JA Business Communications®

■ Work and Career Readiness

JA Business Communications, a one-semester teacher-led course, equips high school students to focus on communication skills necessary to succeed in business, including communicating up, down, and across organizations, talking about performance, and writing in a business setting.

Volunteers engage with students through a variety of activities that includes subject matter guest speaking and coaching or advising for case study and project course work. Volunteer activities help students better understand the relationship between what they learn in school, their future career, and their successful participation in today's global economy.

The following pages outline the JA course plan.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE OBJECTIVES

- Learn the necessary concepts applicable to state and national educational standards
- Apply these standards-based concepts to the real world
- Synthesize elective concepts through a cumulative, tangible deliverable (project)
- Analyze a business situation or principle through the use of a case study
- Demonstrate the skills necessary for future career pathway success

COURSE OUTLINE

Course Theme	Theme Topics	Project Topic
Interpersonal Communication Skills	Communication and Professionalism Active Listening Polished Presentation Meeting Management	Create a presentation that either informs or persuades.
Business Writing	Writing a Clear Message Writing Persuasive Messages Writing to Inform Writing for the Internet	Sell Yourself: Students craft a cover letter for a job they could currently do, using ethos, logos, and pathos.

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COURSE OUTLINE

Course Theme	Theme Topics	Project Topic
Organizational Communication	1. Communicating Within the Organization 2. Communicating Up the Organization 3. Communicating Down the Organization 4. Communicating Across the Organization	Adjusting for Audience: Students draft an email and/or a post for a company website that communicates the same information/idea to multiple audiences.
Communicating About Performance and Expectations	1. Communicating Performance Expectations 2. Positive and Negative Feedback 3. Handling Criticism 4. Documentation	Students complete a self-evaluation/performance review in multiple competencies such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, etc.

THEME 1: INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Session	Session Description	Guiding Standards	Student Learning Objectives
1: Communication and Professionalism	Students learn about communication strategies and the consequences of poor communication in the workplace. They also learn how communication skills affect a person's perceived professionalism.	• CCTC−ESS03.02: Demonstrate use of the concepts, strategies, and systems for obtaining and conveying ideas and information to enhance communication in the workplace. • CCTC−ESS09.01: Identify and demonstrate positive work behaviors and personal qualities needed to be employable.	1. Describe the consequences of poor communication in the workplace. 2. Explain how using effective communication skills can affect the perception of professionalism. 3. Identify and use the best communication strategy for a specific audience.
2: Active Listening	Students learn about the levels of listening and effective listening strategies. Students complete a listening skills self-assessment and make recommendations to improve listening skills in the workplace.	• CCTC−ESS02.07: Interpret verbal and nonverbal cues/behaviors to enhance communication with coworkers and clients/participants. • CCTC−ESS02.08: Apply active listening skills to obtain and clarify information.	1. Explain effective listening techniques. 2. Analyze workplace situations and make recommendations for improving listening. 3. Self-assess listening skills and identify strategies for improvement.

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THEME 1: INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Session	Session Description	Guiding Standards	Student Learning Objectives
3: Polished Presentation	Students learn about the components of a presentation and how to deliver an effective one. They also learn how to organize information in a logical manner. Students create a persuasive presentation, which they deliver to the class.	• CCTC−ESS02.02: Demonstrate use of the concepts, strategies, and systems for obtaining and conveying ideas and information to enhance communication in the workplace. • CCTC−ESS02.06: Develop and deliver formal and informal presentations using appropriate media to engage and inform audiences. • CCTC−ESS04.06: Operate presentation applications to prepare presentations.	1. Recognize effective presentation techniques. 2. Determine the appropriate information and a logical sequence for sharing it in workplace presentations. 3. Create and deliver an appropriate presentation for a workplace situation.
4: Meeting Management	Students learn steps they can take to facilitate an effective meeting. They compare face-to-face and virtual meetings and when each might be used. Students also learn about virtual meeting tools.	• CCTC−ESS04.09: Employ collaborative/groupware applications to facilitate group work. • CCTC−ESS07.05: Conduct and participate in meetings to accomplish work tasks.	1. Identify and use effective strategies for facilitating meetings. 2. Compare the differences between face-to-face and virtual meetings. 3. Evaluate virtual meeting tools and select the best one for a given situation.

