Oregon
HS.HECPS Curriculum

Lesson Plans for Educator Use in Career Connected Learning

OR HS.HECPS

Introduction

About This Curriculum

The Higher Education and Career Path Skills (HECPS) standards provide Oregon educators with a framework for helping students develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to successfully navigate education, careers, and life after high school. Through intentional instruction and meaningful learning experiences, students build self-awareness, explore opportunities, prepare for postsecondary education and training, and develop the skills necessary to thrive in an ever-changing workforce.

The high school HECPS standards are organized into four domains:

- **HS.HECPS.A: Seeking Assistance and Self-Advocacy**
- **HS.HECPS.B: Career Exploration and Preparation**
- **HS.HECPS.C: Postsecondary Readiness**
- **HS.HECPS.D: Workforce Readiness**

To support implementation of these standards, this curriculum is organized into four instructional units, one for each HECPS domain.

Each unit includes:

- **a unit overview,**
- **approximately fifteen lesson frameworks,**
- **assessment strategies,**
- **extension opportunities, and**
- **supplemental resources.**

Together, the four units provide more than 60 hours of instructional framework designed to help educators implement the HECPS standards in a variety of educational settings.

Unlike many published curricula, these lessons are not intended to be comprehensive or scripted. During development, educators were intentionally asked to create a flexible instructional framework rather than fully developed lesson plans. Every lesson follows a common template that identifies learning objectives, instructional activities, reflection opportunities, assessment ideas, and extension strategies while leaving room for educators to apply their own expertise, teaching style, and local resources.

This approach recognizes that no single curriculum can fully reflect the diverse schools, communities, industries, cultures, and opportunities found across Oregon. A lesson that works in Portland or Salem may need different examples than one taught in Burns, Astoria, Ontario, Pendleton, Medford, or Coos Bay. Rather than prescribing one way to teach the standards, this curriculum provides a strong foundation that educators can adapt to make learning meaningful for their students and communities.

The curriculum was also designed with the understanding that artificial intelligence is becoming an important planning and instructional tool for educators.

Each lesson includes opportunities for educators to leverage AI to expand activities, differentiate instruction, generate examples, create supporting materials, develop assessments, or adapt lessons for different grade levels and learning needs. Instead of attempting to anticipate every possible classroom scenario, the curriculum encourages educators to use professional judgment alongside AI tools to efficiently customize instruction while maintaining alignment with the HECPS standards.

This curriculum represents Oregon GEAR UP's investment in strengthening the statewide college and career readiness supports. By creating adaptable instructional resources that can be implemented in schools across Oregon, Oregon GEAR UP and Oregon Goes To College seek to increase access to high-quality college and career readiness instruction while empowering educators to build learning experiences that reflect the strengths and opportunities of their own communities.

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How This Curriculum Was Developed

This curriculum was developed through a two-day Curriculum Design Sprint hosted by Oregon GEAR UP, to be shared through their statewide initiative, Oregon Goes To College.

Twenty-three educators from across Oregon came together to collaboratively design instructional resources aligned to the four HECPS domains. Participants included classroom teachers, school counselors, college and career professionals, and educational leaders representing schools and communities throughout the state.

Before beginning curriculum development, participants engaged in professional learning focused on instructional design, career-connected learning, and evidence-based teaching practices. Throughout the workshop, educators experienced instructional strategies and learning activities as participants before applying those same approaches to curriculum design. This process helped establish a shared understanding of effective instructional design while allowing teams to draw from their own professional expertise.

Following the learning experience, participants divided into collaborative teams, with each team responsible for developing one HECPS domain. Using a common curriculum template, each team designed a unit overview, lesson frameworks, assessment ideas, extension opportunities, and supporting instructional resources. The shared template helped ensure consistency across all four domains while allowing individual teams to contribute their unique ideas and instructional approaches.

Participants were intentionally asked not to create a fully scripted curriculum. Instead, they were challenged to develop instructional frameworks that any educator in Oregon could build upon. Lessons were designed to identify the essential learning experiences, provide a logical instructional sequence, and offer practical examples while leaving room for educators to incorporate local partnerships, community resources, student interests, regional industries, and school-specific priorities.

The result is a curriculum that combines the collective expertise of Oregon educators with the flexibility needed to serve schools across the state. Whether implemented in a comprehensive high school, a rural district, an alternative education program, a charter school, or another educational setting, these resources are intended to provide a practical starting point rather than a finished product.

This curriculum is Version 1.0. As with any first edition, we know there are opportunities for improvement, and we welcome your feedback. Please use the QR code to share suggestions, ideas, and lessons learned as you implement these resources. Your input will help shape Version 2.0.

We are especially grateful to After Affect for facilitating the Curriculum Design Sprint and to Bolen Design, LLC for bringing these resources to life through thoughtful design.

Oregon Goes to College is a statewide initiative of Oregon GEAR UP. Oregon GEAR UP is funded by the US Department of Education and supported by Oregon State University. We are proud to invest in resources that strengthen Oregon's college and career readiness by supporting educators, encouraging collaboration, and expanding access to meaningful college and career readiness instruction for students throughout Oregon.

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Workforce **Readiness**

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STANDARDS

HS.HECPS.D.1
Prepare to apply for an entry-level job related to future career goals.

HS.HECPS.D.2
Prepare a resume and cover letter and determine what to include in a professional portfolio.

HS.HECPS.D.3
Demonstrate interview skills in virtual and in-person settings.

HS.HECPS.D.4
Navigate and negotiate offers of employment including human resource paperwork.

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Workforce **Readiness**

Unit Overview

This unit prepares students to navigate the process of entering and succeeding in the workplace, moving from finding employment opportunities through application, interviewing, onboarding, and responding to real-world workplace situations. Students begin by learning how to interpret job descriptions, search for employment opportunities, understand workplace culture and etiquette, identify appropriate references, and complete job applications.

Students then develop the professional materials needed to pursue employment opportunities. Through resume and cover letter development and the creation of a professional portfolio, students learn how to communicate their skills, experiences, accomplishments, and qualifications for a specific opportunity.

The unit next focuses on communicating those qualifications in person. Students develop elevator speeches, practice responding to interview questions using the STAR method, participate in mock interviews, receive feedback, and reflect on ways to strengthen their interview performance. Students also practice professional post-interview communication through thank-you notes and emails.

Finally, students explore what happens after they are offered a position. They learn how to evaluate and accept a job offer, understand compensation and benefits, complete common onboarding documents, use employee handbooks to understand workplace expectations, and respond appropriately to challenging workplace situations. Students examine workplace rights and responsibilities, including discrimination, harassment, bias, and other forms of misconduct.

Across the unit, students build both practical employment skills and a broader understanding of how to navigate professional environments. The sequence culminates in authentic demonstrations of workforce readiness through professional employment materials, a mock interview, onboarding documents, and reflection.

Unit Purpose

The purpose of this unit is to bridge classroom learning with the real-world process of entering and navigating the workplace. Students develop the practical tools needed to find and pursue employment, including job-search strategies, applications, professional references, resumes, cover letters, portfolios, interview skills, and professional communication.

The unit also prepares students for what happens after they are hired. Students learn to evaluate job offers, understand compensation and benefits, complete onboarding requirements, interpret workplace policies, and respond professionally to workplace challenges. By examining common employment situations through legal, ethical, and interpersonal lenses, students learn to consider not only what workplace policies require, but also how professional decisions can preserve professional respect and contribute to a productive workplace.

Assigned HECPS Standards

- HS.HECPS.**D.1**
- HS.HECPS.**D.2**
- HS.HECPS.**D.3**
- HS.HECPS.**D.3**

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Essential Questions

HS.HECPS.D.1
- What essential tools, documents, and professional skills do I need to successfully secure an entry-level job that fits my career goals?

HS.HECPS.D.2
- How can I create professional job materials that clearly showcase my skills, experiences, and best work for a specific opportunity?

HS.HECPS.D.3
- What skills do I need to present myself as the ideal candidate for a job?
- How do I communicate my strengths, values, and goals in a way that prepares me for future career opportunities?

HS.HECPS.D.4
- How do I confidently evaluate, negotiate, and formally accept a job offer?
- What are employment benefits, and how do they factor into my total compensation package?
- How do I accurately complete onboarding documents such as the W-4 and I-9?
- What forms of identification must I bring on my first day to demonstrate employment eligibility?
- How can I use an employee handbook to understand company policies, expectations, and culture?
- How do I identify and appropriately respond to workplace misconduct, including bias, harassment, bullying, and discrimination?
- What professional strategies can I use to handle challenging situations or conflicts in the workplace?

Unit Learning Outcomes

By the end of the unit, students will be able to:

HS.HECPS.D.1
- Identify career goals and locate appropriate job opportunities.
- Interpret job descriptions and workplace expectations.
- Demonstrate appropriate workplace communication and etiquette.
- Identify appropriate professional references.
- Complete a job application accurately and professionally.

HS.HECPS.D.2
- Create, revise, and professionally present a resume, cover letter, and portfolio tailored to a specific opportunity.
- Select relevant experiences, skills, achievements, and work samples that demonstrate their qualifications.

HS.HECPS.D.3
- Demonstrate effective interview skills.
- Communicate their strengths, experiences, and qualifications during an interview.
- Participate in a mock interview and use feedback and reflection to improve their performance.
- Use appropriate professional communication following an interview.

HS.HECPS.D.4
- Evaluate and appropriately respond to a job offer.
- Explain the role of compensation and benefits in evaluating employment.
- Complete common onboarding documents.
- Use workplace policies and employee handbooks to understand expectations and responsibilities.

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- Analyze workplace situations and identify appropriate professional responses.
- Recognize workplace rights and protections related to discrimination, harassment, bias, and other forms of misconduct.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

CareerOneStop

https://www.careeronestop.org/

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Workforce **Readiness**

Lesson Sequence

LESSON	TITLE	STANDARD	PAGE
1	Decoding Job Descriptions	HS.HECPS.**D.1**	9
2	Navigating the Digital Job Market	HS.HECPS.**D.1**	15
3	Workplace Structure & Expectations	HS.HECPS.**D.1**	22
4	Job Applications & References	HS.HECPS.**D.1**	28
5	Resume Fundamentals	HS.HECPS.**D.2**	35
6	Resume Writing Workshop	HS.HECPS.**D.2**	56
7	Cover Letters: You + Job = Company Success!	HS.HECPS.**D.2**	68
8	Show, Don't Tell: Curating Your Professional Portfolio	HS.HECPS.**D.2**	79
9	Interview Skills: Elevator Speeches	HS.HECPS.**D.3**	88
10	Interview Skills: The STAR Method	HS.HECPS.**D.3**	95
11	Interview Skills: Mock Interviews with Feedback	HS.HECPS.**D.3**	105
12	Reflect, Refine, and Respond: Learning from Your Mock Interview	HS.HECPS.**D.3**	113
13	The Onboarding Blueprint: From Hired to Inspired	HS.HECPS.**D.4**	120
14	The Rules of the Workplace: Navigating Real-World Job Situations	HS.HECPS.**D.4**	128
15	Know Your Worth, Know Your Rights: Navigating Workplace Discrimination and Labor Laws	HS.HECPS.**D.4**	136

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DURATION 60 MINUTES

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Lesson 1

Decoding Job **Descriptions**

Lesson Purpose

This foundational lesson bridges the gap between personal ideals and market realities. By teaching students to deconstruct real-world job criteria, students learn how to determine whether an opportunity aligns with their interests, values, and qualifications before applying. Students learn essential distinctions between required and preferred qualifications and are introduced to common human resources and employment vocabulary such as at-will employment, Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) non-exempt status, shift differential, and seasonal employment.

The lesson supports HS.HECPS.D.1 by helping students identify baseline career goals and develop the vocabulary and analytical skills needed to understand employment requirements before searching for or applying to open positions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Find an entry-level job that aligns with their work values.
- Deconstruct an entry-level job posting to differentiate between required and preferred qualifications.
- Define and apply four foundational HR and employment terms.
- Evaluate a job posting and determine whether they meet the qualifications to apply.

Teacher Preparation

Materials / Handouts

Two local or sample entry-level job postings:

- One for teacher modeling and whole-class analysis
- One for independent or partner analysis

Highlighters or digital annotation tools

Paper or digital space for student responses

Technology

- Internet-connected student devices
- Access to the ***CareerOneStop Work Values Matcher***
- Projector or display for modeling job-posting analysis

Room Setup

- Arrange seating to support independent work, partner discussion, and whole-class modeling.

Teacher Preparation

- Select a local, entry-level job posting to display and analyze with students.
- Select an additional job posting students can analyze independently or with a partner. This can be a current local posting or one generated using the AI Assist Prompt.
- Review the ***CareerOneStop Work Values Matcher*** and confirm students can access it.
- Prepare a brief introduction to the "Big 4" employment terms: **at-will employment, FLSA non-exempt, shift differential, and seasonal employee.**
- Decide whether students will record their responses on paper or digitally.

Instructional Sequence

1 STEP

Self-Assessment: Work Values and Career Targets

Students explore their work values using the CareerOneStop Work Values Matcher and identify an entry-level career target that connects to those values.

2 STEP

Direct Instruction: Anatomy of a Job Description

Students examine an authentic entry-level job posting and learn to distinguish required qualifications, preferred qualifications, job responsibilities, compensation, and schedule information.

3 STEP

Collaborative Practice: The Vocabulary Matrix

Students examine the “Big 4” employment terms, explain why each matters to a job seeker, and practice translating unfamiliar workplace language into plain language.

4 STEP

Independent Practice & Formative Assessment: Can I Apply?

Students independently analyze an entry-level job posting, compare its qualifications with their current experience and skills, and use evidence to determine whether they could apply.

Introduction Questions

Provide private reasoning time before moving into a Turn and Talk, Think-Pair-Share, or whole-group discussion.

- Display a list of work values and briefly explain each. Which values resonate with you, and why?
- Display a job description without revealing the job title. What clues help you identify the job?
- What is the difference between regular pay and overtime pay?
- What might be challenging about a job that does not have set hours from week to week? How could that affect your quality of life?

Instructional Activities

Self-Assessment: Work Values and Career Targets

Direct students to complete the CareerOneStop Work Values Matcher to explore what matters to them in a workplace.

Ask students to record:

- Their top two work values.
- One entry-level job that interests them or aligns with those values.
- One sentence explaining the connection between the job and their work values.

Invite students to briefly discuss whether their results were what they expected and whether the suggested careers included options they had not previously considered.

Direct Instruction: Anatomy of a Job Description

Display a local, entry-level job posting and explain that the class will examine the information an applicant should understand before deciding whether to apply.

Guide students in identifying:

- Required qualifications: Qualifications an applicant must have to be considered.
- Preferred qualifications: Qualifications the employer would like an applicant to have but that may not be required.
- Job responsibilities: What the employee will actually be expected to do.
- Compensation and schedule: Information such as wages, hours, shifts, overtime, or benefits.

Model how to identify the first few examples in the posting.

Ask students to help identify and categorize additional information.

Discuss: ***Why is it important to understand the difference between required and preferred qualifications before deciding whether to apply?***

Collaborative Practice: The Vocabulary Matrix

Introduce the four employment terms identified by the lesson authors:

- At-Will Employment: Employment that may generally be ended by either the employee or employer, subject to applicable laws.
- FLSA Non-Exempt: A classification generally indicating that an employee is covered by federal minimum wage and overtime requirements.
- Shift Differential: Additional compensation that may be provided for working particular shifts, such as nights or weekends.
- Seasonal Employee: An employee hired to work during a particular season or period of increased need.

Ask students to work in pairs to create a plain-language explanation of each term and explain why it would matter to someone considering a job.

Display one or more sentences from job postings that use employment or corporate language.

Ask students to translate each example into language a first-time job seeker could easily understand.

For unfamiliar job description vocabulary, allow students or the teacher to use the Vocabulary Translator prompt provided in the lesson.

Independent Practice & Formative Assessment: Can I Apply?

Provide each student with an entry-level job posting to analyze independently.

Ask students to identify:

- The job title.
- Required qualifications.
- Preferred qualifications.
- Any unfamiliar employment terminology and what it means.
- Which qualifications they currently meet.
- Which qualifications they do not currently meet.

Ask students: ***Can you apply? Why or why not?***

Require students to support their decision with evidence from the posting rather than simply answering yes or no.

Reflection Questions

- Were your work values what you expected? Did you identify a job that interests you?
- Why is it important to understand job qualifications before applying?
- Can you explain the differences among at-will employment, FLSA non-exempt status, shift differential, and seasonal employment?
- What did you notice about the difference between required and preferred qualifications?
- What is one thing you will look for the next time you read a job posting?

Group Reflection / Discussion

- Discussion can be completed through Turn and Talk, Think-Pair-Share, small groups, or whole-group discussion. **Allow students private reasoning time first** before asking them to share.
- Ask students to compare how they interpreted the job postings. Where students reached different conclusions about whether someone should apply, ask them to identify the evidence from the posting that influenced their decision.

Materials and Supplies

- Internet-connected student devices
- Local or sample entry-level job postings
- Paper or digital space for student responses

Recommended Resources

CareerOneStop

https://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Careers/work-values-matcher.aspx

Curriculum Resources

Not applicable.

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- Identify their top two work values and one entry-level career target.
- Highlight and distinguish required and preferred qualifications in a job description.
- Explain the “Big 4” employment terms in plain language and describe why they matter to a job seeker.
- Complete the “Can I Apply?” analysis and support their decision with evidence from a job posting.

AI ASSIST PROMPT

Teachers may use AI to quickly create additional job postings:

“Act as an employer writing two realistic entry-level job postings appropriate for a high school student or recent graduate. Include job responsibilities, required qualifications, preferred qualifications, schedule, and compensation. Include at least two common employment or HR terms. Make one position a reasonable match for a first-time job seeker and make the second include one or two requirements that the applicant may not meet. Do not explain which qualifications are required versus preferred beyond the language normally used in a job posting. Students will analyze the postings and decide whether they should apply.”

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

Use Local Job Postings for Real-World Language
Use local job postings whenever possible so students encounter the language employers in their own communities use. A variety of postings can help students see that job descriptions differ significantly across industries and employers.

Build Confidence Reading Job Postings
The goal is not for students to memorize every employment term they may encounter. The larger goal is for students to become more confident reading a job posting, recognizing language they do not understand, finding clarification, and using the information to make an informed decision about whether an opportunity is appropriate for them.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

Text Scaffolding: Color-code job descriptions. For example, students can use one color for required qualifications and another for preferred qualifications.

Visual Vocabulary Anchors: Pair employment terms with simple visual representations, such as a clock and dollar sign for shift differential.

Collaborative Option: Allow students to analyze postings with a partner or small group before completing the final "Can I Apply?" response independently.

Extension: Job Spec Swap: Pair students and have them examine each other's target entry-level jobs. Students use the required qualifications to interview one another and determine which qualifications they already possess and which they would need to develop.

OR HS.HECPS D.4

DURATION 60 MINUTES

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Lesson 2

Navigating the **Digital Job Market**

Lesson Purpose

The digital job market includes an overwhelming number of listings, along with deceptive postings and fraudulent offers. This lesson helps students learn how to narrow online job searches into realistic opportunities while developing their "scam radar" to recognize red flags such as requests for upfront payments, suspicious communication methods, or requests for personal information.

Using the federal CareerOneStop Job Search Tool, students apply what they learned in Lesson 1 about job descriptions and qualifications to search for active job opportunities that align with their interests. Students move from being passive readers of job descriptions to active, safe researchers who can locate and evaluate potential employment opportunities.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Distinguish between credible and potentially non-credible sources for job opportunities.
- Navigate a public employment database using location, experience, and other relevant filters.
- Identify data-privacy and other red flags that may indicate an online employment scam.
- Find two job openings that align with their career interests and current qualifications.

Teacher Preparation

Materials / Handouts

- Several sample job postings for the ***Scam Radar Workshop***, including both legitimate and suspicious examples
- Paper or digital space for students to record their ***Filter Blueprint*** and ***Opportunity Log***

Technology

- Internet-connected student computers/tablets
- Access to the ***CareerOneStop Job Search Tool***
- Teacher computer and projector or display

Room Setup

- Arrange seating to support individual job searching, partner discussion, and whole-class modeling.

Teacher Preparation

- Identify a career or entry-level job to use when modeling search filters.
- Review the ***CareerOneStop Job Search Tool*** and confirm students can access it.
- Prepare several examples of legitimate and suspicious job postings for the ***Scam Radar Workshop***. These may be drawn from existing materials or generated using the AI Assist Prompt.
- Decide whether students will record their Filter Blueprint, Scam Radar observations, and Opportunity Log on paper or digitally.

Instructional Sequence

1 STEP

Hook & Brainstorm: Where Do Jobs Live?

Students identify places they would look for jobs online and consider how they decide whether a source is trustworthy.

2 STEP

Live Demo: Mastering CareerOneStop Filters

The teacher demonstrates how search terms, location, experience level, and date posted can narrow a large pool of opportunities into more useful results.

3 STEP

Guided Practice: Scam Radar Workshop

Students examine sample job postings and identify signs that an opportunity may be fraudulent or unsafe.

4 STEP

Independent Practice & Formative Assessment: The Opportunity Log

Students conduct their own CareerOneStop search and identify two openings that fit their interests and qualifications.

Introduction Questions

Provide private reasoning time before moving into Turn and Talk, Think-Pair-Share, or whole-group discussion.

- If you wanted a job today, where would you look online?
- What makes you trust one job-search website or listing more than another?
- Why might searching only within a specific city or ZIP code limit your results?
- What are some obvious signs that a job posting might be a scam?
- What personal information would you be uncomfortable providing to someone you had never met or verified?

Instructional Activities

Hook & Brainstorm: Where Do Jobs Live?

Ask students: *"If you wanted a job today, where would you look online?"*

Record or display student responses. Students may identify company websites, online job boards, social media, search engines, school resources, or other sources.

Use their responses to discuss the difference between finding a job listing and knowing that the listing is credible.

Ask students to consider:

- Who posted the opportunity?
- Can you verify that the employer exists?
- Does the posting lead to an identifiable employer or application system?
- What information is being requested from the applicant?
- Is anything about the opportunity unusually vague, urgent, or too good to be true?

Transition to the idea that effective online job searching requires both search skills and evaluation skills.

Live Demo: Mastering CareerOneStop Filters

Project the CareerOneStop Job Search Tool and model an initial broad search using an entry-level career or occupation.

Demonstrate how students can narrow or expand their results using:

- Job title or search keywords
- Location
- Search radius
- Experience or qualification requirements
- Date posted

As filters are changed, ask students to notice what happens to the number and type of opportunities returned.

Discuss why a student might need to broaden a search.

For example, a very specific job title or small geographic radius may produce few results even though related opportunities exist nearby.

Students record a simple Filter Blueprint for a job they would like to find:

- Career or job target:
- Search terms I could use:
- Location:
- Search radius:
- Qualifications I currently have:
- Filters that could help narrow my results:

If students are getting few or no results, they can use the AI prompt below to brainstorm alternative search terms:

"I am looking for an entry-level job related to [career or interest] in or near [location], but my search is producing very few results. Suggest five broader or alternative job titles or keywords I could try. Keep the suggestions appropriate for a high school student or first-time job seeker. Do not invent job openings. I only need better search terms."

This preserves their Advanced Filter Optimization idea without requiring another worksheet.

Instructional Activities

Guided Practice: Scam Radar Workshop

Explain that online job seekers also need to evaluate whether an opportunity is legitimate before responding or sharing personal information.

Present several legitimate and suspicious job-posting examples. Have students look for possible red flags, such as:

- Requests to pay money upfront in order to apply, receive training, or purchase equipment.
- Requests for sensitive personal or financial information unusually early in the hiring process.
- Communication that moves immediately to an unusual or unverified messaging channel.
- Contact information that does not appear connected to the stated employer.
- Pay or benefits that seem unrealistic for the work being described.
- Vague information about the employer, position, duties, or hiring process.
- Pressure to act immediately without time to verify the opportunity.

For each example, students identify the evidence that makes them trust or question the posting.

Then ask: ***What should you do if you are unsure whether a job posting is legitimate?***

Encourage students to verify the employer independently, look for the position on the employer's official website, avoid sending sensitive information until the employer has been verified, and ask a trusted adult for help when something does not seem right.

