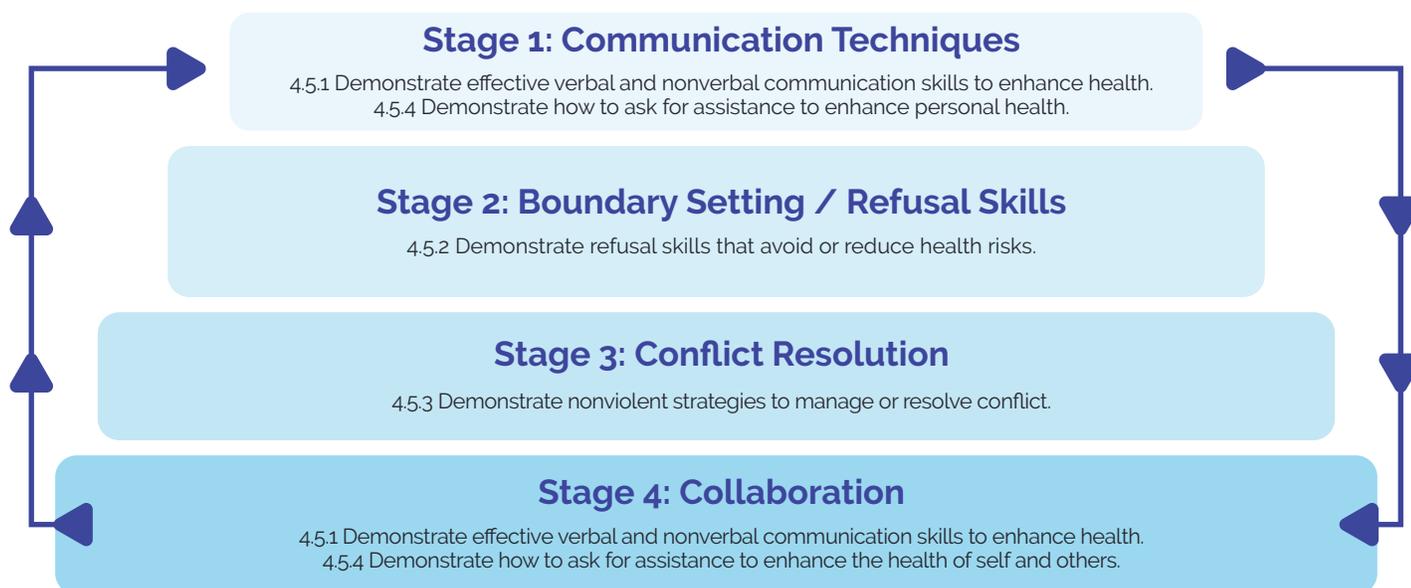**Health Skill:**

Interpersonal Communication

Background Information

The health skill, *Interpersonal Communication*, guides students to better understand, practice, and reflect on their interactions with others. By providing students with a safe space to practice strategies for healthy communication in school, students are more prepared to handle social situations throughout their life. The *Interpersonal Communication* health skill begins with practicing appropriate communication techniques, then explores healthy boundaries with strategies to uphold those boundaries, moving to examining the importance of productive conflict and conflict resolution, and ends with strategies to ensure effective collaboration. Each stage of *Interpersonal Communication* supports students to better understand themselves and their community, while working toward having more authentic, intentional communication with others.

The four stages of *Interpersonal Communication* are designed to support the growth of each student toward more complex levels of communication, beginning with the individual and ending with effective team work. The *Teaching Progression* for the four stages were developed in sequential order to ensure strategies build upon one another, leading to more inclusive, authentic, and collaborative teamwork. However, teachers can rearrange the stages as appropriate for their classroom.

Stage 1: Communication Techniques

4.5.1 Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health.
4.5.4 Demonstrate how to ask for assistance to enhance personal health.

Stage 2: Boundary Setting / Refusal Skills

4.5.2 Demonstrate refusal skills that avoid or reduce health risks.

Stage 3: Conflict Resolution

4.5.3 Demonstrate nonviolent strategies to manage or resolve conflict.

Stage 4: Collaboration

4.5.1 Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health.
4.5.4 Demonstrate how to ask for assistance to enhance the health of self and others.

NATIONAL HEALTH EDUCATION STANDARD (NHES) 4:
Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

National Health Education Standard Rationale: Effective communication enhances personal, family, and community health. This standard focuses on how responsible individuals use verbal and non-verbal skills to develop and maintain healthy personal relationships. The ability to organize and to convey information and feelings is the basis for strengthening interpersonal interactions and reducing or avoiding conflict.

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Grades 3-5 Framework

In grades 3-5, students learn a variety of strategies to effectively communicate in a variety of modes. The graphic below outlines the strategies learned in each stage, beginning with *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* and ending with *Stage 4: Collaboration*. Teachers should use the strategies listed as a starting point and add strategies to meet the needs of their students.

