



JA Careers and Communication

2024-25

Volunteer and Teacher Materials

Junior Achievement of South Dakota

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JA of South Dakota would like to thank JA USA for providing permission for the use of elements from the JA Career Success© and JA It's My Job© (Soft Skills) programs along with local staff, educators, and volunteers for their contributions to the development of this program.

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Goal:

JA Careers and Communication will provide high school students an opportunity to learn about communication, problem solving, teamwork, and the process of getting a job. JA volunteers will share real-life experiences to showcase the importance of career readiness and key soft skills that will be beneficial now and in students' future careers.

Students will:

1. Learn about the various elements of communication (tone, body language, professional vs. unprofessional, cell phone usage, appropriate topics) and understand how their behavior/response impacts the outcome of their interactions with others.
2. Be introduced to the Problem-Solving Tool to utilize when faced with a decision.
3. Learn about how to work together as a high-performing team.
4. Learn the difference between soft-skills and technical skills and the importance of each.
5. Learn about the process of getting a job and practice interviewing.

Teaching Techniques:

- Prepare for your visit by participating in an online or in-person training session.
- State the behavior you expect from the students at the beginning of the session, such as raising hands to participate.
- Please allow classroom teachers to take the lead on engaging with students who may seem to be off-task or non-participatory. Teachers possess deep understanding of their students and are equipped with effective strategies for addressing student behavior. It's important to consider that students may be dealing with personal situations or circumstances that can impact their participation in classroom activities. It's advisable not to single out students with personal questions or put them on the spot during class activities.
- Remember, this is not a lecture, but rather an interactive experience. Connect the discussion and activities to your own experiences in the business world.
- Use language and examples the students can understand and that are relevant to the session.
- Give instructions before handing out materials or having the teacher divide the class into groups.
- To engage students, move around the room during activities and discussions.
- Silence is okay when asking open-ended questions. Wait for responses or rephrase if needed.
- Remind students along the way of what they have learned. Encourage feedback from them and the teacher.
- You can greatly enrich sessions by drawing on both the students' and your personal experiences.
- Have fun! Be enthusiastic and friendly...your attitude is contagious!

Master List of Materials:

General:

- Volunteer Guide (1)
- Table Tents (30)

Session 1:

- Scenario Worksheets (1 set of 6)

Session 2:

- Self-Assessment Worksheet (30)
- Evaluator Sheets (5)
- Challenge Packets (5)
 - Scenario Instructions
 - 30 Index Cards
 - 15 paper clips

Session 3:

- Job Process Packet (30)

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Session 1 Introduction (2-3 minutes)

Introduce yourself and give a brief description of your job and background. Explain that you are a volunteer with Junior Achievement, an organization dedicated to inspiring and preparing young people to succeed in a global economy. Distribute the Table Tents. Ask the students to write their names on the tents and to display them throughout your visits.

Emphasize why you are teaching JA! Why did you care enough to take time out of your schedule to be a volunteer? Did you have JA when you were a student – how did it impact you? If not, how do you think having JA would have influenced you? What do you hope the students will get out of your time there?

Tell the students the goal of this program is to learn about key skills such as communication, problem solving, and teamwork that will not only benefit them now in high school, but also in their future careers. The final session will allow students to showcase these skills as they look at the process of getting a job. The first skill we'll look at is communication!

Get to know the students (2-3 minutes)

- Ask for a show of hands of who has or has had a full or part-time job before? Allow students to share their places of employment.
- Tell the students that you'll be referencing the workplace throughout your visits and you'd like them to share and provide examples from their experiences when possible.

Cell Phone Usage (15-20 minutes)

Productivity: Ask the students to list all the things they can do with a cell phone (make a list on the board).

- From that list – have students identify the ones they think are appropriate for the workplace.
- Which are not appropriate for the workplace? Why?
- If not already mentioned, share some additional things that could be done productively with a cell phone in the workplace: Find an address, make a reservation, book an appointment, check the price of products at different locations, figure out how to pronounce an unfamiliar word, contact a group of colleagues to tell them of a change in hours, contact your supervisor to say you will be late, check the weather for tomorrow, calculate a math problem, find out a ranking on a review site, etc.

