

UNIT 7: LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE



INTRODUCTION

Learning from Experience is the seventh unit in the *Habits of Work* curriculum, and the third unit in part three, *Keeping Your Job*. The pick-and-choose lesson activities are designed to suit the needs and interests of your students. See Appendix A in *Keeping Your Job* for a short summary of the full curriculum.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will be able to:

1. Identify important skills in their current field and areas in which they could improve or grow.
2. Describe their transferable skills.
3. Determine personal growth from past experiences and create opportunities for future personal growth.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR INSTRUCTOR

This unit offers practice internalizing the value and process of lifelong learning and reflection, and makes explicit how we get better with time and practice. Investigations into the habits of experts in several fields are pointing to a magic figure, 10,000 hours, which seems to be the amount of focused practice one needs to do to achieve expertise. This also equates to working at something for three hours a day for five years. It's interesting to note the correlation to the level of competence we associate with any worker with five years' experience.

Good judgment comes from experience, and experience often comes from poor judgment. No one likes to make big mistakes or be involved with failures (projects, relationships, or initiatives). However, the process of examining the difficult experience with honesty can yield a rich harvest of personal and professional learning.

It's just as important to examine successes in order to become consciously competent instead of accidentally competent. Reflection after any experience helps reveal our personal qualities and job habits that we would like to keep and strengthen, change, or shed.

The rapidly changing workplace means people's ability to identify their transferable skills becomes ever more important as multiple career changes become commonplace. Our students



need to be aware of their own growth and how existing skills can be used in new areas. Sometimes the most valuable contribution to a team comes from a member who approaches the problem through a different lens.

Readings

A quick overview of the 10,000-hour theory: www.squidoo.com/10000-hour-rule

Fascinating blog by Daniel Coyle, the author of *The Talent Code*: thetalentcode.com/. *The Talent Code*'s tag line is "Greatness isn't born. It's grown. Here's how."

Explanation of a learning curve: kaylaslearningcurve.wordpress.com/2011/04/01/what-is-a-learning-curve-anyway/

Intriguing thoughts about the work world our students are entering: workawesome.com/career/what-is-a-21st-century-career/

The worst Jobs for the 21st century (from late 2007): www.forbes.com/2007/10/08/jobs-employment-economics-biz-wash-cx_bw_1009worstjobs.html

UNIT PREPARATION CONSIDERATIONS

Tasks

Prep the workplace supervisors about the kinds of questions students will be asking.

Check in with the workplace supervisors about the workplace's evaluation procedure to make sure it would be appropriate for students to ask about it. For example, is the process formal enough to analyze?

Explore the website, www.mynextmove.org/, so that you can facilitate students through it. It's a user-friendly front end to O*NET OnLine, the federal bank of occupational information.

Speakers

Scan the classroom introduction activities for speaker ideas. Contact these people early to arrange dates and times.

Prior Knowledge

You may need to preteach some of these concepts depending on the lessons and activities you select:

- life experience
- good judgment
- soft skills (see the Personal Presentation unit in *Learning About Work*)
- learning curve
- changing workplace



SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT IDEAS

Following are ideas for a summative assessment for this unit:

1. Personal commercials. Make a commercial advertising yourself for the next job you'd like to have. "My name is _____. I would like to _____. I can already _____. In my current job, I've done/learned _____, which I could use in the new job. I'm excited to learn _____" (learning outcomes 1, 2, 3).
2. Make S.M.A.R.T. goal cards for yourself in three areas:
 - a skill you'd like to learn or improve
 - a transferable skill you'll apply in a new area
 - a goal that will stretch you

Explain how each goal is specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. You can find more information on S.M.A.R.T. goals at topachievement.com/smart.html (learning outcomes 1, 2, 3).

UNIT KICKOFF

1. Show this graphic of "Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from poor judgment" at pastorron7.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/yep.jpg. Use it to start a discussion of what it means to learn from experience. Try to tease out the concept that improvement comes from effort, practice, and reflection.
2. Scroll down about five screens at this webpage to see a good graphic flowchart about how we learn from experience: www.businessballs.com/experiential_learning.htm. Ask the class for three quick examples of recent activities or actions they have done. Facilitate talking through each activity or action according to the chart.

LESSONS

This unit is divided into the following lessons. The lessons contain choices for activities and are organized into an instructional sequence around a workplace assignment.

1. Identify and evaluate skills
2. Identify transferable skills
3. Notice growth
4. Create growth
5. Stretch yourself



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
I. Identify and evaluate skills	Introduction – individual	 Journal. Do a Google search on “blank skills and qualities.” In place of the word, <i>blank</i> , type the name of a career that interests you. Investigate a few websites and list the skills and qualities needed to be successful in that career. Highlight the ones you have. Use a different color highlighter for the ones you still need to acquire.
		 Journal. Read the short article, “Evaluate Yourself,” at b.lesseverything.com/2008/5/19/evaluate-yourself Make a list of five questions you would ask yourself to evaluate your work performance.
	Introduction – classroom	 Speaker. Invite someone from the local Chamber of Commerce or your school’s vocational rehabilitation counselor to come talk about the local job market and the kinds of skills that are important for workers to develop.
		Categories. Students bring in the list of skills from the career investigation they did at home. Students review the list of skills and then try to come up with general categories that skills fall under: specific work skills, machinery operation, writing skills, communication skills.
		Role-play. Make a list of careers. Take turns being the new employee and explaining what you can do and what you need to learn, based on your actual real-life skills.
	Workplace activity	 Ask your supervisor to tell you what has changed in your type of workplace in the past 10 years. What skills do workers need now that they did not need 10 years ago? What has stayed the same (e.g., the value of a good work ethic, punctuality)?
	 Ask your supervisor to review the company’s employee evaluation form with you	



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
<p><i>Identify and evaluate skills, continued</i></p>		<p>and explain the reasons for the different parts. Ask at least three questions to deepen your understanding.</p>
		<p>Request a copy of the job description for a job you'd like to have someday. Read the job description with your supervisor or coworker to make sure you understand all the parts.</p>
	<p>Follow-up – individual</p>	<p> Journal. Using the job description from your workplace, list 10 different skills you need to have to get that job. Include interpersonal skills in the list. Rate yourself from one to five on each skill, where one is low (beginner) and five is high (can do it well already). Write down what education you will need after high school, if any, to obtain all the necessary skills.</p>
		<p> Journal. Research the job you'd like to have someday on www.mynextmove.org/. Make a Venn diagram that compares the job requirements in your workplace job description to the skills, knowledge, and abilities listed on the website. Any surprises?</p>
	<p>Follow-up – classroom</p>	<p>Venn diagram. Create a giant Venn diagram that compares current and future skills needed in the students' different workplaces. What can you conclude? Are there patterns across industries?</p>
		<p>Applicant ranking. Teacher makes up a fictitious ad for a job and lists a number of skills the applicant will need. Students get slips of paper saying how many of those skills each of their applicants has (e.g., possesses two of five skills needed for this job). Students write a profile for their applicant for the job and give the profiles to the teacher to read aloud. The class then ranks the applicants, explaining their reasons.</p>
	<p>Future job. Students make up an ad for a career job of their choice, listing six to 10 skills necessary for the job. The teacher makes a generic job application that asks the student</p>	



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
<i>Identify and evaluate skills, continued</i>		applying for the job why they are qualified for the job and what they will need for additional training for the job. Students complete the job application.
2. Identify transferable skills	Introduction – individual	 Journal. Think of a job you’d like to have. Look at the classified ads in your local newspaper or on www.craigslist.com to get ideas. Summarize skills you learned in a previous experience that would help you succeed in this future job. Which ones would you highlight on a résumé or in a cover letter?
		 Watch this 2:35-minute video, “Transferable Skills”: www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJJOW_GtNGo Write down two experiences where you were very successful (e.g., home, sports, club, job, friend, games). List at least five transferable skills you can pull out of those experiences.
	Introduction – classroom	Class skill bank. Make a three column chart: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a job skill someone has • where he or she uses it • other jobs where this skill would be important Remember to include soft skills in the chart. On the Spot game. I am thinking of a skill that’s often transferred from home to sports, or camp to home, or school to home, or sports to a job. Students ask yes or no questions to guess the skill.
	Workplace activity	 Ask three people what skills they have brought from other jobs. What skills did they bring from school? Mental notes. What skills are people using that they could use in a different kind of job?
	Follow-up – individual	 Journal. Make a list of your transferable skills. For example, what skills have you learned at home that you use in school? What have you learned at school that you use at home? What



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
<p><i>Identify transferable skills, continued</i></p>		<p>skills have you learned from sports that you use at home or school?</p>
		<p> Journal. Tell the story of one of your transferable skills: I learned this skill when I was five years old. My mother taught me ... then when I went to school this skill improved by ... Today, I use this skill daily ... at school and home.</p>
	<p>Follow-up – classroom</p>	<p>Stump the class. Students make their own lists of their job skills, and then pick out one job skill they think is not transferable. They call out their untransferable skill and challenge the class to think of another job where it could be used.</p> <p>Switch game. Class develops a list of 20 jobs (go for a big variety) and posts them around the room. Students make individual lists of their transferable skills (e.g., What skills have you learned at home that you use in school?; learned at school that you use at home?; learned from sports that you use at home or school?). Lists in hand, all students stand by a job where they could use their transferable skills. Switch! Students move to another job. Teacher interviews a few students, “How will you use your transferable skills in this job?” Switch at least three times.</p>
		<p>Meet me in the middle. Assign each student one job skill that is needed in a number of occupations (e.g., strong organizational skills, good leadership skills). Ask the students to form a circle. Using a list of common occupations, call out occupations and ask all students who think their assigned job skills apply to that occupation to meet in the middle of the circle. Students can say how they think their particular skills are needed in the occupation. Have students keep track of how many times they are in the middle during the activity. Are there some job skills that are needed for almost every occupation?</p>



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3. Notice growth	Introduction – individual	<p>Sealed letter. Write a letter to yourself. Think about yourself and write about (or list) at least five things you are proud of and five things you would like to work on. Give the letter to your teacher. In a few weeks you will open the letter and do a reflection (at the end of the Stretch Yourself lesson.)</p> <p> Journal. Recall a significant experience in your life. Describe it in three sentences, then describe several ways you grew or changed as a result of this experience.</p>
	Introduction – classroom	<p>In small groups, describe a time you learned from an experience and how you changed as a result of the experience.</p> <p>Body Machine. Discuss the concept of a learning curve, that in the beginning you are slow and make mistakes and need support. Next create a body machine that you start with one movement and then add another movement until you have six to 10 movements running the body machine. Help students see this is similar to a learning curve in that you can't imagine in the beginning how it will all come together, but eventually see the cumulative effect of adding skills one at a time.</p>
	Workplace activity	<p> Ask two people to remember their early days on the job. Ask them to tell you about a significant learning experience they had.</p> <p>Mental notes. What did you learn today? It could be job skill or a interpersonal skill or a new understanding.</p>
	Follow-up – individual	<p> Journal. Write the story of what you learned today. How did you grow as a person? Which life or work skills did you practice today?</p> <p> Journal. Make a trail map of your life journey and important learning along the way.</p>



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
<p><i>Notice growth, continued</i></p>		<p>It could be a waterway, a roadway, or in an airplane, a spaceship, or anything!</p> <p>Design a personal report card. The report card image at 1.bp.blogspot.com/_WZ7dM_6DYfo/SwWT-eTMqSI/AAAAAAAAAU8/857YjBGP37E/s1600/ReportCard.jpg may be helpful as a template. List five things about you that you consider important. Describe how you've grown in each of those areas in the last year.</p> <p> Journal. Draw a learning curve and plot yourself on it in regards to your workplace. Ahead of the point you plotted, list some skills you have already learned. After the point you plotted, write down three skills you have yet to master.</p>
	<p>Follow-up – classroom</p>	<p>Bumper stickers. What are some inspiring sayings that people use to help them stay strong when learning is difficult? Create mottos that will help you keep going when that happens to you.</p>
<p>4. Create growth</p>	<p>Introduction – Individual</p>	<p> Watch the 1:00-minute video, “How to Take Criticism: Seek Clarification”: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ua0ji83HB-g&feature=related. Be on the lookout for the next time someone criticizes you. Practice the suggestions from this video. Then write a journal entry describing how you felt when you were criticized, how it felt to ask for clarification, and if your feelings changed after you got the answers to your questions.</p> <p> Journal. Scan a newspaper or online news site for some bad news. List what might have gone wrong from this event to happen. Identify five things those involved could change to have a better outcome in the future.</p>
	<p>Introduction – classroom</p>	<p>Debriefing practice. Pick a recent event in</p>



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
<p>Create growth, continued</p>		<p>school and have the class evaluate it. What went well? What needs improvement? Ideas and changes for next time?</p>
		<p> Watch the 1:00-minute video on criticism (above), then the 1:19-minute video, “Deadliest Catch: Learning Curve video,” which shows a new deck hand making a mistake and getting yelled at: http://www.yourdiscovery.com/video/deadliest-catch-learning-curve/ Reenact this scene in class as shown in the video. Then do a second version, with the deck hand asking for clarification instead of defending himself. Notice if and how the emotions change. Discuss how it changes the outcome.</p>
	<p>Workplace activity</p>	<p>Work with your supervisor to choose a meaningful task. Complete it. Make mental notes about what went well, what needs improvement, and what you would do differently next time.</p>
		<p> Ask your supervisor for some suggestions about how to improve your work performance. Practice asking for clarification. Right after the conversation, make mental notes about your feelings during the conversation. The next day, take a few minutes to make mental notes about your feelings now that a day has gone by. Are they the same or different?</p>
	<p>Follow-up – individual</p>	<p> Journal. Write up your evaluation of your chosen task at work. Make three lists: what went well, what needs improvement, ideas for next time. Put a star next to the changes you would most like to make. How could others support or guide you?</p>
		<p> Journal. Briefly describe your supervisor’s suggestions for how you could improve your work performance. Draw a series of faces or</p>



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
<p>Create growth, continued</p>		<p>cartoons that show the different feelings you experienced during the conversation. Draw more faces that show your feelings a day later.</p>
	<p>Follow-up – classroom</p>	<p>Role-play. Role-play pairs of situations where 1) a student is criticized and 2) a student is given more positive feedback. The purpose is to let the students practice controlling their response to criticism and handling difficult situations calmly and appropriately.</p>
		<p>Feeling cards. As a group, create a class set of feeling cards that describe possible responses people have to hearing suggestions for improvement. Students then share their stories and choose three to five feelings from the class feeling cards that best describe how they felt.</p>
		<p>S.M.A.R.T. cards. In small groups, make at least one goal card for each person based the workplace activity completed. Use the S.M.A.R.T. goal format found at topachievement.com/smart.html. Help each other write goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely.</p>
<p>5. Stretch yourself</p>	<p>Introduction – individual</p>	<p>  Watch the 1:24-minute video, “How Struggle Becomes Skill”: thetalentcode.com/video-2/ Observe yourself for a day and notice a time you are working at the edge of your ability. Notice another another time when you are not working hard at all. Does the video’s messgae apply to what you experienced? Explain.</p> <p> Journal. Set an ambitious but acheivable goal for the next week in some area you care about. Make a plan for what you’ll do each day toward that goal.</p>
	<p>Introduction – classroom</p>	<p>Failure stories. Read the article, “How to Fail at Practically Anything,” at www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/how-to-fail-at-practically-anything.html. Write the six failure strategies on the board. In small groups share stories where students have used</p>



Lessons	Instructional Sequence	Activities
<p><i>Stretch yourself, continued</i></p>		<p>some of these strategies.</p>
		<p>Read an inspiring story of someone who has learned from a challenging experience. Ask students to think of others that they know who have learned from experience. Share the stories.</p>
	<p>Workplace activity</p>	<p> Ask two people to tell you about a time they had to stretch to accomplish something. What was hard? What was satisfying?</p>
		<p> Ask someone to tell you about one risk he or she took that worked, and another one that didn't. What did he or she learn from each experience?</p>
	<p>Follow-up – individual</p>	<p> Journal. Sealed letter reflection. Open your sealed letter from the introductory activity for the Notice Growth lesson. Write a reflection about how you have stretched yourself in the past few weeks. What progress did you make in the areas you wanted to improve? Are there other things about which you are proud? What are your next short-term goals?</p>
		<p>Crazy goal. Think of something challenging but realistic that you'd like to achieve. Think of a second goal that is too risky (physically, emotionally, anything). Make a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts the goal that stretches you with the goal that pushes you to take an unhealthy risk.</p>
	<p>Follow-up – classroom</p>	<p>Practice. Each student chooses something to practice at the edge of their ability for two weeks. Check in with each other every few days to compare experiences and observations.</p> <p>Group share. Share the workplace stories of successful and unsuccessful risks. Look for patterns or universal lessons.</p>



CONNECTIONS TO NH CAREER DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM

The NH Career Development Curriculum Framework (October 2006) establishes seven curriculum standards “that define what New Hampshire students should know and be able to do relative to career development” at the end of grades four, eight, 10, and 12. Listed below are the End of Grade 10 and End of Grade 12 proficiency standards addressed in this unit, some more intensely than others. *Habits of Work* provides practice toward these standards. Student competence will depend on the activities you choose and the depth of student practice. You may need to develop individual activities in order for students to achieve competence.

- 1.1 Access information from multiple sources and information-retrieval systems.
- 1.3 Demonstrate the ability to summarize ideas and information.
- 1.4 Demonstrate the ability to use a variety of organizational structures such as cause-and-effect patterns, paraphrasing, and charts and graphs to communicate ideas and information.
- 1.5 Demonstrate the ability to effectively and logically support individual ideas.
- 1.6 Use cross-referencing while gathering information.
- 1.8 Recognize, evaluate, and respond appropriately to persuasive forms of communication.
- 2.3 Gather and use appropriate materials and resources in making individual and career decisions, including printed materials, human resources, and information accessed through technology.
- 2.4 Use logic to draw conclusions from available information.
- 2.5 Develop a plan that reflects research and builds on relevant precedents.
- 2.6 Evaluate an event or activity in terms of expressed purposes.
- 2.8 Devise strategies for improving the performance of a system.
- 2.9 Test the effectiveness of the strategies employed.
- 3.1 Independently identify resources and tools needed to achieve learning goals.
- 3.2 Demonstrate an understanding of how courses of study relate to the selection of college majors, further training, and/or entry to the job market.
- 3.3 Describe how skills developed in academic and vocational programs relate to career goals.
- 4.1 Demonstrate the ability to use peer and adult feedback.
- 4.2 Demonstrate an understanding of how individual characteristics relate to achieving individual, social, educational, and career goals.
- 4.3 Demonstrate the importance of responsibility, dependability, punctuality, and integrity in school, the workplace, and adult life.
- 5.1 Demonstrate confidence and positive self-concept in beginning work-related experiences, practice or actual.
- 5.3 Develop the ability to use constructive criticism.
- 6.5 Identify individuals in selected occupations as possible information sources, role models, or mentors.
- 6.6 Consult with and observe adult role models at work to identify elements of their work and determine the need for specific knowledge and skills.
- 6.7 Demonstrate skills and behaviors necessary for a successful interview.
- 7.1 Evaluate the relationship between individual interests, abilities, and skills, and achieving individual, social, educational, and career goals.
- 7.2 Demonstrate a positive attitude toward work and learning.



7.4 Apply employability and job-readiness skills to internship, mentoring, shadowing, and/or other world-of-work-related experiences.

End of Grade 12

- 1.3 Present, explain, and defend positions, using visual aids when appropriate.
- 1.4 Demonstrate the effective use of the conventions of the English language in communications.
- 1.5 Demonstrate the ability to adjust communication style and language so that it's appropriate to the situation, topic, purpose, and audience.
- 2.5 Demonstrate how to analyze the interrelationships of events/ideas from several perspectives.
- 3.1 Evaluate the processes used to achieve goals and improve the qualities of resulting products.
- 4.1 Demonstrate behaviors that maintain physical and emotional health.
- 4.2 Demonstrate knowledge of how individuals grow and develop throughout their lives.
- 5.2 Demonstrate the ability to respect the rights of, and accept responsibility for, oneself and others.
- 5.3 Demonstrate effective and flexible team skills as a team member or leader.
- 6.3 Demonstrate knowledge of how occupational skills and knowledge can be acquired through leisure activities.
- 6.4 Explain how the changing workplace requires lifelong learning and upgrading of skills.
- 6.5 Analyze the effects of the changing workplace on the individual, employers, workers, labor organizations, the economy, and society.
- 6.6 Explain how employment opportunities relate to education and training.
- 6.8 Describe the impact of factors such as population, economic and societal trends, and geographic location on occupational opportunities.
- 6.9 Demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which work, family, and leisure roles are interrelated.