MODULE

Interpersonal

LESSON

Cultural Awareness: Knowing Not to Cross the Line
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Overview

Purpose
To teach students the importance of cultural awareness in the workplace and how culturally aware persons contribute greatly to employers as well as their communities.

National Career Development Standards

Standard 2: Skills to interact positively with others.
Standard 10: Understanding the interrelationship of life roles.

National Career Development Benchmarks

Students will be able to . . .

Benchmark 2.a. Demonstrate effective interpersonal skills.
Benchmark 2.b. Demonstrate interpersonal skills required for working with and for others.
Benchmark 2.c. Describe appropriate employer and employee interactions in various situations.
Benchmark 10.a. Describe factors that determine lifestyles.

Think and Discuss

1. Compare and contrast Cultural Diversity and Cultural Awareness.

2. Why is Cultural Awareness an important characteristic to have in the workplace and in the community?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCANS Fundamental Skills</th>
<th>Bloom's Taxonomy</th>
<th>Multiple Intelligences</th>
<th>Equipped for the Future (EFF) Standards</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☑ Basic Skills</td>
<td>☑ Knowledge</td>
<td>☑ Bodily/Kinesthetic</td>
<td>➢ Resolve Conflict and Negotiate</td>
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<td>☑ Thinking Skills</td>
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<td>☑ Evaluation</td>
<td>☑ Naturalist</td>
<td>➢ Take Responsibility for learning</td>
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<td>☑ Interpersonal</td>
<td>➢ Reflect and Evaluate</td>
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<td>☑ Intrapersonal</td>
<td>➢ Read with Understanding</td>
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<td>➢ Advocate and Influence</td>
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<td>➢ Guide Others</td>
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This lesson uses 10 of the 16 EFF Standards
Teacher Preparation

Class Materials

Copy the following exercises for distribution to students

- Exercise 1: Cultural Awareness Pre-Quiz
- Exercise 4: Crossing the Line: A Warm-Up Exercise
- Exercise 5: CROSSING THE LINE No. 1 - No. 3
- Exercise 6: CULTURAL AWARENESS SELF-ASSESSMENT

Overhead templates for teacher use

- Exercise 1: Exercise 1: Cultural Awareness Pre-Quiz
- Exercise 2: Anecdotes of the Day
- Exercise 4: Crossing the Line: A Warm-Up Exercise
- Exercise 5: CROSSING THE LINE No. 1 - No. 3
- Exercise 6: CULTURAL AWARENESS SELF-ASSESSMENT

Key Words

1. Cultural Awareness
2. Sexual Orientation
3. Taboo
4. Ethnicity
5. Homogeneity
6. Cultural Norms
Exercise 1: Pre-Quiz Directions & Answer Key

Teacher Directions

*This exercise should take 5 minutes with some discussion after each question. A teacher copy is provided with the answers.*

**Step 1:** Have students take the 5-question "Cultural Awareness" quiz to check for understanding.

**Step 2:** Review the questions with students to correct misconceptions they may have which relate to cultural awareness.

**Step 3:** Transition to Exercise 2: “Anecdotes of the Day.”

Answer Key

1. B
2. False
3. A
4. C
5. C
Exercise 1: Cultural Awareness Pre-Quiz

1. Cultural Awareness is best described as:
   a. Loving all people
   b. Knowing and understanding cultural differences & similarities
   c. Teaching others that your culture is the best
   d. Making others aware that they are different than you are

2. Cultural Awareness is the same as Cultural Sensitivity.
   TRUE
   FALSE

3. Which is a demonstration of cultural awareness?
   a. Learning about a person’s customs
   b. Laughing at someone
   c. Making assumptions about someone
   d. Saying "Hello"
   e. Asking about a person’s nationality

4. Which of the following is NOT an example of good cultural awareness?
   a. Learning another language
   b. Talking about global politics
   c. Asking someone what his/her religion is
   d. Eating at an ethnic restaurant

5. Fill in the blank. Cultural awareness begins with __________.
   a. Other people
   b. National pride
   c. Paying attention to others’ perspectives
   d. None of the above
Exercise 2: Anecdotes of the Day

Teacher Directions

Process the anecdotes with your students to check for understanding. This exercise should take 5 minutes with some discussion.

Step 1: Have selected students read the anecdotes aloud. Ask students the following questions:

1. Can people from rural areas be considered foreign to us?

2. What can we do to make people feel comfortable who may be from different upbringings or backgrounds?

3. How does traveling to other parts of the country or world improve cultural awareness?

Step 2: Proceed to Exercise 3: Video Vignette: “Cultural Awareness: Knowing Not to Cross the Line.”
Anecdote 1

“A few years ago, I hired an intern who came from a very small, rural town. His internship was in a very large city. It was obvious that he was having trouble adjusting because the pace of our lifestyle was much faster, louder, and crowded than he had ever expected. He had a slight accent and had a different cultural perspective than the rest of us. I asked the rest of my team to be AWARE of this fact and to make adjustments to how they interacted with him so he could feel a little more welcomed and a little less “foreign.” The first step in working together, and peacefully and productively existing together, begins with taking time to make yourself aware of the other person’s frame of reference.”