Do's & Don't / Etiquette: Ask the students what the cell phone use policies are at the places in which they work. (Cell phone policies vary per establishment and have changed throughout the years.)

Tell the students they are going to work in groups to talk through common scenarios regarding phones in the workplace.

1. Place the students into six groups (there are six different scenarios).
2. Hand out one scenario worksheet to each group.
3. Tell the students they will have two minutes to discuss and complete the chart based on the scenario provided. They should prepare to share the scenario and at least one example with the class.
4. As time allows, have each group present their scenario and at least one example.

Below are the scenarios provided including additional talking points to consider mentioning as time allows.

Scenario 1: Keep your cell phone stored away and muted at work. (Pros/Cons)

- Depends on work policies. May be able to use during breaks or down time.
- *If there is a policy – why do you think there is one? (Safety, Productivity, Customer Service, etc.)*
- Ensure it's off/muted during meetings, interviews, workplace conversations, etc.

Scenario 2: Tell friends and family not to call or text you while you're at work. (Pros/Cons)

- Wouldn't matter if the phone is on mute/stored away.
- Might not know if it is an emergency, etc.

Scenario 3: Share company information on your cell phone. (When Appropriate/Not Appropriate)

- Depends on the nature of the information. Is it confidential/HIPAA related?
- Is it hours/location, etc.? Things that are already on public sites are fine.

Scenario 4: Post on social media while at work. (When Appropriate/Not Appropriate) Use this one to have a broader conversation about social media and emphasize the importance of making good decisions both personally and professionally.

- Everything matters: what they are posting, "liking," who they allow to tag them, etc.
- Ensure postings are appropriate and positive, use correct grammar, etc.
- Once a post is made, it's out there.
- Who cares about social media and why? (Employers, college admissions, renters, scholarship committees, etc. What you post on social media is seen as a reflection of who you are and is often a good indication of how you'll represent the employer, college, etc.)

Scenario 5: Check your phone (texts, social media, apps, etc.) while on the job. (When Appropriate/Consequences)

- Depends on work policies. It could be considered "stealing time".
- Info seen on a phone is instantaneous; it could create a high-emotion response.
- If you post/comment – it is time stamped, so you could get in trouble/fired.
- People have been fired for things posted on social media or for being on their phone at work.
- It could cause a distraction that hinders your work productivity or endangers others. **This is why many companies have policies on cell phone use.** What could happen if you are distracted and:
 - you operate heavy machinery on a construction site?
 - you are a cashier at a diner where patrons pay you on their way out?
 - you are a teacher's aide in a preschool classroom with 12 four-year-old kids?

Scenario 6: When would it be more appropriate to speak to someone vs. text/email them?

- You need to ask yourself what the best way to communicate is for a specific situation.
 - If it's informational, an update, or something that needs to be referenced in the future – an email might be best.
 - If it's conflictive, sensitive in nature, confidential, etc. talking verbally might be best.

Transitioning Topics:

- Have the students return to their original seats.
- Encourage students to think about the benefits of “unplugging” from their phones while at work or in other social settings.
- Ask them if they have ever sent or received a misunderstood text. (Allow students to share examples if they are school appropriate.)
- Ask why is it easy to miscommunicate via text and social media?
 - You can’t hear the tone of voice, see body language, etc.
 - We are going to talk about that more in this next section!

Communication in the Workplace (15-20 minutes)

Ask the students: Think of some of the things that you often say when you are working, or you hear as you go into businesses. For example, if you went into a fast-food restaurant and approached the counter to order, what might the server/cashier say to you? (*Possible answers: “May I help you?” “Would you like fries with that?” “That will be \$5, please.”*)

- Explain that tone and words matter. The way things are said could sound unprofessional. (For example, “May I help you?” becomes “What do you want?”)
- Tell the students, you will put them into groups of two or three.
 - They will have two minutes to brainstorm a phrase that they could say in different ways/tones.
 - Do an example as a whole class, for example:
 - “The dishes need to be washed.” (Say it as though you are dreading the task, questioning the task, and excited about the task.)
 - “I **have to** babysit tonight. (with a downcast tone) vs. “I **get to** babysit tonight! (with an excited tone and facial expression).
- Allow groups two minutes to come up with their phrases and have groups share as time allows.

