

RIGHTS IN PRACTICE

LESSON 6: RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

Lesson aim:

- ↘ To highlight to students the responsibilities that come from rights.
- ↘ To highlight employee responsibilities and outline acceptable workplace behaviour and conduct.
- ↘ Expand students' knowledge and understanding of workplaces and their issues.
- ↘ Outline acceptable workplace behaviour and conduct.
- ↘ Explore workers' responsibilities and explain to students what is expected in the workplace.

Learning objectives:

At the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- ↘ explain some of the key responsibilities of workers and employers in the workplace;
- ↘ identify and list behaviour which is acceptable in the workplace; and
- ↘ outline how problems or issues are dealt with in the workplace.

Lesson outline:

In-class activity: Discussion

Working in pairs, ask students to think about the different roles they play in life, such as son/daughter, student, young worker, friend. Write each group's contribution on the blackboard or flipchart. Next ask students to identify the tasks associated with each of these roles (such as schoolwork, house chores, errands etc). Put each contribution where all students can see them then discuss the differences between the roles and associated responsibilities.

Explain to students that within the workplace there are different types and levels of responsibility attached to different roles and it is important that they understand what is expected of them in the workplace.

Put students into groups and ask them to consider the rights, responsibilities and roles of employees and employers.

Then ask them to consider the following areas, exploring their view on norms, rules and responsibilities:

- ↘ Behaviour.
- ↘ Attendance (hours of work, absences and late arrivals).
- ↘ Work performance.
- ↘ Company policies.
- ↘ Procedures for problem solving and conflict resolution.
- ↘ Role of the workplace supervisor and manager.
- ↘ Dress code.

Provide students with **Worksheet 6** to complete either in class or for homework.

Follow-on class activity: Discussions

Discuss the previous completed exercise to ensure everyone understands the concept of rights and corresponding responsibilities. Ask students to volunteer their working experiences. Did they know about these rights? What is the most important thing they have learned about the workplace? Look for a volunteer to share their working experiences and what they believe their rights and entitlements entail. The class should produce a list of employment rights that they believe should exist.

LESSON 6: RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE WORKPLACE (CONTINUED)

Student activity: Fact-finding the company rules

Using the internet, students should try to find out the following information:

- What companies have rules and policies available to download?
- Using two sets of company rules and procedures, provide a sample of their rules? Which rules do you think are the most/least important? Give reasons for your answer.
- What do they have to say about workers' responsibilities?
- Do you think the rules are fair? Why/why not?

Select one rule from those that you have found and imagine a work colleague had breached or broken that rule. They come to you for advice. Describe how you would go about dealing with this issue.

Student activity: Presenting the company rules

Using the information gathered above on company rules and procedures make a presentation to your class on one of the following, highlighting what you think young people entering the workplace should be made aware of and how you think this should happen.

- Attendance/absences/late arrivals.
- Work performance.
- Behaviour in the workplace.

Student activity: Essay writing

Ask students to write an essay, no longer than 400 words, using examples from family and friends, on any of the following or a topic of the teacher's choosing:

- Workplace do's and don'ts.
- The ideal workplace.
- 10 things every worker should know.

In-class activity: Guest speaker

Arrange to have a guest speaker come to one of your classes to speak to students about the workplace and expectations in terms of employees and employers. Ask students to put together a list of guest speakers they would like to hear and a list of questions that they would like to put to their guest speaker. The questions should specifically focus on issues of concern to young people in the workplace.

The class should then devise a process to decide on a) who the guest speaker should be and b) an agreed list of questions.

(NOTE: The Youth Connect programme in conjunction with the Youth Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions can provide guest speakers to talk to classes on issues affecting young people in the workplace. Contact www.youth-connect.ie for further information and to arrange a booking.)

LESSON 6: RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE WORKPLACE (CONTINUED)

Optional in-class activity: Role play exercise

Ask a number of students to volunteer for the "production line" role play. Explain that they are assembly line workers producing a particular object (the class can decide what they are producing) and they will have a line boss who is in charge of the assembly line. (Activity tip: This activity can be as simple as wrapping or filling boxes. The point is that students should be reliant on each other for the completion of the task.)

Select a line boss from the class who will act as supervisor and puts pressure on the students with new demands, such as go faster, switch seats, that's not right, stop talking, you are late, too slow, don't speak to me, etc.

(NOTE: The product can be anything of your choosing but should involve the students creating something in sequence and as part of a team.)

It is important when appointing a student as a line boss that they have a realistic approach. It might be interesting to run this type of exercise twice, once with a hard line boss approach, another time with a softer approach and ask students to observe:

1. The difference in attitude and behaviour.
2. Attitude to the boss.
3. How the individuals felt during both exercises – was there a difference and how did they feel?

Allow the role-play to continue for about five to ten minutes. At the end of which ask students to discuss the following in groups:

- How did the role-play go? Would you like to work in that workplace? Why?
- What changes would you like to see in the workplace? How could you go about making those changes?

The role play should be re-run either directly after the first one or at a more convenient time to the class. This enactment should incorporate the changes suggested and discussion should then take place after it such as:

- Discuss the changes. Did they work? Why/why not?
- What were the reasons for the success or failure of the changes?

(NOTE: Any situation can be used for the role-playing, but it should involve some type of task.)

Students should develop and enact a role play dealing with a breach of acceptable behaviour in the workplace. Rules and procedures used should be applied from their previous research.

(NOTE: Consult Module 2 on Union Representation regarding representation issues after the role play has been conducted.)