

TEACHING NOTES

Roger Cordiner: Keeping Planes on Schedule

Appropriate Grade Levels: 6 – 8 (This lesson can be used as the start of a larger research project and career exploration for students in grades 9 – 12)

Implementation Time:

One class period (45 minutes to one hour) required for basic exercise.

An additional class period may be needed if group communication exercise is assigned.

Two possible written assignments are suggested for this case study.

Materials Needed:

Teaching notes for “Roger Cordiner” case study

Student copies of “Roger Cordiner”

Career Pathway: Engineering, Industry, & Science

Subject Area: Social Studies/Communication

Learner Outcome(s): What will happen for learners as a result of this lesson?

Students will explore a career opportunity in transportation, by entering the roles of several different types of airline staff. They will learn about the importance of communicating critical information during an emergency, and will review guidelines for good communication in the workplace. Through the individual and group assignments suggested with this lesson, students will demonstrate technical writing and will synthesize what they have learned into an oral presentation.

Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements: How will students learn?

- **Communication:** Students will demonstrate their ability to use listening and observation skills to gain understanding. Students will demonstrate their ability to communicate effectively with different audiences and to make well-chosen and varied connections between their own purposes and their audiences’ interests and needs. Students will use communication strategies and skills to work effectively and responsibly with others. Students will demonstrate their ability to advocate, implement, and evaluate a plan. Students will analyze how communication is used in career settings. They will determine effective communication techniques.
(EALR’s 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 3.3, 4.2, 4.4)
- **Writing:** Students will practice writing clearly and effectively in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes. Students will practice writing for career applications, producing technical and non-technical documents using resources from career settings.
(EALR’s 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.4)

Procedure:

This exercise is designed to be taught in one session. If you choose to assign the group communication exercise, it will require some or all of a second classroom session.

1. Distribute the students’ version of the “Roger Cordiner” case study to your class. **Divide the students into at least five groups of at least three students each.**

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2. *Read aloud to them or let them read one section of the case study at a time. Don't let them read ahead. After each section, ask each group of students to brainstorm the answer to the questions you ask them. Then, use the teachers' version of the case study to guide them through a discussion of what Roger should do at each point.*
3. *Finish by either assigning an individual written assignment or by assigning the group communication exercise or both.*
4. *If you assign the group communication exercise, allow each group approximately 10 minutes to practice their roles. Have each group act through their roles. Then, lead your students in a discussion of the communication techniques that worked and didn't work in each of the role play examples.*

Closure/Assessment:

Review students' written and/or oral work both for basic writing or presentation skills, as well as for students' ability to explain the necessity for clear communication and the types of communication that are appropriate in the workplace.

Then, in small groups or as a whole group, have students review the steps they should follow when they are confronted with a challenging situation and must share critical information with others. Ask them to share personal experiences of communicating with others during an emergency. What did they do? What did they do right or wrong? What would they do if they were confronted with the same problem today?

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Roger Cordiner: Keeping Planes on Schedule

Part One - *Read aloud to students or have them read it. Stop at bottom of this page.*

It was only 6:00 in the morning, and Roger Cordiner had a headache already. Roger was the Lead Aviation Technician for United Airlines. He worked at Sea-Tac International Airport outside Seattle. It was his job to keep United's planes flying, making sure that they were safe and on time every day. He knew that people's lives depended on the quality of his work.

Roger had to fix problems on planes every day, and today's problems had started early. Sometime during the night, the night crew had discovered a hydraulic leak on one of United's DC-10 planes. Not a big problem, except that the leak was on a part that was not kept in stock in Seattle. The closest part to fix the plane was in San Francisco.

The night crew had all gone home, leaving Roger with the problem. The broken DC-10 was supposed to fly out of Sea-Tac for Washington DC at 9:00 that morning. But the first plane from San Francisco that could deliver the part Roger needed to fix the broken plane wasn't due until 8:30. And Roger knew it would take at least an hour to make the repair once he had the correct part. Even if everything worked perfectly, the DC-10 wouldn't be able to leave Sea-Tac until 9:30, half an hour late.

