MODULE
Self Improvement
LESSON
The ABCs to Dressing for Success: Always Be Conservative
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Overview

Purpose

To teach students the importance of dressing appropriately in the workplace as a sign of professionalism and respect.

National Career Development Standards

Standard 1: Understanding the influence of a positive self-concept.

Standard 2: Skills to interact positively with others.

Standard 5: Understanding the need for positive attitudes toward work and learning.

National Career Development Benchmarks

Students will be able to. . .

Benchmark 1.b.: Demonstrate the ability to use peer feedback.
Benchmark 1.d.: Demonstrate an understanding of environmental influences on one’s behaviors.

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 5.e.: Demonstrate positive work attitudes and behaviors.

Think and Discuss

1. Why is the rule “Always Be Conservative” (ABCs) important in the workplace?

2. What are some examples of appropriate attire in the workplace?
<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>Observe Critically</td>
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<td>Thinking Skills</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Visual/Spatial</td>
<td>Convey Ideas In Writing</td>
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<td>Personal Qualities</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Logical/Mathematical</td>
<td>Listen Actively</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Verbal/Linguistic</td>
<td>Solve Problems and Make Decisions</td>
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<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>Musical/Rhythical</td>
<td>Plan</td>
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<td>Naturalist</td>
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<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>Reflect and Evaluate</td>
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This lesson uses 7 of the 16 EFF Standards:
- Observe Critically
- Convey Ideas In Writing
- Listen Actively
- Solve Problems and Make Decisions
- Plan
- Take Responsibility for learning
- Reflect and Evaluate
Teacher Preparation

Class Materials

Copy the following exercises for distribution to students:

- Exercise 1: Dress for Success Pre-Quiz, p. 7
- Exercise 4: DOs and DON'Ts of Business Attire Handout, p. 12

Overhead templates for teacher use:

- Exercise 1: Dress for Success Pre-Quiz, p. 7
- Exercise 2: Anecdotes of the Day, p. 9
- Exercise 4: DOs and DON'Ts of Business Attire Handout, p. 12

Key Words

1. Attire
2. Conservative Dress
3. Grooming
4. Unkempt
5. Idiosyncrasies
Exercise 1: Pre-Quiz Directions & Answer Key

Teacher Directions

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

Step 1: Have students take the 5-question Dress for Success quiz to check for understanding.

Step 2: Review the questions with students to correct misconceptions they may have about dressing for success. Remind students that the rule of thumb if they have questions about their attire is Always-Be-Conservative (ABCs).

Step 3: Transition to the Anecdotes of the Day.

Answer Key

1. False
2. C
3. False
4. E
5. D
**Exercise 1: Dress for Success Pre-Quiz**

1. Dressing for success means that your clothes are more expensive than anyone else’s.
   
   True  
   False  

2. The best outfit to wear to a job interview is (Circle one):
   
   a. A velour jump-suit  
   b. Your birthday suit  
   c. A suit  
   d. all of the above  
   f. Only A and C  

3. When wearing a shirt with stripes, it is best to wear a tie with a checkered pattern.
   
   True  
   False  

4. Which work situation(s) require appropriate dress (Circle one):
   
   a. Meeting with the company president  
   b. Staff meeting with your co-workers  
   c. Visit to a client’s office  
   d. Lunch in the work cafeteria  
   e. all of the above  
   f. Only A, B, and C  

5. While dressing for work, ladies should NEVER (Circle one):
   
   a. Wear low cut shirts  
   b. Wear low cut slacks  
   c. Wear short skirts  
   d. all of the above  
   e. None of the above
Exercise 2: Anecdotes of the Day

Teacher Directions

*Discuss with the students using the questions provided below. This exercise should take 5 minutes with some discussion.*

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

1. Why should you always err on the side of dressing conservatively?
2. Is it expensive to dress for success?
3. How do you feel when someone has helped you who may not be dressed appropriately or appears unkempt?

**Step 2:** Proceed to Exercise 3: Video Vignette: “The ABCs to Dressing for Success: Always Be Conservative.”
Anecdote 1

“One area of great concern I see in organizations, companies, and schools is an increasingly carefree atmosphere when it relates to appearance and dress. I can recall a time when I was pushing for a school uniform for my high school. The majority of my teachers pushed for the uniform code because they were upset at students’ dress appearances. They believed that the dress of our students directly influenced student discipline. As I listened to those teachers pushing for a school uniform, I noticed many of them wearing Levi’s with holes in them, tee-shirts, short skirts, and displaying unkempt grooming. I thought to myself, “How can I push for a uniform policy at my school site when many of my teachers pushing for it look like complete slobs themselves?” I am a true believer that what you wear and how you keep yourself reflects your attitude in your work environment. I believe firsthand that if our teachers looked professional, positive student discipline and student achievement would increase. I believe the same can be said for any organization. When people look professional, they act professional. I encourage all of you to understand your organization’s uniform or dress code policy and follow it conservatively.”