What are some differences between **professional and unprofessional communication**? (*Possible answers: polite, proper grammar (complete sentences), no slang or bad language, not using a raised voice, showing care and concern, all business (not personal)*)

Voice modulation is control of the loudness, pitch, or tone of voice.

- What does the loudness, pitch, and tone of my voice suggest about the content of what I’m saying?
- What would a whisper suggest? How would other people perceive it?
- How could talking loudly be perceived?

Body Language: Remain professional in your nonverbal communication, including facial expressions, hand and body gestures, posture, and tone of voice. For example, nod to show you are listening, use a firm handshake, have an open posture, etc.

Conflict Management: A conflict occurs whenever two or more people don't agree on something. The way you respond (your tone and body language) directly affects the outcome of the situation. The way you respond and interact can either resolve the conflict or escalate it.

- Provide an example of a conflict you have experienced in your job. Talk about how it made you feel, how you managed the conflict, and why conflict management is so important for businesses and employees.
- Ask students for examples of conflicts they have encountered and how they responded (or would respond differently in the future).
- The way you respond to conflict can greatly influence the outcome of the situation. Ask students if anyone has experienced a negative situation that got turned around? (Share a personal example if you have one.)

Transitioning Topics: The way you communicate both verbally and digitally directly impacts your personal brand.

Personal Brand (5-7 minutes)

Tell students you are going to read a series of options and you want them to stand/sit accordingly and then share "why" they chose the one they did and any other words that come to mind when thinking about that brand (have them reset by sitting between each option).

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Stand if you'd chose Nike | Stay seated if you'd chose Adidas |
| • Stand if you'd choose Coke | Stay seated if you'd chose Mountain Dew |
| • Stand if you'd chose Android products | Stay seated if you'd choose Apple products |
| • Stand if you'd chose Subway | Stay seated if you'd chose McDonald's |
| • Stand if you'd chose Snickers | Stay seated if you'd chose Starbursts |

Like companies, people have personal brands. Whether or not we realize it, people are forming opinions about us all the time. Your brand represents your reputation. It's built each day by the choices you make and the way you behave and communicate.

- Companies build their brands over time, and it is important to develop a good brand reputation.
- Ask students to think about what word they think first comes to mind when people think about them (a friend, a teacher, a friend's parent, when they get placed in groups, etc.)
- Tell the students that developing a personal brand requires thinking about your personal characteristics and how you would like to be perceived. What do you want people to think about you? What brand do you want to portray to a future employer?
 - How do you communicate?
 - What activities do you participate in that contribute to your brand?
 - What interests do you have that contribute to your brand?
 - How do you handle conflict?
 - What brand are you portraying on social media?
 - Who are your "influencers" and how do they affect your personal brand?



Summary and Review (2 minutes)

- Cell Phones can be a productive tool at work, but every establishment has varying policies, so be sure to adhere to the guidelines provided.
- Emphasize to the students that the way we communicate in the workplace matters! It's often not what you say, but how you say it!
- How we respond in situations (body language, tone, etc.) can directly affect the outcome.
- Your personal brand is built on the daily habits and choices you make. You can always work to change or enhance your brand if you don't like how you are currently being portrayed.
- You need to be aware of your mood/attitude/the kind of day you are having and not allow it to negatively impact those around you.
 - You are allowed to have a "bad day" – but you are not allowed to impart that onto your team.
 - People may lose respect for you if you portray a bad mood or have "no filter".
 - Maintaining a positive demeanor even amidst difficulty can help build your personal brand.

Session Two Introduction (2-3 minutes)

Ask the students what elements from your first visit stuck with them. Did anyone experience a situation or conflict in which tone and body language made a difference? Tell students today they will be discussing two important soft skills that they can use both now and into their future. These skills will help them build their personal brand!

Soft Skills vs. Technical Skills (2-3 minutes)

Define **Soft Skill**: Personal attributes and behaviors not tied to a specific job.

Define **Technical Skill**: The abilities and knowledge used in a specific profession.

Emphasize the difference between technical skills (i.e. if you are a chef, you need to know how to measure or weigh foods and convert recipes) and soft skills (i.e. strong work ethic, positive attitude, good communication skills, self-confidence, etc.).

