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| **TEXAS CTE LESSON PLAN**  [www.txcte.org](http://www.txcte.org) | |
| **Lesson Identification and TEKS Addressed** | |
| **Career Cluster** | Business Management and Administration |
| **Course Name** | Business Information Management II |
| **Lesson/Unit Title** | Communicating at Work – “Soft” Skills in the Workplace |
| **TEKS Student Expectations** | **130.137 (c) Knowledge and Skills**  (3) The student demonstrates the use of the concepts, strategies, and systems for obtaining and conveying ideas and information to enhance communication in a diverse workplace:  (A) The student is expected to employ verbal and active listening skills when obtaining and conveying information  (B) The student is expected to record information needed to present a report on a given topic and use items such as tables of contents, indexes, tabs, footnotes, endnotes, captions, and/or building blocks  (C) The student is expected to write business correspondence using advanced word processing features such as templates and forms; mail merge, including letters, labels, and envelopes; and document protection and security that convey information effectively using correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization  (D) The student is expected to use online word processing technologies to create, edit, and share documents  (E) The student is expected to communicate with relevant parties such as coworkers and customers by interpreting verbal and nonverbal behaviors  (F) The student is expected to apply strategies for communicating about issues in dealing with a diverse workforce such as sexual harassment and cultural differences |
| **Basic Direct Teach Lesson**  (Includes Special Education Modifications/Accommodations and  one English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) Strategy) | |
| **Instructional Objectives** | **Performance Objective:**  Upon completion of this lesson, the student will understand the importance of accurate communication and following directions in the workplace.  **Specific Objectives**:   * Students will understand the rewards and consequences of accurate business communications. * Students will understand the implications of “hard” and “soft” skills in the workplace. |
| **Rationale** | The ability to communicate in a professional manner can take you a long way in your career and in your personal life. You may not even realize how much communication impacts your day to day, but it does. Therefore, it is so important that you learn to communicate at work. This lesson will demonstrate the importance of accurate communication and following directions in the workplace. |
| **Duration of Lesson** | Teacher’s Discretion |
| **Word Wall/Key Vocabulary**  *(ELPS c1a,c,f; c2b; c3a,b,d; c4c; c5b) PDAS II(5)* | **Important Terms for this Lesson:**   * Hard skills – skills that can be easily taught and measured such as computer skills, language skills, and machinery skills. * Soft skills – usually called “people” skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills; not as easily measurable. |
| **Materials/Specialized Equipment Needed** | **Instructional Aids:**   1. “How Well Can You Follow Directions?” Sheet (at end of lesson plan-found at the okcareertech website) 2. The Scenario Sheet: “Explain the consequences of not following directions promptly” (at the end of the lesson plan) 3. “Hard” and “Soft” Skills Business Leader Report Assignment #1 – within this lesson 4. “Hard” and “Soft” Skills Business Leader Rubric 5. “Instructional Manual” Assignment #2 – within this lesson 6. “Instructional Manual” Rubric 7. “Following Directions Scenario” Assignment #3 – within this lesson 8. “Following Directions Scenario” Rubric   **Materials Needed:**   * Scenario handout: “Explain the consequences of not following directions promptly” * Poster board to record student responses on activities   **Equipment Needed:**   * Computers for students to complete projects * Projector for PPT |
| **Anticipatory Set**  (May include pre-assessment for prior knowledge) | 1. Give students a piece of paper and tell them they are going to do an activity. Read the directions on the “How Well Can You Follow Directions?” sheet. See how students do at the end by walking around the room and tallying correct and incorrect answers. Write on the board or document camera. Then discuss the results with the students. 2. Ask students if they have ever had to assemble something they purchased and had to read directions. What if the person (usually a “technical writer”) who wrote those directions had left out a step or had incorrectly labeled the parts? Discuss the consequences for different types of products from a shelving unit to automobile assembly lines. 3. Discuss the importance of instructional manuals for different types of products and the components of these manuals. Also, discuss with students the importance of training sessions on the job, for example, teaching employees how to use products or services so they may demonstrate to the customers. |
| **Direct Instruction \*** | 1. Bring in samples of advertising, business letters, and instruction sheets or manuals for various products. If you do not have these at home, you can search the Internet for miscellaneous manuals. Point out different steps that, had they been erroneous or omitted, could cause negative consequences, such as: injury to a consumer, lost business for the company, defective products, or termination of the employee. 2. Provide students with samples of manuals for common products and give to each student. White out several steps. Have students fill in the missing steps. Exchange the directions with another student to see if the steps you filled in work in the assembly of the product. 3. Ask students to give examples of skills required at work and write a list on the board or document camera. As you write try to separate the responses into two columns so you can refer to them later as “hard” and “soft” skills in the workplace. Ask students in which category following directions would fit. 4. Workplace Skills    1. Hard skills       1. Completing tasks       2. Operating machinery or equipment       3. Financial or mathematical skills       4. Language skills       5. More easily measurable    2. Soft Skills       1. People skills       2. Communication skills       3. Teamwork       4. Customer service       5. Decision-making       6. Not as easily measurable    3. Many skills are required to obtain jobs and keep them. Ask students what skills these may be and record their responses. Then plan an “H” and an “S” next to the appropriate skills. Explain to students the differences between the two types of skills.    4. Explain that hard skills are usually measurable such as typing skills. They can also be more easily teachable or trainable. These skills are usually assessed before a potential is hired for a job. Soft skills are more difficult to measure and are basically only assessed before employment during an interview.    5. Have students in pairs each think of an occupation and then ask each other to list and identify the hard and soft skills associated with those occupations. 