- School Principal

Anecdote 2

“When I was growing up, I didn’t have parents who could tell me how to dress for success. My dad was a construction worker, and my grandfather was a fireman. They never wore suits, ties, or dress shoes. My family never had much money. If and when I was able to purchase “dress clothes,” they were quite often made of cheap material with ugly patterns and strange colors. As a result, I kind of looked out of place. To make matters worse, the dress shoes my family could afford were made of plastic, not leather. This was not the problem; having inexpensive clothes is okay. The main problem for me was that I didn’t know how to color coordinate, and I had nobody to help me. If you have $5,000 to spend on an outfit, 99% of the time, the suit will look great, the shoes will look great, and all of the accessories will look great, without even having to try!! Unfortunately, as students, you don’t always have that much money. The best thing you can do when shopping for business clothes is to visit a middle-of-the-line department store, like JC Penny or Sears. Ask the sales staff to help you arrange some outfits that will fit your budget. As long as the colors match, the clothes are clean, and you buy the correct sizes of shirt, tie, and slacks or blouse, you will look like a million bucks without having to spend that much!!”

- Career Counselor
Exercise 3: Video Vignette: “The ABCs to Dressing for Success: Always Be Conservative”

Teacher Directions

*Play the video titled “The ABCs to Dressing for Success: Always Be Conservative.” 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:** Proceed to Exercise 4: “DOs and DON'Ts of Business Attire.”
Exercise 4: DOs and DON’Ts of Business Attire

Teacher Directions

*Remember the ABCs of dressing for business: Always Be Conservative*

The lists below apply to daily business attire and ESPECIALLY to job interviews. This exercise should take 10 minutes to complete.

**Step 1.** Review the exercise before introducing the subject to the class.

**Step 2.** Ask the students in class to draw a line down the center of a piece of notebook paper. On one side of the page write: DO and on the other side of the page write: DON’T.

**Step 3.** Give your students 10 minutes to think about the appropriate and inappropriate rules of dressing for job interviews and for work. When 10 minutes are up, ask them to read their lists. Discuss similarities or differences in the students’ opinions. Let them know if their lists matched those below.

**Step 4.** Transition to Exercise 5: “What Should I Wear?”
DOs and DON’Ts of Business Attire:

**DOs**

- Comb your hair
- Brush your teeth
- Take a shower
- Trim your fingernails
- Shave your face (men)
- Shave your legs (ladies)
- Wear a suit (men and ladies)
- Wear clothes that are pressed and clean
- Wear dark blue or gray suits with white shirts
- Wear a solid color tie or a tie with small patterns
- Wear dress shoes that are polished
- Wear socks that match the color of your suit pants
- “Zip your fly”
- Wear a leather belt that matches the color of your shoes

**DON’Ts**

- Spend too much on your clothes—purchase professional looking clothes at a good price
- Leave your hair messy, long, spiked, braided, glittered, purple, orange, yellow, etc.
- Have bad breath and/or food in your teeth
- Reek of body odor
- Have long and/or dirty fingernails
- Have bad, unkempt facial or leg hair
- Wear a t-shirt, jeans, and/or gym shoes
- Wear a wrinkled shirt and/or wrinkled pants with a wrinkled blazer that doesn’t match
- Wear a red, light blue, black and white checker, yellow, green, or orange suit
- Wear red, yellow, orange, green, or any LOUD ties
- Wear shoes with scuffs or holes
- Wear white socks with your dark-colored suit
- Leave your fly open
- Wear slacks without a belt (unless you are wearing suspenders, which might look pretentious)
- Display body piercing or tattoos
- Display a lot of jewelry (necklaces, rings, nose rings, ear rings, etc)
- Reveal any skin besides that on your face and hands
- Wear tight clothes
Exercise 5: What Should I Wear?

Teacher Directions

This exercise should take 10 minutes.

Step 1: Review the lesson before introducing the subject to your students.

Step 2: Ask students to break into groups of 3 in order to complete this worksheet activity. Make enough copies so everyone in class has one sheet.

Step 3: Review the answers in class. The answers are below.