AI Option:
Custom Scam Generator

"Act as a cybersecurity expert helping teach workforce readiness to high school students. Create one fictional job advertisement for an entry-level [job type]. Hide exactly three common online employment-scam red flags in the advertisement, such as requesting an upfront payment, using a suspicious communication method, requesting sensitive information too early, or offering unrealistic compensation. Keep the posting realistic and school appropriate. Do not identify the red flags. Students will analyze the advertisement and try to find all three."

After students identify the three red flags, the teacher can ask AI to reveal and explain them.

Independent Practice & Formative Assessment: The Opportunity Log

Students use CareerOneStop to conduct an independent search for employment opportunities connected to their career interests.

Students locate **two job openings** and record for each:

- Job title
- Employer
- Location
- Where the posting was found
- Required qualifications
- Preferred qualifications, if identified
- One or two primary job responsibilities
- Compensation, if provided
- Date posted, if available
- Why the opportunity fits their interests or goals
- Whether they currently appear qualified to apply
- Any information they would want to verify before applying

Have students apply what they learned in Lesson 1 by paying particular attention to **required versus preferred qualifications.**

Conclude by asking students to compare the two opportunities and identify which one they would be more likely to pursue and why.

Reflection Questions

- What makes a job listing or job-search source credible?
- Why is it useful to filter job postings by education, experience, location, or date posted?
- What are some red flags that could indicate employment fraud?
- What qualifications appeared most often in the jobs you researched?
- Did you find opportunities that matched your future goals or interests?
- What would you verify before submitting an application to an employer you found online?

Group Reflection / Discussion

This discussion can be completed through ***Turn and Talk***, ***Think-Pair-Share***, small groups, or whole-group discussion. **Allow students private reasoning time first.**

Have students compare their searches:

- Which search terms produced the best results?
- Which filters helped most?
- Did anyone have to broaden a search to find opportunities?
- What red flags would cause you to stop before applying?
- How can you verify an employer or opportunity before sharing personal information?

Students can also compare the two opportunities they found and discuss which appears to be the better fit and why.

Materials and Supplies

- Internet-connected student devices
- Teacher computer and projector/display
- CareerOneStop Job Search Tool
- Sample legitimate and suspicious job postings
- Paper or digital space for the Filter Blueprint and Opportunity Log

Recommended Resources

CareerOneStop - Job Search Tool

https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/job-search.aspx

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- Identify credible and potentially questionable sources for online employment opportunities.
- Develop a Filter Blueprint for an entry-level job search.
- Identify red flags in sample online job postings.
- Use CareerOneStop filters to locate relevant employment opportunities.
- Complete an Opportunity Log documenting two openings that align with their interests and qualifications.
- Explain which opportunity they would be more likely to pursue and why.

AI ASSIST PROMPT

Teachers can use this prompt to create additional Scam Radar practice:

"Create four fictional online job postings appropriate for high school students or first-time job seekers. Make two credible and two suspicious. The suspicious postings should each contain 2–3 realistic employment-scam red flags related to employer verification, communication methods, requests for money or personal information, unrealistic compensation, or vague hiring practices. Do not label the postings as credible or suspicious and do not provide the answers. Students will analyze the evidence and determine which opportunities require further verification."

Curriculum Resources

Not applicable.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

As an extension, provide printed examples of suspicious job advertisements. Students circle potential scam indicators and present their warnings to the class.

Have students calculate the actual time and cost of commuting to one of the jobs in their Opportunity Log. For example, if a job pays $16.50 per hour but requires a 45-minute commute each way, students consider whether it is still a good fit.

Find or use AI to generate a variety of job postings and have students compete individually, in small groups, or as a whole class to identify the scams and explain the red flags.

Students can also use other job-search websites, such as O*NET or LinkedIn, to compare opportunities and search results.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

Cross-Curricular Connections: Use the lesson to reinforce how students evaluate credible versus non-credible online sources in other subject areas.

Students can practice the same search and evaluation process using other job-search resources, such as O*NET or LinkedIn.

Project a live job-board search and scroll through a mix of credible and questionable listings. Students call “Stop!” when they notice a possible red flag and explain what they noticed and why it deserves further investigation.

Provide students who need additional support with a simple three-question checklist: Does it ask for money? Is the employer/contact information credible? Does it ask me to communicate through an unusual or unverified channel?

Provide printed sample job postings. Students use colored markers to identify potential scams and distinguish credible from questionable information.

Provide cards representing different search filters, such as “5-mile radius” or “no experience required.” Students arrange the cards to simulate how changing filters alters job-search results.

OR HS.HECPS D.4

DURATION 60 MINUTES

CONTRIBUTORS
SHAYNA BROWN
TROY OLSON

Lesson 3

Workplace **Structure & Expectations**

Lesson Purpose

This lesson details professional communication, covering everything from workplace hierarchy and chains of command to the mechanics of writing formal emails and leaving professional voicemails. It prepares students to interpret direct or indirect managerial feedback without becoming defensive. It directly implements the Oregon Employability Skills framework by teaching critical communication and self-awareness. Understanding professional boundaries helps students maintain a positive professional awareness over time.

In the context of the unit, this lesson shifts focus from the external job hunt to internal workplace behavior. It ensures that once students successfully locate an opening, they know how to interact with management and coworkers professionally.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Distinguish between hierarchical and flat team dynamics.
- Draft and evaluate a professional email following proper formatting rules.
- Use a professional verbal script for phone calls and voicemails to hiring managers.
- Analyze communication expectations in different workplace structures.

Teacher Preparation

Materials / Handouts

- Sample workplace hierarchy and culture scenario for ***The Culture Shift***
- Sample inappropriate workplace email for ***The Anatomy of a Professional Email***
- Sample unpolished and professional phone calls for ***The Phone & Voicemail Lab***
- Workplace communication scenarios for ***The Scenario Switch***
- Paper or digital space for student responses

Technology

- Teacher computer and projector or display
- Student devices, if students will draft responses digitally or use the optional AI activities

Room Setup

- Arrange seating to support whole-group discussion, paired role-play, and independent writing.

Teacher Preparation

- Prepare a brief scenario about communication, workplace hierarchy, and culture for ***The Culture Shift.*** See the AI Assist Prompt for Activity 1.
- Prepare an example of an inappropriate casual workplace email for ***The Anatomy of a Professional Email***. See the AI Assist Prompt for Activity 2.
- Prepare examples of an unpolished and professional phone call for ***The Phone & Voicemail Lab.*** See the AI Assist Prompt for Activity 3.
- Prepare several workplace communication scenarios involving supervisors, coworkers, hiring managers, schedule changes, feedback, mistakes, and requests for help for ***The Scenario Switch***. See the AI Assist Prompt for Activity 4.
- Decide whether students will complete their written responses on paper or digitally.

Instructional Sequence

1 STEP

Hook & Discussion: The Culture Shift

Students examine a workplace scenario and learn how hierarchy, chain of command, team structure, feedback styles, and professional boundaries can influence workplace communication.

2 STEP

Guided Practice: The Anatomy of a Professional Email

Students analyze an inappropriate workplace email, learn the 4-Part Email Rule, and apply it by rewriting the message using professional communication.

3 STEP

Collaborative Practice: The Phone & Voicemail Lab

Students compare polished and unpolished professional phone communication, then practice a phone call or voicemail through a paired role-play.

4 STEP

Independent Practice & Formative Assessment: The Scenario Switch

Students apply what they have learned to a workplace communication scenario by determining who to contact, drafting an appropriate text message, and explaining why their communication fits the situation.

Introduction Questions

- Imagine you work at a local grocery store. You see a faster way to organize the back stockroom. Do you change it immediately on your own, tell your direct supervisor, or email the CEO of the whole company?
- What are some important elements of an appropriate professional email?
- How does the way you speak on the phone change when you're talking to a close friend versus someone you don't know?
- Why is etiquette important when communicating in spoken and written communication?

Instructional Activities

Activity 1: Hook & Discussion, The Culture Shift

Present students with a brief scenario about workplace hierarchy and culture:

- **Scenario:** ***Imagine you work at a local grocery store. You see a faster way to organize the back stockroom. Do you change it immediately on your own, tell your direct supervisor, or email the CEO of the whole company?***

Allow students to collaborate with a supportive peer before presenting their conclusions to the class.

Introduce key workplace culture concepts, including **workplace hierarchy, chain of command, flat team structures, direct feedback, indirect feedback, and professional boundaries.**

Ask students to consider how workplace structure affects who they communicate with and how they communicate.

As a check for understanding, provide short examples and ask students to identify the workplace concept represented. For example:

A tech startup has no supervisors. What term best describes this workplace structure?

Activity 2: Guided Practice, The Anatomy of a Professional Email

Project an example of an inappropriate casual workplace email and ask students to identify why it is ineffective.

Introduce the ***4-Part Email Rule:***

- Clear subject line
- Formal salutation
- Polite, clear request
- Professional sign-off
- Students rewrite the casual message using the ***4-Part Email Rule.***

Discuss:

- What made the original email inappropriate for professional communication?
- How did the ***4-Part Email Rule*** improve it?
- Why is it important to clearly state the purpose or problem in a professional email?

Activity 3: Collaborative Practice, The Phone & Voicemail Lab

Demonstrate the difference between an unpolished phone call and confident, professional outreach to a hiring manager.

Ask students to identify differences in the way the speaker communicates, including tone, clarity, word choice, introduction, purpose, and closing.

Students work in pairs and role-play the ***Job Applicant*** and ***Hiring Manager***, practicing a professional phone call or voicemail.

Discuss:

- How does professional phone communication differ from talking with a friend?
- What differences did you notice between the polished and unpolished phone calls?

Activity 4: Independent Practice & Formative Assessment, The Scenario Switch

Present students with a specific workplace situation involving a supervisor, coworker, or hiring manager. Students determine who they should contact and draft an appropriate text message for the situation.

Students should consider:

- Who needs to receive the message?
- What does that person need to know?
- How direct should the message be?
- What tone is appropriate?
- Does the message clearly explain the problem or request?
- Does the message maintain professional boundaries?

Students draft their response and explain why their communication is appropriate for the situation.

Reflection Questions

- What are some key workplace culture terms, and how might recognizing them help you understand a workplace?
- What makes an email inappropriate for professional communication, and how does the 4-Part Email Rule correct those issues?
- What are the differences between a polished and an unpolished phone call?
- Why is it important to state the problem clearly when responding in an email?
- How can workplace structure affect the way you communicate with others?

Group Reflection / Discussion

Discussion can be completed through Turn and Talk, Think-Pair-Share, whole-group discussion, or another appropriate discussion structure. Allow students private reasoning time first before asking them to share their thinking.

Materials and Supplies

- Teacher computer and projection method
- Sample workplace hierarchy and culture scenario
- Sample inappropriate workplace email
- Sample polished and unpolished phone calls
- Workplace scenarios for the Scenario Switch
- Paper or digital device for student responses

Recommended Resources

Not applicable.

Curriculum Resources

Not applicable.

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- Identify workplace hierarchy and culture concepts through scenarios and reflection.
- Rewrite a casual email using the 4-Part Email Rule.
- Practice a professional phone call or voicemail appropriate for communication with a hiring manager.
- Draft a professional text message appropriate for a specific workplace situation.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

Sentence Frames for Feedback: Give students structured verbal starters to handle managerial critique, such as: “Thank you for pointing that out. Next time, I will make sure to [action verb] so that [desired outcome].”

Scripted Scaffolding: Provide fill-in-the-blank email frames rather than asking students to write from scratch. Provide concrete definitions of abstract concepts such as constructive feedback using clear before-and-after workplace scenarios.

Low-Tech Option, The Index Card Mailbox: Students write their workplace emails on physical index cards and hand the cards up the “chain of command” to visually illustrate how workplace communication flows through organizational structures.

AI ASSIST PROMPTS

Activity 1: The Culture Shift, Workplace Culture Scenarios
Create 4 short, realistic workplace scenarios for high school students entering the workforce. Include situations involving workplace communication, teamwork, asking for help, receiving feedback, workplace expectations, and professional boundaries. For each scenario, provide a discussion question that asks students to decide how they should respond or communicate in the situation. Do not provide the answer so students can discuss and reason through each scenario.

Activity 2: The Anatomy of a Professional Email, Sample Email
Write a short, intentionally inappropriate workplace email from a high school student or young employee to a supervisor. Include realistic problems such as an unclear subject line, overly casual language or text slang, an unclear request, and an unprofessional or missing sign-off. Do not identify or correct the problems. Students will analyze the email and rewrite it using the 4-Part Email Rule: clear subject line, formal salutation, polite and clear request, and professional sign-off.

Activity 2: The Anatomy of a Professional Email, AI Email Critic
Act as a strict, professional hiring manager at a company. Read my draft email below. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate how professional it is. Point out any remaining casual text slang, punctuation mistakes, or formatting errors, and explain how to fix them.

Activity 3: The Phone & Voicemail Lab, Sample Calls
Create two versions of a short phone call between a young job applicant and a hiring manager. In the first, make the applicant noticeably unpolished and overly casual while keeping the example realistic. In the second, have the applicant communicate confidently and professionally. Include an appropriate introduction, reason for calling, clear language, professional tone, and closing. Do not explain the differences. Students will compare the two examples and identify what makes one more professional.

Activity 3: The Phone & Voicemail Lab, Interactive Voicemail Simulator
Act as Sarah, the hiring manager at a local animal shelter. I am going to type out a phone script following up on my job application. Respond to me the way a busy, direct manager would respond in real life, and let's role-play the phone call conversation turn-by-turn.

Activity 4: The Scenario Switch, Workplace Scenarios
Create 8 short, realistic workplace communication scenarios appropriate for high school students entering the workforce. Include situations involving supervisors, coworkers, hiring managers, schedule changes, workplace questions, feedback, mistakes, and requests for help. Each scenario should require the student to decide who they should communicate with and draft an appropriate text message for the situation. Do not provide sample responses or answers.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

The Fishbowl Role-play: Two students sit in the center of the classroom and act out a workplace confrontation where a boss uses micromanagement or direct feedback. The class calls "Freeze!" when a professional boundary is broken and suggests better phrasing.

The Communication Style Spectrum: Hang signs on opposite walls reading "Direct Feedback" and "Indirect Feedback." Read various supervisor statements aloud. Students move to the side of the room that matches the management style they hear.

The Boundary Check Bot: Students draft an email regarding a workplace issue and ask AI: "Read this email to my boss. Highlight any lines that cross personal boundaries, sound overly informal, or violate standard workplace etiquette."

The Conflict Resolution Architect: Prompt AI: "Provide a realistic workplace conflict scenario involving a flat team structure vs. a strict hierarchical team structure. Draft a structured debate script for my students to read in class."

VERSION 1.0 — SCHOOL YEAR 26/27

Use the QR code to contribute to the ongoing improvement of this resource.

OR HS.HECPS D.4

DURATION 60 MINUTES

CONTRIBUTORS
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Lesson 4

Job Applications & References

Lesson Purpose

This lesson focuses on the technical mechanics of the hiring process. Students learn how to navigate common job application fields, provide complete and accurate information, and avoid mistakes that can prevent an application from moving forward. Students also learn how employers may use Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) and why carefully following the directions of a specific application matters.

Students then examine the role of references in the hiring process, distinguish between personal and professional references, and identify people who could speak credibly about their skills, reliability, and work habits. This final lesson brings together the goals, job opportunities, and professional communication explored throughout the unit as students practice completing an application and build a workplace-ready reference sheet.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Navigate the common sections of a job application and recognize the importance of complete, accurate information.
- Complete a sample application using appropriate formatting and following the directions provided by the employer.
- Differentiate between personal and professional references.
- Identify people who can reliably describe their skills, reliability, and work habits, and create a workplace-ready three-person reference sheet.

Teacher Preparation

Materials / Handouts

- Sample digital job application for ***The Portal Void***
- Mock job application for ***Mastering the Application Fields***
- Sample reference relationships for Building the ***Reference Matrix***
- Paper or digital space for students to create their Professional Reference Sheet
- Entry-level job description from an earlier lesson, if students will use one for additional application practice

Technology

- Teacher computer and projector or display
- Student devices, if students will complete applications or reference sheets digitally

Room Setup

- Arrange seating to support whole-class modeling, collaborative discussion, and independent application practice.

Teacher Preparation

- Prepare or select a sample digital job application for ***The Portal Void.*** See the AI Assist Prompt for Activity 1.
- Prepare a standard blank or mock job application for Mastering the ***Application Fields.*** See the AI Assist Prompt for Activity 2 if a sample is needed.
- Prepare several examples of possible reference relationships for students to evaluate during Building the ***Reference Matrix***. See the AI Assist Prompt for Activity 3.
- Decide whether students will complete the mock application and Professional Reference Sheet on paper or digitally.
- If desired, ask students to have an entry-level job description from an earlier lesson available for additional application practice.

Instructional Sequence

1 STEP

Hook & Discussion: The Portal Void

Students examine a sample digital job application, consider what happens after an application is submitted, and identify information, directions, and potential errors an applicant should notice before submitting.

2 STEP

Guided Practice: Mastering the Application Fields

Students examine the common sections of a job application and practice completing a mock application accurately, completely, and according to the employer's directions.

3 STEP

Collaborative Practice: Building the Reference Matrix

Students distinguish between personal and professional references, evaluate possible reference relationships, and identify adults who could credibly speak about their skills, reliability, and work habits.

4 STEP

Independent Practice & Unit Wrap-Up: Professional Reference Sheet

Students create and review a Professional Reference Sheet containing three real or well-planned potential references and consider how they can continue building professional relationships for the future.

Introduction Questions

- Talk with a neighbor about possible part-time jobs you would consider applying for.
- Why do people say you only get one chance to make a first impression?
- Why is your reputation important as you move through life?
- If someone asked you to be a reference and you had reservations, what would you do?

Instructional Activities

Activity 1: Hook & Discussion, The Portal Void

Project a sample digital job application and ask students what they think happens after an applicant selects **Submit**.

Explain that employers use different processes to review applications. Some use Applicant Tracking Systems or other digital tools to organize applicant information, while others may review applications more directly. Regardless of the system, applicants should carefully follow the employer's directions, provide accurate information, proofread their responses, and complete all required fields.

Ask students to examine the sample application and identify:

- Information they would need before beginning.
- Fields that are required.
- Information they may need to verify before submitting.
- Directions or formatting requirements they would need to follow.
- Potential mistakes that could create a poor first impression or prevent the application from being completed.

Discuss: ***What steps can you take to make sure your application is complete and ready for an employer to review?***

Activity 2: Guided Practice, Mastering the Application Fields

Project a standard job application and walk students through the common sections of an application.

These may include:

- Contact information
- Position desired
- Availability and scheduling
- Education
- Employment or volunteer experience
- Skills and qualifications
- References
- Applicant certification/signature

Discuss how students should respond when a question does not apply to them. Explain that students **should follow the directions on the specific application.** When appropriate and permitted, "N/A" can indicate that a question is not applicable rather than accidentally leaving a field incomplete.

Students complete a mock application using their own information or realistic practice information.

Before submitting, students review the application for:

- Complete information
- Correct spelling and capitalization
- Accurate contact information
- Consistent formatting
- Appropriate responses to non-applicable questions
- Any required fields they may have missed

Ask: ***How can small details, such as formatting your name correctly, proofreading your responses, or completing required fields, affect an employer's first impression of your application?***

Instructional Activities

Activity 3: Collaborative Practice, Building the Reference Matrix

Explain the difference between **personal references** and **professional references.**

A professional reference is someone who can credibly speak about a student's skills, reliability, character, work habits, or performance in a professional, academic, volunteer, extracurricular, or similar setting.

Provide students with several possible reference relationships and have them sort or discuss which would generally make stronger professional references.

Examples might include:

- Teacher
- Coach
- Supervisor
- Volunteer coordinator
- Club or activity advisor
- Coworker
- Family friend
- Friend
- Parent or guardian
- Relative

Discuss why some people may be better able to describe a student's work habits, reliability, and job-related skills than others.

Students then identify several adults who could potentially serve as professional references for them.

Emphasize that students should ask someone's permission before listing that person as a reference and make sure they have the person's correct contact information.

Ask: ***Who would be a good reference for you if you were applying for a job, and what could that person tell an employer about you?***

Activity 4: Independent Practice & Unit Wrap-Up, Professional Reference Sheet

Students create a formal Professional Reference Sheet with three real or well-planned potential references.

For each reference, include:

- Full name
- Professional title or role
- Organization, school, or workplace
- Relationship to the applicant
- Phone number
- Email address

Students review a classmate's reference sheet and provide informed feedback.

If students do not yet have three appropriate references, they may identify potential references and note the steps they would need to take to develop or confirm those relationships.

Conclude by asking: ***Why might an employer value hearing from someone who has observed how you work, learn, contribute, or follow through on responsibilities?***

Reflection Questions

- What steps can you take to make sure an application is complete and ready to be reviewed?
- How can small details on an application affect an employer's first impression?
- Who would be a good professional reference for you?
- Why are some references more useful to an employer than others?
- What can you do now to begin building relationships with adults who may become professional references in the future?

Group Reflection / Discussion

Discussion can be completed through Turn and Talk, Think-Pair-Share, whole-group discussion, or another appropriate discussion structure. Allow students private reasoning time first before asking them to share their thinking.

Materials and Supplies

- Teacher computer and projection method
- Sample digital job application
- Mock job application
- Paper or digital device for student responses
- Paper or digital device for creating a Professional Reference Sheet
- Entry-level job description from earlier career exploration, if available

Recommended Resources

Not applicable.

Curriculum Resources

Not applicable.

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- Analyze a sample digital application and identify common application requirements and potential mistakes.
- Complete and proofread a mock job application.
- Differentiate between personal and professional references.
- Evaluate possible reference relationships.
- Create a Professional Reference Sheet containing three real or well-planned potential references.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

Chunking Strategy: Break the mock application into discrete sections. Have students complete one section, such as Contact Information, before taking a structured 60-second processing break.

The "N/A" Anchor: Explain "N/A" through a concrete example, showing students how it can communicate that a question does not apply when the application allows that response, rather than leaving a field unintentionally incomplete.

Low-Tech Option, Standardized Paper Applications: Provide a generic paper employment application. Students complete it manually while practicing the same attention to directions, completeness, accuracy, and professional presentation.

AI ASSIST PROMPTS

Activity 1: The Portal Void, Sample Digital Application Create a realistic sample digital application screen for an entry-level summer job appropriate for a high school student. Include common application fields, required and optional fields, instructions, and several details students should notice before submitting. Do not explain what students should notice. The sample will be projected so students can analyze the application and identify information they need, directions they should follow, and possible mistakes to avoid.

Activity 2: Mastering the Application Fields, Mock Job Application Create a realistic one-page mock employment application for a high school student applying for an entry-level job. Include sections for contact information, position desired, availability, education, employment or volunteer experience, skills and qualifications, references, and applicant certification. Clearly identify required fields and include a few questions that may not apply to every applicant so students can practice following application directions. Do not complete the application or provide sample answers.

Activity 2: Application Review Act as a hiring manager reviewing an application for this entry-level position: [paste job description]. Review my completed mock application below. Identify missing information, unclear responses, spelling or formatting problems, or places where I may not have followed the application directions. Do not rewrite my application for me. Instead, tell me what I should review before submitting it.

Activity 3: Building the Reference Matrix, Reference Sorting Examples Create 12 realistic examples of people a high school student might consider using as a job reference, such as teachers, coaches, supervisors, volunteer coordinators, coworkers, family friends, friends, parents, or relatives. Mix stronger and weaker choices. For each example, provide only the person's relationship to the student and a one-sentence description of how they know the student. Do not identify which are good or poor references. Students will evaluate and sort them.

Activity 4: Professional Reference Sheet Review Act as a hiring manager reviewing the structure of a student's Professional Reference Sheet. Check whether each reference includes a full name, professional title or role, organization, relationship to the applicant, phone number, and email address. Identify missing information or formatting inconsistencies. Do not evaluate or verify the real people or their contact information, and do not invent missing personal information.