THEME 2: BUSINESS WRITING

Session	Session Description	Guiding Standards	Student Learning Objectives
1: Writing a Clear Message	Students learn how to evaluate their audience and clarify the purpose of their message. Students identify the difference between clear and unclear messages. They also use technology to create clear messages.	• CCTC−ESS02.05: Use correct grammar, punctuation, and terminology to write and edit documents. • CCTC−ESS04.05: Operate writing and publishing applications to prepare business communications.	1. Describe how an effective message addresses the needs of the audience and the purpose of the message. 2. Differentiate between clear and unclear written messages. 3. Use different technological tools to compose clear, succinct, and accurate messages.

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THEME 2: BUSINESS WRITING

Session	Session Description	Guiding Standards	Student Learning Objectives
2: Writing Persuasive Messages	Students learn about creating persuasive messages. They create and use credibility, logic, and emotion to persuade an audience. Students also use social proof to strengthen the persuasiveness of a message.	• CCTC−ESS01.02: Demonstrate language arts knowledge and skills required to pursue the full range of post-secondary education and career opportunities. • CCTC−ESS02.02: Demonstrate use of the concepts, strategies, and systems for obtaining and conveying ideas and information to enhance communication in the workplace.	1. Identify the type of strategy (e.g., credibility, logic, emotion) used in persuasive messages. 2. Describe how audience characteristics influence persuasive messaging strategy. 3. Use social proof to enhance the persuasiveness of a message.
3: Writing to Inform	Students learn about common types of business correspondence and when to use each. They also learn how to use appropriate language in business correspondence.	• CCTC−ESS02.02: Demonstrate use of the concepts, strategies, and systems for obtaining and conveying ideas and information to enhance communication in the workplace.	1. Describe types of business correspondence used to share information internally and externally. 2. Use appropriate language for business correspondence. 3. Analyze the purpose and audience for a message and write an informative letter, memo, or email to share the information.
4: Writing for the Internet	Students learn about different ways that businesses can communicate online, including using websites and social media. Students draft an online message to launch or promote a business of their choosing.	• CCTC−ESS02.02: Demonstrate use of the concepts, strategies, and systems for obtaining and conveying ideas and information to enhance communication in the workplace. • CCTC−ESS04.04: Operate Internet applications to perform workplace tasks.	1. Identify the best online platform for a variety of business communications. 2. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of using online platforms for communicating a business message. 3. Effectively use online platforms for a variety of business communications.

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THEME 3: ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Session	Session Description	Guiding Standards	Student Learning Objectives
1: Communicating Within the Organization	Students learn about communication within a business and how it changes as the business grows. Students explore different tools for communicating within a business and practice sharing information with people at different levels of the organization.	• CCTC–ESS02.02: Demonstrate use of the concepts, strategies, and systems for obtaining and conveying ideas and information to enhance communication in the workplace. • CCTC–ESS05.01: Describe the nature and types of business organizations to build an understanding of the scope of organizations.	1. Describe how communication within a business changes as the organization grows. 2. Identify appropriate tools for communicating within businesses of various sizes. 3. Identify the most appropriate methods for communicating with people at different levels of an organization.
2: Communicating Up the Organization	Students learn about upward communication strategies and why they are important to a business. They learn about barriers that prevent effective communication. Students also identify techniques to facilitate effective upward communication.	• CCTC–ESS02.02: Demonstrate use of the concepts, strategies, and systems for obtaining and conveying ideas and information to enhance communication in the workplace. • CCTC–ESS07.04: Establish and maintain effective working relationships with all levels of personnel and other departments in order to accomplish objectives and tasks.	1. Explain why upward communication is beneficial to a business. 2. Describe barriers to upward communication in an organization. 3. Identify methods for encouraging upward communication in an organization.
3: Communicating Down the Organization	Students learn about downward communication and how to improve it within an organization. They also determine whether downward communication is effective and role-play downward communication skills.	• CCTC–ESS02.02: Demonstrate use of the concepts, strategies, and systems for obtaining and conveying ideas and information to enhance communication in the workplace. • CCTC–ESS02.07: Interpret verbal and nonverbal cues/behaviors to enhance communication with coworkers and clients/participants. • CCTC–ESS07.01: Employ leadership skills to accomplish organizational goals and objectives. • CCTC–ESS07.02: Employand staff development skills to foster positive working relationships and accomplish organizational goals.	1. Identify methods for improving downward communication within an organization. 2. Interpret communication cues that demonstrate the effectiveness of downward communication. 3. Demonstrate the skills used in effective downward communication.