Stage 1: Communication Techniques

Strategies:
- Body Language
  - Nodding
  - Eye contact
  - Facial expressions
  - Show emotions
- Active Listening
  - Interpret body language
  - Summarize the speaker
  - Ask the speaker questions
  - Make connections to the speaker
- Speaking Strategies
  - Tone
  - Speed
  - Volume
  - Ask for help

Stage 2: Refusal Skills & Boundary Setting

Strategies:
- I-Statements
- Assertive v. Aggressive tone
- Listen to feelings
- Identify personal boundaries
- Say no clearly and assertively
- State boundaries clearly and assertively
- Use refusal/boundary setting strategies:
  - Say "No" firmly and loudly. Stand tall and be clear
  - Avoid or leave the situation
  - Suggest something different to do
  - Explain why it is a bad idea for you
  - Politely decline - "Thanks but no thanks"
  - Seek help from a trusted adult

Stage 3: Conflict Resolution

Strategies:
- I-Statements
- Assertive v. Aggressive tone
- Use coping strategies to remain calm
- Identify problem
- Ask for help
- Perspective-taking
- Negotiation needs and wants

Stage 4: Collaboration

Strategies:
- Explain impact of individual actions
- Use roles and responsibilities
- Include all members of the team:
  - Facing all members
  - Making sure everyone speaks at least once
  - Asking questions to get all team member's ideas
  - Assigning clear jobs for everyone (e.g. time keeper, note taker, leader)
  - Create team agreements
- Identify goals
- Offer help
- Give and receive feedback:
  - Asking if you can give feedback
  - Being specific
  - Saying how you feel using I-Statements
  - Asking for a specific solution

Notes on Grade Level Progression

Activities, vocabulary, and language throughout the models are vertically aligned and build upon one another. If students require scaffolding refer to previous grade levels for additional ideas for activities and instruction that address gaps in student skills. For enrichment activities, look at higher grade levels in order to provide additional practice opportunities or for ideas on how to deepen understanding.

Stage 1: Communication Techniques

The *Interpersonal Communication* health skill model begins with *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* to teach students to engage in more meaningful conversations with others. The communication techniques used in *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* are designed to help students practice effective methods of listening and speaking. It is important to keep in mind that there is not one best way to communicate. Communicating with others is personal, cultural, and part of an individual's identity. The communication strategies suggested in this model help students explore more ways to communicate with others, but these strategies are not meant to discredit other communication styles. Since communication techniques are rooted in individual culture and social norms, these techniques are suggested tools for students to incorporate into their own personal communication style. Teachers should use their knowledge of students to tailor listening and speaking strategies to meet the needs of their students and honor students' cultural backgrounds. By the end of *Stage 1: Communication Techniques*, students in all grade-levels will have the foundational tools necessary for engaging in more complex interpersonal situations. Students who master these techniques will be better equipped to engage in setting boundaries, resolving conflict, building strong teams, and advocating for themselves and others.

The Steps:

Step 1
Listen to Others

▶

Step 2
Speak

Grades 3-5 Framework

In grades 3-5, *Interpersonal Communication* begins with foundational communication techniques. For grades 3-5, students practice listening strategies and develop more advanced speaking techniques. Through the use of appropriate voice and body language, students become more effective listeners and speakers. Students learn specific strategies to become more active listeners by focusing on eye contact, body language, and facial expressions. To ensure they are understood, students also learn about appropriate use of voice to clearly communicate their needs, wants, and feelings. The use of effective communication techniques allows students to fully engage in the remaining stages of *Interpersonal Communication.*

Mastery of *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* in grades 3-5 means students are able to use active listening strategies to engage with peers and adults and use appropriate voice to communicate their needs, wants, and feelings.

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Stage 1: Communication Techniques

The Steps:

Step 1: Listen to Others

Step Overview: Effective communication begins with listening. In this step, students learn how to be effective listeners. To begin, students identify the ways people use their bodies, voices and facial expressions to communicate with others. Throughout the instruction of this step, students learn to listen to both the words and body language of someone else to ensure they understand what a person is trying to communicate. In addition to body language, reflective listening strategies, such as summarizing, questioning, and connecting, allow students to show they are listening as well as check if they understand someone.

Sub Skill(s):

- Define communication
- Use appropriate body language while listening
- Notice the speaker's body language to better understand
- Summarize the speaker
- Ask the speaker questions

Step 2: Speak

Step Overview: After listening, a person must use speaking strategies to effectively communicate their needs, wants, and feelings. To begin, students practice using appropriate speed, volume, and tone when speaking in different settings and to different people. Continuing their understanding of body language from Step 1, students practice using their own body language and facial expressions to appropriately express themselves to those with whom they are trying to communicate. Understanding the impact of voice, body language, and facial expressions creates a foundation for the remaining stages of *Interpersonal Communication.*

Sub Skill(s):

- Use appropriate volume of voice
- Use appropriate speed of voice
- Show my emotions using body language
- Ask for help with a strong, clear voice

Teaching Tips

- Select listening and speaking strategies that are responsive to the needs of your classroom. Communicating with others is personal, cultural, and part of an individual's identity. The communication strategies suggested in this model help students explore more ways to communicate with others, but these strategies are not meant to discredit other communication styles.
- Since communication styles are so personal, avoid making judgements about the right and wrong ways to communicate. Instead, prompt students to think about context and whether or not a specific commuication technique is appropriate or inappropriate forr the context. Allow students to come to their on conclusions about appropriate and inappropriate ways to communicate.
- Provide opportunities for students to role play the different listening and speaking strategies in order for them to demonstrate the strategies in class.
- Remind students of speaking and listening strategies throughout their day by prompting students to use their listening and speaking strategies during work and play time throughout the school day.

See *Teaching Progression* for suggested learning activities.

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