Optional Extension: Interview Prep Connector Based entirely on my completed application entries and this job description, generate three interview questions a hiring manager might reasonably ask me to learn more about my experience and qualifications.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

ATS Red-Light/Green-Light Game: The teacher acts as the application reviewer. Students examine sections of mock applications. When they encounter missing required information or another preventable application error, the teacher calls "Red Light!" Students identify the problem and determine what should be checked or corrected before submission.

Reference Interview: For homework, students can conduct a mini-interview with one of the adults they are considering for their Professional Reference Sheet. Ask: "If an employer called you about me, what are the top two strengths you would tell them about?"

Reference Verification Agent: Students can use AI to review the types of relationships represented on their reference sheet and consider whether each person is positioned to speak about their skills or work habits. Students should not enter private contact information into the AI.

Interview Prep Connector: Students can use their completed application and job description to generate likely interview questions as a bridge to future interview practice.

OR HS.HECPS D.2

DURATION 50-60 MINUTES

Start the Lesson: 10 minutes
Learn New Material: 10 minutes
Practice Together: 20 minutes
Work Independently: 15–20 minutes
Wrap Up: 5 minutes

CONTRIBUTOR BRIAN SAMHAMMER

Lesson 5

Resume **Fundamentals**

Lesson Purpose

This lesson teaches students that resume format is a strategic choice. Different formats serve different purposes, and students must analyze their own experience to select the format that best showcases their strengths.

Students compare four common resume formats, identify what quality looks like in a resume, inventory their own school, work, volunteer, leadership, and skill-building experiences, and determine which format best tells their story. The lesson emphasizes that there is no one "right" resume format. The best choice depends on the student's experience, strengths, goals, and the opportunity they are pursuing.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify and distinguish between four resume formats: chronological, functional, combination, and targeted, and explain the purpose and best-use scenarios for each.
- Analyze their own experience, including school, work, volunteer, leadership roles, and skills, and determine which experiences are relevant and resume-worthy.
- Select an appropriate resume format for their situation and provide at least two supporting reasons for their choice.
- Recognize what quality looks like in a resume by evaluating examples and identifying professional formatting, organization, and presentation standards.

Teacher Preparation

Materials / Handouts

One Resume Format Comparison Chart per student, with extras available

Four Sample Resumes, one representing each format:

- Chronological
- Functional
- Combination
- Targeted

Paper, notebooks, or a digital document for students to brainstorm their experiences and justify their format choice

Paper or digital space for students to begin organizing information in their chosen resume format

Extra paper, pencils, and highlighters

Technology

- Teacher computer and projector or display
- Student devices, if students will brainstorm or begin organizing their resumes digitally

Room Setup

- Arrange seating so students can clearly view the four Sample Resumes and work with a partner during resume analysis.

Teacher Preparation

- Prepare or display the four ***Sample Resumes*** without initially identifying their formats.
- Review the R***esume Format Comparison Chart*** and the distinguishing features of chronological, functional, combination, and targeted resumes.
- Decide whether students will complete their experience brainstorm and format justification on paper or digitally.
- Prepare to model the chronological row of the ***Resume Format Comparison Chart*** before students analyze the remaining formats.

Instructional Sequence

1 STEP

Resume Format Comparison Chart

Students compare four unlabeled resume examples, learn the characteristics, strengths, and limitations of chronological, functional, combination, and targeted resumes, and complete the Resume Format Comparison Chart.

2 STEP

Experience Inventory & Format Selection

Students brainstorm their school, work, volunteer, leadership, extracurricular, personal, and skill-building experiences and identify the experiences, accomplishments, and skills they may want to feature on a resume.

3 STEP

Choose the Right Resume Format for YOU

Students use their experience inventory, sample resumes, and Resume Format Comparison Chart to select the resume format that best showcases their experience and explain the reasoning behind their choice.

4 STEP

Begin Organizing Your Resume

Students begin organizing their information using their selected resume format and determine which experiences, skills, and accomplishments should receive the greatest emphasis.

Introduction Questions

Display the four resume examples without initially labeling the formats. Ask:

- What do you notice when you compare these four resumes?
- What is different about how the information is organized?
- Which resume is easiest to read? Why?
- If you had lots of volunteer experience but no paid jobs, which resume would you choose? Why?
- What information does each resume make easiest for an employer to notice?

Introduce the idea: **There is no one "right" format. It depends on YOU.**

Instructional Activities

Resume Format Comparison Chart

Display the ***Resume Format Comparison Chart*** with columns for:

- Format Name
- Best For
- Key Sections
- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Example Scenario

Introduce the four formats using the sample resumes.

- **Chronological:** Jobs and experiences are generally listed from most recent to oldest. This format can work well for someone with steady work experience because it clearly shows progression and stability.
- **Functional:** Skills and accomplishments receive more emphasis than job history. This format can be useful for students with limited paid work experience but strong skills developed through school, volunteering, clubs, projects, or other experiences.
- **Combination:** Combines skills and accomplishments with work or experience history. This can be a flexible option for students who have both experiences and skills they want to highlight.
- **Targeted:** Customized for a specific job opportunity. It emphasizes the experiences, accomplishments, and skills most relevant to that particular position.

Model the chronological row together. Ask:

- What do you notice about how this resume is organized?
- What information appears first?
- What are the strengths of this format?
- When might this format be less effective?
- Who might benefit from using it?

Have students work in pairs to analyze the functional format using the same questions. Continue with the combination and targeted formats, gradually reducing teacher modeling.

Students complete the comparison chart using the four resume samples and class discussion.

Reinforce that format choice is **strategic and personal.** Different students may make different choices because their experiences are different.

Experience Inventory & Format Selection

Explain that students should brainstorm **all of their experiences before deciding what belongs on the resume.** The goal is not to filter yet, but to recognize what they have done.

Ask students to brainstorm experiences in the following areas:

- School projects, presentations, coursework, awards, academic accomplishments, and honors
- Paid jobs, internships, babysitting, yard work, tutoring, or other informal work
- Volunteer work and community service
- Clubs, sports, leadership roles, and extracurricular activities
- Event planning or coordination
- Family or personal responsibilities that demonstrate skills
- Technical skills, including software, digital tools, design, social media, video editing, photography, or coding
- Communication skills, including writing, presentations, customer service, active listening, and conflict resolution
- Leadership skills, including team coordination, mentoring, training others, decision-making, and collaboration
- Problem-solving skills, including research, critical thinking, organization, creative thinking, and time management
- Numbers or metrics that demonstrate impact, such as people helped, hours volunteered, money raised or managed, projects completed, or other measurable accomplishments

Remind students that **everything counts.** School projects, volunteer work, clubs, sports, part-time jobs, family responsibilities, and personal projects can all demonstrate skills and accomplishments.

Students review their brainstorm and identify:

- 3–4 experiences they are most proud of
- Their strongest skills
- 3–5 experiences, accomplishments, or skills they are most likely to feature on a resume

Ask students to think about **why** those experiences matter and what they demonstrate about them.

Instructional Activities

Choose the Right Resume Format for YOU

Students review their Resume Format Comparison Chart, sample resumes, and personal experience inventory.

Ask them to select the format that they believe will best showcase their experience:

- Chronological
- Functional
- Combination
- Targeted

Students respond to the following:

- Which format did you choose?
- Why is this format the best choice for your experience?
- What experiences or strengths will this format help you highlight?
- What is one reason another format may be less effective for you right now?

Students should provide at least two clear reasons supporting their format choice.

Possible sentence starters:

- "I chose this format because..."
- "This format is best for me because I have..."
- "This format will help me show my strengths by..."
- "Unlike another format, this one allows me to..."

Have students briefly compare their choices with a partner or small group. Emphasize that students may choose different formats and still have equally strong reasoning.

Begin Organizing Your Resume

Students begin organizing their information using the format they selected.

Ask students to consider:

- Which experiences should appear first?
- Which 3–4 experiences are most important to include?
- What skills or accomplishments should an employer notice quickly?
- Which resume sections will best organize their information?
- Is there information they brainstormed that does not need to appear on this particular resume?

Students do not need to complete a polished resume during this lesson. The purpose is to begin organizing their information and preparing for continued resume development.

Reflection Questions

- Why did you choose the resume format you chose?
- What about your experience made this format the best fit?
- What will be the strongest section of your resume? Why?
- What experience or accomplishment are you most proud of?
- What did you identify today that you had not previously thought of as “resume experience”?
- What might make you choose a different format for another job or opportunity?

Group Reflection / Discussion

In groups of 3–4, discuss:

- Which resume format did you choose and why?
- How is your choice different from others in your group?
- What does that tell us about how people’s experiences are different?

For closing, students may stand in a circle and complete:

- “One thing I learned about resumes today is…”
- Each student shares one sentence, with no repeats.

Materials and Supplies

- Resume Format Comparison Chart
- Four sample resumes, one of each format
- Paper, notebook, or digital document for experience inventory and reflection
- Computer or digital device, if students will begin resumes electronically
- Projector or smartboard
- Whiteboard or poster board and markers
- Timer, optional
- Extra paper, pencils, and highlighters
- Reference sorting examples for Building the Reference Matrix

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- Complete a Resume Format Comparison Chart demonstrating understanding of the four formats, their strengths and weaknesses, and when each may be appropriate.
- Brainstorm a broad inventory of school, work, volunteer, leadership, skill-building, and other relevant experiences.
- Identify 3–5 experiences, accomplishments, or skills they may include on a resume.
- Select an appropriate resume format and provide at least two clear reasons supporting their decision.
- Begin organizing their information using the selected format.
- Complete an exit response stating their format choice and one reason why.

Recommended Resources

CareerOneStop – Resume Building Tools, Career Exploration, and Transferable Skills

https://www.careeronestop.org/

NACE Career Readiness Competencies – Framework for Identifying and Describing Employability Skills

https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined

America Succeeds – Durable Skills

https://www.americasucceeds.org/durable-skills

Curriculum Resources

Four Sample Resumes

See Figure 5.1

Resume Format Comparison Chart

See Figure 5.2

AI ASSIST PROMPTS

Experience Inventory Support
I am a high school student creating my first resume. I may have limited paid work experience. Help me brainstorm experiences that could show my skills and accomplishments. Ask me questions one at a time about school projects, classes, volunteer work, clubs, sports, leadership, informal jobs, family responsibilities, personal projects, technology, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and other activities. Do not invent experiences for me. Help me identify skills and accomplishments only from experiences I actually describe.

Resume Format Selection Support
I am deciding between chronological, functional, combination, and targeted resume formats. Ask me questions about my work experience, school and volunteer experiences, leadership roles, skills, accomplishments, and whether I am applying for a particular job. Do not choose the format for me. Help me compare which formats could work and explain the strengths and limitations of each so I can make my own decision.

Differentiation and Extension Support
I'm teaching high school students in grades 9–12 about resume formats and selecting the right format for their experience. My students have a range of experience levels: some have steady part-time jobs, some have only volunteer or school-based experience, and some have no paid work experience. Provide practical differentiation strategies for students who need additional scaffolding, on-level practice, and additional challenge. Include support for common questions such as: "I don't have enough experience for a resume," "Should I include my group project from class?", "What if I don't have any paid work experience?", and "Can I exaggerate my accomplishments?" Keep the suggestions practical and appropriate for a high school workforce readiness classroom.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

- Students may initially believe that they do not have enough experience to create a resume. Reinforce that everything counts. School projects, volunteer work, clubs, sports, part-time jobs, informal work, family responsibilities, and personal projects can all demonstrate skills and accomplishments.
- Students do not need paid work experience to create a strong resume. If they have not held a traditional job, focus on what they have done and what those experiences demonstrate.
- Encourage honesty. A student's resume should reflect their story, not someone else's, and accomplishments should not be exaggerated.
- Use Turn and Talk frequently to increase participation and give students a chance to test their thinking before sharing with the whole group.
- If possible, display authentic resume examples with identifying information removed. Seeing real examples can help students recognize professional presentation and understand why format matters.
- Sharing a personal story about revising your own resume or changing formats for different opportunities can make the lesson more relatable.
- Celebrate strong work publicly when appropriate. For example, share strong format-selection reasoning or examples of experiences students successfully recognized as resume-worthy.
- Lesson 5 is designed for a 50–60 minute class period. If time is short, prioritize comparison of the four formats, experience brainstorming, and format selection. Students can continue organizing and developing the actual resume in the next lesson.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

- If time is limited, have students brainstorm their school, work, volunteer, leadership, and skill-building experiences before class so more lesson time can be devoted to resume comparison and format selection.
- During guided practice, pair students who need additional support with peers who can help them analyze the sample resumes and comparison chart.
- Provide simplified prompts, standard prompts, or additional challenge depending on student readiness.
- Allow students to complete their experience inventory and format justification by hand, digitally, or verbally recorded.
- For students who would benefit from additional guidance, narrow the comparison to two likely resume formats before asking them to select among all four.
- If classroom space allows, place the four resume samples at stations and have students rotate through them while completing the comparison chart.
- Students who are ready to go deeper can compare their selected format to a specific job posting and consider how they would adjust their resume for that opportunity.

Four Sample Resumes

FIGURE 5.1

EXAMPLE 1

Chronological

ALEX MARTINEZ

Portland, OR 97214 | (503) 555-0142 | alex.martinez@email.com | LinkedIn.com/in/alexmartinez

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Reliable and customer-focused barista with 18 months of experience in fast-paced coffee shop environment. Strong communication and problem-solving skills with proven ability to work efficiently under pressure. Seeking part-time position that values teamwork and customer service excellence.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Barista | Coffee Connection | June 2023–Present

- Prepare and serve 100+ specialty drinks daily with 98% customer satisfaction rating
- Trained 3 new employees on espresso machine operation and POS system, reducing training time by 25%
- Promoted to shift lead after 8 months; now responsible for opening procedures and inventory management
- Maintained health and safety compliance; zero violations in quarterly inspections
- Resolved customer complaints professionally, resulting in positive online reviews

Volunteer Tutor | Lincoln High School Writing Center | September 2023–Present

- Tutor 5–8 students weekly in essay writing and research skills
- Helped 12 students improve writing grades by an average of 1.5 letter grades
- Developed study guides for common writing assignments

EDUCATION

Lincoln High School | Expected Graduation: June 2025

- GPA: 3.6 | National Honor Society member
- Relevant Coursework: Business Management, AP English, Communication Arts
- Award: Student Employee of the Month (March 2024)

SKILLS

- Technical: POS systems, espresso machines, Microsoft Office, social media (Instagram, TikTok)
- Communication: Customer service, public speaking, written communication, conflict resolution
- Leadership: Team training, shift management, inventory tracking, opening/closing procedures

EXAMPLE
1

Chronological

ALEX'S **COFFEE SHOP** EXPERIENCE

SCENARIO

Alex has worked at the same coffee shop for 18 months and has developed real skills and responsibility over time. This resume shows career growth and stability—perfect for highlighting progression at one job.

WHY THIS FORMAT WORKS FOR **ALEX**

Shows Progression & Growth
Alex started as a regular barista and was promoted to shift lead. This format clearly displays career advancement and increased responsibility—a strong signal to employers.

Demonstrates Stability
Staying at one job for 18 months shows reliability and commitment. Employers value employees who stick around.

Easy to Follow Timeline
Dates are in reverse chronological order (most recent first), making it easy for employers to see what Alex has been doing recently.

BEST FOR

Students with steady work history at one or more jobs, students who want to show career growth, students applying in the same field or industry.

EXAMPLE
2

Functional

JORDAN CHEN

Seattle, WA 98101 | (206) 555-0198 | jordan.chen@email.com | LinkedIn.com/in/jordanchen

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Organized and detail-oriented high school student with strong leadership, communication, and project management skills developed through volunteer work, club leadership, and school projects. Seeking entry-level position where I can apply my organizational abilities and commitment to teamwork.

CORE SKILLS & COMPETENCIES

Leadership & Organization

- Coordinated school fundraiser that raised $1,200 for local food bank
- Served as Vice President of Environmental Club; led 15 members on 4 community cleanups
- Managed project timelines and deliverables for 3-person group presentations in AP classes
- Trained peer tutors in effective feedback techniques
- Communication & Customer Service

Greeted and assisted 50+ visitors weekly as volunteer at community center front desk

- Answered phones, scheduled appointments, and resolved issues professionally
- Presented research findings to audiences of 30+ students and teachers
- Collaborated effectively with diverse teams on school and volunteer projects

Technical & Digital Skills

- Proficient in Microsoft Word, Excel, Google Workspace, Canva
- Created social media content for Environmental Club Instagram (250+ followers)
- Designed flyers and promotional materials using Canva
- Basic knowledge of WordPress and website navigation

EDUCATION

Roosevelt High School | Expected Graduation: June 2025

- GPA: 3.8 | National Merit Scholar
- Relevant Coursework: AP Environmental Science, Business Management, Digital Media
- Awards: Academic Excellence Award (2024), Community Service Recognition (2024)

VOLUNTEER & LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

- Vice President, Environmental Club | Roosevelt High School | September 2023–Present
- Community Center Volunteer | Eastside Community Center | January 2024–Present (4 hours/week)
- Peer Tutor | Roosevelt High School | September 2023–Present (2–3 hours/week)
- Event Planning Committee | School Spirit Week | March 2024 (Organized activities for 400+ students)

SKILLS

- Technical: Microsoft Office, Google Workspace, Canva, social media platforms, WordPress basics
- Soft Skills: Leadership, organization, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, time management

EXAMPLE
2

Functional

JORDAN'S **FIRST JOB** SEARCH

SCENARIO

Jordan has never had a paid job but has strong skills from school leadership, volunteer work, and clubs. This resume focuses on what Jordan CAN DO rather than job titles—perfect for first-time job seekers.

WHY THIS FORMAT WORKS FOR **JORDAN**

Focuses on Skills

Jordan doesn't have traditional job experience, but the functional format showcases real, marketable skills in organized categories. Employers can see exactly what Jordan can do.

Proves Ability with Examples

Each skill area includes specific accomplishments (raised $1,200, managed 250+ social media followers, etc.). Numbers prove capability.

Instead of Lack of Experience

Volunteer work and leadership roles are presented as seriously as paid jobs. The focus is on what matters: skills and impact.

BEST FOR

First-time job seekers, students with limited paid work experience, students who want to emphasize skills over job titles, students with gaps in employment.

EXAMPLE
3

Combination

MORGAN TAYLOR

Portland, OR 97205 | (503) 555-0167 | morgan.taylor@email.com | LinkedIn.com/in/morgantaylor

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Responsible and adaptable high school student with 2+ years of experience in customer service and education. Strong organizational, communication, and problem-solving skills demonstrated through work, volunteer, and leadership roles. Seeking part-time position in retail, administration, or education support.

KEY SKILLS & COMPETENCIES

Customer Service & Communication

- Professional customer interaction in fast-paced environments
- Active listening and conflict resolution
- Clear written and verbal communication
- Bilingual: English and Spanish

Organization & Administration

- File management and data entry
- Schedule coordination and time management
- Attention to detail; proofreading and quality control
- Project planning and follow-through

Technical Skills

- Microsoft Word, Excel, Google Workspace
- Social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok)
- Basic website navigation and online research

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Tutor | Academic Success Tutoring Center | September 2023–Present

- Tutor 4–6 students weekly in math (algebra, geometry) and English writing
- Developed customized study plans for each student; 85% of students improved grades
- Communicated progress updates to parents via email and phone
- Managed tutoring schedule and student files independently

Cashier & Customer Service Associate | Trader Joe's | May 2023–August 2023

- Operated cash register accurately; processed 50+ transactions daily
- Provided friendly, efficient customer service in high-volume retail environment
- Resolved customer questions and concerns professionally
- Maintained store cleanliness and product organization

EDUCATION & ACTIVITIES

Lincoln High School | Expected Graduation: June 2025

- GPA: 3.7 | Honor Roll student
- Relevant Coursework: AP English, Child Development, Business Management
- Leadership: Vice President, Peer Mentoring Club (September 2023–Present); organized 6 peer mentoring sessions
- Volunteer: Literacy Volunteer at Community Center (2 hours/week); helped adults with reading and writing skills

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- Student Employee of the Month, Trader Joe's (July 2023)
- Community Service Award, Peer Mentoring Club (2024)

EXAMPLE
3

Combination

MORGAN'S **BALANCED** APPROACH

SCENARIO

Morgan has some work experience (babysitting, tutoring) AND strong skills from school projects, clubs, and volunteer work. This resume blends the best of both formats to show skills AND experience.

WHY THIS FORMAT WORKS FOR **MORGAN**

Shows Skills First, Then Proves Them

The skills section gives employers a quick overview of what Morgan offers. The experience section proves those skills with real examples.

Balances Different Types of Experience

Morgan has paid work (cashier, tutoring center), self-employment (babysitting), and volunteer work. This format treats all equally and shows versatility.

Most Versatile for Most Students

This is the format that works best for most high school students because it doesn't require extensive work history OR specialized skills—just a mix of both.

BEST FOR

Students with moderate work experience and some leadership/volunteer roles, students applying to various types of positions, students who want to emphasize both skills and experience equally.

EXAMPLE
4

Targeted

THE JOB POSTING

MARKETING INTERNSHIP – SUMMER 2025

Local Digital Marketing Agency Seeking High School Student

We're looking for a motivated high school student to join our marketing team for the summer. You'll work on social media campaigns, content creation, and basic graphic design.

REQUIRED SKILLS:

- Social media experience (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook)
- Basic graphic design skills (Canva, Adobe Spark, or similar)
- Strong written communication
- Creativity and attention to detail
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Create social media posts and graphics
- Assist with content calendar planning
- Help manage client social media accounts
- Write engaging captions and headlines
- Basic video editing for social media

NICE TO HAVE:

- Experience with analytics/tracking performance
- Video creation or editing experience
- Understanding of marketing trends

EXAMPLE
4

Targeted

CASEY RODRIGUEZ

Portland, OR 97214 | (503) 555-0152 | casey.rodriguez@email.com | LinkedIn.com/in/caseyrodriguez

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Creative and detail-oriented high school student with proven experience in social media content creation, graphic design, and digital marketing. Strong written communication skills and passion for visual storytelling. Seeking summer marketing internship where I can apply my design and social media expertise to support client campaigns.

CORE SKILLS – MARKETING & DESIGN

Social Media & Content Creation

- Managed Environmental Club Instagram account (350+ followers); created 40+ posts using Canva
- Designed and posted weekly content calendars; increased engagement by 60% in 3 months ← Added specific metric
- Created TikTok content for school fundraiser campaign (25,000+ views)
- Experienced with Instagram Stories, Reels, and caption writing

Graphic Design & Visual Content

- Proficient in Canva; created 50+ designs including flyers, posters, and social media graphics
- Basic video editing using iMovie; edited 3 promotional videos for school events
- Experience with color theory, typography, and visual hierarchy
- Designed merchandise mockups using Canva Pro templates

Written Communication & Storytelling

- Wrote engaging captions and headlines that drove engagement on social media ← Directly matches job description
- Edited and proofread content for clarity and brand voice
- Experienced in adapting tone for different platforms and audiences

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Social Media Manager, Environmental Club | Roosevelt High School | September 2023–Present

- Manage club Instagram account with 350+ followers; post 2–3 times weekly
- Created social media strategy that increased engagement by 60% in 3 months
- Designed graphics, flyers, and promotional materials using Canva

Content Creator, School Fundraiser Campaign | Roosevelt High School | March 2024

- Created TikTok promotional videos for school fundraiser; achieved 25,000+ views
- Wrote captions and hashtags to maximize reach and engagement
- Designed digital ads and graphics using Canva

EDUCATION & TECHNICAL SKILLS

Roosevelt High School | Expected Graduation: June 2025

- GPA: 3.7 | Honor Roll
- Relevant Coursework: Digital Media, Graphic Design, Business Management, AP English
- Technical Skills: Canva, iMovie, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Microsoft Office, Google Workspace

AWARDS

- Digital Media Award, Roosevelt High School (2024)
- Social Media Engagement Recognition, Environmental Club (2024)

EXAMPLE
4

Targeted

Key Changes Casey Made for the Targeted Resume

WHAT CHANGED	WHY
Skills section reorganized	Moved social media/design skills to the TOP to match job posting priorities
Added specific numbers	"350+ followers," "60% engagement increase," "25,000+ views" prove impact
Language matches job posting	Used exact phrases like "content calendar," "engagement," "graphic design," "captions"
Emphasized design tools	Highlighted Canva experience specifically (mentioned in job posting)
Added analytics section	Job posting said "nice to have"; Casey added proof of tracking performance
Reordered work experience	Put most relevant role (Social Media Manager) first
Removed unrelated content	Took out volunteer, tutoring, and babysitting not relevant to marketing internship
Added metrics everywhere	Every accomplishment includes a number or percentage

EXAMPLE
4

Targeted

MARKETING INTERNSHIP FOR CASEY

SCENARIO

Casey is a high school senior interested in marketing and found a specific internship posting. This resume is CUSTOMIZED for that exact job. Compare it to Casey's general resume to see what changed.

