

## Health Skill:

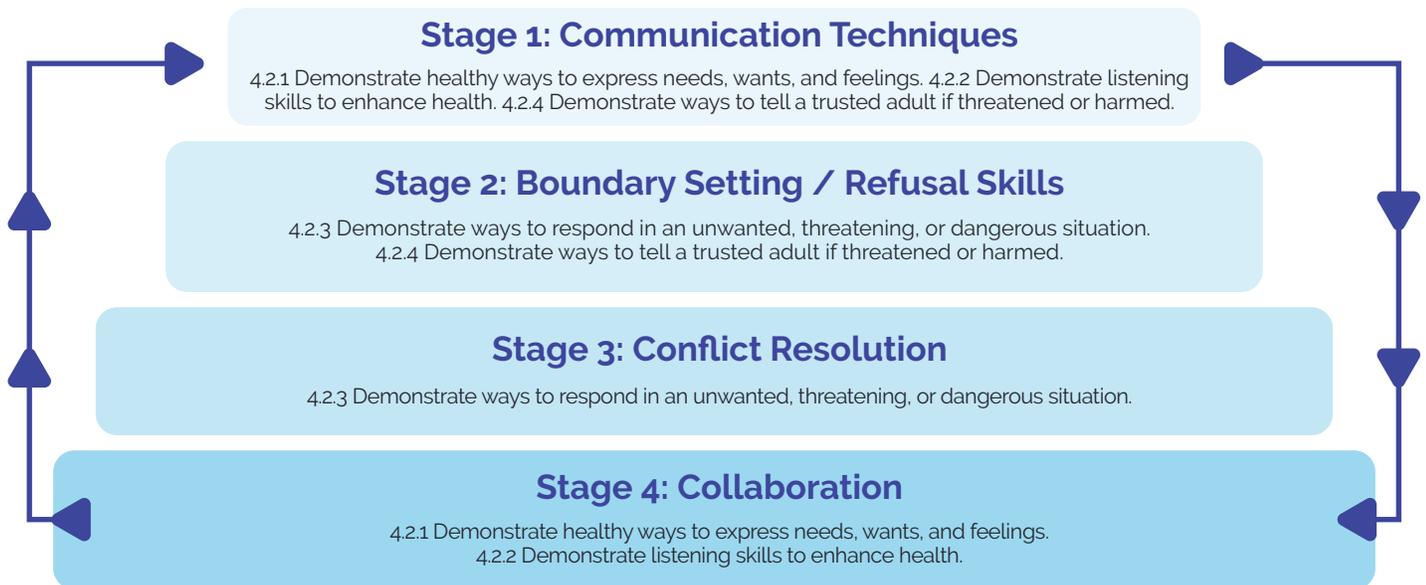
# Interpersonal Communication



## 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 PreK-2 Framework

In grades PreK-2, 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 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



Step 2  
Speak

## Grades PreK-2 Framework

In grades PreK-2, *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* begins with listening strategies and gradually begin to develop more advanced speaking techniques. Students learn specific strategies to become more active listeners by focusing on eye contact, body language, and facial expressions. Students learn about their role in a conversation as a listener and practice techniques when someone is speaking to a large group, small group, and one-on-one. Students also learn specific speaking strategies to strengthen their voice and practice appropriate voice depending on context. Language for describing effective and ineffective communication has been simplified by using terms such as "good" and "bad." Use more nuanced or complex language as students are ready. Many of the activities in the *Teaching Progression* are written for students who have not started reading and writing. If students are reading and writing, adapt or add to activities to reinforce literacy skills. For some activities, guidance is provided for how literacy may be included.

Mastery of *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* for grades PreK-2 means students are able to use active listening strategies to engage with peers and adults, use appropriate speaking strategies to voice their needs, wants, and feelings, and ask for help when needed.



## Stage 1: Communication Techniques

### The Steps:



#### Step 1: Listen

**Step Overview:** Effective communication begins with listening. In this step, students learn how to be effective listeners by using a variety of listening strategies. Before jumping into listening skills, time should be spent examining the importance of communicating effectively. From there, students begin their mastery of listening skills to enhance health by examining the differences between effective and ineffective listening. Next, students practice specific strategies to be a more engaged listener. When learning listening skills, it is important for students to see a model and practice specific skills. The specific skills suggested in this progression include eye contact, appropriate facial expressions, and appropriate body language. Definitions or criteria for these skills need to be determined by the teacher to ensure they are culturally responsive and inclusive of all student experience.

#### Sub Skill(s):

- Explain why listening is important
- Use listening strategies
  - Not speaking
  - Eye contact
  - Body language
  - Facial expressions
- Listen to stay safe



#### Step 2: Speak

**Step Overview:** Effective speaking strategies allow individuals to better express their needs, wants, and feelings. In this step, students learn how people communicate with their voice, face, and body to express their ideas. When learning appropriate speaking strategies, it is important for students to have the chance to practice specific strategies and language with peers. Students can do this by playing games or responding to a variety of prompts. In this step, students should also practice determining appropriate settings for their voice volume.

#### Sub Skill(s):

- Explain why communicating clearly is important
- Use face and body to communicate
- Use voice to communicate
  - Speed
  - Volume
  - Tone
- Ask for help



## 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 communication technique is appropriate or inappropriate for the context. Allow students to come to their own 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.

See *Teaching Progression* for suggested learning activities.