ANSWERS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Situation</th>
<th>Attire Choice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question #1</td>
<td>= Answer #3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question #2</td>
<td>= Answer #4</td>
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<td>Question #5</td>
<td>= Answer #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #6</td>
<td>= Answer #6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 4: Transition to Exercise 6: “Classroom Fashion Show.”
What Should I Wear Worksheet

Instructions: Your job is to read each business scenario and match it with the most appropriate attire choice.

Business Scenarios

1. You are going to meet a new client for the first time. This client lives on a ranch in Southern Texas and lives in a very casual environment. By the way, you will be visiting this client in early July.
2. You have a lunch meeting with your department colleagues in the cafeteria at work.
3. You have a meeting in the boardroom with company directors and the company CEO.
4. You are going to a four-hour staff meeting for a planning session.
5. You have a phone conference call from your home at 6:00 A.M.
6. You have a telephone job interview with a local company and they are going to call you at home.

Attire Choices

1. Your pajamas and fuzzy, pink bunny slippers.
2. The best suit you own, with a white shirt and a solid-color tie.
3. Business casual, polo shirt and casual slacks—the shirt should be short sleeved.
4. Your regular, everyday business attire as dictated by the company rules.
5. Shirt and tie, so you look professional but not too dressed-up.
6. Wear a nice suit, just for the feel of being professional. Since you won’t actually be seen, the colors don’t matter, but you do have to “feel” professional.
Exercise 6: Classroom Fashion Show

Teacher Directions

This role-play is for all the students in the room. The teacher will be the fashion show judge and all the students will be contestants. Each student is to get in front of the class and walk down the fashion “runway” to be “judged” on a few points that business managers might judge them. This exercise will help students identify common blunders, severe errors, and personal idiosyncrasies that should be made conscious when one puts a professional wardrobe together. It will also help them compare and contrast clothes that will be acceptable together and those that will not. This exercise should take 10 minutes to complete.

Step 1: Review this exercise before introducing the subject to your students.

Step 2: There are no wardrobe changes required for this fashion show. Students should wear what they are wearing to class that day.

Note: If you can, the ideal scenario would be to ask the students THE DAY PRIOR to the fashion show to wear their business attire the NEXT DAY to class. If they cannot do that or they do not want to, the fashion show can continue with any type of clothes. Students may be a little self-conscious regarding how they look, so you may want people to answer the questions anonymously on a piece of paper. Explain to all your students that this exercise is to better prepare them for the world of work. Have fun with the exercise.

Step 3: Start your fashion show, with one student at a time walking in front of the classroom, showing his/her ensemble, doing a twirl or two, then returning to his/her seat.
Step 4: Ask the students to answer these questions as you read them aloud:

1. Is this outfit appropriate for a business setting?
2. If not, what needs to be changed? Shirt, slacks, shoes, etc.
3. If it is appropriate, what makes it so?
4. Does the contestant show a sense for matching colors?
5. Are the colors business-appropriate or are they too bright?
6. Do the clothes look clean and unwrinkled?
7. Does the contestant look well groomed or like he/she just woke up?
8. Do the contestant’s shoes match his/her wardrobe?
9. Does the contestant have excessive tattoos, skin, piercing, hair color distract from the attire?
10. Is the contestant wearing clothes that fit appropriately and not too loose, too tight, hanging low or cut too short?

Step 5: Transition to Exercise 7: Wrap-up: “The ABCs to Dressing for Success: Always Be Conservative.”
Exercise 7: Wrap-Up: “The ABCs to Dressing for Success: Always Be Conservative”

Teacher Directions

The following questions should be answered and logged in student journals or on-line portfolios. This exercise should take 5 minutes.

Step 1: Have students answer and log their responses to the following questions:

1. Why is the rule “Always Be Conservative” (ABCs) important in the workplace?
2. What are some examples of appropriate attire in the workplace?

Final Thoughts on Dressing for Success:

To make an impression on your employer, look nice and always dress conservative. If you are interviewing for a position, it is imperative that you wear your best clothes. If you can afford dry cleaning, we suggest that you get your clothes dry cleaned. Many employers are frustrated by the appearance job candidates have when they interview. If you want your name crossed off quickly, look like a slob at an interview. If you want serious consideration, look your best. When you are hired for your position, your employers will be very impressed if you continue to look well groomed. In addition, one of the criteria for job evaluations is based on employee appearance. You do not want to be evaluated poorly in this area because you have complete control on how you look. When we say grooming, it is not just how you look. Use deodorant, have clean hair, and brush your teeth. You will turn people and employers completely off if you do not do this. Good Luck!