WHY THIS TARGETED FORMAT WORKS

Speaks the Language of the Job

The targeted resume uses the exact words from the job posting. Employers (and applicant tracking systems) recognize that Casey is a perfect fit.

Emphasizes What Matters Most

Casey reorganized sections to put the most relevant skills first. The employer sees immediately that Casey has the exact experience they need.

Removes Distractions

By removing unrelated experience, Casey's resume stays focused and doesn't waste space on irrelevant information.

Shows Strategic Thinking

A targeted resume proves Casey read the job posting carefully and customized their application—employers notice and reward this effort.

BEST FOR

Applying to a specific job or internship, applying in a specific industry, students who want to show they're the PERFECT fit for one particular position.

Resume Format Comparison Chart

Example

FIGURE 5.2

Comparison Chart

FORMAT NAME	BEST FOR	STRENGTHS	WHEN TO USE
Chronological	Steady work history	Shows career progression; easy to follow timeline	Multiple jobs in same field; clear career growth
Functional	Limited work experience	Highlights skills; doesn't penalize lack of jobs	First job; volunteer/ club experience; career change
Combination	Mix of work + skills	Balanced view; most versatile	Most high school students; multiple experience types
Targeted	Specific job posting	Perfect match for job; strategic focus	Applying to ONE specific position; internship applications

Resume Format
Comparison Chart

FIGURE 5.2

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Directions: Fill in each row for all four resume formats. Use the resume samples and class discussion to complete this chart. Write clearly so your answers are easy to read.

Comparison Chart

FORMAT NAME	BEST FOR	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	EXAMPLE SCENARIO
Chronological				
Functional				
Combination				
Targeted				

Resume Format
Comparison Chart

FIGURE 5.2

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

My Observations & Questions

What I learned about resume formats:

Questions I still have:

Which format do you think will work best for YOU? Why?

OR HS.HECPS D.2

DURATION 45–50 MINUTES

CONTRIBUTOR BRIAN SAMHAMMER

Lesson 6

Resume **Writing Workshop**

Lesson Purpose

This lesson builds on the resume foundation from Lesson 5 by helping students understand that how they describe their experiences matters as much as the experiences themselves. Students practice transforming vague resume bullet points into stronger accomplishment statements using action verbs, specific details, and evidence of impact.

Students then apply these skills to their own resume using the format they selected in Lesson 5 and a professional resume template. Through practice, peer feedback, and reflection, students develop a stronger resume that accurately communicates their skills, experiences, and accomplishments to a potential employer.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Transform weak or vague resume bullet points into stronger accomplishment statements.
- Select and use action verbs that accurately describe their skills, responsibilities, and contributions.
- Incorporate specific details and, when appropriate, numbers, percentages, scope, frequency, or other measurable results.
- Apply these strategies to strengthen their own resume.
- Create or revise a professional resume using the format selected in Lesson 5.
- Review a classmate's resume and identify one strength and one area for improvement.

Teacher Preparation

Materials / Handouts

- One ***Resume Writing Quick Reference*** per student
- Students' resume format and experience work from Lesson 5
- Students' previously selected job description or career opportunity
- Paper or digital space for peer feedback and reflection
- Several weak resume bullet-point examples for guided and scaffolded practice

Technology

- Student devices with access to a professional resume template through Google Docs, Canva, Microsoft Word, or another approved platform
- Teacher computer and projector or display

Room Setup

- Arrange seating so students can clearly view teacher modeling and easily work with a partner during guided practice and peer review.

Teacher Preparation

- Review the ***Resume Writing Quick Reference*** and prepare to model the formula **Action Verb + Specific Details + Evidence of Impact = Strong Bullet Point.**
- Prepare several weak resume bullet-point examples for guided and scaffolded practice. An AI prompt for generating additional examples is included in the AI Assist Prompts.
- Prepare the weak and stronger resume bullet-point examples used during the opening.
- Ensure students can access the resume format and experience work they completed in Lesson 5.
- Ensure students can access their previously selected job description or career opportunity.
- Confirm students have access to professional resume templates through Google Docs, Canva, Microsoft Word, or another approved platform.

Instructional Sequence

1 STEP

From Weak to Strong

Students compare weak and strong resume bullet points and learn how action verbs, specific details, and evidence of impact can make resume statements more effective.

2 STEP

Scaffolded Practice

Students practice strengthening resume bullet points through teacher modeling, partner practice, and independent application with gradually decreasing support.

3 STEP

Personal Resume Creation

Students create or revise their own resume using the format selected in Lesson 5 and apply the strategies from the lesson to accurately communicate their experiences, skills, and accomplishments.

4 STEP

Peer Resume Review

Students exchange resumes, provide focused constructive feedback, and identify revisions that could improve clarity, specificity, or professional presentation.

Introduction Questions

- Imagine you're an employer scanning many resumes quickly. What would make you stop and read one more carefully?
- Which is stronger: **"Worked at the movie theater"** or **"Managed concession transactions and trained new employees"?** Why?
- What makes a resume bullet point specific rather than vague?
- When can numbers or measurable details make an accomplishment more credible?
- Why is it important that every claim on a resume is accurate and honest?

Instructional Activities

From Weak to Strong

Display a weak bullet point:

Weak: Worked at the movie theater.

Ask students what makes the statement weak or incomplete. Allow students to briefly Turn and Talk before discussing as a class.

Introduce the formula: **Action Verb + Specific Details + Evidence of Impact = Strong Bullet Point**

Explain that evidence of impact does not always have to be a number. It might include the number of people served, frequency or time frame, money raised or managed, projects completed, specific outcomes, scope of responsibility, or other details showing what the student actually accomplished.

Model the revision process:

- Replace a vague verb with an accurate action verb.
- Identify what the person actually did.
- Add specific details.
- Add evidence of scope or impact when it is accurate and meaningful.

For example:

Weak: Washed cars and took money from customers Stronger: Used point-of-sale system to take payments from customers. Provided customer service to help customers select the product that fits their needs.

Repeat the process with additional examples such as:

- Helped organize the school dance.
- Was a member of the debate team.
- Participated in the school musical.
- Helped at the community center after school.

Gradually increase student input and decrease teacher modeling.

Scaffolded Practice

Continue practicing with decreasing levels of support.

Round 1, Pair Practice: Give students a weak example such as “Helped at the community center after school.”

Students work with a partner and consider:

- What did the person actually do?
- What action verb more accurately describes the work?
- Who or what did they support?
- Is there a number, time frame, result, or other specific detail that could accurately strengthen the statement?

Share several revisions and discuss what makes them stronger.

Round 2, Independent Practice: Provide another weak example, such as “Was responsible for customer service at the retail store.”

Students revise it independently using the Resume Writing Quick Reference.

Round 3, Apply the Skill: Students select one experience from their own resume and strengthen at least one bullet point. Ask them to check:

- Does it begin with an accurate action verb?
- Does it explain what I actually did?
- Is it specific?
- Have I included evidence of impact or scope when I genuinely have it?
- Am I describing my experience honestly?

Instructional Activities

Personal Resume Creation

Students use a professional resume template in Google Docs, Canva, Microsoft Word, or another approved platform. They should use the resume format selected in Lesson 5 and the job description or career opportunity they previously identified.

Students organize appropriate information into their resume, which may include:

- Professional contact information
- Education and relevant coursework
- Work experience
- Volunteer or community experience
- School projects
- Clubs, sports, leadership, or extracurricular experiences
- Relevant skills
- Awards, certifications, or accomplishments when applicable

Students review their experience section and apply the strategies practiced earlier. Encourage them to use strong and accurate action verbs, describe experiences specifically, include measurable evidence when genuinely available, emphasize experiences relevant to the opportunity, maintain consistent formatting, and proofread carefully.

Students do not need a curriculum-specific resume template. They may use professional templates already available through common platforms.

Scaffolded Practice

Students exchange resumes with a partner and provide brief constructive feedback.

Ask reviewers to respond to four prompts:

- **First Impression:** What stands out immediately?
- **Strongest Evidence:** Identify one bullet point, skill, or accomplishment that communicates the student's experience particularly well.
- **One Question:** If you were the employer, what would you want to know more about?
- **One Revision Suggestion:** What single change would most improve the resume's clarity, specificity, or professional presentation?

Remind students to be specific, kind, honest, and helpful. Students review the feedback they receive and decide which suggestions would strengthen their resume.

Reflection Questions

Students submit their completed resume with a brief reflection:

- What do you want an employer to notice first about your resume? Why?
- Choose one bullet point you strengthened. What did you change, and why is the revised version more effective?
- What evidence did you include to demonstrate your skills or accomplishments?
- How does the resume format you selected in Lesson 5 help communicate your experience effectively?
- What is one part of your resume you would continue improving before using it for a real opportunity?

Group Reflection / Discussion

Facilitate a brief whole-class discussion:

- ***We learned that weak bullet points can be transformed into stronger ones. Can you think of a time when how you described something changed how people understood it? What was different?***

Students may also complete a Think-Pair-Share:

- ***Find one bullet point on your resume that uses a strong action verb and specific evidence. Why is this bullet point effective?***

Materials and Supplies

- Resume Writing Quick Reference
- Resume format and experience work from Lesson 5
- Student-selected job description or career opportunity
- Computer or digital device
- Access to a professional resume template
- Paper or digital space for peer feedback and reflection
- Projector or smartboard

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- Transform weak resume statements into stronger accomplishment statements.
- Demonstrate increasing independence as scaffolds are reduced.
- Apply action verbs, specific details, and evidence of impact to their own experiences.
- Create or revise a professional resume using an appropriate format.
- Provide constructive peer feedback.
- Submit their resume with a brief reflection explaining their choices and identifying an area for improvement.

Recommended Resources

CareerOneStop

https://www.careeronestop.org/

NACE Career Readiness Competencies

https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined

America Succeeds: Durable Skills

https://www.americasucceeds.org/durable-skills

Canva Resume Templates

https://www.canva.com/resumes/templates/

Curriculum Resources

Resume Writing Quick Reference

https://www.careeronestop.org/

Resume Format Comparison Chart

https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined

AI ASSIST PROMPTS

Generate Practice Examples
Act as a high school career readiness educator. Create 8 weak resume bullet points students can practice revising. Include a variety of experiences such as part-time work, volunteering, school projects, clubs, sports, leadership, family responsibilities, and personal projects. Make each bullet point realistically vague so students can practice adding stronger action verbs, specific details, and evidence of impact. Do not provide improved versions unless requested. Do not invent unrealistic accomplishments or statistics.

Coach a Student Through a Bullet Point
Help me strengthen this resume bullet point without inventing anything about my experience. Ask me questions about what I actually did, who I worked with or served, how often I did it, what skills I used, and what result or impact occurred. After I answer, help me create a stronger bullet point using accurate action verbs, specific details, and evidence of impact. Do not add numbers, percentages, responsibilities, or accomplishments that I did not provide.

Resume Content Feedback
Act as a resume coach for a high school student. Review the resume content I provide for clarity, specificity, action verbs, relevance to the job description, and professional tone. Do not invent experiences or accomplishments. Identify places where I could be more specific and ask questions that would help me improve the wording myself.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

- Lesson 6 is content-dense. Do not rush the guided practice. The modeling and gradual release from teacher support to independent revision are where much of the learning occurs.
- Students may believe that school, volunteer, extracurricular, family, or personal experiences are not "real" resume experiences. Reinforce that these experiences can demonstrate meaningful skills when described accurately and specifically.
- Use Turn and Talk frequently during guided practice so all students have opportunities to test their thinking.
- When students add numbers or measurable outcomes, emphasize accuracy over impressiveness. Students should never invent statistics, satisfaction ratings, hours, responsibilities, or accomplishments simply because a number appears stronger.
- Students do not need a curriculum-created resume template. Professional templates available through Google Docs, Canva, Microsoft Word, or similar platforms allow students to apply the format decisions they made in Lesson 5.
- Quality matters more than rushing to completion. If students need additional time, peer review and final revisions can continue during the next available work period.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

- Begin with teacher modeling, move to pair practice with guiding questions, and then have students revise independently.
- Allow students to use the Resume Writing Quick Reference throughout the lesson.
- For students who need additional support, focus on fewer high-quality experiences or sections rather than requiring a fixed number of entries.
- Work with students using questions such as, "What did you actually do?", "Who did you help or serve?", and "What changed because of your work?"
- Students may brainstorm verbally, by hand, or digitally before transferring their ideas to the resume.
- Pair students strategically during guided practice and peer review.
- Students can tailor several resume bullet points specifically to the job description or career opportunity they identified earlier.

Resume Writing
Quick Reference

FIGURE 6.1

Name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Class:** _____

Strong Bullet Formula

ACTION VERB + SPECIFIC DETAILS + EVIDENCE OF IMPACT = **STRONG BULLET POINT**

Overview: Numbers can be helpful when they are accurate and meaningful, but not every experience needs a percentage or metric. Specific details, scope, frequency, outcomes, and clearly described responsibilities can also demonstrate impact.

Action Verbs

Choose a verb that accurately describes what you did.
Do not exaggerate an experience simply to make it sound stronger.

SKILL AREA	EXAMPLES
Leadership & Management	Led, Managed, Coordinated, Organized, Supervised, Mentored, Trained, Guided
Communication & Presentation	Presented, Communicated, Facilitated, Collaborated, Explained, Wrote, Edited, Negotiated
Creation & Design	Created, Designed, Developed, Built, Produced, Launched, Implemented, Established
Problem-Solving & Improvement	Analyzed, Solved, Resolved, Improved, Streamlined, Increased, Reduced, Refined
Achievement & Accomplishment	Achieved, Earned, Completed, Exceeded, Secured, Accomplished
Research & Analysis	Researched, Investigated, Evaluated, Assessed, Compared, Identified, Documented
Assistance & Support	Assisted, Supported, Facilitated, Contributed, Collaborated, Partnered

Skills to Consider

Students can draw skills from school, work, volunteering, clubs, athletics, hobbies, family responsibilities, and personal projects.

- **Technical:** Microsoft Office, Google Workspace, Canva, coding, video editing, photography, data tools
- **Communication:** Writing, public speaking, customer service, active listening, professional email, phone communication
- **Leadership & Teamwork:** Team leadership, mentoring, collaboration, event planning, decision-making
- **Organization:** Time management, scheduling, attention to detail, inventory management, reliability
- **Customer Service & Sales:** Customer relations, cash handling, POS systems, sales, problem resolution
- **Creative & Critical Thinking:** Research, analysis, creativity, problem-solving, design thinking
- **Practical Skills:** Equipment use, cooking, maintenance, repair, construction, organization of physical spaces
- **Learning & Adaptability:** Quick learning, adaptability, self-direction, perseverance, continuous learning

Resume Format Comparison Chart

Example

FIGURE 6.2

Comparison Chart

FORMAT NAME	BEST FOR	STRENGTHS	WHEN TO USE
Chronological	Steady work history	Shows career progression; easy to follow timeline	Multiple jobs in same field; clear career growth
Functional	Limited work experience	Highlights skills; doesn't penalize lack of jobs	First job; volunteer/ club experience; career change
Combination	Mix of work + skills	Balanced view; most versatile	Most high school students; multiple experience types
Targeted	Specific job posting	Perfect match for job; strategic focus	Applying to ONE specific position; internship applications

Resume Format
Comparison Chart

FIGURE 6.2

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Directions: Fill in each row for all four resume formats. Use the resume samples and class discussion to complete this chart. Write clearly so your answers are easy to read.

Comparison Chart

FORMAT NAME	BEST FOR	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	EXAMPLE SCENARIO
Chronological				
Functional				
Combination				
Targeted				

Resume Format
Comparison Chart

FIGURE 6.2

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

My Observations & Questions

What I learned about resume formats:

Questions I still have:

Which format do you think will work best for YOU? Why?

OR HS.HECPS D.2

DURATION 100–120 MINUTES
Completed across two 50–60 minute class periods.

CONTRIBUTOR DEVIN TAMIAZZO

Lesson 7

Cover Letters: You + Job = Company Success!

Lesson Purpose

A resume summarizes a student's qualifications, but a cover letter explains why those qualifications matter for a particular opportunity. It allows an applicant to connect personal experiences to an employer's needs, demonstrate genuine interest, and communicate in a professional yet individual voice. Students learn that a cover letter is not merely a resume wearing a paragraph costume. It is a focused argument answering two questions: Why are you a strong match for this position, and why are you interested in this employer?

This lesson builds directly on students' previous resume work. Because developing a thoughtful cover letter requires both analysis and writing time, the lesson is organized into two instructional parts that may be completed across two class periods. In Part 1, students learn the purpose and structure of a cover letter and analyze sample letters. In Part 2, students return to their previously selected job posting and resume, connect their qualifications to the employer's needs, draft a tailored cover letter, receive feedback, and revise.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain the purpose of a cover letter and how it differs from a resume.
- Identify the essential sections of an effective cover letter.
- Analyze sample cover letters and support an evaluation with evidence.
- Connect qualifications and experiences from an existing resume to a specific employer's needs.
- Draft and revise a professional cover letter tailored to a specific position.

Teacher Preparation

Materials / Handouts

- Four ***Sample Student Cover Letters***
- Students' resumes from previous lessons
- Students' previously selected job postings
- Blank document or school-approved professional cover letter template
- Paper or digital space for feedback and reflection

Technology

- Student devices for drafting and revising cover letters
- Teacher computer and projector or display

Room Setup

- Arrange seating so students can view teacher instruction and work in pairs or small groups during sample analysis and feedback.

Teacher Preparation

- Review the four ***Sample Student Cover Letters*** and identify examples to highlight during class discussion.
- Ensure students have access to the resumes and job postings used during their previous resume work.
- Ensure students have access to a blank document or school-approved professional cover letter template.
- Prepare to introduce the essential components of an effective cover letter.
- Review the AI Assist Prompts if additional scaffolds, sentence starters, or alternatives to peer feedback are needed.

Instructional Sequence

1 STEP

Why & Anatomy

Introduce why cover letters matter, how they differ from resumes, and the essential components of an effective cover letter.

2 STEP

Analyze Sample Cover Letters

Students analyze sample cover letters to identify how applicants communicate interest, qualifications, and connections to an employer.

3 STEP

Connect Yourself to the Job & Draft

Students reopen their previously selected job posting and resume, identify relevant evidence from their own experiences, and draft a tailored cover letter.

4 STEP

Feedback & Revision

Students receive focused peer or teacher feedback, revise their cover letter, and reflect on how effectively it communicates their fit for the position

Introduction Questions

- What can a cover letter communicate that a resume cannot?
- Why should a cover letter be changed for each position?
- What makes a claim such as “I am hardworking” convincing?
- Which experience from your resume deserves more explanation?

Instructional Activities

Why & Anatomy

Ask students what a cover letter can communicate that a resume cannot. Use their responses to introduce the purpose of a cover letter.

Explain that a cover letter provides context for a resume and allows applicants to explain how their qualifications align with the position.

Introduce the basic structure of a professional cover letter:

- **Applicant Information:** Name and professional contact information.
- **Employer Information:** Name, title, organization, and other appropriate information when available.
- **Professional Greeting:** Addresses the employer or hiring representative appropriately.
- **Opening:** Identifies the position and communicates interest.
- **Evidence:** Uses specific experiences, skills, or accomplishments to demonstrate qualifications.
- **Employer Connection:** Explains why those qualifications matter for this particular position or organization.
- **Closing:** Reinforces interest and ends professionally.

Reinforce that a strong cover letter should not simply repeat the resume. It should select relevant information from the resume and explain why it matters to the employer.

Analyze Sample Cover Letters

Provide students with the four contributor-created sample cover letters: **Maya Hernandez, Noah Thompson, Priya Shah, and Jordan Kim.**

Students read the letters individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

Ask students to identify:

- How does the applicant communicate interest in the position?
- What experiences, qualifications, or skills does the applicant highlight?
- Where does the applicant connect their experience to the position or organization?
- Which details make the letter feel specific rather than generic?
- Where could the applicant provide stronger evidence or make a clearer connection?

Ask students to decide which applicant makes the strongest case for receiving an interview and identify at least two details from the letters that support their decision.

Discuss responses as a class. Reinforce that effective cover letters create a clear connection among the **applicant, the position, and the employer's needs.**

Instructional Activities

Connect Yourself to the Job & Draft

Students reopen the job posting and resume used during their previous resume work.

Students review the job posting and identify two or three job-related qualities the employer appears to value.

Students review their resume and identify experiences that demonstrate those qualities. Evidence may come from:

- Paid employment
- School projects
- Clubs or organizations
- Athletics
- Volunteering or community involvement
- Caregiving or family responsibilities
- Creative or personal projects
- Other relevant experiences

Before drafting, ask students to consider:

- Why am I interested in this position?
- What does this employer appear to need?
- Which of my experiences best demonstrates that I could meet those needs?
- What can I explain in my cover letter that the employer would not understand from my resume alone?

Students draft a professional, one-page cover letter using their own evidence and voice. The letter should identify the position, explain their interest, connect relevant qualifications to the employer's needs, and close professionally.

Feedback & Revision

Students exchange letters with a partner or conference briefly with the teacher.

Reviewers provide three pieces of feedback:

- **Strength:** What is the strongest connection between the applicant's experience and the job?
- **Growth Opportunity:** Where could the applicant be more specific or provide stronger evidence?
- **Question:** What would you still want to know about this applicant?

Remind students that feedback should strengthen the writer's ideas rather than rewrite the letter for them. Students review the feedback they receive and decide which suggestions will strengthen their letter.

Students revise for specificity, alignment with the position, clarity, and professional tone.

Reflection Questions

- What detail makes your cover letter specific to this position?
- Which example from your experience provides the strongest evidence that you are a good fit?
- What feedback led to your strongest revision?
- How does your cover letter add information or context that is not obvious from your resume?
- What would need to change if you applied for a different job?

Group Reflection / Discussion

- During the sample analysis, students work in pairs or small groups to determine which applicant makes the strongest case for receiving an interview and support their choice with evidence from the letters.
- Following revision, ask students to share one change they made that made their letter more specific or better connected to the position.

Materials and Supplies

- Student resume from previous lesson
- Student-selected job posting
- Sample Student Cover Letters
- Computer or digital device
- Blank document or professional cover letter template
- Paper or digital space for peer feedback
- Projector or smartboard

Recommended Resources

Not applicable.

Curriculum Resources

Sample Cover Letters

See Figure 7.1

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- Complete comparison of two sample cover letters.
- Create a one-page cover letter draft for the Lesson 5 position.
- Complete peer or teacher feedback.
- Revise a final cover letter demonstrating job-specific alignment.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

Provide sentence starters or a three-paragraph writing frame.
Allow oral rehearsal, speech-to-text, or bullet-point planning before drafting.
Use a brief teacher conference instead of peer review when needed.

Extension: Adapt the completed cover letter for a second position and identify what changed.

AI ASSIST PROMPTS

Writing Supports
Act as a high school workforce readiness educator supporting students as they write cover letters. Students already have a resume and a specific job posting and will use those materials to write their own cover letters.

Adapt the writing portion of the lesson for **[grade/course]** and **[student population or learning need].**

Provide three scaffolds that help students connect their experiences to the qualifications in a job posting, four sentence starters for students who have difficulty beginning or organizing their letter, and one alternative to peer review for students who would benefit from teacher-guided or independent feedback. The supports should help students develop their own ideas rather than generating a completed cover letter. Do not invent experiences, skills, accomplishments, or qualifications for students.

