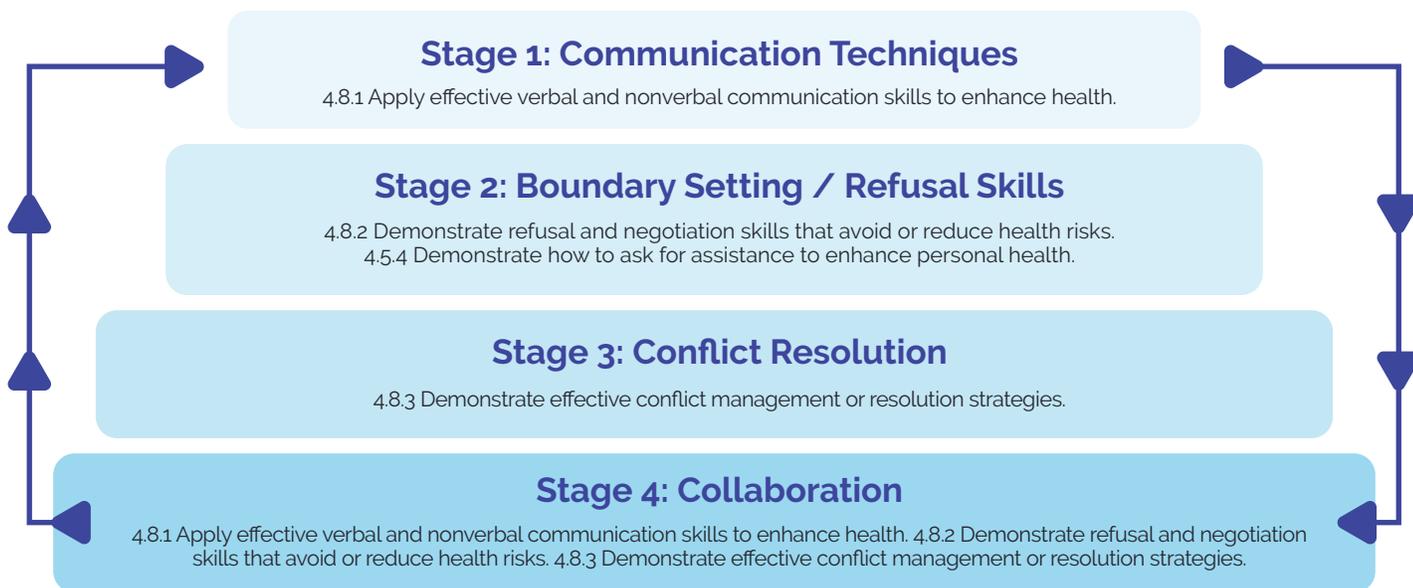**Health Skill:**

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

4.8.1 Apply effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health.

Stage 2: Boundary Setting / Refusal Skills

4.8.2 Demonstrate refusal and negotiation skills that avoid or reduce health risks.
4.5.4 Demonstrate how to ask for assistance to enhance personal health.

Stage 3: Conflict Resolution

4.8.3 Demonstrate effective conflict management or resolution strategies.

Stage 4: Collaboration

4.8.1 Apply effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health. 4.8.2 Demonstrate refusal and negotiation skills that avoid or reduce health risks. 4.8.3 Demonstrate effective conflict management or resolution strategies.

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 6-8 Framework

In grades 6-8, 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:
- Analyze context of situation
- Active Listening
  - Ask speaker questions
  - Summarize the speaker
- Body language
  - Nodding
  - Eye contact
  - Facial expressions
- Non-verbal communication
  - Eye contact with the listener(s)
  - Appropriate posture
  - Appropriate hand gestures
- Verbal Communication
  - Tone
  - Inflection
  - Speed
  - Volume

Stage 2: Refusal Skills & Boundary Setting

Strategies:
- Identify personal boundaries
- I-Statements
- Communicate your boundary
- Use a refusal / boundary setting strategy
  - 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
  - Ignore the suggestion
  - Make a joke or use humor
  - Politely decline - "Thanks but no thanks"
  - Seek help from a trusted adult

Stage 3: Conflict Resolution

Strategies:
- Identify feelings
- Use coping strategies to remain calm
- Engage
- Walk away
- Perspective-taking
- I-Statements
- Negotiate needs & wants
- Create a plan to resolve conflict

Stage 4: Collaboration

Strategies:
- Identify team goal
- Share my strengths with my team
- Get to know team members
- Get ideas from everyone
- Create team norms
- Give & receive feedback

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.