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THEME 3: ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Session	Session Description	Guiding Standards	Student Learning Objectives
4: Communicating Across the Organization	Students learn about horizontal and diagonal communication and the strategies they can use to improve these communication flows. They also learn about the organizational grapevine.	• CCTC–ESS02.02: Demonstrate use of the concepts, strategies, and systems for obtaining and conveying ideas and information to enhance communication in the workplace. • CCTC–ESS02.07: Interpret verbal and nonverbal cues/behaviors to enhance communication with coworkers and clients/participants.	1. Define horizontal and diagonal communications. 2. Identify strategies for improving horizontal and diagonal communications. 3. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of the organizational grapevine.

THEME 4: COMMUNICATING ABOUT PERFORMANCE AND EXPECTATIONS

Session	Session Description	Guiding Standards	Student Learning Objectives
1: Communicating About Performance and Expectations	Students learn how to define and share information related to job performance effectively. They also practice applying this knowledge to a work-based scenario.	• CCTC–ESS07.01: Employ leadership skills to accomplish organizational goals and objectives. • CCTC–ESS07.03: Employ teamwork skills to achieve collective goals and use team members' talents effectively. • CCTC–ESS08.02: Interpret and explain written organizational policies and procedures to help employees perform their jobs according to employer rules and expectations.	1. Define and clearly communicate employee performance expectations. 2. Establish a plan for discussing employee performance expectations. 3. Use strategies to discuss employee performance.
2: Positive and Negative Feedback	Students learn the difference between positive and negative feedback and how to give effective feedback. Students evaluate the effectiveness of feedback and use verbal communication techniques to deliver feedback effectively.	• CCTC–ESS07.01: Employ leadership skills to accomplish organizational goals and objectives. • CCTC–ESS07.03: Employ teamwork skills to achieve collective goals and use team members' talents effectively. • CCTC–ESS08.02: Interpret and explain written organizational policies and procedures to help employees perform their jobs according to employer rules and expectations.	1. Describe characteristics of effective feedback. 2. Identify ineffective feedback. 3. Use effective communication techniques to give feedback.

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Session	Session Description	Guiding Standards	Student Learning Objectives
3: Handling Criticism	Students assess their ability to receive feedback. They also learn strategies for using feedback effectively, including how to use verbal and nonverbal communication skills to manage their response.	• CCTC–ESS07.04: Establish and maintain effective working relationships with all levels of personnel and other departments in order to accomplish objectives and tasks. • CCTC–ESS09.01: Identify and demonstrate positive work behaviors and personal qualities needed to be employable. • CCTC–ESS09.06: Identify and exhibit traits for retaining employment to maintain employment once secured.	1. Assess your ability to receive criticism. 2. Identify and apply strategies for using feedback constructively. 3. Use verbal and nonverbal communication skills to manage personal response to constructive criticism.
4: Documentation	Students learn about the importance of business documentation. They identify the stakeholders who benefit from different kinds of documentation. Students also develop a policy and procedure document for a business.	• CCTC–ESS02.03: Locate, organize, and reference written information from various sources to communicate with coworkers and clients/participants. • CCTC–ESS03.03: Identify, write, and monitor workplace performance goals to guide progress in assigned areas of responsibility and accountability. • CCTC–ESS03.04: Conduct technical research to gather information necessary for decision making. • CCTC–ESS10.01: Employ information management techniques and strategies in the workplace to assist in decision making.	1. Recognize documentation requirements for a business. 2. Develop a business document that communicates a policy, establishes an agreement, or meets a regulatory need.

CASE STUDY: COMMUNICATING SUCCESSFULLY

Students learn about the different aspects of a communication model and the importance of good communication in the workplace. They read scenarios about workplace communication, analyze the communication problems, and use the communication model to make recommendations for improvement.

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