Help a Student Make Connections
Help me prepare to write a cover letter without writing the letter for me. I will provide a job posting and information from my resume (Excluding my name and personal information). First, identify the skills, qualifications, responsibilities, or characteristics the employer appears to value. Then ask me questions that help me identify experiences from my own life that demonstrate those qualities. Do not invent experiences or qualifications for me. After I answer, help me identify the two or three strongest connections I could explain in my cover letter.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

- Keep Part 1 analysis brisk so Part 2 remains a true writing workshop.
- Students may draw evidence from school projects, clubs, athletics, volunteering, caregiving, creative work, or household responsibilities.
- Feedback should improve specificity and job alignment without rewriting the student's voice.
- Use school-approved contact information and protect student privacy.

EXAMPLE
1

Digital Media Internship

MAYA HERNANDEZ

425 Cedar Street | Portland, OR 97217 | 503-555-0148 | maya.hernandez@example.com

July 14, 2026

Mr. Daniel Reynolds
Internship Coordinator
BrightPixel Creative
880 Market Avenue
Portland, OR 97205

Dear Mr. Reynolds:

I am interested in the digital media internship position posted on the BrightPixel Creative website. I believe BrightPixel Creative is an exciting company in the field of design and advertising, and I would be honored to apply my knowledge of digital media while gaining more hands-on experience.

Academically, I have taken several art, business, and digital media courses offered at my high school. I have also taken honors English and advanced mathematics courses. My current GPA of 3.8 shows my strong work ethic and dedication to school. While attending high school, I have held several leadership positions, including Yearbook Layout Editor, Photography Club secretary, and Student Council representative. I have also played on my school's soccer team and volunteered by helping younger students with art projects at a community center.

I would like to speak with you further about the qualifications that would make me an excellent candidate for a summer internship at your company. Please contact me at 503-555-0148 or maya.hernandez@example.com. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Maya Hernandez

Maya Hernandez
Enclosure: Resume

EXAMPLE
2

Animal Care Assistant

NOAH THOMPSON

782 Oakview Drive | Salem, OR 97301 | 503-555-0183 | noah.thompson@example.com

July 14, 2026

Ms. Caroline Miller
Volunteer Coordinator
Willamette Animal Rescue
1450 River Road
Salem, OR 97304

Dear Ms. Miller:

I would like to apply for the Animal Care Assistant position advertised on your website. My experience as an assistant at Happy Tails Pet Supply in downtown Salem, Oregon, has reinforced my goal of pursuing a career working with animals. I know I can bring many skills from this experience to Willamette Animal Rescue.

Having worked at Happy Tails Pet Supply for over one year, I have learned a lot about the skills needed to care for animals. In my job, I am responsible for cleaning animal areas, filling food and water dishes, and helping with bathing appointments. Through this work, I have learned how to interact with different animals and respond to their individual personalities. I also help customers locate supplies and answer basic questions, which has strengthened my communication and customer service skills.

I would like to meet with you to discuss my experiences and share how much I would enjoy working at Willamette Animal Rescue. You may contact me at 503-555-0183 or noah.thompson@example.com. Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,

Noah Thompson

Noah Thompson
Enclosure: Resume

EXAMPLE
2

Student Museum Guide

PRIYA SHAH

920 Riverside Lane | Eugene, OR 97401 | 541-555-0162 | priya.shah@example.com

July 14, 2026

Ms. Rachel Bennett
Visitor Services Coordinator
Oregon Discovery Museum
205 Science Way
Eugene, OR 97403

Dear Ms. Bennett:

I am interested in the Student Museum Guide position listed on your organization's website. I have a strong knowledge of science and technology and have visited the Oregon Discovery Museum many times. This knowledge, familiarity with your organization, and strong work ethic would make me a strong candidate for the position.

I have completed many hours of volunteer work, including serving as a Technology Assistant at the Lane County Library. During this experience, I helped visitors use computers and kept a detailed record of equipment being checked out. I have also served as vice president of my high school's Robotics Club and have been a member of the National Honor Society and Environmental Club. These activities have strengthened my communication, organization, and leadership skills.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the qualifications and experiences that would make me a valuable employee at the Oregon Discovery Museum. Please contact me at 541-555-0162 or priya.shah@example.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Priya Shah

Priya Shah
Enclosure: Resume

EXAMPLE
4

Youth Program Assistant

JORDAN KIM

315 Maple Court | Beaverton, OR 97005 | 971-555-0126 | jordan.kim@example.com

July 14, 2026

Mrs. Angela Roberts
Assistant Director
Little Pines Learning Center
760 Fourth Avenue
Beaverton, OR 97006

Dear Mrs. Roberts:

I am writing to apply for the Youth Program Assistant position at Little Pines Learning Center. As you can see from my enclosed resume, I have experience working with children and community organizations. I am interested in education and child development and would be excited to work for your organization.

My experience as a babysitter and summer recreation volunteer has increased my knowledge and patience while working with younger children. I have learned how to plan, organize, and lead a variety of activities appropriate for elementary-age students. Through my volunteer experience at a summer recreation program, I have also developed effective communication skills while working with children and their families. In addition, I have taken courses related to education and human development.

I hope you will consider me for the Youth Program Assistant position. Please contact me at your convenience to discuss my resume and experience. You can reach me at 971-555-0126 or jordan.kim@example.com. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jordan Kim

Jordan Kim
Enclosure: Resume

OR HS.HECPS D.3
OR HS.HECPS B.1
OR HS.HECPS C.2
OR HS.HECPS A.1

DURATION 50 MINUTES
Completed across two class periods.

CONTRIBUTOR DEVIN TAMIAZZO

Lesson 8

Show, Don't Tell: **Curating Your Professional Portfolio**

Lesson Purpose

A professional portfolio is valuable far beyond the arts because it turns broad claims such as "I am a strong communicator" or "I can solve problems" into visible evidence. Employers increasingly look for demonstrated problem-solving, teamwork, communication, initiative, technical skills, skill development and learning progress, so a portfolio can help students support those claims with projects, presentations, research, certifications, reflections, and examples of collaboration.

Postsecondary programs can use portfolios to understand how students connect learning across courses, reflect on growth, and apply knowledge to real situations, while students can use them to document college and career readiness over time. Scholarship requirements vary, and a portfolio may not always be submitted directly, but maintaining one gives students an organized collection of accomplishments, skills, leadership, and service experiences that can strengthen essays, applications, interviews, and recommendations, particularly because many scholarships consider demonstrated skills or abilities.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain the purpose and audience of a professional portfolio.
- Identify work products that demonstrate relevant skills, accomplishments, and development.
- Connect each selected artifact to a specific employability or future-readiness skill.
- Write brief explanations that communicate the context, contribution, skills, and significance of each artifact.
- Use peer feedback to revise and strengthen their portfolio.

Teacher Preparation

Materials / Handouts

- Students' work products from previous HECPS lessons and other relevant experiences
- Two sample portfolio entries, one effective and one needing improvement
- Paper or digital space for students to complete the ***Portfolio Artifact Audit***
- Paper or digital space for peer feedback and reflection
- Folders or binders, if students will create physical portfolios

Technology

- Teacher computer and projector or display
- Student devices, if students will create digital portfolios
- Access to the selected portfolio platform, such as Google Drive, Google Sites, a school website, slideshow, or shared digital folder

Room Setup

- Arrange seating to support whole-class modeling, independent portfolio development, and paired feedback.
- If students are creating physical portfolios, provide workspace for organizing and assembling materials.

Teacher Preparation

- Decide whether students will create a physical or digital portfolio and select the platform or format students will use.
- Ensure students have access to work products from previous HECPS lessons and other experiences they may want to consider for inclusion.
- Prepare or display two sample portfolio entries, one effective and one needing improvement. See the AI Assist Prompt for Activity 1.
- Decide how students will complete the ***Portfolio Artifact Audit*** and peer feedback, on paper or digitally.
- Arrange students in pairs for the ***Portfolio Test Drive.***

Instructional Sequence

1 STEP

Claim or Proof?

Students compare claims about skills with evidence that could demonstrate those skills and learn the purpose and essential qualities of a professional portfolio.

2 STEP

Portfolio Artifact Audit

Students review work from previous HECPS lessons and other experiences, identify at least five possible artifacts, and select the three to five pieces that provide the strongest evidence of their skills, accomplishments, or growth.

3 STEP

Build Your Portfolio

Students organize their selected artifacts into a professional portfolio and write brief explanations connecting each artifact to their contribution, skills, learning, and intended audience.

4 STEP

Portfolio Test Drive

Students exchange portfolios with a partner, provide focused feedback, present one selected artifact, and make at least one meaningful revision.

Introduction Questions

- What is the difference between saying you have a skill and proving it?
- What could you include in a portfolio if you have never had a job?
- Which assignments or experiences best represent what you can do?
- What would an employer, college, or training program want to see?
- Should every assignment go into a portfolio? Why or why not?

Instructional Activities

Claim or Proof?

Display claims such as:

- "I am responsible."
- "I communicate well."
- "I am a problem-solver."

Ask students to identify evidence that could support each claim.

Introduce a portfolio as a curated collection of evidence.

Establish four qualities of an effective portfolio:

- **Relevant:** The evidence matters to the intended audience or purpose.
- **Polished:** The work is ready to be viewed by someone outside the classroom.
- **Explained:** The viewer understands what the artifact is and what it demonstrates.
- **Organized:** The portfolio is easy to navigate and understand.

Display two sample portfolio entries, one effective and one needing improvement.

Ask students:

- What makes one more convincing than the other?
- What does the viewer learn about the student from each?
- What could be changed to make the weaker entry more effective?

Use student responses to reinforce that strong portfolios do more than collect work. They help an audience understand what the student can do and why the evidence matters.

Portfolio Artifact Audit

Ask students to locate possible artifacts from previous HECPS units or other experiences. Possible products may include:

- Strengths and interests profile
- Career pathway research
- Employability skills reflection
- Team project
- Professional email
- Postsecondary plan
- Annotated job posting
- Resume and cover letter
- Interview preparation
- Certification, award, or volunteer experience

For each possible artifact, ask students to consider:

- What skill does this demonstrate?
- Is this work polished enough for someone outside my classroom to see?
- Is it relevant to something I may want to do in the future?
- Does it show something important about my abilities, accomplishments, or demonstrated improvement.

Have students identify at least five possible artifacts on the ***Portfolio Artifact Audit.***

Ask students to compare their possibilities and select the **three to five strongest artifacts** for their portfolio.

Remind students that the goal is not to include everything they have completed. The goal is to intentionally select evidence that helps an audience understand their skills, accomplishments, or demonstrated improvement.

Instructional Activities

Build Your Portfolio

Have students organize their portfolio using the following basic structure:

- Cover or home page
- Brief introduction and future goal
- Resume
- Three to five work samples
- Certifications, awards, or accomplishments, when applicable

For each selected artifact, ask students to write a short explanation identifying:

- What the artifact is
- What the student contributed
- Which skill it demonstrates
- Why it matters to the intended audience
- What the student learned or improved

Provide the following structure as a scaffold when needed:

This artifact was created for _____. My role was to _____. It demonstrates my ability to _____ because _____. Through this experience, I learned or improved _____.

Circulate as students work and ask questions that help them make their evidence more explicit, such as:

- What does this actually show that you can do?
- What was your individual contribution?
- Why would an employer, college, or training program care about this?
- What did you learn or improve through this experience?

Have students proofread their explanations and confirm that digital links, files, images, or other portfolio elements work correctly.

Portfolio Test Drive

Pair students and have them exchange portfolios.

Ask partners to review each portfolio from the perspective of an employer, college, training program, scholarship committee, or other future audience.

Have partners provide four pieces of feedback:

- **First Impression:** What creates a strong first impression?
- **Evidence:** What is one skill that is clearly supported by evidence?
- **Clarity:** What section is confusing, incomplete, or needs more explanation?
- **Improvement:** What is one change that could strengthen the portfolio?

Ask each student to present one artifact to their partner, explaining what it is and what it demonstrates about them.

Have students review the feedback they received and identify at least one change that would meaningfully strengthen their portfolio.

Provide time for students to make at least one revision before completing the lesson reflection.

Reflection Questions

- Which artifact provides the strongest evidence of your abilities?
- Which skill is missing from your portfolio?
- What did you choose not to include, and why?
- How does your portfolio show growth?
- How might you change it for a different opportunity?
- What work product would you like to add before graduation?

Group Reflection / Discussion

Discuss:

- What makes a piece of work convincing evidence that someone is ready for a job, college, apprenticeship, or other future opportunity?

Following the Portfolio Test Drive, invite students to share:

- What did someone else notice about your portfolio that you had not considered?
- What is one change you made or plan to make because of the feedback you received?

Materials and Supplies

- Previous student work
- ***Portfolio Artifact Audit***
- Computers or Chromebooks, when needed
- Folders or basic paper for physical portfolios, when needed
- Sample portfolio entries
- Paper or digital space for peer feedback and reflection
- Pens or pencils

Recommended Resources

Not applicable.

Curriculum Resources

Portfolio Artifact Audit

See Figure 8.1

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- Students identify at least five possible artifacts and intentionally select three to five pieces that provide strong evidence of their skills, accomplishments, or growth.
- Students create a physical or digital portfolio containing three to five selected work products and organize the portfolio for an intended future audience.
- Students provide a brief explanation for each selected artifact that communicates its context, their contribution, the skill demonstrated, and its significance.
- Students provide and receive focused peer feedback and make at least one meaningful revision based on the feedback.
- Students briefly present one selected artifact and explain what it demonstrates about their abilities.
- Students identify one strength of their portfolio, one gap, and one next step for continuing to build evidence of their college, career, and future readiness.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

- Require only two artifacts for younger students or shorter classes.
- Allow audio or video explanations instead of written captions.
- Let students photograph physical work.
- Provide preselected artifact categories for additional structure.
- Replace partner presentations with a gallery walk or recorded walkthrough.

AI ASSIST PROMPTS

Sample Portfolio Entries

- Create two short sample professional portfolio entries for high school students to compare. Both should describe the same type of student work or experience.
- Make one entry effective: relevant, polished, clearly explained, and connected to a specific skill.
- Make the second entry noticeably weaker but realistic. It might lack context, fail to explain the student's contribution, make a vague claim about a skill, or leave the audience unsure why the artifact matters.
- Do not label which example is stronger. Students will compare the examples and determine which is more effective and why.
- Keep each example brief enough to display and discuss as a class.

For Differentiation, Adaptation, or Extension

Suggest ways to [**differentiate, adapt, extend, or enhance**] a high school professional portfolio activity for [**grade level/course**] students. The class includes [**student population, learning needs, accommodations, or other relevant details**]. Students will select [**number**] existing work samples, explain the skills each demonstrates, organize them for [**intended audience or purpose**], and use feedback to revise. The lesson will take [**available time**] and use [**physical portfolio, digital portfolio, or both**].

Provide:

- Supports for students who need additional structure
- Accessible alternatives for reading, writing, speaking, or technology
- Sentence frames or scaffolds
- Pacing or grouping adjustments
- One extension for students ready for a greater challenge
- One optional enhancement using [**available technology, community partners, career focus, or other resource**]

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

Emphasize thoughtful selection rather than quantity. Three strong, clearly explained artifacts are more useful than a large collection with no context.

Portfolio Artifact
Audit

FIGURE 8.1

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Directions: Use this worksheet to identify, evaluate, and select the strongest artifacts for your professional portfolio. Each artifact should demonstrate your skills, accomplishments, or demonstrated improvement.

Step 1 — List Possible Artifacts

Identify at least five pieces of work from previous HECPS units or other experiences.

#	ARTIFACT TITLE / DESCRIPTION	SOURCE (CLASS, JOB, PROJECT, ETC.)	WHAT SKILL OR QUALITY DOES THIS DEMONSTRATE?	IS IT POLISHED ENOUGH FOR SOMEONE OUTSIDE MY CLASSROOM TO SEE? (YES / NO)

Step 2 — Compare and Reflect

For each artifact, consider:

- What skill or improvement does this show?
- Is it relevant to something I may want to do in the future?
- Does it help an audience understand my abilities or growth?

Use the space below to jot notes or rank your artifacts.

ARTIFACT	STRENGTH	POSSIBLE REVISIONS OR IMPROVEMENTS	KEEP FOR PORTFOLIO? (YES / NO)

Portfolio Artifact
Audit

FIGURE 8.1

Step 3 — Select Your Strongest Artifacts

Choose three to five artifacts that best represent your professional readiness.

SELECTED ARTIFACT	WHAT IT DEMONSTRATES	WHY IT BELONGS IN MY PORTFOLIO

Step 4 — Reflection

How do these artifacts together show your growth, skills, and readiness for future opportunities?

OR HS.HECPS D.3

DURATION 60 MINUTES

CONTRIBUTOR KELLY GOMES

Lesson 9

Interview Skills: **Elevator Speeches**

Lesson Purpose

Finding a job is about more than completing an application. Employers want candidates who understand their organization, can communicate their strengths, and build professional relationships. In this lesson, students learn how networking opens opportunities, how researching an employer demonstrates initiative, and how a well-crafted elevator speech creates a positive first impression. These foundational skills prepare students to confidently introduce themselves and make meaningful connections throughout their education and careers.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Discover why networking is important in finding employment.
- Develop a 30-second elevator speech.
- Research an employer and demonstrate learning by identifying interview preparation strategies.
- Practice introducing themselves professionally.

Teacher Preparation

Materials / Handouts

Networking station signs:

- Friends
- Teachers
- Coaches
- Family
- Volunteer supervisors
- Employers
- Social media
- Clubs
- Community organizations

Sticky notes, index cards, paper, or digital space for recording gallery walk responses
Paper or digital space for drafting elevator speeches

Paper or digital exit tickets

Technology

- Teacher computer and projector or display
- Internet-enabled student devices
- Access to the ***CareerOneStop Networking Guide***
- Access to the ***CareerOneStop Interview Skills Guide***

Room Setup

- Post the networking category signs around the room for the gallery walk.
- Arrange the room so students can rotate among stations and later work with multiple partners to practice their elevator speeches.

Teacher Preparation

- Write or display the opening prompt: ***You have 30 seconds to introduce yourself to someone who could help you get a job. What would you say?***
- Review the CareerOneStop Networking Guide for ideas to support the gallery walk debrief and elevator speech activity.
- Review the ***CareerOneStop Interview Skills Guide*** to support the Employer Research Challenge discussion.
- Determine how students will record gallery walk responses, draft their elevator speeches, and document employer research.
- Prepare paper or digital exit tickets.

Instructional Sequence

1 STEP

Warm-Up: First Impressions

Students consider what they would say if they had only 30 seconds to introduce themselves to someone who could help them get a job.

2 STEP

Networking Gallery Walk

Students explore the people and groups that can be part of a professional network and consider how different connections can provide advice, information, and opportunities.

3 STEP

Build an Elevator Speech

Students learn the basic structure of an elevator speech, draft their own, practice with classmates, and use peer feedback to strengthen their introduction.

4 STEP

Employer Research Challenge

Students research an employer and consider how knowledge about the organization can help them prepare for an interview and tailor their communication.

5 STEP

Exit Ticket

Students identify one thing employers want to hear and one question they still have about networking, interviews, or professional communication.

Introduction Questions

- You have 30 seconds to introduce yourself to someone who could help you get a job. What would you say?
- Who is already part of your network?
- What makes a professional introduction effective?
- Why might researching an employer change what you say during an interview?

Instructional Activities

Warm-Up - First Impressions

Display the prompt: ***You have 30 seconds to introduce yourself to someone who could help you get a job. What would you say?***

Ask students to write an independent response without providing an elevator speech formula yet.

Pair students and have them share what they wrote. Invite several students to share what they included in their introductions.

Ask the class to identify characteristics that made the introductions effective.

Explain that students will return to their initial responses later in the lesson after learning more about networking and professional introductions.

Networking Gallery Walk

Direct students' attention to the networking categories posted around the room.

Divide students into groups and assign each group a starting station.

At each station, ask students to record responses to:

- How could this person or group help someone get a job?
- What could you ask them?

Rotate groups through the stations until they have considered multiple types of professional connections.

Bring students back together and debrief the gallery walk using ideas from the CareerOneStop Networking Guide.

Use the discussion to introduce or reinforce:

- The hidden job market
- Networking is not simply asking someone for a job. It can include asking for advice, information, introductions, and connections.
- Professional communication
- Following up with contacts

Ask students to identify people who are already part of their network.

Have students consider one way they could begin expanding their professional network.

Build an Elevator Speech

Explain that an elevator speech is a brief professional introduction that helps another person quickly understand who you are, what you are interested in, and what you can offer.

Introduce the basic structure of an elevator speech using the ***CareerOneStop Networking Guide***:

- Name
- What you're looking for
- Skills
- Why you're interested

Ask students to return to the introduction they wrote during the warm-up and identify which of these elements they already included.

Have students draft or revise their own 30-second elevator speech.

Provide the following sentence frames as needed:

Hi, I'm _____.
I'm interested in _____.
My strengths are _____.
I'm hoping to _____.

Pair students and have them practice their elevator speeches with three different classmates.

After each practice, ask partners to provide:

- One compliment
- One suggestion

Encourage students to pay attention not only to the words they use, but also to pace, clarity, eye contact, tone, and professional presence.

After the final practice round, ask students to review the feedback they received and identify at least one change that would strengthen their elevator speech.

Instructional Activities

Employer Research Challenge

Ask students to choose a local employer or company they might realistically want to learn more about.

Direct students to begin with the employer's website and use other appropriate sources as needed.

Have students identify:

- Mission
- Products or services
- Company values
- One recent accomplishment
- Three skills the employer wants

Have students record their findings in a notebook, digital document, or other teacher-selected format.

Ask students to use their research to respond to:

- How could this information help during an interview?
- How could you tailor your elevator speech or skills statements to this information?
- Have students share their findings with a partner or small group.

Invite groups to share examples of information that would be particularly useful when preparing for an interview.

Connect the discussion to the ***CareerOneStop Interview Skills Guide***, emphasizing that researching an employer before an interview allows applicants to ask better questions, make stronger connections between their skills and the position, and demonstrate genuine interest.

Exit Ticket

Ask students to complete:

- One thing employers want to hear…
- One question I still have…

Collect the responses to identify areas that may need additional attention in future interview-preparation lessons.

Have students complete a final version of their elevator speech and research one employer where they would like to work as homework, if additional practice is desired.

Reflection Questions

- Who is in your network? How can you grow your network?
- How can I improve my elevator speech given the feedback from my peers?
- How could employer research help during an interview?
- How could you tailor your elevator speech or skills statements based on what you learn about an employer?

Group Reflection / Discussion

- During the Networking Gallery Walk debrief, discuss how different people and groups can provide advice, information, connections, and employment opportunities.
- During the Employer Research Challenge, groups share what they discovered and discuss how knowing more about an employer could change the way they prepare for an interview.

Materials and Supplies

- Networking station signs
- Sticky notes, index cards, paper, or digital note-taking space
- Internet-enabled devices
- Paper or digital space for drafting an elevator speech
- Paper or digital exit ticket

Recommended Resources

CareerOneStop: Why Networking Is Important

https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Network/why-network.aspx

CareerOneStop: Get Ready for an Interview

https://www.careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Interview/get-ready.aspx

Curriculum Resources

Not applicable.

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- Students develop a 30-second professional introduction that communicates their interests, strengths, and goals.
- Students practice their elevator speech with multiple classmates and provide and receive feedback.
- Students identify relevant information about an employer and explain how that information could influence their interview preparation and communication.
- Students revise their elevator speech based on practice, feedback, and employer research.
- Students identify one thing employers want to hear and one remaining question about networking, interviews, or professional communication.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

- Allow students to draft or rehearse their elevator speech before sharing it with peers.
- Adjust the number of gallery walk stations or peer practice rounds as needed for time or student needs.

AI ASSIST PROMPTS

For Differentiation and Adaptation

Adapt this interview preparation lesson for **[grade/course]** and **[student population or learning need]**. Students will explore networking, create and practice a 30-second elevator speech, and research an employer.

Provide sentence stems for elevator speeches, student-friendly definitions for networking and professionalism, a visual checklist for interview preparation, and sample responses and speaking prompts as appropriate.