Remind the students that during your last session, communication was an example of a soft skill. Today, you will explore more soft skills.

Soft Skills Self-Assessment (5 minutes)

- In order to get an idea of the soft skills you already have or ones you could work on, we are going to take 3-5 minutes to complete a soft-skills assessment (sample on next page).
 - After reading the statement, students should indicate whether they feel it is a strength or weakness and then record examples of when they have demonstrated the skill (if they marked strength) or possible ways to strengthen it (if they marked weakness or uncertain).
 - Ask for a couple students to share one of their strengths and the specific example that demonstrates it.
- Encourage students to finish working through this worksheet on their own as many employers are looking for these skills and might ask about them.
- Next, we are going to look at two common soft skills: problem solving and teamwork.

Sample of the Soft Skills Self-Assessment

Read each statement below. Mark the column that best represents you and then record an example of when you demonstrated the skill or possible ways to strengthen it.

- Strength: The soft skill is a strength of mine. I already do this pretty well.
- Weakness: The soft skill is a weakness of mine. I need to work on it.
- Uncertain: I need to learn more about this soft skill. I'm not sure if I'm good at it or not.

Soft Skill	Strength	Weakness	Uncertain	Record examples of when you demonstrated this skill or possible ways to strengthen it.
1. I have a strong work ethic, even when no one is looking over my shoulder to be sure I'm doing the right thing.				
2. I am good at influencing others or being a leader in a group when it is needed.				
3. When someone points out a weakness of mine, I use the information to improve myself without being negative.				
4. If I don't have a solution when facing a challenge, I find the person who can help me and ask for help.				
5. I can be flexible when facing change.				
6. I prioritize and plan my tasks so that I meet deadlines.				
7. I am organized.				
8. When under pressure, I am able to stay calm and focused on the task at hand.				
9. I generally have a positive attitude. I am pleasant to be around.				
10. Regardless of how my own day is going, I remain polite to those around me, using "please," "thank you," and "I apologize" as necessary.				

Problem Solving (10 minutes)

The first soft skill we'll discuss today is problem solving.

Define **Problem Solving**: An orderly method of overcoming obstacles to arrive at a solution.

Introduce the students to the Problem-Solving Tool below. (Also on the back of their Self-Assessment. Consider writing key words on the board if possible.)

- Step One: Identify the Problem
- Step Two: Identify Pros/Cons for possible solutions
- Step Three: Choose the best solution and act on it
- Bonus Step: Reflect and Evaluate – after you've made the decision, stop and think about if you'd make any changes to your decision if you were put in that situation again.

Sometimes when you are presented with a decision you have time to think about how you'd like to respond. Other times you must make decisions more instantaneously. In those times, you must make the best decision at the moment, own the consequences of the decision, and then reflect on the outcome for the future. How you problem solve contributes to your personal brand that we discussed in our first session.

Pick a Corner – Activity: For this activity, you will share a scenario with the students and they will indicate their response by moving to the corner of the room that best represents what they would do in the situation (three corners will be used based on the three response options below). Once the students are in a corner, discuss why they chose what they did and allow them to counter each other and/or challenge their thinking as needed (possible consequences are provided below).

Scenario: You work at a large movie theatre. A new movie is just out and everyone wants to see it. The movie is rated "R", so customers must be 17 years old to get in. Students from your school come to buy their tickets from you. You know that one is only 15 years old. *What do you do?*

1. **Sell all of them tickets and just pretend you don't know that one of them is underage.**
 - a. Although this might seem like a good solution for you and the kids from your school, there could be consequences. For example, the parents of the underage customer could complain. The company then may discipline you for ignoring it's policies.
 - b. You may get a reputation for letting people break the rules, and others will expect the same favor or will be upset if treated differently.
2. **Explain that they are putting you in a bad situation, but sell them all tickets and let them know they owe you a favor.**
 - a. The outcome for this choice is similar to the first option. But the further error of trying to gain a personal advantage by doing something harmful to your employer could increase the likelihood that someone will report you and that you will suffer more severe consequences.
 - b. This is not a good situation to put yourself in.
3. **Require everyone in the group to show identification proving they are 17 or older and refuse to sell a ticket to anyone who cannot.**
 - a. This choice may cause some discomfort for you, especially if the group tries to pressure you into letting them in without IDs. However, when you agreed to work for this company, you became its representative and need to follow its policies – for your sake and the company's sake.

