manager or a human resource professional from business and industry to discuss the importance of professional dress in the workplace.
- Ask students to reflect on the activity by answering the following essay questions:

  Why is it always a good idea to dress neatly and professionally for a job interview?

  How is the culture of a workplace impacted by the clothing worn by employees? Explain.

  When you have an important test, what type of clothing can you choose to help you feel confident and prepared?

Teacher Resource:

Making a Great First Impression, Mind Tools

Handout #1

Clothes with Superpowers

Use the video entitled "Dress Like You Mean It," a TEDx Talk by high school student Michaela Finley, to answer the following:

The presenter, Michaela Finley, asserts that "dressing yourself in the morning should be a mindful act." What does she mean by that?

_____
_____

In what ways did the presenter's appearance portray professionalism? Was there anything about the way the presenter represented herself that detracted from her professionalism? Explain.

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Had the presenter worn yoga pants and a tank top, how would your perception of her presentation be different?

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What is "enclothed cognition?" Explain.

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According to the presentation, clothing affects (choose all that apply):

a. Language
b. Behavior
c. Confidence

Have you ever felt that your language, behavior, or confidence have been affected by your choice of clothing? Explain.

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Why do you think wearing a coat called a doctor's coat caused experiment participants to behave differently than wearing a coat called a painter's coat (even though it was the same coat)? Explain.

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How did wearing a suit affect the feelings of the Dress for Success clients, according to the presentation?

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At the conclusion of the video, Ms. Finley asks, “What superpower do you need to use to face this day?” What would be your answer to that question today? Do you think clothing choice can help you face daily challenges?

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Handout #1:
Clothes with Superpowers
Sample Student Responses

Use the video entitled "Dress Like You Mean It," a TEDx Talk by high school student Michaela Finley, to answer the following:

The presenter, Michaela Finley, asserts that "dressing yourself in the morning should be a mindful act." What does she mean by that?
The presenter is emphasizing the impact that clothing can have on a person's attitudes and behavior. Therefore, we should think about what we are wearing in relation to the type of day we anticipate having. Do we need extra confidence? Do we need to look professional? Are we just relaxing with friends?

In what ways did the presenter's appearance portray professionalism? Was there anything about the way the presenter represented herself that detracted from her professionalism? Explain.
The presenter was wearing a very professional outfit with a red skirt, red necklace, and black-and-white shirt. Her jacket was neat and matched the rest of her outfit. Her shoes were professional. Her hair kept getting in her eyes, and she had to swipe it away a few times. That was distracting when watching her presentation.

Had the presenter worn yoga pants and a tank top, how would your perception of her presentation be different?
It would have been difficult to take her presentation and research seriously. Her professional image reinforces that she is an authority figure during the presentation, even though she is a high school student.

What is "enclothed cognition?" Explain.
"Enclothed cognition" describes the psychological effects of clothing on the wearer. It involves both the symbolic meaning behind the clothing and the physical experience of wearing the clothing.

According to the presentation, clothing affects (choose all that apply):

a. ***Language***
b. ***Behavior***
c. ***Confidence***

Have you ever felt that your language, behavior, or confidence have been affected by your choice of clothing? Explain.
Answers will vary but may include the concept that wearing neat or tailored clothing promotes confidence, or that wearing comfortable or bulky clothing promotes laziness or tiredness, or that wearing soiled or old clothing promotes feelings of embarrassment.

Why do you think wearing a coat called a doctor's coat caused experiment participants to behave differently than wearing a coat called a painter's coat (even though it was the same coat)? Explain.
The experiment pointed to the symbolic meaning behind a "doctor's coat" vs. a "painter's coat" and the participants' behaviors reinforced that clothing is more than just pieces of fabric; clothing affects how we perceive others and ourselves.
How did wearing a suit affect the feelings of the Dress for Success clients, according to the presentation?
They became chatty and seemed less tired. One woman in particular was "transformed" in her demeanor when she

tried on her suit.

At the conclusion of the video, Ms. Finley asks, “What superpower do you need to use to face this day?” What would be your answer to that question today? Do you think clothing choice can help you face daily challenges?
Answers will vary but may include things such as “the power to pass a quiz” or “the power to face a presentation.” Answers should include the concept that clothing choices can help people feel more empowered, confident, or prepared.