5. Following Directions (a soft skill)    1. Employment Policies    2. Training or How-to-Manuals    3. Product User Guides    4. Ask students what employees gain by following directions. They should respond with something like: employees are happier; therefore, sales can increase and customers can be satisfied as well. 6. Rewards    1. Increased teamwork and employee morale    2. Increased productivity, creating increased sales and revenue    3. Increased number of customers 7. Consequences    1. Employee reprimands of termination, decreased morale    2. Loss of business, customers, and sales    3. Possible defective products which could result in injury    4. Following directions is one of the main reasons that employees are terminated from a job. Employees must follow employment policies. Ask students, again in pairs, each to identify a policy as well as the consequence for not following the policy. Either a student or the teacher can record these responses on a poster board.    5. Following directions externally with customers can be just as important. If an employee does not properly explain or use directions for a product, injury can result as well as sales can dramatically decrease. |
| **Guided Practice \*** | 1. Provide students with a list of topics (or students may come up with their own idea if the teacher approves) for which they will create their own visual version of a “how-to” instruction sheet on the computer using either a SmartArt or other version of a flowchart. Have them type each direction in a different shape in the proper order. Examples may be: how to make a pb&j sandwich, how to send a text message and attach a picture, how to create a spreadsheet in Excel with a formula, or how to parallel park a car. When they have completed their diagram, exchange with a partner and have them critique your steps to make sure you did not leave anything out. 2. Have students create a table in Microsoft Word with 3 columns and 5 rows. In the top row type the label “Occupation”, then “Hard”, and “Soft”. Ask for someone to volunteer the name of an occupation and type it in the first column. Then ask what skills are required for the career. You may also have this on your computer or document camera to guide students where to place their responses. Place their skill responses in the appropriate columns and continue with other career suggestions. They should start to see the meaning of “Hard” and “Soft” skills and how they apply to many different occupations. The last row should be reserved for a career in which they personally have an interest. |
| **Independent Practice/Laboratory Experience/Differentiated Activities \*** | * **“Hard” and “Soft” Skills Business Leader Report Assignment #1**   Have students conduct Internet research of business leaders who possess “hard” skills versus “soft” skills. Type a report which states the leader’s particular career and summarizes which skills his/her career requires as well as which skills that leader is best known to possess. Use appropriate report formatting. This report will be evaluated according to the related rubric.   * **“Instructional Manual” Assignment #2**   Create a detailed instructional manual (a “how-to” or User’s manual) for either assembling a product of your choice or performing a task (such as how to play a certain game). Get approval from your teacher first. Include proper report formatting, including double-spacing, 1” margins, and heading and paragraph styles. Sections should include, but are not limited to, an outline of your guide, parts description and appropriate labeling (use clipart and drawing shapes if necessary), supplies needed, and assembly steps or directional steps. Include illustrations as needed to help the reader understand the steps. Remember that grammar is very important for understanding the entire manual. This project will be evaluated using the related rubric.   * **“Following Directions Scenario” Assignment #3**   Use the “Explain the consequences of not following directions promptly” handout for the general directions for this assignment. In pairs students will complete the tasks stated in the directions. Then have them display their results on two different documents. Any application can be used but one document should contain the list of tasks, three per group as stated in the directions, using possibly a table, SmartArt Graphic, bulleted list or whatever the pair decides. The other document should be the timeline as described in the directions, as well as the possible consequences if any of the groups does not follow the directions for each task that the pairs have produced. |
| **Lesson Closure** | 1. What are “hard” skills and why are they important at work? 2. They are the teachable skills such as computer skills and language skills that help us with the technical aspects of our jobs. 3. What are the “soft” skills are why are they important? 4. They are called the “people” skills and, because every business has customers, these are the skills that attract and keep the customers. 5. Why is the soft skill of following directions important in business? 6. If employees do not follow directions such as employment policies, they can lose their jobs. If directions are not clear, products can become defective or injuries can result. As a result, business can be lost. |
| **Summative / End of Lesson Assessment \*** | Use the assigned rubrics to evaluate the three Independent Practice Assignments. |
| **References/Resources/**  **Teacher Preparation** | **References:**   * <http://www.atctraining.com/soft_skills_definition_of_communication.htm> |
| **Additional Required Components** | |
| **English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) Strategies** |  |
| **College and Career Readiness Connection[[1]](#footnote-1)** |  |
| **Recommended Strategies** | |
| **Reading Strategies** |  |
| **Quotes** |  |
| **Multimedia/Visual Strategy**  **Presentation Slides + One Additional Technology Connection** |  |
| **Graphic Organizers/Handout** |  |
| **Writing Strategies**  **Journal Entries + 1 Additional Writing Strategy** |  |
| **Communication**  **90 Second Speech Topics** |  |
| **Other Essential Lesson Components** | |
| **Enrichment Activity**  (e.g., homework assignment) | 1. Interview two individuals regarding the skills that are required for their careers. Create a document of your choosing that summarizes their career, the skills required, and whether they are considered hard or soft skills. 2. Create a one-page report on the fastest-growing careers and the type of skills required for these careers (hard and soft). Also include the level of education or training required for these careers. |
| **Family/Community Connection** |  |
| **CTSO connection(s)** | Business Professionals of America  Future Business Leaders of America |
| **Service Learning Projects** |  |
| **Lesson Notes** |  |

1. Visit the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards at <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/collegereadiness/CRS.pdf>, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)