Well, Roger thought, he didn't have a choice. He had to get the right part to fix the plane. He called the United office in San Francisco and asked them to send the part on the next flight. But what should he do about the fact that his repair would make the DC-10 late?

STOP

Roger Cordiner: Teaching Notes for Part One

Communicating critical information with others is important no matter what your job is.

Lead your students through a discussion about all the things Roger could do. Remind the students that Roger can't step outside his job – for instance, he can't make the decision to cancel the flight and he can't work directly with passengers – his job is simply to fix the plane. But, he needs to make sure other people understand what he is doing, so he has to tell them what he has learned.

Ask students to list all the people they think need to know what Roger is doing. These people might include:

- The pilot and flight attendants for the plane
- The people who are supposed to load the baggage on the plane
- The passengers who are scheduled to fly on the plane
- The customer service agents, who have to help the passengers
- The flight planners, who need to figure out how this flight affects all the other flights that United will send out from Sea-Tac that day.

Now ask the students to imagine what will happen if Roger **DOESN'T** communicate. If all these people don't know what Roger is doing, what will happen to them?

(Optional: Ask students to describe a situation they've been in where they've had to communicate quickly with others. How did they know they had to communicate? What happened? Did they do the right thing... or did they run into a problem because they forgot to communicate something important with someone?)

Background Information for Teachers on Communication Skills

The Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements identify communication as a “unifying theme that crosses all disciplines.”

The Commission on Student Learning says this about the importance of strong communication skills:

Communication for Today and Tomorrow. *The information age and the increasing contact between people of different cultures make communication more important than ever before. These global realities heighten the need for clarity and an understanding of the ethical responsibilities and consequences of communication. As education research Ernest Boyer noted, “It should be remembered that we speak more than we write. Throughout our lives we judge others, and we ourselves are judged, by what we say and how we speak. The information age raises to new levels of urgency the need for all students to be proficient in the use of the spoken as well as the written word.”*

What is Communication? *Communication is defined as a process by which we assign and convey meaning in an attempt to create shared understanding. This process requires a vast repertoire of skills in intrapersonal and interpersonal evaluating. Use of these processes is developmental and transfers to all areas of life: home, school, community, work, and beyond. It is through communication that collaboration and cooperation occur.*

Fundamental Beliefs about Curriculum and its Assessment. *If there is one unifying theme that crosses all disciplines, it is communication. Communication is our window to basic literacy and academic excellence. Reaching levels of excellence and accuracy of expression mandate mastery of formal English. These are the capabilities that cultivate the potential in each student and the possibilities for the future.*

Part Two - Read aloud to students or have them read it. Stop at bottom of this page.

Roger knew that the late plane would make hundreds of passengers late. Some of them might even miss their connecting flights because of the delay. And so, even though his job was simply to fix the plane, he knew he had one more important thing to do while he waited for the part to arrive. He had to communicate what he had learned to the rest of the people who worked for United. That way, they could decide what to do about all the passengers who would be late.

Roger quickly called the people at United's planning center at Sea-Tac. He told them that the earliest he could fix the DC-10 would be by 9:30 that morning. They decided to add an extra half hour, just to be on the safe side, and rescheduled the plane to leave at 10:00. They then called all of United's customer service agents – the people who check in passengers when they arrive at the airport – and told them about the new schedule.

Now that the customer service agents knew what was going on, they could help passengers decide what to do. Some passengers would just wait at the airport for an extra hour until the plane was repaired. But others had to be moved to different flights to get where they were going.

Roger knew that good communication was especially important when there was a problem. Even if he did a great job repairing the plane, the rest of the people at United couldn't do their jobs unless they knew what he was doing. With that in mind, he called the San Francisco office one more time just to make sure the part he needed was on the way. They assured him that it was.

Well, Roger thought, at least everything's under control. He poured a cup of coffee and then helped his crew get everything ready to make the repair.

STOP

Roger Cordiner: Teaching Notes for Part Two

Has Roger done the right thing so far?

Ask students to imagine how people react when Roger tells them the plane will be late. What kind of reactions might people have?

