

A Lesson in Human Capital and Career Awareness

TOPIC: CAREER AWARENESS

GRADES 6-8, 9-12 (DEPENDING ON STATE STANDARDS IN CAREER EXPLORATION)

Introduction:

- Career exploration is required by most states in either middle or high school (or both). Activities in career exploration will allow students to develop skills in planning, decision-making, and goal-setting. Students will also gain a sense of empowerment as they begin to understand that actions taken now can impact their lives in the future. This lesson contains a variety of activities. The teacher has discretion to choose a few activities or complete them all as a unit. The teacher should place emphasis on career fields that are growing or may not exist yet.
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Learning Outcomes:

- Students will apply the concepts of human capital and opportunity costs to explore potential career paths.
 - Students will explore potential careers in growing fields.
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Materials:

- Job interest survey that includes up to date statistics and job trends
 - <https://www.bls.gov/k12/content/students/careers/career-exploration.htm>
 - Indiana Career Explorer (access code required)
 - [BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)
 - For students interested in careers in technology: <https://www.cyberseek.org/>
 - <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/computer-and-information-technology/home.htm>
 - Community support (career fair)
 - Career counselor (optional)
 - Blank sheets of cardstock/printer paper
 - Markers
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Activities:

This lesson was modified from a lesson entitled: It's Your Paycheck: Invest in Yourself from the Federal Reserve Banks of St. Louis. Link: www.stlouisfed.org/education_resources

1. Begin by having students define human capital. Human capital are the skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by an individual. Taken together these items add value to the person's worth to the company and/or organization he/she works within.
2. Ask students to list ways in which a person could increase the value of their human capital. Answers: education, training, apprenticeship, more experience; become more well-rounded/

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- wider skill set; improve soft skills such as presentation and speaking skills; network within the career; stay involved and informed in the career field; explore other related career fields, etc.
3. Next have students define the term, opportunity cost. Opportunity costs refer to a benefit that a person could have received, but gave up, to take another course of action. In order to demonstrate this meaning, opportunity costs could be framed as a necessity of a cost-benefit analysis. Use an example students would understand: . If you spend time and money going to a movie, you cannot spend that time at studying for an exam and you can't spend the money on the video game that you want. Chances are that you will not do as well on the exam and it will now take you longer to attain the game. Most of us subconsciously reflect on opportunity costs or a cost/benefit analysis when we make major decisions.
 4. The teacher should place students into groups. There should be four groups in the room-groups can be numbered 1-4. The teacher should model the following activity prior to giving students paper.
 - A. Fold the piece of paper in half, shorter edges together. Crease the centerfold. The folded paper should measure $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$.
 - B. Open the paper to $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$.
 - C. Fold the bottom $8\frac{1}{2}$ " edge to the middle crease. Crease the fold.
 - D. Open the paper back up to $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$.
 - E. Fold the top $8\frac{1}{2}$ " edge to the middle crease. Crease the fold.
 - F. The paper should now have four sections.
 - G. Starting from one end of the paper, countdown 3 triangles. Print your first name in large letters in the rectangle.
 - H. Turn the paper upside down. Again, countdown 3 triangles. Print your first name in large letters in the rectangle.
 - I. Fold the paper to create a tent with your name displayed on both sides.
 5. Each student will need a piece of cardstock paper or printer paper and a marker. Students are going to create their own name tents but each group will have different rules to follow.
 6. Explain the rules:
 - A. Group 1: Each person must remain seated. You must use only one hand, your non-dominant hand, to produce the name tent. You must keep your dominant hand behind your back. Stand when your name tent is done.
 - B. Group 2: Each person must remain seated. You must use only one hand, your dominant hand, to produce the name tent. You must keep your non-dominant hand behind your back. Stand when your name tent is done.
 - C. Group 3: Each person must remain seated. You can use both hands to produce the name tent. Do not help each other. Stand when your name tent is done.
 - D. Group 4: Each person must stand up. You must use only one hand, your non-dominant hand, to produce the name tent. You must keep your dominant hand behind your back. You may not use the desk, table, or chair to help you. You may not help each other. Sit when your name tent is done.
 7. Each group will be timed. They have two minutes to complete the activity. All should begin on the teacher's "begin" command.
 8. The teacher should draw a table on the board with each group and 30 sec, 60 sec, 90 sec, and 120 secs. When a student stands from the appropriate group, note the time and add a tally mark.

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9. After 2 minutes, stop the activity. Discuss the following points:
 - A. Ask a student from each group if it was hard to produce the tents. Have them explain why or why not.
 - B. Which groups finished quickest? Why?
 - C. Which groups took the longest to finish? Why?
10. Ask students to transfer this knowledge to what was said about human capital. In this scenario, which groups probably had access to more human capital? Answer: the ones with less restraints and limits on them. They represent the groups in society with more access to resources such as education and finances. Ask students to determine the qualifications of each group in educational terms.
11. Representation of groups during the activity:
 - A. Group 4: high school dropouts
 - B. Group 1: high school graduates
 - C. Group 2: high school graduates with some additional training (associates, bachelors, or trade school)
 - D. Group 3: advanced degrees
12. Begin a discussion on the development of human capital. We all tend to develop human capital throughout life. Ask students to list examples of human capital that they possess. (Answers: reading; math skills; computer skills; athletic skills; leadership skills; boy scout/ girl scout training; instruments; etc)
 - High School: The teacher could ask students if technology has impacted our ability to develop human capital in a positive way. Allow students to discuss. (Answers: Online coursework, increased networking via platforms like LinkedIn and Twitter, access to educational platforms and webinars, Youtube, etc. Negative impact: validity of sources and accreditation; virtual learning may not be as impactful, etc.)
13. What investments have you made or will you make to continue to develop this human capital? (Answers: practice; continue reading, continued technical classes; joining more clubs; learning more music; etc)
14. Are there opportunity costs to developing this capital? Come up with an example from your life of an opportunity cost (Example: I really like to read but I need to do a better job of leading the Student Council so I have to put off reading in order to get several tasks done for the leadership position I hold.)
15. The teacher should now present the website the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook (link: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/a-z-index.htm>). Spend a few minutes explaining the website and what is contained on it.
16. Students should enter the url on their device. On a document, have students list of 4 different careers that interest them. (This task could have been done as homework the evening prior to this activity so that students would have more time to think).
17. For each job listed, have students gather the following information:
 - A. Median income:
 - B. Amount of education required to enter the field:
 - C. Whether or not work experience is required:
 - D. How much on the job training is needed:
 - E. The number of jobs available in 2016:
 - F. The expected growth rate from 2016-2026:

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- G. The employment change from 2016-2026:
 - H. A brief description of what people in this job do:
 - I. Human capital you have to do the job:
 - J. Human capital you need to do the job:
 - *At least one of the jobs chosen must be one that is showing growth potential over the next decade. The teacher should encourage students to think outside the box and discover career paths that they may not have considered. A career counselor could help guide students.
 - **A career inventory can be used prior to this activity to give students some direction and guidance in their strengths and weaknesses.
18. Each student should then select their top choice of job. The teacher should arrange for someone in that field to come in on a Job Fair day and talk with the student(s) about what they do. The student(s) can ask questions regarding human capital, what the job entails, etc.
19. The teacher could end the unit by asking students to list two longterm goals that they have for themselves in order to develop human capital. Perhaps they will sign up for a class, attend a summer camp, read information, etc in order to achieve the goal.

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