

Health Skill:

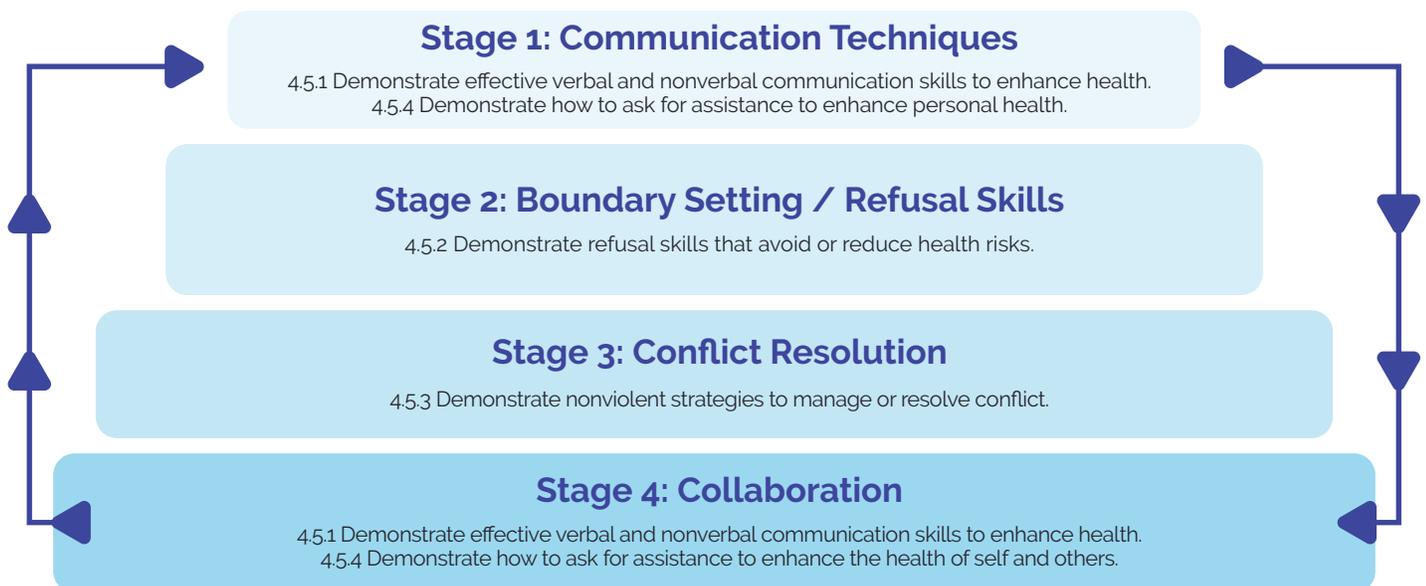
Interpersonal Communication



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.



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.



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.



Notes on Grade Level Progression

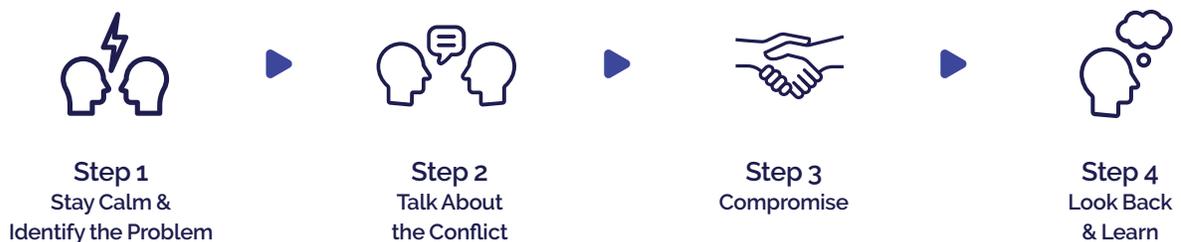
Activities, vocabulary, and language throughout the models are vertically aligned and build upon one another. If students require scaffolding refer to previous grade levels for additional ideas for activities and instruction that address gaps in student skills. For enrichment activities, look at higher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



Stage 3: Conflict Resolution

Conflict is a natural and vital part of our social interactions, and when conflict is addressed using healthy communication skills, it leads to growth and understanding. Everyone engages in conflict, and explicitly teaching specific strategies for resolving these often uncomfortable situations helps turn unproductive conflict into productive conflict. In *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution*, students explore their experiences with conflict and learn new strategies for handling different types of conflict. *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* allows students to reflect on real-life situations. Finally, I-Statements are a crucial part of *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* as their use allows a person to express how they are feeling without placing blame.