- A corporate manager

Anecdote 2

“Every student, regardless of grade level or career interests, MUST become heavily involved with a certain activity if he/she wants to become a well-rounded and culturally sensitive person. This activity will help them study harder after school, perform better on tests, help make more friends, strengthen their language skills and, most importantly, help them connect and relate to thousands of different people. What is this mysterious activity, you ask? TRAVEL! I’m not prescribing world travel, but if you can do it, great. I am prescribing traveling ANYWHERE you can. Get out of your hometown! Get out of your home state! Just get out! If you live in Chicago, drive or take a bus to Indianapolis or Minneapolis. Spend the day seeing how folks there live and work and play. Ideally, if you can save some money each year just for traveling, you will find that accessing assorted areas of the US is quite possible for a small piece of your savings. Traveling to Maine, Texas, Oregon, or Mississippi will introduce you to cultures and customs that are quite different from your own—and that is the point of a cultural sensitivity lesson. The more unique individuals and customs you experience, the more well-rounded you become. Well-rounded in your knowledge of people and the world, and well-rounded in your ability to coexist with nearly anyone you meet. So make a resolution for next year, save a few dollars, get a friend involved (its always best to travel with a companion) and get out and start living!”

- A Career Counselor
Exercise 3: Video Vignette: “Cultural Awareness: Knowing Not to Cross the Line”

Teacher Directions

Play the video titled “Cultural Awareness: Knowing Not to Cross the Line.” Discussion should follow after the video vignette. This exercise should take 5 minutes to discuss.

Step 1: Review the video vignette before introducing the video to your class.

Step 2: Show the video and discuss with your class the message provided in the video.

Step 3: Transition to Exercise 4: “Crossing the Line Exercise.”
Exercise 4: Crossing the Line Exercise

Teacher Directions

Please review the exercise before proceeding. There are some sensitivity issues that should be defined and discussed with the class. These areas revolve around sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and religion. Remind your students that the workplace is not the place to judge others and that, just because people have different backgrounds and beliefs, it is imperative that they understand the importance of tolerance toward everyone in the workplace and the community. This exercise should be a serious discussion and should reinforce the importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity in the workplace. This exercise should take 15 minutes to discuss.

Step 1: Read the first paragraph of the exercise to the class.

Step 2: Read each question out loud and ask students to take a vote on whether each question is appropriate or inappropriate for an employer to ask an employee or if they would feel comfortable or uncomfortable being asked the question by an employer.

Step 3: Discuss with students the follow-up questions at the end of the exercise.

Step 4: Transition to Exercise 5: “Cultural Common Sense.”
Crossing the Line: A Warm-Up Exercise

There are some things that certain people shouldn't know about you. They just don't need to know. Ironically, when something is “taboo for discussion,” it seems to make people want to talk about it more. However, some people have a higher tolerance for “probing questions” or “inappropriate questions” than other people.

Take a vote of all of the class members to see if anyone would feel comfortable or uncomfortable when asked the following questions: (remind the class that they don't have to answer the questions; they just need to decide if it would make them uncomfortable to answer them or not.)

1. What is your sexual orientation?
2. What religion are you?
3. Are you a Democrat or Republican?
4. Do you have kids? How many?
5. What country are your parents from?
6. Is English your first language?
7. Are you married?
8. When was your last date?
9. Do you live with your parents?
10. How much money do you make?
11. What kind of car do you drive?
12. Where is your house located?
13. Do you go to church on Sunday?
14. Can you lift 100 pounds over your head?
15. How much do you weigh?
16. Do you have any illnesses or diseases?
Follow-Up Questions to Crossing the Line

1. Which questions were considered “Crossing the Line” by the majority of students? Why? What made them so?

2. Run through the list and ask the students to pretend their Math Teacher is asking the questions.

3. What if their new Boss asked these questions?

4. What if a potential employer were asking these questions in a job interview?

5. Does it make a difference who asks the questions? (In some cases, it might.)

(Point out that some students might actually answer these questions, but they SHOULD NOT. All of these questions are inappropriate and even illegal in certain circumstances.)
Exercise 5: Cultural Common Sense

Teacher Directions

Please review this exercise before presenting the topic to the class. This exercise should take 20 minutes to complete.

Note: Culturally speaking, there are a few areas of discussion that are “taboo” and should NEVER be asked of you or asked by you. This exercise will help you identify when the Cultural Common Sense line has been crossed and what you should do to handle the situation.

Step 1: Select students to read each scenario in front of the class.

