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
4.12.1. Use skills for communicating effectively with family, peers, and others to enhance health.

Stage 2: Boundary Setting / Refusal Skills
4.12.2. Demonstrate refusal, negotiation, and collaboration skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

Stage 3: Conflict Resolution
4.12.3. Demonstrate strategies to prevent, manage, or resolve interpersonal conflicts without harming self or others.

Stage 4: Collaboration
4.12.2. Demonstrate refusal, negotiation, and collaboration skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.
4.12.4. Demonstrate how to ask for and offer assistance to enhance the health of self and others.

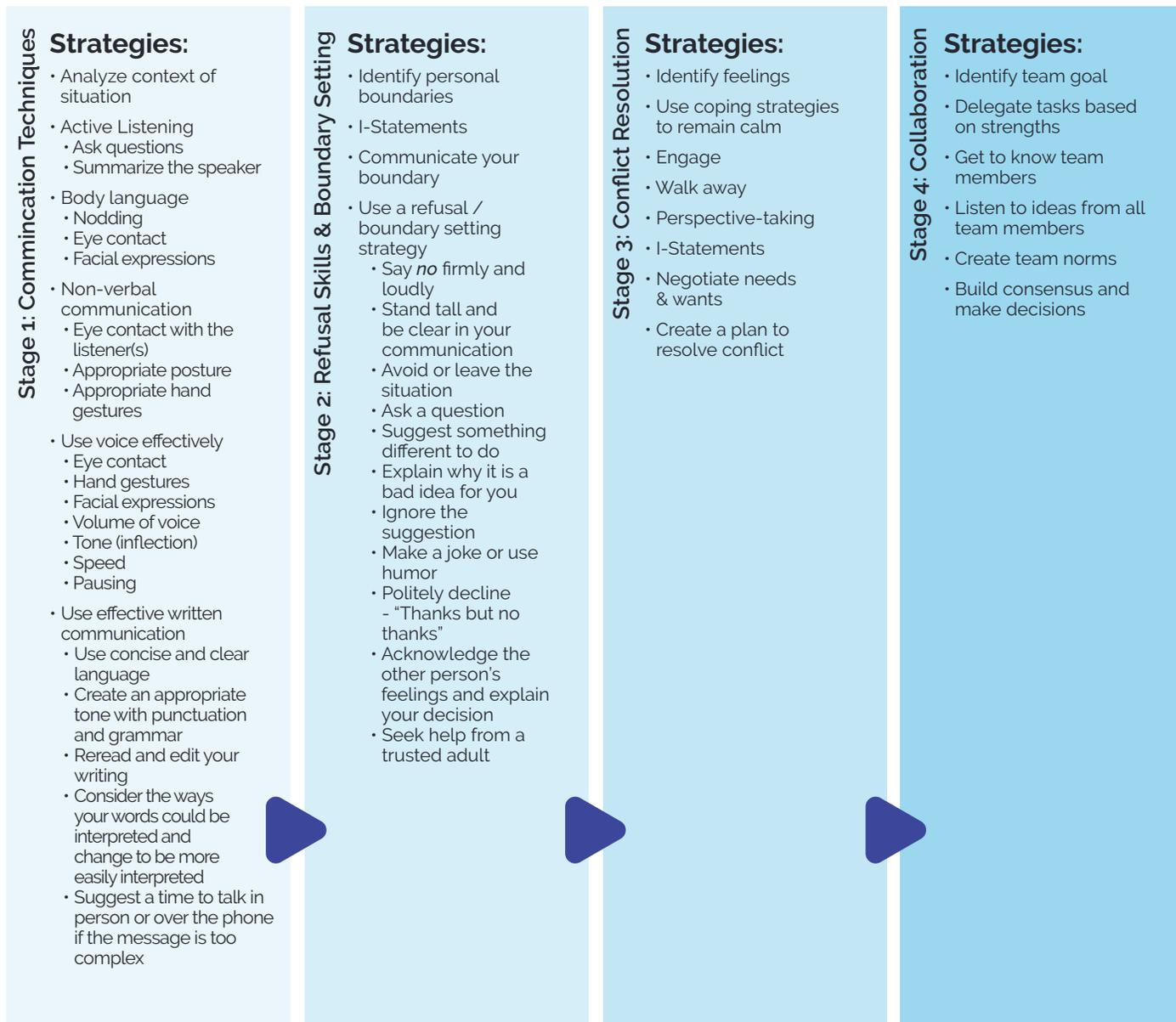**NATIONAL HEALTH EDUCATION STANDARD (NHES) 4:**
Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

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.