Teamwork (30 minutes)

The second soft skill we'll discuss today is teamwork.

Define **Teamwork**: a form of collaboration in which a structured group works together to reach a goal.

Make a chart on the board and ask the students to brainstorm:

- Examples of when they have worked in a group or as a team.
- What they like and dislike about working as a team.
- Characteristics they feel are important to having a high-performing team.

Below is an example; you and your students may come up with different ideas.

Examples of working as a team: Sports, family (chores, vacation, etc.), school projects, jobs, band, choir, clubs, etc.	
Cons/Dislikes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One person does all the work because everyone else is lazy (or) • One person is so controlling, they don't let others do work • Disagreements • Lack of leadership • Lack of communication • Have to depend on others 	Pros/Likes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many hands make light work (distribution of labor) • Generates more ideas • Social • Work together to accomplish the goal • Specialization of skills
Characteristics of a high performing team: Communication, listening, being open minded, working together, reliability, passion (want to), dedication, knowing the goal, etc.	

Additional talking prompts to aid your discussion:

- Do you prefer working in groups or alone? Why?
- Have you ever been in a group where you had to do all the work?
- Have you ever been in a group where you weren't allowed to do any of the work?
- What makes a group work well together? Poorly together?
- How do you make sure everyone in a group is contributing equally? Is it possible?

Define **High-Performance Team**: A goal-oriented group that produces superior results through collaboration and creativity. Today the students will be practicing the attributes of a high-performance team.

(Optional, pending time) Briefly discuss the GRPI model – included on the back of the Self-Assessment. This model is attributed to Richard Beckhard, further developed by Noel Tichy and Irwin Rubin, Mark Plovnick, and Ronald Fry. Noel Tichy, a professor at the University of Michigan used this model to help improve the performance of teams at many successful companies, including General Electric, Ford, and Coca-Cola.

- Goals: The team has clear goals, and all team members understand them.
- Roles and Responsibilities: The work is clearly structured. Everyone contributes and knows his or her responsibilities.
- Processes: The team has determined effective ways to make decisions, resolve conflicts, and share information.
- Interpersonal Relationship Skills: Team members positively relate to one another.

Teambuilding Architecture Activity:

First, ask the students if anyone would be willing to be an “evaluator.” You can choose up to five students depending on your class size. If no one volunteers, ask the teacher to help select 3-5 students.

- Provide students the evaluation tables and tell them they are going to be observing all the groups as they solve the situation (they should observe only, not talk to or interact with the groups). Evaluators should use the table to record notes and observations.
- At the end, the evaluators will collaborate to determine the team they thought had the “highest performance” not necessarily who has the best structure. They should focus on the team dynamics (soft-skills), not on the results of the building (technical-skills).
- Evaluators can look over the evaluation table while you split the remaining students into five groups.

Give each remaining group a set of materials.

1. Tell the students **they just formed a group of colleagues who work together at an architecture company. They just got called together by their boss and their task is to apply soft skills (communication, conflict management, problem solving, collaboration, etc.) while solving the situation provided. At the end of the challenge, each group is going to get 30 seconds to pitch/explain their idea – so be sure to designate someone in the group to be the spokesperson.**
2. Have the groups open their materials and start reading/solving the situation. (All situations are the same – sample below.) Have the evaluators start observing and recording notes. Throughout the activity you may have to remind the students that they can only use the materials provided. They can tear or rip the cards, but they can’t use scissors, etc.

Apply soft-skills as you work through the following situation: You work in a small department at an architecture company. John, your manager, has called you and your team members together because he just got a call from a potential client. The client’s company will be moving into town within the next year and wants to brainstorm ideas for their new building. The client is driving across town to meet with John and should arrive in approximately ten minutes. Wanting to make a good impression when meeting the client, John has asked you to design a model of a building structure. Since it is last minute, the only materials he has available to use are the index cards and paperclips provided. The client specifically noted he called your company because of previous skyscraper buildings he has seen your company create. He likes how your company not only provides creative elements, but that you also pay attention to small details to ensure quality in your work. Your team will have 30 seconds to “pitch” your building model to the client and share why they should select your company for the project.

