

Regional Micro-Enterprise Credential: School versus Work Expectations

(Updated: June 12, 2017)

There's a difference between: 1) the expectations schools place on students; and 2) the expectations that employers place on their new employees.

Have you been late to a class two or three times at school? At worst you may have gotten detention. *At work your employer would have terminated you.*

Did you ever "forget" to complete a homework assignment, or turn in a class project late? At school you'll get a lower grade. *At work employers terminate employees who don't complete their work assignments.*

Did you get in a shoving contest with your friends or a fight where both of you yelled at each other in public? Did you throw something at your classmate?

Did you not come to school because it was too rainy, or because you had a bad night of sleep?

You can do all of these things and still remain a student in good standing at school. *But all of these things are very likely to get you terminated from a job.*

School vs Work Expectations

Going to school is very different than holding a job.

At school there is lots of room for error. You can be late for different classes without any real penalty. You can do well on some tests and fail others and still pass. You can "call in sick" and complete any assignments from the day you were absent at another time.

At work there is nowhere near as much room for error. Being late twice can result in being terminated. A poor attendance record . . . failure to complete assigned tasks . . . failure to perform the work you're assigned at the level of quality required. *These behaviors may be acceptable at school, but they are unacceptable at work.*

Owners of a Pet Store

Imagine you're the owner of a pet store. Your store is open from 9am to 8pm seven days a week so you can generate the sales you need to make a profit.

What needs to happen in the hours that you're closed?

- Check on the health of the animals and clean their habitats
- Clean the store
- Complete your financial tasks (count and deposit cash and credit card receipts, account for employee hours, complete payroll, pay taxes, etc.)
- Check your inventory, stock your shelves, order new merchandise
- Develop and implement your advertising and marketing plans
- Interview and hire new employees

These essential tasks must be completed *after* your normal store business hours.

Questions:

- 1) What do pet store owners do on holidays when their store is closed?
- 2) What do pet store owners have to do when they want to go on vacation?

The level of sustained, high-quality effort required by employees at work is much greater than the level of effort required by students – and this is even more true for small business owners and entrepreneurs.

Take a look at the example of a pet owner (above). Think about what it takes to run a pet store. You have to be busy the entire work day waiting on customers. Then – after your store closes – you have to complete an entirely different set of tasks to make sure your animals are healthy and your store is ready the next day to operate profitably.

Now: take a moment to think about the two questions posed at the bottom of this case example.

As you answer these two questions, think about how the work expectations for small business owners and employees are different than expectations for a high school student.

Work expectations are greater for small business owners, entrepreneurs and even regular employees than they are for students. Consider the examples below:

Skipping an assignment:	Consequences
Student: you accidentally skip a question on a homework assignment	
Employee: you accidentally skip a weld on a roof support	
Showing up late:	Consequences
Student: you're late to school and miss the first 15 minutes of class	
Employee: you're late to the salon and miss the supplier's delivery truck	
Leaving too early:	Consequences
Student: you fall sleep before completing your assigned paper	
Employee: you go home from the restaurant before sending the bakery your order for the next day	

When you go back and review many of the concepts you studied before you completed your Self-Assessment, you'll see they mean very different things in school versus at work.

Concept	School	Work
On-Time	Required: a good record of showing up on time	Required: a <i>perfect</i> record of showing up on time
Vacations	Summer, spring and holiday breaks (~18 weeks)	Two weeks for new employees, uncertain for owners
Absenteeism	Occasional / repeat absences tolerated	Repeat absences (2 or more) grounds for termination
Unsafe Behaviors	Addressed supportively / compassionately	Not tolerated – grounds for termination
Determination	Commitment during the school day and after hours to complete homework assignments	Commitment during the longer workday; the possibility of overtime; an owner's 24 / 7 commitment to the business
Self-Discipline	Forgiveness for lapses in effort or follow-through	Serious business consequences for lapses in self-discipline
Comfort engaging with strangers	Students, teachers and principals are familiar; coming into contact with strangers happens infrequently	Every day you come into contact with unfamiliar suppliers, customers and employees, many of whom look, talk and act differently than you do
Financial Literacy	Often OK not to worry about a budget	The ability to understand and live within budgets (work and personal) is essential
Personal Responsibility	OK to "drift" some days	Every day matters, every action counts

The first time students complete their Micro-Enterprise Credential Self-Assessment they often answer the questions based on what's expected of them as high school students. We want you to go back and complete the Micro-Enterprise Credential "School versus Work Expectations" Self-Assessment. Complete this assignment based on what you will be expected to do as a small business employee or an entrepreneur *after* you graduate from high school.