Grades 9-12 Framework

In grades 9-12, 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: Commincation Techniques

Strategies:
- Analyze context of situation
- Active Listening
  - Ask 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
- Use voice effectively
  - Eye contact
  - Hand gestures
  - Facial expressions
  - Volume of voice
  - Tone (inflection)
  - Speed
  - Pausing
- Use effective written communication
  - Use concise and clear language
  - Create an appropriate tone with punctuation and grammar
  - Reread and edit your writing
  - Consider the ways your words could be interpreted and change to be more easily interpreted
  - Suggest a time to talk in person or over the phone if the message is too complex

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 in your communication
  - Avoid or leave the situation
  - Ask a question
  - 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"
  - Acknowledge the other person's feelings and explain your decision
  - 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
- Delegate tasks based on strengths
- Get to know team members
- Listen to ideas from all team members
- Create team norms
- Build consensus and make decisions

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 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 9-12 Framework

In grades 9-12, students practice strategies to create effective, strategic and inclusive teams. Students begin *Stage 4: Collaboration* by identifying team goals in order to have a clear objective for collaborative work. Next, students evaluate their personal role and impact on the team by acknowledging their strengths and evaluating the influence of individuals on a team. Understanding the strengths of ourselves and others allows the team to delegate tasks effectively and ensures higher quality work. Finally, students learn to support their teams by practicing inclusion strategies and learning how to create proposals using consensus-building strategies. To teach *Stage 4: Collaboration*, teachers should provide opportunities to work in groups to complete a variety of tasks. *Stage 4: Collaboration* can be taught and reinforced anytime the teacher plans on having students work in groups.

Mastery of *Stage 4: Collaboration* means students are able to identify the goal of a team, understand their roles and responsibilities on a team, contribute to a team by fulfilling their roles and responsibilities, and include all members of their team.

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 activity with focus and common understanding.

Sub Skill(s):

- Define collaboration
- Identify the goal of the team

Step 2: Examine My Role

Step Overview: This step allows students to understand what their roles and responsibilities are in a team. Students should first understand what makes a good team member, and then reflect on how they can use their personal strengths to contribute to a team. Once students understand the impact their individual efforts have on whether or not a team achieves their goal, they spend time exploring their strengths in order to better understand how they can best support their team in the activity and delegate tasks accordingly.

Sub Skill(s):

- Name attributes of a positive team member
- Explain impact of an individual on a team
- Delegate tasks based on strengths

Step 3: Support the Team

Step Overview: Part of collaboration is supporting a team in achieving its goals. This step is important once work has started and needs to be completed. Many of the strategies help students include all members of the team. Inclusion of all team members leads to the most creative and effective teams. We want students to work in teams to promote diverse perspective taking, increase creativity, and create an environment where new ideas are shared and challenged. Collaboration is the most complex form of interpersonal communication, and it can lead to the most creative results. To reach these results, all members of a team must be included and utilized. In Step 3, students practice inclusion strategies and consensus building to make their teams more dynamic and productive.

Sub Skill(s):

- Explain why inclusion is important to collaboration
- Get to know team members
- Listen to all team member ideas
- Create team norms
- Build consensus and make decisions

Step 4: Reflect

Step Overview: Learning to reflect takes practice and intention. After working on a team, it is important to take time after the task or goal is completed to ask important questions about the teams's ability to complete the goal created at the beginning of the collaboration process. Each person should reflect on their personal contribution, their strengths, and their areas of growth. The final step of *Stage 4: Collaboration* allows for students to reflect on their experience and success. Students use this reflection process to improve 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 our team achieve our goal? Why or why not?
- Did our 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) and group work to provide practice opportunities for students to work on teams.
- Provide checklists of effective team behaviors for students to use during group work or to reflect 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.