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**M1 Lesson 5: Communication Skills**

Core Competencies:

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| * Communication
 | * Thinking
 | * Personal & Social
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Big Ideas:

* Reflecting on our preferences and skills helps us identify the steps we need to take to achieve our career goals.

Curricular Competencies:

* Use self-assessment and reflection to develop awareness of their strengths, preferences and skills.
* Demonstrate respect, collaboration, and inclusivity in working with others to solve problems.
* Apply decision-making strategies to a life, work, or community problem and adjust the strategies to adapt to new situations.

In this lesson and activities, students will think about the different types of communication skills, and how important communication skills are in the world of work.

Lesson:

For students:

Communication skills are important to everyone - they are how we give and receive information and convey our ideas and opinions with those around us.

Communication comes in many forms:
• verbal (sounds, language, and tone of voice)
• aural (listening and hearing)
• non-verbal (facial expressions, body language, and posture)
• written (journals, emails, blogs, and text messages)
• visual (signs, symbols, and pictures)

It is important to develop a variety of skills for both communicating TO others and learning how to interpret the information received FROM others. Knowing our audience and understanding how they need to receive information is equally important as knowing ourselves.

A large percentage of youth preparing to enter the workforce are significantly lacking in the "soft" skills such as teamwork, decision making, communication, initiative, interpersonal skills, and work ethic. It's important, both in career and in life, to develop our communication skills in order to also better advocate for ourselves and work with others, both important for lifelong learning. By practicing our communication skills now (although it may feel awkward and strange at the time), we will be better able to communicate our strengths and assets in the future!

Adapted from: "Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success", a resource developed through extensive feedback from teachers and students, in conjunction with the lesson "Communication Skills for the Workplace" by Audrey Milne

Assignment:

In the following assignment, students will read two scenarios of people using their communication skills at work. Each scenario is comprised of one employee and one supervisor. When reading each scenario, students should think about what each person did correctly, and perhaps what they could have done differently. Alternatively, you can always read the scenarios aloud in class.

Both in our professional and our personal lives, it is extremely important to be specific when offering and receiving communication. Often times our meaning gets lost, twisted or misunderstood because we haven't been specific enough in our communication or we haven't asked enough questions about the problem.

**ROLE PLAY #1**
***Scenario*:** Jade has her first job mowing lawns. She works for her best friend’s brother who owns a landscaping company. She’s had the job for about three weeks and really feels like she’s getting into the groove. In fact, it’s the perfect job for her: she loves being outside and appreciates the fact that she can work on her own and even listen to her music! Jade arrives early at Mr. Z.’s house (her first customer of the day) and gets ready to begin mowing.

*Mr. Z*.: You’re finally here!

*Jade*: Hi, Mr. Z. Yes, I’m here to mow your lawn.

*Mr. Z*.: Well, you didn’t do a very good job last week.

*Jade*: I wasn't the person who mowed your lawn. But I's like to hear why you were unhappy with the job.

*Mr. Z*.: It was just a mess!

*Jade*: Can you please be more specific? What exactly didn't you like? In what way was it a mess?

*Mr. Z.*: Well, it looked just awful.

*Jade*: Mr. Z., I really want to make sure that whatever upset you last time doesn't happen again. If you tell me exactly what you want done differently in the future, it will really help me to make sure your lawn is cut exactly how you like it.

*Mr. Z*.: Well, the cut grass was left on the lawn, and the edges weren’t straight.

*Jade:*  Okay, let me be sure that I understand. Besides mowing, you want us to make sure that we rake up, remove the cut grass, and be more careful to straighten the edging.

*Mr. Z.:*  Yes, that is exactly what I expect!

*Jade*: Thanks Mr. Z. I'll be sure to do those things today, and will let the boss know that that's what you would like done in the future.

*Mr. Z*.: Thank you very much.

**ROLE PLAY #2**

***Scenario*:** Will works in a large dental office and winds up rushing to get to work every day after school. His job tasks include filing, making photocopies, stuffing envelopes, and answering the telephone. Ms. T, the office manager, has asked to speak with Will about his time sheet.

*Ms. T*.: Hello, Will. I would like to talk with you.

*Will*: Yes, Ms. T.?

*Ms. T*.: Will, I’ve been watching your time this week, and I’m quite concerned.

*Will*: Ms. T., I see that you’re not happy, but will you please be more specific?

*Ms. T*.: You’re not getting here on time.

*Will*: I know I’ve been arriving to work late, and I am sorry.

*Ms. T.*: Well look at your time today. You were supposed to be here at 3:15 this afternoon, and now it's 3:30 and you've just walked in. We need to be able to depend on you to be here at the time you're scheduled to work.

*Will:* I understand that you expect me to be here on time. I'm getting here as quickly as I can after school. Would it be possible to change my start time to 3:30? I can put the extra 15 minutes in at the end of the workday instead.

*Ms. T.*: Well, I suppose we can try that. Are you absolutely sure that you can make it here by 3:30 each day?

*Will:* I'm sorry that I've been getting here late and upsetting you. I really do think that I can be here each day by 3:30, but if for some reason I can't make it here by that time, I'll be sure to call and let you know.

*Ms. T.:* That would be very helpful. Thank you Will.

**Assignment:**

After reading each of the scenarios, answer the following questions:

*Role Play #1:*

* In your opinion, how did Jade handle Mr. Z.'s comments?
* What do you feel Jade did correctly, and what, if anything, do you think she should do differently?
* What are your thoughts about Mr. Z.'s communication skills? What, if anything, do you think he should have done correctly?
* How could Mr. Z.'s or Jade's messages be interpreted differently based on their **tone?**

*Role Play #2:*

* How do you think Ms. T. handled the situation with Will's lateness?
* In your opinion, how did Will handle Ms. T.'s disapproval?
* What, if anything, do you think Will or Ms. T. should have done differently?
* How could Ms. T.'s or Will's messages be interpreted differently based on their **tone?**

*Journal Entry****:***

Think about a time when a parent, teacher or friend criticized you. Describe the following:

* What happened? How did this make you feel? How did you handle it?
* What might you do differently if something like this were to happen again in the future? Did this experience change the way you give feedback to others?

Extension:

Consider using the following ebook produced by the U.S. Department of Labor for additional resources and activities to develop soft skills in students.

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/softskills.pdf>

Assessment:

