FaceSpace Project Lesson 1: Introduction to Social Networks

SUBMITTED BY: Kathryn McGinn

SUBJECT(S): Career Development

GRADE LEVEL(S): 9, 10, 11, 12

☰ OVERVIEW:

This is the first lesson in a series about workplace expectations. As such, this lesson addresses some broad concepts about the workplace. Subsequent lessons will provide more specific suggestions about topics such as workplace norms, etiquette and dress codes. In this lesson, students will discuss the terms "social capital" and "social networks" and consider how these concepts apply to their own lives. After reading the Knowledge@Wharton article, "Connecting the Corporate Dots: Social Networks Reveal How Employees and Companies Operate," students will consider the role of social capital and networks in the workplace. Finally, this lesson will introduce students to the "FaceSpace" project, which they will work on throughout this module.

☰ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Career Development, III. Workplace Expectations

☰ RELATED ARTICLES:

- "Workplace Etiquette: Would You 'Ghost' Your Employer?"
- "Is TikTok Invading Your Privacy?"
- "How Clean Is Your Digital Footprint?"
- "Educator Toolkit: Technology and Privacy"
- "Educator Toolkit: Digital Footprints"
- "Career Insight: Sachin Rekhi on Why You Shouldn't Fear Rejection"

- "Breaking Down Community Barriers: The Fight for Environmental Justice"
- "An Arctic Teen's Viral Tunes Save His Language from Extinction"
- "#ExploreMuseums: Using Social Media to Improve Your Future Prospects"

Common Core Standard(s):

- ELA CCR Reading 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- ELA CCR Reading 2: Determine the central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- ELA CCR Speaking and Listening 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Objectives/Purposes:

- Students will understand the concepts of social capital and social network and will consider how these terms apply to their own lives.
- Students will read/analyze the article to obtain relevant information.
- Students will begin to think about workplace expectations.

Knowledge@Wharton Article:

- "Connecting the Corporate Dots: Social Networks Reveal How Employees and Companies Operate" (students do not need to read the last section of the article: Staying on the Line)

Other Resources/Materials:

- Comprehension questions for "Connecting the Corporate Dots" (Handout A)
- FaceSpace handout (Handout B)

Activities:

1. Ask students how they would define the term social network. After getting their input, share the Wharton Global Youth Program definition of social network: "A social network is a social structure of individuals that are linked in one or more ways. Like friendship, financial exchange, group membership, or family ties. Online social networking sites like Facebook enable social networks to form and grow. However, it's important to note that some of us did have friends before the advent of social networking sites." *(5 mins)*

2. As a class, have students brainstorm on the social networks to which they belong. Give students five minutes to write in more detail about one social network to which they belong and describe the benefits of being a part of that group. Students share with a partner and volunteers share with the class. *(10 mins)*

3. Share the definition for social capital: "Social capital refers to the connections within and between social networks, and the degree to which a community or society collaborates and cooperates to achieve mutual benefits. Aside from environmental benefits, a tree-planting program can also help build social capital by giving an opportunity to neighbors to work on something together." Ask students to describe what kind of social capital they currently possess? What kind of social capital would be helpful to have when looking for a job? *(5 mins)*

4. Have students read the Knowledge@Wharton article to learn more about the value of social networks and capital. Hand out the reading guide (see end of lesson), and ask students to fill in the answers as they read. *(10 mins)*

5. After students have finished the article and reading guide, discuss as a class. Make sure students address the key points:

a. Why do companies want to understand how social networks operate? In other words, how does knowledge about social networks benefit companies?

- Helps them understand how companies operate, how employee and board members interact, how key employees can be identified, and how relationships can be used to improve productivity and communication.
- Learn how information flows (or does not flow) through the company.

- Consider how different groups of people work together.
- Identify "cosmopolitans": employees critical to information flow.

b. How can jobseekers benefit from social networks?

- People often find jobs through acquaintances (even more than through friends and family members).
- Jobseekers can use connections to learn more about open positions, organizations, etc., and be better prepared for interviews?

c. What is "positive degree correlation"? How does this phenomenon benefit some people? How might it harm others?

- "Big hitters hang out with big hitters": i.e., the corporate elite have a close social network that allows them to compare/borrow governance practices and ownership structures.
- Difficult for new members to join; power concentrated in the hands of an elite few.

(5 mins)

6. Explain that this lesson is the first in a series about social networks and workplace expectations. As students continue in this module, they will work in groups to complete a "FaceSpace" project that ties together all that they are learning. Hand out the "FaceSpace" assignment and go over the requirements. Answer any student questions. Allow students to form groups (or assign groups). *(5 mins)*

Tying it All Together:

Tell students they will continue to learn more about workplace expectations throughout the week. Encourage students to incorporate what they learn into their "FaceSpace" projects. Ask students how they can draw on their own social networks to learn more about workplace expectations. *(5 mins)*

Practice Outside of the Classroom:

If students want to do additional reading about social networks, suggest the New York Times article about Alexandra Roberts, "A former geek offers hope," available at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/26/fashion/an-ex-geek-offers-hope-to-teenagers.html. Do students agree with the author's description of social networks in high schools?

What Worked and What I Would Do Differently:

I have changed this lesson to give students more time to think about concrete examples of social networks in their own lives and how these networks have been beneficial to them. The first time I taught this unit, I found that students did not actually grasp the concept of a "social network" just from discussing the definition and reading the article.