Elevator Speech Feedback

Students may use AI to revise rather than replace their own elevator speech:

Here is my 30-second elevator speech. Help me make it more professional while keeping it authentic to me. Identify one strength, one area I could make more specific, and one suggested revision. Do not add skills or experiences that I did not provide.

Employer Research

After students conduct their own research, they may use: I am preparing for an interview with **[company/employer]**. Based only on the company information I provide below, suggest interview questions they might ask and identify which skills appear most important to emphasize. Explain what information led you to each suggestion.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

- Avoid giving students the elevator speech formula before the opening activity. Their initial attempt provides a useful comparison point and helps students recognize for themselves what may be missing from a professional introduction.
- The goal of the peer rounds is not memorization. Encourage students to become increasingly comfortable communicating the same core information naturally rather than reciting a script word for word.
- Encourage students to begin with the employer's own website when researching mission, services, values, and current information. Discuss the importance of verifying information before using it to prepare for an interview.
- Consider requiring students to highlight or annotate any ideas they adopted from AI and explain why they chose them. This reinforces critical thinking and helps students use AI as a tool for reflection and revision rather than as a substitute for authentic preparation.

OR HS.HECPS D.3

DURATION 60 MINUTES

CONTRIBUTORS KELLY GOMES

Lesson 10

Interview Skills: **The STAR Method**

Lesson Purpose

Interviewing is a skill that improves with preparation and practice. Employers look for candidates who can communicate clearly, provide examples of their experiences, and demonstrate professionalism. This lesson gives students repeated opportunities to practice answering interview questions, organize responses using the STAR method, and receive feedback in a low-risk environment. Developing these skills increases students' confidence and prepares them for employment, internships, college admissions interviews, scholarships, and leadership opportunities.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Answer common interview questions using examples.
- Practice behavioral interview responses.
- Demonstrate professional interview behaviors.
- Provide constructive peer feedback.

Teacher Preparation

Materials / Handouts

- STAR Story Station prompts
- Interview questions
- Paper or digital space for drafting STAR responses
- Interview Preparation Scenario Cards

Technology

- Projector or smartboard
- Internet-enabled devices, if AI supports are used

Room Setup

- Post the STAR Story Station prompts from Activity 3 around the room.
- Arrange the room for Speed Interviews using two circles or another rotating interview format.
- Provide enough space for students to rotate through the STAR Story Stations and interview partners.

Teacher Preparation

- Determine the method of sharing for the Warm-Up, such as A/B partners or an inner/outer circle.
- Prepare to display the STAR Method structure and guidance included in Activity 2.
- Determine whether students will complete two or three STAR Story Stations based on available time.
- Prepare the Interview Preparation Scenario Cards for Activity 5. Select approximately two cards for whole-class discussion and additional cards for partner or independent practice.
- Review the AI Assist Prompts if sentence starters, simplified questions, or additional student supports are needed.

Instructional Sequence

1 STEP

Warm-Up: A/B Share

Students practice active listening and responding to common introductory interview questions.

2 STEP

Mini Lesson: STAR Method for Behavioral Questions

Students learn the STAR strategy and draft a response to a behavioral interview question.

3 STEP

STAR Story Stations

Students practice applying STAR to multiple behavioral interview prompts with peer coaching.

4 STEP

Speed Interviews

Students participate in short interview rounds and provide focused peer feedback.

5 STEP

Preparing for Mock Interviews

Students analyze interview-preparation scenarios and identify what applicants did well, what mistakes they made, and what they should do differently.

Introduction Questions

- How can I prepare for difficult interview questions?
- Why might an employer ask you to describe a specific experience rather than simply ask whether you have a skill?
- What makes an interview answer convincing?
- How can preparation affect the impression you make during an interview?

Instructional Activities

Warm-Up: A/B Share

Facilitate an A/B Share, inner/outer circle, or other rotating active-listening exercise.

Ask students to respond to the following common interview questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What is one strength?
- Why should we hire you?

Encourage students to listen carefully to their partner rather than simply waiting for their turn to speak.

Bring the class back together and briefly discuss what made some responses easier to understand or more convincing than others.

Mini Lesson: STAR Method for Behavioral Questions

Introduce the STAR strategy as a structured way to answer behavioral interview questions by describing a specific Situation, Task, Action, and Result.

Explain each part of STAR:

- **Situation:** Describe one specific event or circumstance. Give enough detail for the interviewer to understand what was happening. Examples may come from work, school, volunteering, extracurricular activities, or other relevant experiences.
- **Task:** Explain the goal, responsibility, problem, or task you were working toward.
- **Action:** Describe the specific actions you took. Keep the focus on your contribution. When discussing teamwork, explain what you personally did rather than only describing what "we" did.
- **Result:** Explain what happened as a result. What did you accomplish? What changed? What did you learn?

Reinforce the following STAR tips:

- Use one specific example rather than speaking generally.
- Be specific without rambling.
- Focus on your own actions and contribution.
- Include the result. Do not stop after explaining what you did.
- Be honest and do not embellish.

Mini Lesson: STAR Method for Behavioral Questions (Continued...)

- A difficult or unsuccessful outcome can still demonstrate growth, perseverance, teamwork, or another strength.
- Prepare examples from several areas of your life rather than relying on one experience for every question.

Display the behavioral interview question: ***Tell me about a time when you worked as part of a team to successfully execute a project.***

Guide students through a class discussion by asking:

- What do you think an employer wants to hear?
- What characteristics might they be looking for?
- What would count as the Situation, Task, Action, and Result?

Have students draft their own STAR response to the question.

STAR Story Stations

Direct students to the behavioral interview prompts posted around the room:

- Describe a challenge you've faced.
- Tell me about a mistake and what you learned from it.
- Describe an example of teamwork and how you contributed to the whole.
- Tell me about a goal you achieved.
- Tell me about a time you solved a problem.

Have students rotate through two or three prompts, depending on available time.

At each station, pair students and have them coach one another to include:

- Situation
- Task
- Action
- Result

Encourage students to draw examples from different areas of their lives, including school, work, volunteering, athletics, clubs, leadership, family responsibilities, or other relevant experiences.

Instructional Activities

STAR Story Stations (continued...)

Circulate as students work and prompt them to make responses more specific, focus on their own actions, or identify a clear result when needed.

Speed Interviews

Arrange students into two circles or another rotating interview format.

Assign one group to begin as interviewers and the other as applicants.

Allow approximately four minutes for each interview.

Have interviewers ask:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this company?
- One behavioral interview question.
- What questions do you have for us?

After each interview, have interviewers provide **one strength and one suggestion** based on:

- Eye contact and attentive body language
- Clear answers
- Confidence
- Specific examples
- Professional communication
- Rotate students into new interview pairs.

Have students complete approximately **two rounds as applicants and two rounds as interviewers,** as time allows.

Preparing for Mock Interviews

Explain that effective interviewing includes preparation before the interview as well as professional behavior during the interview.

Review the following **Before the Interview** practices with students:

- Research the employer and practice responses to likely questions.
- Choose clothing appropriate to the workplace and position. When unsure, it is generally safer to appear slightly more professional than too casual.
- Plan to arrive or log in 10–15 minutes early.
- For virtual interviews, test technology and prepare a quiet, professional setting.
- Minimize distractions and silence your phone.
- Avoid clothing, accessories, or strong fragrances that may distract from the conversation.

Review the following **During the Interview** practices:

- Communicate confidently and professionally.
- Listen carefully and give honest, direct answers.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand a question.
- Avoid speaking negatively about previous employers or supervisors.
- Be prepared to ask thoughtful questions.
- Ask about next steps and close by expressing interest in the opportunity.

Select approximately two Interview ***Preparation Scenario Cards*** to discuss as a whole class.

For each scenario, ask:

- What did the applicant do well?
- What mistakes did they make?
- What advice would you give before the interview?

Have students analyze one additional Interview Preparation Scenario Card independently or with a partner.

Reflection Questions

- How did using the STAR method improve one of your interview responses?
- Which part of STAR is easiest for you? Which part do you need to practice?
- What feedback will you use to improve your next interview?
- What is one interview-preparation habit you want to remember before a mock or real interview?
- Which experience from your life could you prepare now as a STAR story for a future interview?

Group Reflection / Discussion

After STAR practice, discuss: ***What makes a behavioral interview response convincing?***

After the Speed Interviews, ask students to share one communication strategy they noticed that helped an applicant appear confident and professional.

During the interview-preparation scenarios, students discuss:

- What did the applicant do well?
- What mistake or missed preparation step affected the interview?
- What advice would you give the applicant?

Materials and Supplies

- STAR Story Station prompts
- Interview questions
- Paper or digital space for drafting STAR responses
- Interview Preparation Scenario Cards
- Internet-enabled device, if AI supports are used
- Projector or smartboard

Recommended Resources

Not applicable.

Curriculum Resources

Interview Scenario Cards

See Figure 10.1

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- Draft STAR response.
- Practice responses to behavioral interview questions.
- Participation in Speed Interviews.
- Peer interview feedback.
- Analysis of an interview-preparation scenario.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

- Allow students to plan STAR responses in writing before speaking, use brief notes during practice, or rehearse with a partner before participating in speed interviews.
- Reduce the number of STAR Story Stations or interview rotations for students who need additional processing or practice time.
- Teacher Extension: “Hire or Rehire?” After groups discuss an Interview Scenario Card, have them rate the applicant: Ready to Hire, Needs Coaching, or Not Ready Yet. Groups defend their rating using evidence from the Preparing for Interviews guidance. This can be done verbally or with simple green, yellow, and red cards.

AI ASSIST PROMPTS

Writing Supports

Act as a high school workforce readiness educator supporting students as they write cover letters. Students already have a resume and a specific job posting and will use those materials to write their own cover letters.

Adapt the writing portion of the lesson for **[grade/course]** and **[student population or learning need].**

Provide three scaffolds that help students connect their experiences to the qualifications in a job posting, four sentence starters for students who have difficulty beginning or organizing their letter, and one alternative to peer review for students who would benefit from teacher-guided or independent feedback. The supports should help students develop their own ideas rather than generating a completed cover letter. Do not invent experiences, skills, accomplishments, or qualifications for students.

Help a Student Make Connections

Help me prepare to write a cover letter without writing the letter for me. I will provide a job posting and information from my resume (Excluding my name and personal information). First, identify the skills, qualifications, responsibilities, or characteristics the employer appears to value. Then ask me questions that help me identify experiences from my own life that demonstrate those qualities. Do not invent experiences or qualifications for me. After I answer, help me identify the two or three strongest connections I could explain in my cover letter.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

- Keep Part 1 analysis brisk so Part 2 remains a true writing workshop.
- Students may draw evidence from school projects, clubs, athletics, volunteering, caregiving, creative work, or household responsibilities.
- Feedback should improve specificity and job alignment without rewriting the student's voice.
- Use school-approved contact information and protect student privacy.

Interview
Scenario Cards

FIGURE 10.1

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Directions for Teachers

- Review the scenario cards along with the teacher key and extension activities provided below.
- Select a few scenario cards to model together as a whole class.
- After modeling, have students work independently or in small groups using the student directions and discussion questions.

Directions for Students

Read your assigned scenario carefully.
Discuss the following with your partner or group:

- What did the applicant do well?
- What mistakes did they make?
- What advice would you give them before the interview?

Be prepared to share your insights with the class.

Card 1

Jordan wakes up 20 minutes before the interview. They throw on whatever clothes are closest, skip breakfast, and rush out the door. They arrive five minutes late and apologize.

DISCUSSION

- What mistakes did Jordan make?
- What could have been done the night before?

Card 2

Taylor is interviewing for a grocery store job after basketball practice. They wear athletic shorts, a team hoodie, running shoes, and a baseball cap because they don't have time to change.

DISCUSSION

- Which clothing choices could create a poor first impression?
- What would be a better option?

Card 3

Alex arrives dressed professionally but keeps checking their phone while waiting. During the interview, the phone rings loudly.

DISCUSSION

- What preparation mistake happened?
- How could this affect the interviewer's impression?

Card 4

Morgan wears ripped jeans, flip-flops, and a graphic T-shirt to interview for a retail position because "the employees dress casually."

DISCUSSION

- Why is this risky?
- How could Morgan still dress appropriately for a casual workplace?

Interview
Scenario Cards

FIGURE 10.1

Card 5

Casey arrives on time and is dressed professionally. When asked, "Why do you want to work here?" Casey replies, "I don't really know much about your company."

DISCUSSION

- What preparation step was missed?
- How could researching the company improve this answer?

Card 6

Riley wears a nice outfit but applies a large amount of cologne before the interview.

DISCUSSION

- Why can strong fragrances be a problem?
- What would be a better choice?

Card 7

Jamie logs into a virtual interview exactly on time from a noisy kitchen while wearing pajama pants and a sweatshirt. Their microphone doesn't work for the first five minutes.

DISCUSSION

- What should Jamie have done before the interview?
- How could Jamie create a more professional virtual setting?

Card 8

Before entering the interview, Sam buys a large iced coffee. They carry it into the interview room and set it on the interviewer's desk.

DISCUSSION

- Why might this seem unprofessional?
- What should Sam have done instead?

Card 9

Avery wears a dress shirt with bright neon pants, colorful sneakers, and several large accessories that draw attention.

DISCUSSION

- What message might this send?
- How could Avery keep some personal style while appearing professional?

Card 10

When asked, "Tell me about yourself," Dakota says, "Um…I don't know…I've never really thought about it."

DISCUSSION

- What preparation could have prevented this?
- What should Dakota practice before interviews?

Interview
Scenario Cards

FIGURE 10.1

Card 11

When asked why they left their previous job, Cameron replies, “My manager was terrible and everyone there was lazy.”

DISCUSSION

- Why is this answer a concern?
- How could Cameron answer honestly while remaining professional?

Card 12

The interviewer asks, “Do you have any questions for me?” Harper responds, “Nope.”

DISCUSSION

- Why is this a missed opportunity?
- What questions could Harper ask?

Card 13

Logan arrives early, dresses professionally, has researched the company, and answers questions confidently. At the end of the interview, Logan quickly leaves without thanking the interviewer or asking about next steps.

DISCUSSION

- What important step was missing?
- How should Logan have closed the interview?

Card 14

Sydney wears professional clothing but has earbuds hanging around their neck, sunglasses on their head, and a backpack covered with large patches and pins.

DISCUSSION

- Which accessories might distract from a professional image?
- What would you recommend?

Card 15

The interviewer asks, “What do you know about our company?” Ethan replies, “Honestly, I didn’t have time to look.”

DISCUSSION

- Why is employer research important?
- What are three things Ethan could have learned in 10 minutes?

OR HS.HECPS D.3

DURATION 60 MINUTES

CONTRIBUTOR KELLY GOMES

Lesson 11

Interview Skills: **Mock Interviews with Feedback**

Lesson Purpose

Authentic practice is one of the most effective ways to build confidence. Participating in a mock interview allows students to apply everything they have learned in a realistic setting while receiving constructive feedback from teachers, community members, or employers. This experience helps students identify their strengths, recognize areas for growth, and become more comfortable communicating their skills before participating in a real job interview.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Ask relevant and insightful questions during a job interview.
- Demonstrate confidence and professionalism in mock interviews.
- Understand the importance of preparing questions and practicing interviews for job success.

Teacher Preparation

Materials / Handouts

- Mock Interview Rubric with Questions for Interviewers, one copy per student for each interview
- Paper or digital Exit Slip

Technology

- Devices and videoconferencing technology, if virtual interviews will be used

Room Setup

- Determine the flow between individual interviews, panel interviews, and/or video interviews based on the number of students, interviewers, available spaces, technology, and time.
- Arrange the classroom and any additional interview spaces to support the selected interview format.
- If possible, organize the experience so students participate in more than one type of interview.

Teacher Preparation

- Prior to the lesson, arrange for school staff, community members, and/or workforce professionals to participate as interviewers in person or virtually.
- Provide interviewers with the ***Mock Interview Rubric with Questions for Interviewers*** and explain how it will be used to provide student feedback.
- Ask interviewers to include at least one behavioral interview question during each interview.
- Prepare enough copies of the rubric for each student interview.
- Prepare a digital or paper Exit Slip using the questions included in the lesson.
- Review the AI Assist Prompt if additional or career-specific interview questions are needed.
- Plan to collect and review completed interviewer rubrics before returning them to students.

Instructional Sequence

1 STEP

Mock Interviews

Students participate in individual, panel, and/or video interviews with school, community, or workforce professionals and receive verbal and written feedback on their performance.

2 STEP

Exit Slip

Students reflect on their interview performance, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and record questions they still have about interviewing.

Introduction Questions

- How can practicing my interviewing skills with community members help me refine my skills?

Instructional Activities

Mock Interviews

- Welcome the school, community, and/or workforce professionals serving as interviewers and help them get situated in their assigned interview spaces.
- Provide each interviewer with the ***Mock Interview Rubric with Questions for Interviewers*** and review the interview process and expectations.
- Remind interviewers to ask questions from the provided list and include at least one behavioral question.
- Direct students to their assigned interview locations and begin the interview rotations.
- Have students participate in individual, panel, and/or video interviews according to the established rotation. When possible, provide students with experience in more than one interview format.
- Ask interviewers to provide each student with at least one quick piece of positive verbal feedback following the interview.
- Allow interviewers time between interviews to complete the rubric and provide written feedback for each student.
- Continue the rotations until students have completed their assigned interviews.
- Collect the completed rubrics from interviewers at the end of the activity.
- Review the rubrics for key points, common patterns, or areas that may need reteaching before returning the written feedback to students.

Exit Slip

After students complete their interviews, distribute or provide access to the Exit Slip.

Ask students to reflect independently on their interview experience by responding to:

- What do you think you did well?
- What can you improve?
- What is something you have questions about?

Collect the Exit Slips and use student responses, along with interviewer feedback, to identify skills that may need additional practice or instruction.

Reflection Questions

- What do you think you did well?
- What can you improve?
- What is something you have questions about?

Group Reflection / Discussion

- If time allows, invite students to share:
- What was one thing you learned from interviewing with someone outside of your class?
- What is one interview skill you want to continue improving?

Materials and Supplies

- Mock Interview Rubric with Questions for Interviewers
- Interview spaces and/or devices for virtual interviews, as needed
- Paper or digital Exit Slip

Recommended Resources

Not applicable.

Curriculum Resources

Mock Interview Rubric with Questions for Interviewers

See Figure 11.1

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- Participation in mock interviews.
- Interviewer-completed scoring guides/rubrics.
- Completed student Exit Slip.

AI ASSIST PROMPT

For Teacher Preparation: Interview Questions

I am preparing mock interviews for high school students interested in **[career field or type of position]**. Generate 10 age-appropriate interview questions that a school, community, or workforce partner could ask during a mock interview. Include at least three behavioral questions that allow students to practice giving specific examples from their experiences. Include optional follow-up questions an interviewer could use when a student gives a short or vague response.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

- The number and type of interviews will depend on the number of students and available school, community, and workforce partners. The goal is to give students authentic practice rather than require every class to use the same interview configuration.
- Review completed interviewer rubrics before returning them to students. Look for key points or common areas that may need reteaching before students receive their written feedback.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

- Provide interview questions in advance for students who need additional processing or preparation time.
- Adjust the number or type of interview rotations based on student needs, available interviewers, resources, and time.

Mock Interview Rubric

with Questions for Interviewers

FIGURE 11.1

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Interviewer: _____ **Position Applied For:** _____

Scoring Scale

1. **Beginning:** Needs significant support and practice.
2. **Developing:** Demonstrates some interview skills but needs additional practice.
3. **Meets Expectations:** Demonstrates solid interview skills with minor areas for improvement.
4. **Exceeds Expectations:** Consistently demonstrates professional interview skills.

CRITERIA	BEGINNING	DEVELOPING	MEETS EXPECTATIONS	EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS	SCORE
Professional Appearance & Preparedness	Unprepared or inappropriate for interview setting.	Somewhat prepared; appearance or materials could improve.	Prepared and appropriately dressed; minor lapses.	Arrived prepared, dressed appropriately, brought notes/ resume if applicable, appeared confident.	
Introduction & First Impression	Did not introduce self professionally or appeared disengaged.	Greeting was hesitant or lacked confidence.	Friendly greeting and eye contact; mostly professional.	Confident greeting, eye contact, smile, firm handshake (if appropriate), introduced self professionally.	
Communication Skills	Responses were unclear, very quiet, or lacked engagement.	Sometimes difficult to hear or understand; limited eye contact.	Spoke clearly with occasional hesitation.	Spoke clearly, confidently, and at an appropriate pace with excellent eye contact.	
Quality of Responses	Answers were incomplete, off-topic, or difficult to understand.	Answers were brief or lacked specific examples.	Answered questions clearly with some supporting examples.	Answers were thoughtful, detailed, and directly answered each question using examples.	
Behavioral Question (STAR Method)	Unable to provide a relevant example.	Example was incomplete or lacked detail.	Included most parts of the STAR format.	Clearly explained Situation, Task, Action, and Result with a strong example.	

Mock Interview Rubric
with Questions for Interviewers

FIGURE 11.1

CRITERIA	BEGINNING	DEVELOPING	MEETS EXPECTATIONS	EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS	SCORE
Knowledge of Employer/ Position	No evidence of research or preparation.	Some distracting behaviors or inconsistent body language.	Showed some knowledge of the employer or position.	Demonstrated clear research about the employer and connected skills to the position.	
Professionalism & Body Language	Poor body language or lack of professionalism.	Some distracting behaviors or inconsistent body language.	Mostly professional with minor distractions.	Positive posture, active listening, appropriate facial expressions, avoided distracting habits.	
Questions Asked the Interviewer	Did not ask a question.	Question was basic or unrelated.	Asked at least one appropriate question.	Asked thoughtful questions showing genuine interest in the position/ company.	
Closing the Interview	Did not close professionally.	Closing was brief or awkward.	Thanked interviewer appropriately.	Thanked interviewer, expressed enthusiasm, and ended confidently.	

Total Score: _____ / 36

Overall Performance

- ☐ Outstanding (33–36)
- ☐ Proficient (28–32)
- ☐ Developing (20–27)
- ☐ Needs Additional Practice (9–19)

Two Stars and a Wish

Strength #1: _____

Strength #2: _____

One Area to Improve: _____

Mock Interview Rubric
with Questions for Interviewers

FIGURE 11.1

Possible Interviewer Questions

1. What is your favorite internet meme or video? Why?
2. Tell me about yourself
3. What is your favorite class/subject in school and why?
4. What are your biggest strengths?
5. What do you consider to be your weaknesses?
6. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
7. How do you use technology in your life?
8. What would be your dream job?
9. What is a challenge that you've faced? How did you solve/overcome it?
10. Tell me about a time when you worked as part of a team to successfully execute a project.
11. Why should I hire you?
12. What is your biggest accomplishment so far?
13. What do you like to do for fun?
14. How would your teachers describe you?
15. What do you like do to relax/chill out?

OR HS.HECPS D.3

DURATION 60 MINUTES

CONTRIBUTOR KELLY GOMES

Lesson 12

Reflect, Refine, and Respond: **Learning from Your Mock Interview**

Lesson Purpose

Professional growth doesn't end when the interview is over. Successful job seekers reflect on feedback, identify opportunities for improvement, and follow up professionally with employers. In this lesson, students analyze their interview performance, set goals for continued growth, and practice writing thank-you notes and emails, an often-overlooked skill that demonstrates professionalism, gratitude, and strong communication. Learning to reflect and respond thoughtfully helps students become lifelong learners who continuously improve their workplace readiness.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Analyze feedback from their mock interview using a scoring rubric.
- Reflect on their strengths and identify specific goals for improvement.
- Develop an action plan to improve future interview performance.
- Write a professional thank-you note and/or thank-you email to their interviewer.

Teacher Preparation

Materials / Handouts

- Completed interview feedback rubrics from Lesson 11
- Three colors of highlighters or other annotation tools
- Paper or digital space for student reflection and SMART goal responses
- Thank-you cards or paper, if students will write handwritten notes
- Envelopes and postage, if handwritten notes will be mailed
- Paper or digital Exit Ticket

Technology

- Devices and email access, if students will send professional thank-you emails

Room Setup

- Arrange seating to support independent reflection, partner discussion, and small-group discussion.
- Have three colors of highlighters available for students.
- Display or prepare to display the feedback annotation color key used in the lesson.