The Steps:



Grades 3-5 Framework

In grades 3-5, students focus on gaining control over their emotions in order to have calm and rational conversations during conflict. Students engage in more metacognitive strategies (strategies that build their awareness of how they approach conflict), identifying the ways they tend to approach conflict and reflecting on whether this is always the best way. Because the majority of conflict in school occurs during students free time, most scenarios and situational practices should focus on peer interactions during free time at school, however, teachers should consider how students can practice and think about *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* in their daily life, beyond the school day.

Mastery of *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* for grades 3-5 means students are able to stay calm during conflict, identify the problem, talk through conflict by using I-Statements, and reach a compromise where everyone gets what they need and/or want.



Stage 3: Conflict Resolution

The Steps:



Step 1: Stay Calm and Identify the Problem



Step Overview: Step 1 of *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* begins with students exploring the definition of conflict and examining how they personally handle conflict in their own life. Next, students learn appropriate coping strategies to use in order to remain calm and approach the conflict rationally. Step 1 ends with students identifying the problem that led to the conflict. If both people are not calm enough to resolve the conflict or understand the real problem, students should seek help from a trusted adult. This initial step is designed to allow students to be ready to have an effective dialogue with another person during a conflict by staying calm and identifying the root cause of the issue.

Sub Skill(s):

- Define conflict
- Identify feelings
- Remain calm
- Identify problem
- Ask for help



Step 2: Talk About the Conflict

Step Overview: Step 2 of *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* teaches students specific strategies for how to express themselves when having a conflict with another person. This step promotes dialogue between all sides and encourages students to use perspective-taking strategies to gain empathy and understanding. Students are encouraged to dialogue even when they are upset, examining the importance of understanding another person's perspective in different situations, especially when there are disagreements. Students use I-Statements to clearly explain how they would feel in different conflict scenarios. While language for I-Statements is provided, guidance for instruction on I-Statement is not addressed in grades 3-5. For ways to teach I-Statements, see *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* in grades PreK-2. Each of these strategies allow students to better express their needs, while still listening to the needs of others.

Sub Skill(s):

- Define perspective
- Use I-Statements
- Use an assertive, not aggressive, voice



Step 3: Make a Compromise

Step Overview: To truly resolve a conflict, both sides need to come to a consensus by compromising. In this step, students practice making fair compromises that allow for both sides to feel heard, validated, and respected moving forward. Students begin the step by defining compromise and analyzing what makes a compromise balanced or fair. Students can use scenarios to determine the difference between a fair compromise and an unfair compromise. Finally, students should practice compromising with their peers by identifying what each party needs to resolve the conflict. Upon completing this step, students will be able to voice their opinions, listen to others, and create a compromise that takes both sides into account.

Sub Skill(s):

- Define compromise
- Negotiate needs and wants
 - State needs and wants
 - Decide on needs and wants
 - Make an agreement



Step 4: Look Back & Learn

Step Overview: Learning to reflect takes practice and intention. After an individual works to resolve a conflict, they then must reflect on how they feel after the conflict, and determine if additional follow up is necessary, and what they want to remember next time they are in a conflict. Building time for students to reflect is crucial in developing metacognition, which supports health skills, *Self-Management and Advocacy for Self & Others*.

Reflection Question(s):

- Was I calm when I tried to resolve the conflict?
- Did I use I-Statements?
- Did I get everything I needed and/or wanted? Why or why not?
- What might happen next after this conflict?
- Would I make the compromise again? Why or why not?
- What do I want to remember next time I am in a similar conflict?



Teaching Tips

- Teach I-Statements to support students in expressing their feelings during conflict. See the *Language of Health Literacy* for Step 3: Explain Perspectives for I-Statement language. For more explicit instruction for the components of an I-Statement, see *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* for grades PreK-2.
- Be careful not to convey that all conflict is bad, rather focus on the idea that conflict is normal and can lead to better outcomes and stronger relationships since it allows people to be honest about their feelings.
- Use role play to provide students the opportunity to work through conflict in low stakes environments.
- Share the steps of *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* with other school staff, so they can use similar language when conflict occurs in their classrooms or other spaces, such as the cafeteria or playground.

See *Teaching Progression* for suggested learning activities.