- *They might thank Roger for telling them about the problem.*
- *They might become angry or yell at him because the plane is late.*
- *They might tell him he's not working fast enough.*

How should Roger handle these different reactions? (NOTE: Group exercise at the end of this case study has students role play different roles. These questions will help prepare them for that exercise.)

Part Three: *Read aloud to your students or have them read to the bottom of this page and then stop.*

If Roger thought his headache was over, he was wrong. At 8:45, the crew unloading the baggage from the San Francisco flight called Roger to tell him they couldn't find the part he needed. It looked like it hadn't been put on the plane after all. Now Roger couldn't fix the broken DC-10.

Roger wanted to know what had happened to the part, but he didn't have any time to lose. He needed to resolve the crisis first and ask "why" later. So, he started all over again. The part from San Francisco was lost. The only other part he could find to fix the plane was in Chicago! And the next flight from Chicago wouldn't arrive until 1:00 that afternoon. This was a real problem.

Once again, Roger got on the phone to communicate his news with the other people who worked at United. Now, the earliest the plane could leave was 2:00 that afternoon. And since no passengers would want to wait around at the airport that long, all the passengers would have to be moved to other flights and this flight would have to be canceled. What a lot of upset people there were going to be inside the airport.

Before the flight was canceled, though, Roger decided to see if there was anything he could do to fix the plane. He spent a few minutes studying the broken part again, then tried a simple fix... not his first choice, but it might work. He tested the part and it worked. No more leaking.

One more time, Roger got on the phone, this time to say he could have the plane ready to leave Sea-Tac in 30 minutes. Too late, he was told. The flight had been canceled already.

And just then, the part he had been waiting for all morning was delivered to his office. The crew in San Francisco that morning had forgotten to tell the baggage handlers there to load the part into the plane, so the part had been left behind. Someone finally found it and sent it up to Roger... but it was too late. Hundreds of passengers had had a bad day all because people hadn't talked to each other.

Assessment/Closure – *There are two written assignment options (for individuals) and one suggested oral communication exercise (for groups).*

Roger Cordiner: Teaching Notes for Assignments and Group Exercise

Written Assignment OPTION One (for individuals)

Give these instructions to your students:

You are Roger's boss and you are developing Standard Operating Procedures for his position, written instructions about what Roger should do every day. You've written all the information about maintaining and fixing airplanes. But now you need to tell Roger how to communicate with his co-workers.

Please write a one-page essay for the Standard Operating Procedures that states why communication is important in Roger's job. In addition, please list the kinds of people he needs to communicate with. Also, please provide suggestions for Roger about HOW he should communicate with these people when there is a problem (for instance, is he allowed to lose his temper?).

Written Assignment OPTION Two (for individuals)

Give these instructions to your students:

Please write a two-page essay describing an incident in your life where something went wrong because of poor communication. What could you -- or others -- have done differently?

Oral Communication Exercise (for groups)

This exercise will require some or all of an additional class session. To prepare for this exercise, please divide your students into at least five groups of at least four students each. Then, pass out one of the five following instruction sheets to each group. Each group will act out a slightly different scenario to illustrate good and bad ways to communicate.

Roger Cordiner – Communication Exercise GROUP A

Have one person in your group play each of these roles:

- Roger
- United planning staff person at Sea-Tac Airport (the person who schedules the planes)
- Passenger who is supposed to be on the 9:00 AM plane
- United customer service representative at Sea-Tac Airport (the person who checks in the passengers)

Roger has forgotten to tell anyone that the plane will be delayed because of the broken part. No one knows there is a problem at all until 8:30 (just one-half hour before the plane is supposed to take off) when two United staff people call Roger to ask him why the mechanic at the plane won't let them open the doors and begin letting the passengers on-board. They have a VERY angry passenger with them, who is going to miss a very important meeting if the plane doesn't leave on time. Oops!

Act out how you think this conversation would go.

How will the planning staff person feel about having to reschedule this flight just half an hour before it is supposed to leave? The planning person has to coordinate this flight with United flights at airports all over the country. How will this happen since no one told him or her there was a problem?

How will the customer service representative feel about having to tell hundreds of passengers that they can't get on the plane... and that it won't be leaving for at least another hour?

How will the passenger respond when he learns he will be late?