3. While the students are working, check with the teacher to see if he/she would be willing to be the “client” to make the final decision on which group wins the challenge and why. If they prefer not to, you should plan to fulfill that role. Have whoever plans to be the “client” consider the following elements the “client” is looking for: Skyscraper Building (**Height**), Creative Elements (**Creativity**), Pay attention to small details (**Quality work**).
4. Give a 2-minute warning (the client has entered the building) and then call time.
5. Reveal to the class who the client is and that he/she is going to decide which structure wins and why.
6. Give each team 30 seconds to “pitch” their structure to the client (teacher or volunteer).
7. At the same time the groups are giving their “pitches” to the client, have the evaluators collaborate to decide which team they think was the highest performing team based on soft-skills and why.
8. Allow the “client” to share which structure he/she would choose and why (technical-skill winner). This may be different from the Evaluators’ selection.
9. Allow the evaluators to share what they observed of the teams and announce the team that they determined was the highest performing based on soft-skills. This may be different from the “client”.
10. As time allows, continue a large group discussion regarding the experience. Pick and choose from the following questions to guide discussion and to re-emphasize key themes:

Theme: Reflecting on the soft skill of teamwork

- Is there anything they could have done better as a team that would have led to a different outcome?
- Did your group have a clear goal that everyone understood?
- Did every team member understand his/her role and responsibility?
- Was the leadership shared, or did one person dominate? How were decisions made?
- Were there team members who did more than their share or didn’t contribute at all?
- Was there conflict on any of the teams? If so, how was it confronted? Openly and constructively?

Theme: The effect of Reflecting and Evaluating

- Was time taken to examine the processes so the team was successful in its work?
- Which group struggled the most with the building project? Why?
- Did the students think they needed more time? If so, tell the students that sometimes in life there is ample time to reflect, evaluate, and possibly research a topic before making a decision. However, sometimes something comes up unexpectedly or there simply isn’t time for further evaluation. At those times, you often have to make the best decision at the moment, own the consequences of the decision, and then reflect on the outcome for the future.

Theme: Giving credit where credit is due

- Was there trust/openness in communication? Did team members pass “blame” for failed attempts?
- Was the team sensitive to the needs of others and encouraging of creativity?
- Did anyone put other team members/groups “under the bus” to prove their point/idea was better?
- Were team members willing to acknowledge if others had better ideas?

Summary and Review (2 minutes)

You cannot always choose who you get to work with; whether you like them or not, you need to find a way to work well together to succeed as a team.

Session Three Introduction (3 minutes)

Ask students to share highlights they have gained from the program thus far. Ask students if they applied the Problem-Solving Tool to any situations since your last visit. Tell students today you will be expanding on the soft skills you've already discussed and connect them to how to get a job. Tell the students that the personal brand they build will not only affect whether or not they get a job but also keeping the job and future salary reviews, promotions, etc.

Step One: Identifying Job Opportunities (2 minutes)

Ask students, "If you need or want a job, how can you identify job opportunities?" [Help-wanted signs, billboards, TV ads, websites (Indeed, LinkedIn, etc.), go into the establishment and ask, word of mouth, etc.]

Ask students who have had jobs how they found out about the job opening.

Step Two: Indicating Interest for the Job (10 minutes)

Once you identify where you'd like to work, the next step is to indicate interest by submitting an application, cover letter, and/or resume. Briefly summarize the following:

- **Application:** Allows employers to learn about an applicant's work history and other important information needed for the job.
- **Cover Letter:** Allows an applicant to share why they want the job and why the company should choose them.
- **Resume:** Summarizes a person's education, skills, and work experience. It is often the "first impression" that hopefully leads to an interview.

Two ways to help identify what to include in the cover letter and resume is to read the job description and to fill out a brag sheet.

- A **Job Description** outlines key responsibilities, duties, and requirements for a specific job. This can be used to ensure the position is a good fit for you, to help you tailor your resume/cover letter to the position, and to help you prepare for a job interview.
- A **brag sheet** is a list of your life's achievements, key experiences, skills, and employment.
 - What are some things about yourself that you're proud of and that might make your parents, teachers, job supervisors, and coaches proud?
 - I know you've been told it's not polite to brag, but when it comes to finding a job, you need to promote yourself!