Teacher Preparation

- Review the completed interview feedback rubrics from Lesson 11 before returning them to students, noting any common areas that may need clarification or additional instruction.
- Prepare a list of interviewer names and appropriate contact information.
- Determine whether students will send handwritten thank-you notes, emails, or both based on how interviews were conducted and available contact information or postage.
- Determine how students will record their reflection and SMART goal responses, such as on paper or digitally.
- Prepare the Exit Ticket on paper or digitally.

Instructional Sequence

1 STEP

Opening Reflection

Students reflect on how their mock interview felt and identify initial strengths, surprises, and areas of confidence.

2 STEP

Dig Into Your Feedback

Students review and annotate their completed interview rubric to identify strengths, areas for improvement, and repeated feedback.

3 STEP

Reflection & Growth Plan

Students use their interview feedback to select one priority for improvement and develop a SMART goal for future interview preparation.

4 STEP

Professional Thank-You Notes

Students learn the components of professional interview follow-up and write a handwritten thank-you note, professional email, or both to their mock interviewer.

5 STEP

Closing Reflection

Students reflect on what they learned from the mock interview and feedback process and identify what they will do differently before their next interview.

Introduction Questions

- How did your interview feel now that you have had some time to think about it?
- What can feedback help you notice about your interview performance?
- How can you use feedback to prepare for your next interview?
- Why might following up after an interview matter?

Instructional Activities

Opening Reflection

Ask students to think back to their mock interview and privately consider: ***How did it feel?***

Have students rate themselves from 1–5 on each of the following:

- I felt prepared.
- I stayed calm.
- I answered questions clearly.
- I felt confident.
- I would interview this way again.

Pair students and ask them to briefly discuss:

- What surprised you?
- What are you proud of?

Explain that they will now compare their own perceptions of the interview with the feedback provided by their interviewer.

Dig Into Your Feedback

Return each student's completed interview feedback rubric from Lesson 11.

Display the three-color annotation key and have students review their feedback using:

- **Green:** Highlight strengths, such as strong eye contact, good examples, or a friendly greeting.
- **Yellow:** Highlight comments that suggest improvement, such as speaking louder, providing more specific examples, or improving the closing.
- **Blue:** Circle or mark comments that appear more than once.

Explain that repeated feedback can help students identify priorities for growth.

Ask students to identify:

- Three things they did well.
- Two interview skills they want to improve.

Place students in small groups to discuss:

- Which feedback surprised you?
- What compliment meant the most?
- Which suggestion would help you most in a real interview?

Reflection & Growth Plan

- Ask students to review the strengths and areas for improvement they identified from their interview feedback.
- Have each student select one priority for continued growth.
- **Introduce or review SMART goals:** Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
- **Share the example:** Before my next interview, I will practice answering five behavioral questions using the STAR method with a partner.
- Ask students to write their own SMART goal beginning with: ***Before my next interview, I will…***
- Have students check their goal against each element of SMART and revise it as needed.

Instructional Activities

Reflection & Growth Plan

Ask students: ***Why do employers appreciate thank-you notes?***

Record student ideas and reinforce that professional follow-up:

- Shows appreciation.
- Demonstrates professionalism.
- Reinforces interest.
- Leaves a positive final impression.
- Helps the candidate remain memorable.

Explain that following up promptly after an interview is a professional courtesy and another opportunity to express appreciation.

Tell students whether they will write a handwritten note, professional email, or both based on the interview format and available contact information.

For a handwritten thank-you, review the expected components:

- Greeting
- Thank the interviewer
- Mention something specific from the interview
- Express appreciation
- Professional closing
- Display and review the original handwritten thank-you example provided in the lesson.

For a professional email, review the expected components:

- Subject line
- Greeting
- Thank the interviewer
- Mention something discussed
- Express appreciation
- Professional closing

Display and review the original professional email example provided in the lesson.

Have students draft their thank-you note or email using specific details from their own mock interview.

Ask students to proofread their message for accuracy, professionalism, spelling, and the interviewer's correct name before submitting or sending it.

Send or mail the completed thank-you messages to interviewers when possible.

Closing Reflection

Ask students to complete the Exit Ticket independently.

Have students respond to:

- What are you proud of from your mock interview?
- What did your feedback help you notice?
- What interview skill would you most like to improve?
- What will you do differently before your next interview?

Collect the Exit Tickets and use them, along with the interview rubrics and SMART goals, to identify any interview skills that may need additional practice.

Reflection Questions

- What are you proud of from your mock interview?
- What did your feedback help you notice?
- What interview skill would you most like to improve?
- What will you do differently before your next interview?

Group Reflection / Discussion

During the lesson, students discuss:

- What surprised you about your interview?
- Which feedback surprised you?
- What compliment meant the most?
- Which suggestion would help you most in a real interview?
- How did practicing help you?
- What would you tell another student preparing for a mock interview?

Materials and Supplies

- Completed interview feedback rubrics from Lesson 11
- Three colors of highlighters or other annotation tools
- Paper or digital space for reflection
- Pens or pencils
- Thank-you cards or paper, if applicable
- Envelopes and postage, if applicable
- Devices for email, if applicable
- Paper or digital exit ticket

Recommended Resources

Not applicable.

Curriculum Resources

Not applicable.

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- Review and analysis of mock interview feedback.
- Reflection on strengths and opportunities for growth.
- SMART goal for future interview preparation.
- Professional thank-you note and/or email.
- Closing reflection.

AI ASSIST PROMPT

For Teacher Preparation: Teachers can use the AI prompt included in the prompt section to adapt the reflection and goal-setting activities for their students.

Adapt this mock-interview reflection lesson for **[grade/course]** and **[student population or learning need]**. Students have completed a mock interview and received written feedback. Provide sentence starters to help students identify strengths, areas for growth, and a SMART goal while keeping the thinking and reflection with the student.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

- Keep the focus on **using feedback rather than simply receiving it**. Students do not need to respond to every comment on their rubric. Help them notice strengths, patterns, and one meaningful area they can work on next.
- Whenever possible, have students actually send their thank-you notes or emails. This gives the activity an authentic audience and recognizes the time community and workforce members contributed to the mock interview experience.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

- Allow students to discuss their feedback with a teacher, peer, or support staff member before responding independently.
- Allow oral responses or speech-to-text for the reflection and SMART goal.
- Provide the SMART goal example as a model for students who need additional support.
- Students with extensive feedback may select one or two priority areas rather than trying to address every comment.

OR HS.HECPS D.4

DURATION 60 MINUTES

CONTRIBUTOR KELLY GOMES

Lesson 13

The Onboarding Blueprint: **From Hired to Inspired**

Lesson Purpose

Getting hired is an exciting step, but accepting a job also means learning new responsibilities, expectations, policies, and procedures. New employees may be asked to complete unfamiliar paperwork, provide documentation, and follow workplace policies that differ from expectations at school or home.

In this lesson, students explore what happens after they are hired. They are introduced to common onboarding documents and practice using an employee handbook to locate information they may need on the job. Rather than memorizing workplace policies, students learn how to find information, interpret expectations, and ask questions when they are unsure.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify common information and documents employees may encounter when beginning a new job.
- Locate and interpret workplace expectations and policies in an employee handbook.
- Apply workplace policies to realistic situations and identify where to seek clarification when needed.

Teacher Preparation

Materials / Handouts

Not applicable.

Technology

Not applicable.

Room Setup

Not applicable.

Teacher Preparation

- Select an employee handbook for students to explore. This may be a handbook from a local employer, a publicly available employee handbook, or another appropriate sample.
- Review the handbook to ensure students can locate examples related to the categories included in the scavenger hunt. Not every handbook will contain the same information, so adjust individual prompts if needed.
- Print one Employee Handbook Scavenger Hunt for each student, or provide students with a digital copy for completing the activity.
- Prepare to display a simple hypothetical job offer for the opening activity. Include basic information such as position, employer, pay, schedule, and start date.
- Access current examples of the federal ***Form W-4, Employee's Withholding Certificate,*** and ***Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification***, to display during Activity 2. Students will examine these forms but will not complete them.
- Prepare a paper or digital exit ticket using the question included in Activity 5.

Instructional Sequence

1 STEP

You Got the Job!

Students consider what they would want to know before accepting and beginning a new job.

2 STEP

What Happens After You Say Yes?

Students are introduced to common new-hire paperwork and discuss why employees need to understand what they complete and sign.

3 STEP

Employee Handbook Scavenger Hunt

Students practice locating and interpreting workplace information using an employee handbook.

4 STEP

What Would You Do?

Students discuss what they discovered and how employees can use workplace resources when questions or problems arise.

5 STEP

Exit Ticket

Students identify something they would want to understand before beginning a new job.

Introduction Questions

- You just found out you got the job. What would you want to know before your first day?
- What responsibilities come with saying yes to a job?
- What should you do if an employer gives you a document or policy you do not understand?

Instructional Activities

You Got the Job!

- Display a hypothetical job offer that includes the position, employer, hourly pay, schedule, and start date.
- Tell students: ***Congratulations. You got the job. Your employer asks whether you can accept the position and begin next week. What would you want to know before you say yes?***
- Have students brainstorm questions individually or with a partner. Invite several students to share.
- Use their responses to introduce the idea that getting a job means learning more than when and where to show up.
- Employees need to understand pay, schedules, workplace expectations, paperwork, policies, and what to do when they have questions.

What Happens After You Say Yes?

Explain that before or shortly after beginning a job, employees may be asked to complete paperwork, provide documentation, review policies, and sign forms. Display examples of a **Form W-4** and **Form I-9**. Students do not need to complete either form. Use them to briefly introduce paperwork students may encounter when they begin working.

Form W-4: Employee's Withholding Certificate

Point out:

- Employees complete the W-4 so their employer knows how much federal income tax to withhold from their paycheck.
- Show where employees enter basic personal information and where they sign the form.
- Explain that information provided on the W-4 can affect how much money is withheld from each paycheck.
- Students may encounter unfamiliar tax language. They should read instructions carefully and seek reliable help rather than guessing when they do not understand something.

What Happens After You Say Yes? (Continued...)

Form I-9: Employment Eligibility Verification

Point out:

- Employers use the I-9 to verify an employee's identity and authorization to work in the United States.
- Show that part of the form is completed by the employee and part is completed by the employer.
- Show students the lists of acceptable documents and explain that employees provide documentation that meets the requirements described on the form.
- Reinforce the importance of reading the instructions and knowing what documentation is required before beginning a job.
- Explain that employers may also ask new employees to complete or review things such as direct-deposit information, emergency contacts, safety procedures, technology policies, confidentiality agreements, benefit information, and an employee handbook.

Ask:

- Which of these would you feel comfortable completing or reviewing on your own?
- What should you do if you don't understand something you are being asked to complete or sign?
- Explain that employees do not need to memorize every workplace rule. They do need to know **where to find information and how to ask for clarification**.

Employee Handbook Scavenger Hunt

- Provide students with the selected employee handbook and the Employee Handbook Scavenger Hunt.
- Students work individually or with a partner to locate examples of different kinds of workplace information. For each prompt, students identify the policy or section where they found the information and briefly record what they learned.
- If students cannot locate one of the categories in the handbook, have them note that it was not found rather than assuming what the employer's policy might be.

Instructional Activities

What Would You Do?

Bring students back together to discuss what they found.

Ask:

- What was easiest to find in the handbook?
- What was difficult to find or understand?
- What policy or expectation surprised you?
- If you had a problem with a coworker or supervisor, where could you look for guidance?
- What would you do if the handbook did not answer your question?
- Why might workplace expectations be different from one employer to another?

Reinforce that being workplace-ready does not mean knowing every rule before beginning a job. It includes knowing how to **locate information, understand expectations, and ask appropriate questions when clarification is needed.**

Exit Ticket

- Students respond: ***You start a new job tomorrow. What is one thing you would make sure you understand before your first shift? Why?***

Reflection Questions

- What workplace expectation or policy surprised you?
- What information would be most important for you to understand when starting a new job?
- What can you do when you encounter workplace paperwork, policies, or instructions you do not understand?

Group Reflection / Discussion

During the Activity 4 debrief, students discuss:

- Which workplace policies seem most important for a new employee to understand?
- What did you learn about finding information rather than simply knowing the answer?
- Who could you ask for help if you could not find or understand a workplace expectation?

Materials and Supplies

- Employee handbook, paper or digital
- Employee Handbook Scavenger Hunt, paper or digital
- Current Form W-4 and Form I-9 examples for teacher display
- Projector or display
- Paper or digital Exit Ticket
- Internet-enabled devices if the employee handbook is accessed digitally

Recommended Resources

Not applicable.

Curriculum Resources

Employee Handbook Scavenger Hunt

See Figure 13.1

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- Participation in the opening and onboarding discussions.
- Completed Employee Handbook Scavenger Hunt demonstrating the ability to locate and interpret workplace information.
- Participation in the handbook debrief.
- Completed Exit Ticket.

AI ASSIST PROMPT

For Teacher Preparation:
Adapt the Scavenger Hunt

I am using the following employee handbook with high school students learning how to locate and interpret workplace policies. Review the handbook sections I provide and compare them with these scavenger hunt categories: reporting concerns, interpersonal conflict, professional appearance, attendance, safety, technology, pay/scheduling, workplace conduct, and employee rights or protections. Identify any categories that are not addressed in the handbook and suggest a replacement scavenger hunt prompt based only on information that is actually included. Do not answer the scavenger hunt questions for students.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

- The goal is not for students to memorize workplace policies. Focus on their ability to locate information, interpret expectations, and recognize when they need clarification.
- Employee handbooks vary significantly. Review the handbook before the lesson and adjust scavenger hunt prompts when a particular category is not addressed.
- The W-4 and I-9 portion is intended as an introduction to common new-hire paperwork, not a tax or employment-law lesson. Students should see what the documents look like, understand their general purposes, and recognize the importance of reading instructions and seeking reliable assistance when needed.
- Do not have students enter real Social Security numbers, financial information, identification numbers, or other personal information on sample employment forms.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

- Allow students to work with a partner to navigate the employee handbook.
- Assign fewer scavenger hunt categories for students who need additional reading or processing time.
- Provide the handbook digitally.
- Assign different categories to small groups and have groups share what they find rather than requiring every student to complete all 10.
- Pre-identify relevant sections of a lengthy handbook.

Employee Handbook
Scavenger Hunt

FIGURE 13.1

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Directions: For each prompt, provide the a response.

PROMPT	STUDENT RESPONSE
Policy/Section | What I Found	
An example of how an employee should report a problem or concern.	
A policy that could help an employee deal with an interpersonal problem or conflict at work.	
Examples or guidance about professional dress or appearance.	
A policy related to attendance, being late, or missing work.	
An example of a workplace safety expectation or procedure.	
A policy about technology, cell phones, social media, or other digital behavior.	
Information about pay, work hours, scheduling, breaks, or timekeeping.	
An example of something an employee can or cannot do while at work.	
A policy describing an employee's rights or protections.	
One policy or expectation that surprised you or that you did not know workplaces might have.	

Reflection:

Which policy or expectation do you think would be most important for a new employee to understand? Why?

_____

_____

OR HS.HECPS D.4

DURATION 50 MINUTES

CONTRIBUTOR MICHELLE NEWBY

Lesson 14

The Rules of the Workplace: **Navigating Real-World Job Situations**

Lesson Purpose

This lesson moves workplace theory into practice by placing students directly into the dynamic, sometimes unpredictable situations they will face on the job. While traditional lessons focus on hard skills, role-playing forces students to actively navigate professional interpersonal scenarios, such as receiving constructive feedback, resolving a conflict with a coworker, or professionally communicating a boundary to a supervisor. By practicing these conversations in a low-stakes classroom environment, students build situational fluency, professional composure, and communication skills.

As a pillar of future readiness, this experiential learning sharpens skills like empathy, respect for others, negotiation, and active listening that employers consistently prioritize. It prepares students to handle the gray areas of professional life where there isn't always a single textbook answer. Within the broader career readiness unit, this lesson acts as a bridge between understanding the rules and expectations of a workplace and learning how to navigate the human interactions that happen within it.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Distinguish between ***Peer Energy*** (emotionally reactive, casual, defensive, or overly compliant language) and ***Professional Energy*** (calm, objective, firm, and solutions-oriented language).
- Use the four components of the ***BIFF Method*** for professional communication: Brief, Informative, Friendly/Firm, and Focused on the Future.
- Practice responding professionally to challenging workplace situations involving coworkers, customers, and supervisors.
- Reflect on how communication choices can help employees maintain both workplace relationships and appropriate boundaries.

Teacher Preparation

Materials / Handouts

- Workplace Scenario Role-Playing Cards, enough for student pairs
- Paper or digital Exit Ticket

Technology

- Projector or display, if used to display the ***Peer Energy/Professional Energy*** definitions and ***BIFF Method***

Room Setup

- Arrange chairs or desks so students can easily work in pairs and rotate to a new partner.
- Provide enough space for multiple pairs to conduct role-plays simultaneously.

Teacher Preparation

- Print and cut enough Workplace Scenario Role-Playing Cards for student pairs.
- Select a variety of cards involving coworkers, customers, and supervisors so students encounter different types of workplace situations.
- Prepare to display or write the ***Peer Energy, Professional Energy,*** and ***BIFF Method*** definitions on the board.
- Review the scenarios and identify any that may require additional context or sensitivity based on the students in the class.
- Prepare the Exit Ticket using the prompt included in Activity 4.

Instructional Sequence

1 STEP

The Two Energies & BIFF

Introduce the difference between Peer Energy and Professional Energy and teach the BIFF Method as a strategy for communicating calmly, clearly, and professionally in difficult workplace situations.

2 STEP

Speed-Dilemma Role Play

Students practice responding to workplace dilemmas, receive feedback, switch roles, respond to push back, and apply Professional Energy and BIFF across multiple situations.

3 STEP

Workplace Communication Debrief

Students identify communication choices that escalated workplace situations and strategies that helped employees communicate professionally, solve problems, and maintain appropriate boundaries.

4 STEP

Exit Ticket

Students apply Professional Energy by writing a response they could realistically use in a difficult workplace situation.

Introduction Questions

- How do we balance the desire to be liked by our peers with the professional obligation to maintain our personal integrity and workplace boundaries?
- What communication strategies can help an employee advocate for their safety, time, or boundaries when talking with someone who has more authority?

Instructional Activities

The Two Energies & BIFF

Begin by asking: *"Raise your hand if you've ever wanted to tell a teacher, a parent, or a coach exactly what you were thinking, but you had to bite your tongue because you knew it would end badly."*

Explain that entering the workforce sometimes requires intentionally changing how we communicate. Introduce the two modes:

- Peer Energy: How you might talk to friends. Casual, emotionally reactive, defensive, or overly compliant just to be liked.
- Professional Energy: How you communicate to protect your job and your boundaries. Objective, calm, firm, and focused on solutions.

Introduce the BIFF Method as one strategy students can use when they need to communicate professionally in a difficult situation:

- **Brief:** Keep your response short. Don't over-explain or make excuses.
- **Informative:** State the facts of your situation clearly.
- **Friendly/Firm:** Keep your tone polite while maintaining your boundary.
- **Focused on the Future:** Offer a constructive next step rather than dwelling on the conflict.

Explain: ***Today, we're practicing how to flip the switch to Professional Energy, even when a customer is upset, a coworker pressures us, or a supervisor puts us in a difficult situation.***

Speed-Dilemma Role Play

Divide students into pairs and give each pair a Workplace Scenario Role-Playing Card.

Designate one student as the Employee and the other as the Instigator, who may be a coworker, customer, or supervisor depending on the card.

Round 1: Action & Reflection
- The Instigator begins the scenario using the card.
- The Employee reacts on the spot.
- After the role-play, partners discuss: Did the response use Peer Energy or Professional Energy? What worked? What could be improved?

Speed-Dilemma Role Play

Round 2: Role Swap
- Students switch roles and repeat the scenario.
- Partners briefly reflect again on how the Employee responded.

Round 3: Add a Curveball
- Tell the Instigator not to immediately accept the Employee's first response. Push back once and require the Employee to continue the conversation.
- Encourage the Employee to use BIFF to stay calm, communicate clearly, maintain an appropriate boundary, and suggest a next step.
- Switch roles so both students practice responding to pushback.

Round 4: New Scenario
- Students rotate to a new partner and/or exchange scenario cards.
- Complete one final role-play with a different workplace dilemma.
- Partners identify where they heard Professional Energy or BIFF in the response.

Remind students that the goal is not to memorize a perfect script. The goal is to practice responding professionally when they are put on the spot.

Instructional Activities

Workplace Communication Debrief

Bring the class back together. Divide the board into two columns:

Peer Energy: What Made It Worse?
Professional Energy: What Helped?

Ask:

- What were some responses that made a situation worse?
- What did those responses have in common?
- Who heard a partner give an especially effective response?
- What did that person say or do that worked?
- When did being Brief, Informative, Friendly/Firm, or Focused on the Future help?

Record student examples in the appropriate column.

Close the discussion by returning to BIFF and emphasizing that professional communication does not mean automatically agreeing with another person. Employees can communicate respectfully while still asking questions, solving problems, or maintaining appropriate boundaries.

Exit Ticket

Students respond: ***Choose one scenario you practiced today where your first instinct might have been to comply, get defensive, or snap back. Write a two-sentence "Professional Energy" response you could realistically say in that situation.***

Reflection Questions

Not applicable.

Group Reflection / Discussion

Discuss:

Where is the line between being a "team player" and allowing yourself to be taken advantage of? How can you communicate professionally when you need to say no, ask a question, or maintain a boundary?

Materials and Supplies

- Workplace Scenario Role-Playing Cards
- Board or display for Peer Energy, Professional Energy, and BIFF
- Paper or digital Exit Ticket

Recommended Resources

Not applicable.

Curriculum Resources

Workplace Scenario Role-Playing Cards

See Figure 14.1

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- Participation in multiple workplace scenario role-plays.
- Ability to distinguish between Peer Energy and Professional Energy during partner reflection and class discussion.
- Practice using BIFF to respond to workplace situations.
- Completed two-sentence Professional Energy Exit Ticket.

AI ASSIST PROMPT

For Teacher Preparation:
Additional Workplace Scenarios

I am teaching high school students how to communicate professionally during challenging workplace situations using the BIFF Method: Brief, Informative, Friendly/Firm, and Focused on the Future. Create five age-appropriate workplace role-play scenarios involving entry-level jobs. Include a mix of coworker, customer, and supervisor situations. For each scenario, provide the situation, the role the partner should play, and one realistic pushback statement the partner can use. Do not provide the ideal student response because students should practice developing their own.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

- The room may become loud during simultaneous role-play. Use a timer, chime, or countdown to signal when students should stop, reflect, or rotate.
- Keep rotations moving. The value of the activity comes from students practicing several responses rather than perfecting one scenario.
- Students may discover that there is more than one professional way to respond to a situation. Focus discussion on whether the response is calm, clear, respectful, and solutions-oriented rather than searching for one "correct" script.
- If a scenario raises a question about an employee's legal rights or workplace safety, distinguish between practicing professional communication and determining the correct legal response. Encourage students to consult workplace policies and appropriate trusted or authoritative resources rather than treating the role-play as legal guidance.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

- Allow students who are uncomfortable improvising to serve as an **Observer/Coach** in a group of three. The observer listens for Professional Energy and BIFF and provides feedback after the role-play.
- Reduce the number of rotations and allow additional preparation time before students respond.
- If simultaneous role-play is difficult for the class, conduct selected scenarios as a whole-class fishbowl with students observing and discussing the responses.

Workplace Scenario

Role-Playing Cards

FIGURE 14.1

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Lesson Description: This interactive, 50-minute lesson prepares high school students for the realities of their first jobs by immersing them in real-world workplace dilemmas. Working in pairs, students swap roles to navigate high-stakes scenarios across three thematic pillars: Peer Dynamics, Power Dynamics, and Workplace Ethics/Time Off. Instead of lecturing, the lesson relies on active improvisation and the BIFF Method (Brief, Informative, Friendly/Firm, Future-focused) to teach students how to drop reactive "Peer Energy" and adopt poised "Professional Energy" when facing intense pressure from coworkers, customers, or bosses.