Do you think people will get angry with Roger? How should Roger react? Should he apologize? Or should he get angry at them, because, after all he IS doing his job of fixing the airplane?

Roger Cordiner – Communication Exercise GROUP B

Have one person in your group play each of these roles:

- Roger
- United planning staff person at Sea-Tac Airport (the person who schedules the planes)
- United customer service representative at Sea-Tac Airport (the person who checks in the passengers)

It is 7:00 in the morning. Roger calls the United planning center to tell his co-workers at United that the plane will be late because it needs a part from San Francisco before it is safe to fly. The United staff people are not happy that the plane will be delayed, but they understand it is not Roger's fault. They ask him to explain everything to them so that they can decide what to do.

Act out how you think this conversation would go.

What kind of information should Roger share?

What kinds of questions would a planning staff person (who schedules United's flights) or a customer service representative (who has to deal with customers when they arrive at the airport) be likely to have?

Roger Cordiner – Communication Exercise GROUP C

Have one person in your group play each of these roles:

- Roger
- United planning staff person at Sea-Tac Airport (the person who schedules the planes)
- United customer service representative at Sea-Tac Airport (the person who checks in the passengers)

It is 7:00 in the morning. Roger calls the United planning center to tell his co-workers at United that the plane will be late because it needs a part from San Francisco before it is safe to fly. The United staff people are not happy that the plane will be delayed, and they think that if Roger just worked harder or faster the plane could still be on time.

They get angry with Roger and say that the delay is his fault.

How should Roger react? Is it OK for Roger to get angry back? How can Roger give them the information they need even though they are angry?

Roger Cordiner – Communication Exercise GROUP D

Have one person in your group play each of these roles:

- Roger Cordiner
- United staff person in San Francisco

Roger couldn't get the part he needed to fix the DC-10 because someone in San Francisco forgot to ask the baggage crew to load it on the plane that was flying to Seattle... even though they told Roger that the part was on the plane. Because he didn't get the part on time and couldn't fix the DC-10, the flight had to be canceled.

Roger is upset about this. He calls his colleague in San Francisco and yells at him for not following through.

Act out how you think this conversation would go.

What does Roger want to communicate to the person in San Francisco?

Will getting angry hurt him or help him? How do you think the person in San Francisco will react when Roger yells at him?

Roger Cordiner – Communication Exercise GROUP E

Have one person in your group play each of these roles:

- Roger Cordiner
- United staff person in San Francisco

Roger couldn't get the part he needed to fix the DC-10 because someone in San Francisco forgot to ask the baggage crew to load it on the plane that was flying to Seattle... even though they told Roger that the part was on the plane. Because he didn't get the part on time and couldn't fix the DC-10, the flight had to be canceled.

Roger is upset about this. He calls his colleague in San Francisco. But, even though Roger is very angry, he decides that he shouldn't yell. Instead, he explains the problem and asks what they can do to prevent it from happening again.

Act out how you think this conversation would go.

What does Roger want to communicate to the person in San Francisco?

Roger has decided not to yell. Do you think yelling and getting angry would help him or hurt him? How do you think the person in San Francisco will react when Roger calls him to explain the problem?

Roger Cordiner: Teaching Notes for Group Exercise

Give each group about 10 minutes to read their instructions and practice their role playing. If there are too many people in the groups, you can have two or more students play the same role as a team or have each group repeat the exercise.

Then, ask each group to act out their scenario in front of the class. After each presentation, ask your students to discuss the good and bad points about the way Roger and his co-workers communicated to each other.

Points to discuss:

- *What is the best way to effectively communicate important information when there is a crisis? Ask students to evaluate each of the “Roger” characters to decide who did the best job communicating the facts clearly.*
- *How do tone of voice and manner of presentation affect the way other people will react? Ask the students to compare the scenarios where people get angry and those in which they are calm. Which ones were best for sharing information?*
- *How should someone like Roger react when others get angry at him? Is it OK to get angry back? What are some communication techniques to use when people are angry?*
- *What kind of information do people need? Do people need to know the whole story of all the things Roger tried to do to fix the plane? Or should Roger focus instead on when the plan will be fixed?*