Step 2: Discuss each scenario during the Time Out.

Step 3: Transition to Exercise 6: “Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment.”
CROSSING THE LINE No. 1: The job interview.

(Ask 2 students to volunteer to read the following out loud in front of the class.)

INTERVIEWER: Well, Ms. Williams, tell me about yourself.

MS. WILLIAMS: I am a recent high school graduate, and I am looking forward to working in the nursing industry. That is why I would like this job at the hospital.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, what is your ethnic background? We really need someone who can work with our patients from Mexico.

TIME OUT! Questions for the class:

1. Is this a typical interview session? Why or why not?
2. What has been said that might make this an out-of-the-ordinary interview?
3. What should MS. WILLIAMS do or say at this point in the interview?

CONTINUE . . .

MS. WILLIAMS: Would you repeat that question; I think I misunderstood you.

INTERVIEWER: Sure. Are you Hispanic? And can you speak Spanish?

MS. WILLIAMS: Well, I have to answer “no” to the second part of your question, even though it is somewhat inappropriate. And I don’t understand how the first part of your question is relevant to the qualifications of the job.

INTERVIEWER: You’re right, I crossed the line. Sorry.

PROCESS:

Did the class predict that MS. WILLIAMS would handle the situation this way? What did they recommend she do or say and how did it differ from the script?

Tell the class the following:

Don’t get too defensive when you hear an interview question like this one. But do remember that it is illegal for an interviewer to ask you questions about your race, ethnicity, age, gender, marital status, religious affiliations, or anything personal that does not relate to your ability to perform a job.
CROSSING THE LINE No. 2: On the job.

(Ask 2 new students to volunteer to read the following out loud in front of the class.)

**BOSS:** Mr. Smith, I’m curious. How are things at home for you?

**MR. SMITH:** What do you mean?

**BOSS:** You seem preoccupied lately. Are you having trouble at home with the wife?

**TIME OUT!** Questions for the class:

1. Should MR. SMITH answer this question? Why or why not?
2. Is it proper for the BOSS to ask about life at home? Why or why not?
3. How should MR. SMITH handle this situation?

**CONTINUE . . .**

**MR. SMITH:** I appreciate your concern. I am a bit preoccupied, but I prefer to keep my home life at home.

**BOSS:** Yes, but I really need to know if something is wrong so I can pull you off of the night manager shift. That is a huge responsibility. I can't have any money being lost.

**TIME OUT!!**

The BOSS is being pretty persistent here. What should MR. SMITH do??

**CONTINUE . . .**

**MR. SMITH:** I understand. I will work on staying focused. If I keep up this low level of performance, please let me know.

**BOSS:** Okay. You just better fly straight, mister.

**PROCESS:**

Did the class predict that MR. SMITH would handle the situation this way? What did they recommend he do or say and how did it differ from the script?

*Tell the class the following:*

MR. SMITH kept the BOSS out of his personal business without telling the boss to keep his nose to himself. When someone crosses the line, keep your cool, stay professional and polite, and clear the matter up tactfully. Most of the time, a person won’t even realize he/she has crossed the line with you, so don’t get too defensive right out of the gate.
CROSSING THE LINE No. 3: The first day of work.

(Ask 2 new students to volunteer to read this out loud in front of the class.)

NEW EMPLOYEE (MALE or FEMALE): Hi, I’m new here, what’s your name?

JOSEPH: I’m Joseph. Welcome to ABC Burgers!

NEW EMPLOYEE: Thanks.

JOSEPH: Are you new in town, too?

NEW EMPLOYEE: Yep.

JOSEPH: Wow, so I bet you need someone to show you around? You know, all of the hot night spots? Are you attached?

TIME OUT! Questions for the class:

1. Is this appropriate workplace conversation, especially on someone’s first day of work?
2. What has been said that might make this an out-of-the-ordinary discussion? Why might JOSEPH be crossing the line?
3. What should the NEW EMPLOYEE do or say at this point?

CONTINUE . . .

NEW EMPLOYEE: I appreciate the offer. I don’t think we should mix business and pleasure at this point. We should keep a professional relationship.

JOSEPH: Whatever. One day you’ll come crawling back to me!

NEW EMPLOYEE: Please don’t take this the wrong way, but we really do need to maintain a professional relationship if we plan on working together.

JOSEPH: Okay.

PROCESS:

Did the class predict that NEW EMPLOYEE would handle the situation this way? What did they recommend she/he do or say and how did it differ from the script?