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Stage 4: Collaboration

People are often put into collaborative groups and need to be taught specific skills to have the most successful, effective teams. Effective collaboration skills can lead to more creative outcomes, increased content retention, higher self-esteem, and increased empathy. Also, students with effective collaboration skills are better prepared for future social situations and career opportunities. In *Stage 4: Collaboration*, students explore their personal contribution to teams, the impact of their actions, and specific skills to promote inclusion. Students also learn valuable strategies to hold teams accountable for quality work that accomplishes team goals. Throughout collaboration, students may get into conflict. Encourage students to use the conflict resolution strategies established in *Stage 2: Conflict Resolution* to address these conflicts and move forward to achieve team goals.

The Steps:

Step 1
Identify the
Team Goal

Step 2
Examine
My Role

Step 3
Support
the Team

Step 4
Reflect

Grades 6-8 Framework

In grades 6-8, students analyze effective collaboration skills by evaluating the role of the individual in team work and reflecting on what responsibilities each member contributes to the team. Students practice appropriate active listening skills and analyze the impact of body language in communication when working on a team. Students explore the importance of diverse perspectives, elements of creating and upholding team norms, the differences between "helping or hurting" the team, and the key structures necessary for a team to effectively work together.

Mastery of *Stage 4: Collaboration* for grades 6-8 means students are able to explain what makes a team successful, describe the impact of the individual on the team, contribute positively to a team, and clude everyone to ensure everyone's ideas are heard.

Stage 4: Collaboration

The Steps:

Step 1: Identify the Team Goal

Step Overview: Identifying the goal of a team is the first step in building effective, successful teams. Without a goal driving the team, the team can easily become off task or confused. Students in Step 1 begin to examine the importance of collaboration and learn the necessary skills of naming their team's goal for a given task. Students demonstrate their ability to set a goal for their team that is specific, measurable and timely. This step allows students to start their team tasks with focus and common understanding.

Sub Skill(s):

- Define collaboration
- Identify the goal

Step 2: Examine My Role

Step Overview: When working on a team, it is important to understand individual responsibilities, so that we are able to contribute to a team to ensure goals are met. Students need to better understand the impact of the individual to be a better member in their team. In this step, students should spend time identifying their job on a team, such as time keeper, note taker, leader, etc. Students should practice identiying their roles on a team through a collaborative group task where they work with their team to be supportive and responsible.

Sub Skill(s):

- Name attributes of a positive team member
- Know my strengths
- Know my job

Step 3: Support the Team

Step Overview: In Step 3, students shift from thinking about their personal contributions and transition to thinking about how all members of the team must work together. Once individuals understand their specific role on a team, it is everyone's job to make sure everyone is working together to reach the team's goals. In this step, students work to include all members of the team by using specific strategies, such as getting to know members of the team, hearing ideas from everyone, and creating team norms. Finally, students should practice giving and receiving feedback since feedback helps all members of the team improve and work towards the best outcomes.

Sub Skill(s):

- Understand impact of individuals on the team
- Define inclusion
- Get to know team members
- Get ideas from everyone
- Create team norms
- Give and receive feedback

Step 4: Reflect

Step Overview: Learning to reflect takes practice and intention. After working in a team, it is important to take time after the task is completed to ask important questions about the team's ability to complete the goal created at the beginning of the collaboration process. Each person should reflect about their personal contribution, their strengths, and their areas of growth. The final step of collaboration allows for students to reflect on their experience and success. Students use this reflection to improve team work in the future to create more successful teams. 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):

- Did the team achieve our goal? Why or why not?
- Did the team include everyone? Why or why not?
- Did I fulfill my responsibilities? Why or why not?
- Did our team experience any conflict? If so, how did we work through this conflict?
- What is something our team was really good at doing?
- What is something our team needs to improve?

Teaching Tips

- Use team building games (see *Resource Bank* below for suggested activities) to provide practice opportunities for students to work on teams.
- Provide checklists of effective team behaviors for students to use to reflect during and after group work.
- Share the strategies from *Stage 4: Collaboration* with other content area teachers in order to reinforce language and promote collaborative work outside of the health education classroom.
- Implicitly teach *Stage 4: Collaboration* by designing learning activities around group work throughout the year.
- Review strategies from *Stage 1: Communication Techniques*, *Stage 2: Refusal Skills & Boundary Setting*, and *Stage 3: Conflict Resolution* to support students in collaboration.

See *Teaching Progression* for suggested learning activities.