Allow students three minutes to start filling out their brag sheet. They won't be able to complete it, but it allows them to get started. Then, take a few minutes to let a couple students showcase items they wrote down. Some examples are included if they need help.

Academic Achievements: GPA, test scores, AP classes, academic awards, scholarships, attendance, honor roll

Extracurricular activities: experience with sports, arts, religious organizations, etc., with an emphasis on notable accomplishments and leadership positions (e.g., three goals in one game, two years in the school band, team leader, editor of school paper, singing in church choir, having poetry published)

Volunteer and community service activities: time spent helping at a food bank, daycare center, etc., and notable accomplishments (exceptional number of hours donated, accolades received, etc.)

Work experience: babysitting, summer jobs, part-time jobs, etc. (length of employment, accomplishments)

Honors and awards: community, professional, academic, personal

Notable personal experience: cultural, overcoming a challenge, travel, etc.

Positive personal attributes (strengths): presented as a list of adjectives or phrases, such as “excellent researcher,” “good with children,” or “responsible”

Future goals: academic, professional, personal (e.g., graduate cum laude, get a specific college degree or vocational certificate, become the youngest person to do something, start a nonprofit)

Step Three: Prepare for the Interview (15 minutes)

Typically, the next step in getting a job is an interview – but before the interview, you’ll want to be sure to prepare ahead of time.

Ask students their experiences with interviewing and what they know about dos, don’ts, and interview etiquette. Review the **Interview Etiquette** in their worksheet, sharing personal examples along the way.

Your Appearance

- Dress in nice but not formal clothes: collared shirts with no graphics (tucked in) and dark or khaki pants or skirt; no jeans, tank tops, shorts, or short dresses/skirts.
- Wear closed-toe shoes—no flip flops!
- Make sure your clothes are clean with no rips or tears.
- Be well groomed: deodorant, fresh breath, clean face.

Your Body Language

- Act and speak appropriately and clearly.
- Show up on time.
- Have respectful posture.
- Let the interviewer lead the conversation.
- Listen carefully to the interviewer.
- Respond appropriately, taking a moment to gather your thoughts if needed.
- Be honest.
- Remember to smile!

Part of preparing for the interview is to think about questions that might be asked and then to practice! Optimally, practice answering interview questions with a friend or family member; but if nothing else, practice in front of a mirror talking out loud so you can hear your answer.

You can do a web-search on common interview questions for a specific job/industry. As you prepare, think about relevant experiences that will showcase why you should be the person hired for that position.

The student worksheet provides two resources to help students prepare for an interview.

1. Examples of how interview questions often target specific questions that relate to the job. (You don't have to read all of these, but highlight how the questions are different based on the job.)

Interview Questions: Daycare Center Worker

1. This job requires someone with leadership ability. Can you describe a time when you were a leader?
2. You'd be working with young children. What experience do you have spending time with children? Have you been in a leadership role with them?
3. We like to think of ourselves as a team. Share an example of how you contributed to a group or team.
4. It's important for our workers to take initiative and step up when they see something that needs to be done. Give me an example of a time you did that.

Interview Questions: Restaurant Server

1. This job requires someone who pays attention to details. What experience do you have following through and making sure all details are handled?
2. Sometimes you might be responsible for closing and making sure all workers leave their space clean. What experience do you have overseeing a group or project?
3. We like to think of ourselves as a team. Share an example of how you contributed to a group or team.
4. You'll have to be able to carry a tray with up to 20 pounds. Are you strong enough to do that?

Interview Questions: Pet Store Salesperson

1. This job requires someone with sales ability. What skills do you have that make you good at selling?
 2. You'd be working with animals. What experience do you have with animals?
 3. We like to think of ourselves as a team. Share an example of how you contributed to a group or team.
 4. Sometimes the unpredictable happens, like an escaped iguana or a barking dog. How would you handle a situation where customers might be scared?
2. Why are you the Right Person? This worksheet allows students to combine and apply the elements of the Brag Sheet, Questions to Consider, and their Soft-Skills Assessment from Session 2 to practice delivering thoughtful interview answers. Ultimately, they want to be able to show the interviewer why they are the right person for the job!
 - i. Allow students 2-3 minutes to look through the questions and jot down some initial answers.
 - ii. Again, encourage students to complete this worksheet at home or before interviewing for a job.