Tell the class the following:

You can see that NEW EMPLOYEE handled the situation professionally and did not get wrapped up in making the workplace a social hangout. JOSEPH clearly crossed the line, but no harm was done because of the way the NEW EMPLOYEE handled the situation.
Exercise 6: Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment

Teacher Directions

*Please review the self-assessment before introducing the subject. This exercise should take 15 minutes to complete.*

**Step 1:** Make copies of the self-assessment for each student.

**Step 2:** Have students take the self-assessment and have students process their individual scores.

**Step 3:** Discuss the self-assessment questions with your class once the questions have been scored.

**Step 4:** Transition to Exercise 7: “Cultural Awareness Wrap-Up.”
CULTURAL AWARENESS SELF-ASSESSMENT

- If someone asked you to describe the major differences involved when a person worships in a Jewish or a Mormon temple, you could answer with a few examples and even compare it to your own place of worship.

HOW CLOSELY DOES THIS DESCRIBE YOUR CURRENT KNOWLEDGE?

1 Not at all
2 Just a little
3 Very close
4 Right on!

- You are someone who can tell when a person speaks Spanish if he/she has a dialect from Spain or Mexico. You might even be able to join in because learning how to speak other languages, even casually, is interesting to you.

HOW CLOSELY DOES THIS DESCRIBE YOUR CURRENT KNOWLEDGE?

1 Not at all
2 Just a little
3 Very close
4 Right on!

- You are a person who enjoys learning about the various ways people react and interact when they greet each other for the first time. You are aware that when folks meet in certain cultures, some hug while others simply bow. Some shake hands, but, in other cultures, it is considered offensive and dirty to touch another person’s hand.

HOW CLOSELY DOES THIS DESCRIBE YOUR CURRENT KNOWLEDGE?

1 Not at all
2 Just a little
3 Very close
4 Right on!

- Be it a turban, a sari, a necktie, or a nose ring, you understand the significance and meaning of various clothing articles and accessories.

HOW CLOSELY DOES THIS DESCRIBE YOUR CURRENT KNOWLEDGE?

1 Not at all
2 Just a little
3 Very close
4 Right on!
• If a person tells you that he/she is from Belarus, you know where that country is located and from which part of the world this person has traveled. You might even have some information, which you learned by reading, that you can share with this person to help him/her feel more at ease.

HOW CLOSELY DOES THIS DESCRIBE YOUR CURRENT KNOWLEDGE?

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<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Just a little</td>
<td>Very close</td>
<td>Right on!</td>
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</table>

• You can follow and understand the politics involved with international trade, business, and even war. You like to read about and learn how and why certain countries stand for the values they impart to their citizens.

HOW CLOSELY DOES THIS DESCRIBE YOUR CURRENT KNOWLEDGE?

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<td>Just a little</td>
<td>Very close</td>
<td>Right on!</td>
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• You like to experiment and eat food from different countries. You know the difference between sushi and sashimi. You often look for restaurants that serve, for example, Korean, Indian, Ethiopian, Russian, or even Brazilian food. In fact, you are so well prepared in food diversity, you have tried fried alligator gumbo—the same way it is prepared in the Southern United States.

HOW CLOSELY DOES THIS DESCRIBE YOUR CURRENT KNOWLEDGE?

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• You wish you could travel more than you currently do. Every chance you get, you try to explore different areas of your city, state, or country. You love the excitement and adventure involved with travel, and you know that traveling is the best form of education the world has to offer.

HOW CLOSELY DOES THIS DESCRIBE YOUR CURRENT KNOWLEDGE?

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Tabulate the Score to the Cultural Awareness Self-Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL SCORE</th>
<th>WHAT IT MIGHT MEAN</th>
<th>WHAT YOU SHOULD DO FOR FOLLOW-UP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>You have the highest level of Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>Keep it up!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 to 31</td>
<td>You are on the right track!</td>
<td>Sharpen your weaker points and you will be even better!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 23</td>
<td>So/so in the knowledge and awareness area</td>
<td>Take some time to practice developing your weak areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 to 15</td>
<td>Need to improve your Cultural Awareness skills</td>
<td>Spend some time with your teacher so you can develop a strategy on building your Cultural Awareness!</td>
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- Processing Questions:

  Which areas of Cultural Awareness from the Self-Assessment are your strongest?

  How can you obtain the ones you don’t yet have?
Exercise 7: Cultural Awareness Wrap-Up

Teacher Directions

Please review this exercise before introducing the subject to your class. This exercise should take 5 minutes.

Step 1: Have students answer the following questions in their journal:

1. Compare and contrast Cultural Diversity and Cultural Awareness.

2. Why is Cultural Awareness an important characteristic to have in the workplace and in the community?

Final Thoughts: There is a difference between cultural awareness and cultural diversity. Cultural awareness is the process by which cultural diversity can occur. Think of it as process and product. You need a process in place in order to make a product. When a person or group learns, researches, and lives someone else’s culture, they become aware. As we learn culture, we learn to tolerate, appreciate, and respect the way others live. It is important to understand that ultimate strength in an organization, group, country, or individual comes from diversity and not from homogeneity. Cultural awareness is the first step to cultural diversity.