Essential Questions

1. How do we balance the desire to be liked by our peers with the professional obligation to maintain our personal integrity and workplace boundaries?
2. What communication strategies allow an employee to effectively advocate for their own safety, time, and rights when facing an unfair power differential with an authority figure?

Reflection Questions

1. The Reflex vs. The Strategy: When you were put on the spot during the role-play, what was your immediate, natural instinct—to get defensive, to make an excuse, or to completely give in? Why do you think it is so difficult to choose "Professional Energy" in the heat of the moment?
2. The Coworker Dynamic: We often think of workplace dilemmas as being between an employee and a boss. However, how did today's scenarios show that a choice to break a rule (like calling out fake-sick or clocking someone in late) directly affects your peer coworkers rather than just the business owner?
3. The BIFF Power-Up: Look back at the scenario you found most challenging today. How does shifting your focus toward a future solution (the final "F" in BIFF) change the conversation from a tense argument into a professional negotiation?

Whole-Class Discussion Questions

1. Where is the line between being a "team player" and being exploited? Managers frequently ask employees to "step up," "help out," or "be a team player" during emergencies or busy shifts. At what point does agreeing to these requests stop being good customer service and start crossing the line into allowing yourself to be taken advantage of? How do you know when it's time to say no?
2. Can you be too professional, or is "Professional Energy" always the right choice? Imagine a coworker is trying to vent to you about a difficult personal situation, or a boss is trying to build a genuine, friendly relationship with you, but you respond with strict, rigid BIFF communication. Can keeping your walls up too high hurt your workplace relationships? How do you balance being warm and human with keeping your professional boundaries safe?

OR HS.HECPS D.4

DURATION 50 MINUTES

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Lesson 15

Know Your Worth, Know Your Rights: **Navigating Workplace Discrimination and Labor Laws**

Lesson Purpose

Young workers may enter the workplace without realizing that being new, young, or inexperienced does not mean giving up their rights. Understanding basic workplace protections can help students recognize when something is wrong, ask questions, advocate for themselves, and seek help when needed.

In this lesson, students learn basic protections related to pay, safety, fair treatment, and youth employment. They then apply those protections to a realistic workplace scenario and determine what an employee could do next. The goal is not for students to memorize labor law, but to recognize warning signs and know that reliable information and support are available.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify basic worker protections related to pay, safety, and fair treatment.
- Identify several Oregon-specific protections and restrictions for workers under 18.
- Recognize potential workplace violations in a realistic scenario.
- Identify appropriate steps an employee can take to communicate their concerns when something at work seems unsafe, unfair, or inconsistent with workplace rules or labor laws.

Teacher Preparation

Materials / Handouts

- Paper or digital Exit Ticket
- Current Oregon and federal worker-rights resources listed in the Resources section

Technology

- Projector or display
- Internet access, if students will view worker-rights resources during the lesson

Room Setup

- Arrange seating to support whole-class discussion and small-group analysis of the workplace scenario.

Teacher Preparation

- Review the current Oregon BOLI and U.S. Department of Labor youth employment information linked in the Resources section.
- Verify that the youth employment, work-hour, break, and safety information presented in the lesson is current.
- Prepare to display the four basic worker protections and Oregon youth employment information.
- Prepare a paper or digital Exit Ticket using the prompts included in the lesson.

Instructional Sequence

1 STEP

Myth vs. Reality

Students respond to two workplace situations and test what they already know about pay and young-worker protections.

2 STEP

Know Your Basic Protections

Introduce four categories of workplace protections related to pay, safety, fair treatment, and young-worker rules, including several Oregon-specific protections and restrictions.

3 STEP

Spot the Violation: Jordan at the Pizzeria

Students apply the four protection categories to a realistic workplace scenario and determine how the employee could respond, document the situation, verify information, and seek help.

4 STEP

Exit Ticket

Students identify a workplace protection they learned about and explain appropriate next steps and reliable sources of information when something at work seems wrong.

Introduction Questions

- Your boss tells you that you have to stay an hour late on a school night. If you are 15, can your employer require you to work whenever they need you?
- You spend 15 minutes cleaning after a restaurant closes, but your boss says you don't get paid because the business is closed. Is that okay?

Instructional Activities

Myth vs. Reality

Kick off the class with a quick poll.

- **Scenario A:** Your boss tells you that you have to stay an hour late, pushing your shift past the hours you are legally allowed to work on a school night. If you are 15, can your employer require you to stay? Yes or no?
- **Reality:** No. Federal law limits when and how many hours 14- and 15-year-olds may work. During a school week, they generally may work no more than three hours on a school day and 18 hours in the week. Work must occur outside school hours and within permitted times of day.
- **Scenario B:** You work at a fast-food restaurant and spend 15 minutes cleaning after the doors close. Your boss says you don't get paid for cleanup because the restaurant isn't open. Is this allowed? Yes or no?
- **Reality:** No. Required work time must be paid. This can include required preparation, cleanup, training, and meetings.

Tell students: ***Today isn't about memorizing every labor law. It's about knowing enough to recognize when something doesn't seem right and knowing what you can do next.***

Know Your Basic Protections

Introduce four basic categories students should know as they enter the workforce.

Get Paid for the Time You Work

- If an employer requires you to work, that time generally must be recorded and paid. That can include required setup, cleanup, training, and meetings.

Work in a Safe Environment

- Employees have the right to a safe workplace, appropriate safety training, and required protective equipment. Young workers may also be prohibited from performing certain hazardous jobs or operating certain equipment.
- Explain that students should stop and ask questions if they have not been trained to perform a task or believe something may be unsafe.

Be Treated Fairly

Explain that employees have protections against unlawful discrimination and harassment.

Know Your Basic Protections (Continued...)

Briefly distinguish:

- **Bias:** A preference, assumption, or stereotype that can influence how someone is treated.
- **Bullying:** Repeated intimidating or mistreating behavior that may violate workplace policy even when it is not unlawful discrimination.
- **Discrimination:** Unfair employment treatment because of a characteristic protected by law.
- **Harassment:** Unwelcome conduct based on a protected characteristic that can become unlawful under particular circumstances.

Emphasize that inappropriate workplace behavior does not have to meet the legal definition of discrimination or harassment before an employee can raise a concern.

Young Workers Have Additional Protections

Explain that federal and Oregon laws place additional restrictions on when minors may work and what work they may perform.

Highlight a few rules most relevant to students:

Ages 14–15

During weeks when school is in session, federal law generally limits work to:

- Outside school hours.
- No more than 3 hours on a school day.
- No more than 18 hours during a school week.
- Between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., with evening hours extended to 9:00 p.m. from June 1 through Labor Day.
- Nonhazardous jobs and permitted occupations.

Ages 16–17 in Oregon

- May generally work up to 44 hours per workweek without a special emergency permit.
- May not perform jobs prohibited as hazardous for minors.

Oregon Breaks for Minors

- Paid rest periods for minors are at least 15 minutes for each four-hour period or major portion of a four-hour work segment.
- A meal period of at least 30 minutes is generally required when a nonexempt employee works six or more hours.
- Remind students that laws can change and circumstances can differ. The important skill is knowing where to check current information rather than trying to memorize every rule.

Instructional Activities

Spot the Violation: Jordan at the Pizzeria

Divide students into small groups. Read the scenario and have students record their responses.

The Case of Jordan at the Pizzeria
Jordan is 15 years old and works at a local pizza shop. It's a Tuesday night during the school year. Jordan's shift was supposed to end at 6:30 p.m., but the restaurant gets hit with a huge rush.

The manager, Rick, tells Jordan: ***"I need you to stay until 8:30 p.m. to help clear tables and clean up. Also, the dishwasher is backed up, so I need you to go into the back kitchen and run the commercial dough-mixing machine. Don't worry about clocking the extra two hours. I'll just add a $15 cash bonus to your envelope next week."***

Discuss the scenario as a group:

- Spot It: What parts of this situation should make Jordan stop and ask questions?
- Connect It: Which of the four basic protections might apply: Pay, Safety, Fair Treatment, or Young Worker Rules?
- Respond: What could Jordan say to Rick?
- Document: What information would be important for Jordan to keep track of?
- Get Help: If the problem isn't resolved, who could Jordan ask for help?

Reinforce a simple approach students can use when something at work does not seem right: **STOP → CHECK → DOCUMENT → ASK FOR HELP**

- **Stop** when something seems unsafe, inappropriate, or inconsistent with what you understand.
- **Check** the workplace policy or a reliable source.
- **Document** important details such as dates, hours, instructions, messages, or what occurred.
- **Ask** for help from an appropriate supervisor, trusted adult, workplace contact, or appropriate agency when needed.

Exit Ticket

Students respond:

- Name one protection you have as a worker that you did not know about before today.
- If something at work seems unsafe, unfair, or illegal, what are two steps you could take?
- Where could you go to find reliable information about your rights as a young worker?

Reflection Questions

- Have you ever seen or heard about a workplace situation that you would view differently after this lesson?
- Why can it be difficult for a young or new employee to speak up when something seems wrong?
- What does a respectful, safe, and supportive workplace look like to you?

Group Reflection/Discussion

- Discuss: ***Why might a young worker stay quiet when they think something at work is wrong? What could make it easier for that person to ask questions or seek help?***

Materials and Supplies

- Board or display
- Paper or digital Exit Ticket
- Internet access if students will view worker-rights resources

Recommended Resources

Oregon BOLI: Meals and Breaks

https://www.oregon.gov/boli/workers/pages/meals-and-breaks.aspxcom

Oregon BOLI: Youth Employment

https://www.oregon.gov/boli/employers/pages/minor-workers.aspx

U.S. Department of Labor: Rules for 14- and 15-Year-Old Workers

https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/YouthRules/young-workers/non-ag-14-15

OSHA: Safe Work for Young Workers

https://www.osha.gov/young-workers/safe-work-for-young-workers

EEOC: Harassment Information for Young Workers

https://www.eeoc.gov/youth/harassment

Curriculum Resources

Not applicable.

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

- Participation in the Myth vs. Reality discussion.
- Completed Spot the Violation: Jordan at the Pizzeria activity.
- Identification of an appropriate response and next steps for Jordan.
- Completed Exit Ticket.

AI ASSIST PROMPT

For Teacher Preparation: Create Additional Scenarios

I am teaching high school students in Oregon about four basic categories of worker protections: getting paid for time worked, workplace safety, fair treatment, and special protections for young workers. Create five short, age-appropriate workplace scenarios for students to analyze. Use common teen jobs such as restaurants, retail, recreation, childcare, or grocery stores. For each scenario, ask students to identify what concerns them, which category of protection may apply, what information they would need to verify, and what the employee could do next. Do not provide legal conclusions or an answer key. Remind me to verify current Oregon and federal labor laws before using the scenarios.

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

- This lesson provides an introduction to worker protections, not comprehensive legal instruction. Avoid presenting simplified classroom examples as legal advice.
- Labor laws can change. Use current Oregon BOLI, U.S. Department of Labor, OSHA, and EEOC resources when questions arise.
- The goal is not for students to memorize specific labor laws. Focus on helping them recognize potential concerns, locate reliable information, and know what steps they can take.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

- Keep the four categories Pay | Safety | Fair Treatment | Young Worker Rules visible during the activity.
- Allow students to complete the scenario with a partner rather than as a class.
- Provide sentence starters such as “I am concerned about…”, “Before I do that, I need to check…”, or “Could we…”
- Use additional workplace scenarios as an extension when time allows.

OR HS.HECPS D

Workforce **Readiness**

Extension Opportunities

Purpose

These strategies extend workforce readiness learning beyond classroom practice by giving students opportunities to interact with professionals, apply employment skills in authentic settings, and learn about workplace expectations from people who use these skills every day. The strategies build on the resumes, cover letters, interview skills, professional communication, and workplace readiness concepts developed throughout the unit while helping students connect those skills to their own communities and future opportunities.

Community Partnership

Mock Interviews with
Community Members

Instructional Activity

Invite school staff, community members, employers, and workforce partners to conduct individual, panel, or virtual mock interviews with students. Students practice responding to interview questions, asking questions of the interviewer, and receiving authentic feedback.

Learning Objective

HS.HECPS.D.3: Practice interview skills in-person and virtual settings.

Implementation Notes

Use the mock interview structure and rubric from Lesson 11. Partners can participate in person or virtually.

Professional Engagement

INTERACTIVE GUEST EXPERIENCES

Instructional Activity

Rather than inviting professionals only to give presentations, ask them to participate in the learning. Professionals might review anonymized résumés, respond to student elevator speeches, discuss observations from interviews, work through workplace scenarios with students, or explain how their organization approaches onboarding and workplace expectations.

Learning Objective

Students connect classroom learning about employment preparation and professional behavior to current workplace practices.

Implementation Notes
Give professionals a specific role or task before they arrive so the experience remains interactive rather than becoming a traditional guest speech.

Experiential Learning

Apply Workforce Skills in Real Contexts

Instructional Activity
Provide opportunities for students to apply classroom concepts in authentic settings through job shadows, work-based learning, internships, school-based enterprises, volunteer experiences, or community projects. Ask students to intentionally practice one or more skills from the unit, such as professional communication, teamwork, responding to feedback, asking questions, or following workplace expectations.

Learning Objective
Students transfer workforce readiness skills from classroom practice to authentic environments.

Implementation Notes
The experience does not need to be long. A short workplace or community experience can become meaningful when students know what skill they are practicing and reflect afterward.

Observation & Investigation

Workplace Expectations Investigation

Instructional Activity
During a workplace tour, job shadow, or employer visit, have students intentionally observe how employees communicate, dress, collaborate, solve problems, interact with customers, and follow workplace expectations. Students identify examples that connect to concepts from the unit.

For example, ninth-grade students could create career displays and presentations for middle school students. Each student becomes the “career expert” for the occupation or pathway they researched and shares what they learned with a younger, authentic audience.

Learning Objective
Students recognize how professionalism and workplace expectations appear in different employment settings.

Implementation Notes
Ask the employer in advance which workplace behaviors students may be able to observe.

Future Pathway Exploration

From Job Posting to Pathway

Instructional Activity
Students select a real job that interests them and investigate what could eventually make them a competitive applicant. They identify required skills, experience, education or training, and possible entry points, then identify one step they could take now to begin building toward that opportunity.

Learning Objective
Students connect workforce preparation skills to future education, training, and career pathways.

Implementation Notes
Use real job postings whenever possible so students see how employers communicate actual expectations.

Authentic Presentation

MOCK INTERVIEWS

Instructional Activity
Students demonstrate their workforce readiness skills through mock interviews with authentic audiences such as employers, community members, school staff, or workforce professionals.

Learning Objective
HS.HECPS.D.3: Practice interview skills in-person and virtual settings.

Implementation Notes
This can serve as an authentic demonstration of learning after students complete the interview preparation sequence.

Virtual Engagement

VIRTUAL EMPLOYER INTERVIEWS

Instructional Activity

Connect students virtually with professionals who can conduct mock interviews, respond to student questions, or discuss hiring and workplace expectations in their field.

Learning Objective

Students practice professional virtual communication while learning directly from professionals.

Implementation Notes

Virtual participation can expand access to professionals and industries that may not exist locally.

Alternative Implementation

SCHOOL-BASED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Instructional Activity

When employer or community participation is unavailable, use adults already in the school as an authentic professional audience. Administrators, counselors, office staff, coaches, teachers, food service staff, or other employees can conduct mock interviews, respond to elevator speeches, or discuss how workforce readiness skills appear in their own roles.

Learning Objective

Students practice professional communication and employment skills with adults beyond their regular classroom teacher.

Implementation Notes

The goal is an authentic audience and interaction. It does not require an outside employer.

Parent Engagement

FAMILY WORKFORCE CONNECTIONS

Instructional Activity

Invite students to interview a parent, caregiver, family member, or trusted adult about how they found a job, prepared for an interview, learned workplace expectations, handled a difficult workplace situation, or developed professional skills over time. Students compare what they hear with concepts from the unit.

Learning Objective

Students connect workforce readiness concepts to the experiences and knowledge of adults in their lives.

Implementation Notes

Allow students to select another trusted adult when a parent or caregiver is unavailable or when another adult would provide a stronger connection.

Reflection & Debrief Strategies

CONNECT THE EXPERIENCE BACK TO LEARNING

Instructional Activity

Following an employer interaction, mock interview, job shadow, workplace tour, or other career-connected experience, ask students to identify:

- What did you notice that connected to something you learned in this unit?
- What workforce readiness skill did you see someone demonstrate?
- What did the experience make you realize you need to practice or develop?
- What is one thing you will do differently because of this experience?

Learning Objective

Students reflect on authentic experiences and transfer what they observed to their own workforce readiness.

Implementation Notes

Reflection is already embedded throughout the unit. Use these questions to extend the same practice following career-connected experiences.

Reflection & Debrief

CONNECT THE EXPERIENCE BACK TO LEARNING

Instructional Activity

Following an employer interaction, mock interview, job shadow, workplace tour, or other career-connected

experience, ask students to identify:

- What did you notice that connected to something you learned in this unit?
- What workforce readiness skill did you see someone demonstrate?
- What did the experience make you realize you need to practice or develop?
- What is one thing you will do differently because of this experience?

Learning Objective or Target

Students reflect on authentic experiences and transfer what they observed to their own workforce readiness.

Implementation Notes

Reflection is already embedded throughout the unit. Use these questions to extend the same practice following career-connected experiences.

OR HS.HECPS D

Workforce **Readiness**

Assessment Strategies

Purpose

These assessment strategies provide students with authentic opportunities to demonstrate the skills needed to prepare for, pursue, and navigate employment. Assessments emphasize application, professional communication, preparation, reflection, and decision-making rather than recall. Together, they provide evidence that students can prepare professional employment materials, communicate their qualifications to employers, demonstrate effective interview skills, understand workplace expectations, and apply what they have learned to realistic employment situations.

D.1
HS.HECPS

Professional Communication in Practice

Assessment Strategy
Workplace Communication Application

Student Assignment
Students select or are assigned a realistic workplace communication situation and create an appropriate professional response. The situation might require communicating with a supervisor, coworker, customer, or potential employer.

Students should:
- Identify the purpose and audience for the communication.
- Determine the most appropriate way to communicate.
- Use a professional tone appropriate to the situation.
- Clearly communicate the necessary information.
- Demonstrate appropriate workplace communication expectations.
- Explain one choice they made to make their communication professional and effective.

When possible, students should use a professional communication they have already created during the unit as evidence rather than completing an additional assignment.

What Mastery Looks Like
Students demonstrate mastery when they:
- Select a communication method appropriate to the audience and situation.

- Communicate information clearly and accurately.
- Use an appropriate professional tone.
- Demonstrate awareness of audience and purpose.
- Apply workplace communication expectations to a realistic situation.
- Explain why their communication choices are appropriate.

Implementation Notes

This assessment should build from professional communication practiced throughout the unit. Teachers may use a professional email, workplace scenario, or another relevant communication students have already completed. The goal is to assess whether students can apply professional communication skills, not require an additional standalone writing assignment.

D.2
HS.HECPS

My Job Application Package

Assessment Strategy

Employment Application Portfolio

Student Assignment

Students use the position they have worked with throughout the employment preparation lessons to assemble a professional application package.

Students include applicable evidence from the unit, such as:

- Mock job application.
- Three professional references.
- Resume.
- Cover letter.
- Other professional materials developed for the position.

Students review the complete package as though they were preparing to submit it to an employer and respond to the following:

- What qualifications do my application materials communicate to this employer?
- What evidence from my experiences supports those qualifications?
- How did I tailor my materials to this particular position?
- What is one part of my application package I would improve before submitting it to a real employer?

What Mastery Looks Like/How to Measure:

Students demonstrate mastery when they:

- Complete employment materials accurately and professionally.
- Present information consistently across application materials.
- Identify relevant skills, experiences, and qualifications.
- Tailor materials to the selected employment opportunity.
- Communicate their qualifications clearly to a potential employer.
- Evaluate their own application materials and identify a meaningful area for improvement.

Implementation Notes

This assessment brings together work students already complete during the application, resume, references, and cover-letter lessons. Students should revise and assemble existing work rather than recreate it. Whenever possible, use a real or realistic job posting so students must make decisions about which experiences and qualifications are most relevant to a specific employer.

Students should also consider what they have learned about their strengths, interests, and skills and use that information to guide future career exploration.

D.3
HS.HECPS

Mock Interview Performance & Reflection

Assessment Strategy

Authentic Interview Demonstration

Student Assignment

Students participate in an in-person, panel, and/or virtual

mock interview with a school staff member, community member, employer, or other workforce partner.

During the interview, students demonstrate the preparation and skills developed throughout the unit by:

- Introducing themselves professionally.
- Responding clearly to common interview questions.
- Using specific examples when responding to behavioral questions.
- Communicating their skills and experiences.
- Demonstrating appropriate professional behaviors.

Asking relevant questions of the interviewer.
After the interview, students review their ***Mock Interview Scoring Guide*** and feedback and reflect on:

- What did I do well?
- What feedback did I receive?
- What interview skill do I most need to improve?
- What will I do differently before my next interview?

What Mastery Looks Like

Students demonstrate mastery when they:

- Communicate clearly and professionally during the interview.
- Provide relevant responses to interview questions.
- Use specific examples to support their responses.
- Demonstrate preparation and professional interview behaviors.
- Ask appropriate questions of the interviewer.
- Use interviewer feedback to identify strengths and areas for continued growth.

Implementation Notes

This assessment uses the mock interview experience already included in Lesson 11 and the reflection that follows it. The Mock Interview Scoring Guide provides authentic external feedback, while the student reflection provides evidence that students can use feedback to improve their future performance. The assessment does not require an additional interview beyond the experience already built into the unit.

D.4
HS.HECPS

Workplace Ready: What Would You Do?

Assessment Strategy

Workplace Situation Analysis

Student Assignment

Students analyze a realistic workplace situation involving an employee responsibility, workplace expectation, professional behavior, safety concern, worker protection, or other issue addressed during the unit.

Students respond to four questions:

1. What is happening? Identify the workplace issue or expectation involved.
2. What do I need to know? Identify information, workplace policies, or worker protections that could help you understand the situation.
3. What would I do? Explain how you would respond professionally.
4. Where could I get help? Identify a reliable person, workplace resource, policy, or outside source you could use if you were unsure how to respond.

Students should explain their reasoning rather than simply identify whether something is “right” or “wrong.”

What Mastery Looks Like

Students demonstrate mastery when they:

- Recognize the workplace issue or expectation involved.
- Identify relevant information they would need before responding.
- Apply workplace expectations, responsibilities, or protections appropriately.
- Describe a reasonable and professional response.
- Identify an appropriate source of information or assistance.
- Explain the reasoning behind their decisions.

Implementation Notes

This assessment can use workplace situations already included in the unit, including employee handbook scenarios, onboarding situations, or worker-rights scenarios. Students do not need to memorize employment laws or workplace policies. The assessment should measure whether they can recognize an issue, locate reliable information, and determine an appropriate course of action.

My Workforce Readiness Portfolio & Reflection

Assessment Strategy

Culminating Evidence Portfolio and Reflection

Student Assignment

Students revisit the work they created throughout the Workforce Readiness unit and assemble evidence of their preparation for employment.

Depending on the lessons and activities completed, portfolio evidence may include:

- Professional email.
- Mock Job Application.
- Three Professional References.
- Resume.
- Cover Letter.
- Professional Portfolio.
- Mock Interview Scoring Guide and Reflection.
- Thank-you notes/emails.
- Job Acceptance Letter.
- Practice W-4.
- Unit Reflection.

Using their collected evidence, students complete the unit reflection and identify specific examples that demonstrate what they learned and how their workforce readiness skills developed.

What Mastery Looks Like

Students demonstrate mastery when they:

- Provide evidence of learning from across the Workforce Readiness unit.
- Use specific artifacts to demonstrate professional communication, employment preparation, interview skills, and understanding of workplace expectations.
- Reflect thoughtfully on their strengths and growth.
- Identify skills or areas they still need to develop.
- Connect what they learned to future employment and workplace experiences.