Answering Interview Questions

Interview Questions	How to Answer	Your Answer
Tell me about yourself.	Have a brief story ready to tell that helps the interviewer understand why you're the right person for the job.	
What is your greatest strength? Give me an example.	Describe a strength and give an example of a time you used it that has relevance for the job.	
What is your greatest weakness? How have you worked to overcome it?	Have a story ready about a time when you made a mistake but learned from it and are now better prepared for the job.	
How are you at working with others?	Give an example of a time you worked with a group to get something done.	
Once you're given directions, can you work independently?	Give an example of a time you followed directions and worked independently to get something done.	
Things can change quickly. How are you at adapting to change?	Describe a time you successfully adapted to change.	
Who is someone you admire?	Name someone, preferably not controversial, whose achievements and skills you aspire to and have relevance to the job.	
What's the hardest thing you've ever had to do?	Describe an academic, personal, or professional challenge and how you overcame it.	
What do you consider your greatest accomplishment?	Describe a key achievement within the context of the job.	
Why do you want to work here?	Describe how your skills can help the organization. Your answer should show that you've researched and respect the company.	

Step Four: The Interview (15 minutes)

Take the time to conduct mock interviews with the students in a workshop-style model. Before the first interview, role-play the full experience by asking /demonstrating things like:

- When does the interview start? (As soon as you drive onto the premise– you could be viewed on security footage, etc. The way you treat all associates you encounter makes a difference!)
- How to properly introduce yourself.
- How to give a proper handshake.

Mock Interviews:

- Pull up two chairs to create an interview staging area (you will interview select students one at a time).
- Select a student to come up to answer 3-4 interview questions.
 - Identify a position for which you are interviewing (allow the student to indicate a position or make up your own - such as a grocery cashier).
 - Ask the student a few questions (you can select from the “Why are you the Right Person worksheet” (also listed below), use the questions from the Daycare Center/Restaurant Server/Pet Store Salesperson examples, or bring your own).
 - After the 3-4 questions, have the class talk about:
 - What did the interviewee do well?
 - What could the interviewee do to make it even better?
 - Point out why that type of question is asked.
 - Provide praise and coaching as applicable.
 - Repeat the process with additional students as time allows.

“Why are you the Right Person?” Interview Questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What is your greatest strength? Give me an example.
- What is your greatest weakness? How have you worked to overcome it?
- How are you at working with others?
- Once you’re given directions, can you work independently – please provide an example?
- Things can change quickly. How are you at adapting to change?
- Who is someone you admire?
- What’s the hardest thing you’ve ever had to do?
- What do you consider your greatest accomplishment?
- Why do you want to work here?

Step Five: Asking Questions at the end of the Interview (2-3 minutes)

The interviewer will almost always ask if you have any questions for them at the end of the interview. Be prepared to ask a couple questions as it shows your vested interest in the position.

Potential questions to ask the employer at the end of an interview:

- How would you describe the responsibilities of the current open position?
- How would you describe a typical day or week in this position?
- What does success look like for this position and how is it measured?
- Who would I be working most closely with?
- What do you see as the most challenging aspect of this job?
- What is the company's management style?
- Are there opportunities for professional development?
- What are your company values? What characteristics do you look for in employees to represent those values?

Step Six: Send a Thank you (1 minute)

Before leaving the interview, be sure to note the name of the interviewer so you can send them a thank you note. This will help showcase your interest in the position. Optimally you'd want the thank you note to be received within 1-2 business days. Consider a hand-written note if there is time, or an email thank you is also acceptable.

Summary & Review/Graduation (2-3 minutes)

Allow the students to ask any additional questions and/or summarize why you believe the students should prioritize career-readiness even in high school. Make graduation special. If appropriate given the current public health situation, teach them to shake your hand properly (no 'limp fish' or 'super squeezers') and shake with the right hand. If bringing a treat, please make sure your treat is peanut-free, as this may be a school district policy.