

Health Skill:

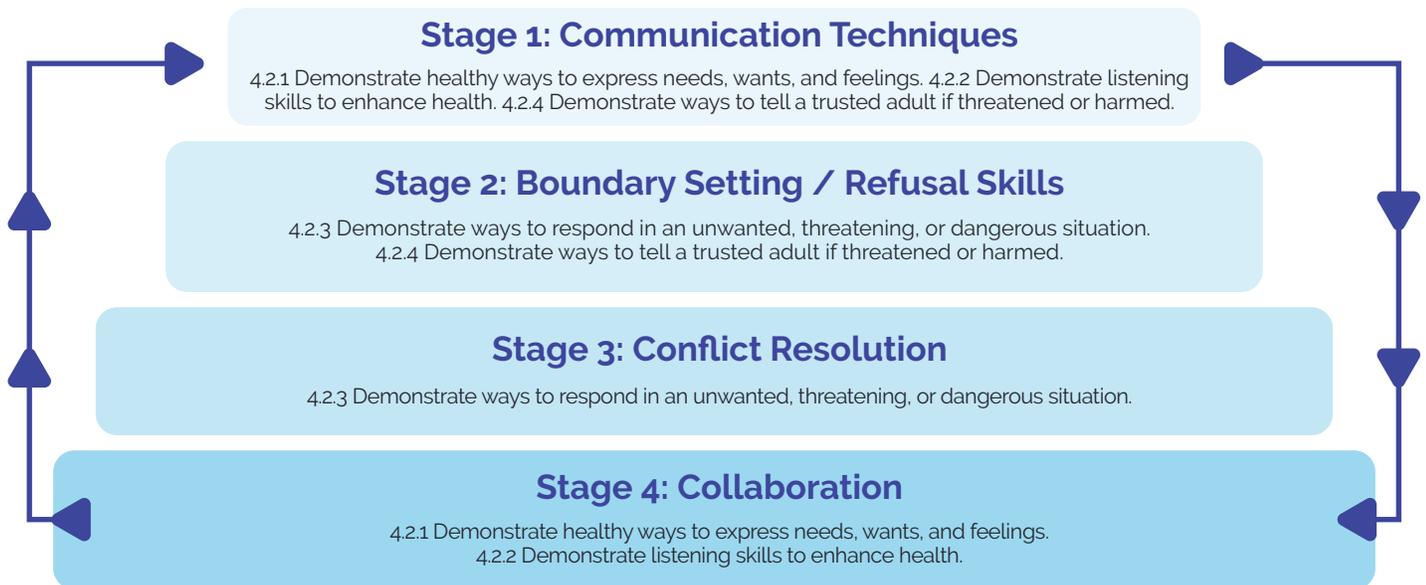
Interpersonal Communication



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 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:



Step 1
Stop & Think



Step 2
Say Feelings



Step 3
Agree or Get Help

Grades PreK-2 Framework

In grades PreK-2, students will focus on appropriate steps for handling conflict with peers. The three steps in this health skill model use strategies practiced in *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* to deepen understanding of *Interpersonal Communication*. Students in grades PreK-2 should focus on their use of words to express how they feel in conflicts. In *Stage 2: Conflict Resolution*, students practice responses to real-life scenarios to prepare for conflict in their daily life. These strategies include strategies to stay calm when conflicts arise, how to use I-Statements to express their feelings, and how to come to an agreement. 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 3: Conflict Resolution* for grades PreK-2 means students are able to explain the conflict, use strategies to remain calm, and voice their needs to others, including those who can help.



Stage 3: Conflict Resolution

The Steps:



Step 1: Stop & Think

Step Overview: During conflict it is important to take a moment to stop and think, which helps to identify the root cause of the conflict and utilize coping strategies to enter conflict resolution calmly. Students begin this health skill by identifying conflict and emotions associated with different situations. Next students should practice calming strategies to engage in conversation with another person during a conflict. This step allows students to evaluate the situation, calm themselves down, and think about how to proceed.

Sub Skill(s):

- Understand the conflict
- Use calming strategies



Step 2: Say Feelings

Step Overview: After using effective coping strategies, those involved in conflict must talk with each other to establish needs, wants, and feelings. Students begin this step by learning the purpose of I-Statements. While I-Statements can be used in a variety of situations that do not involve conflict, I-Statements are taught here because of their necessity in Conflict Resolution. Using I-Statements in conflict allows students to clearly state their feelings without attacking the other person in the conflict. I-Statements are typically broken down into three parts: 1. stating the feeling; 2. explaining the action that caused the feeling; and 3. explaining why the action caused the feeling. Teachers should reinforce the listening and speaking strategies in *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* as they practice saying their I-Statements.

Sub Skill(s):

- Use I-Statements



Step 3: Agree or Get Help

Step Overview: During conflict, individuals first must stop and think, and then talk about how they are feeling. Once this has happened, they must work on coming to an agreement or seek help from someone who can settle the conflict. Students begin this step by examining balanced, fair agreements for different scenarios. When making an agreement, it is important to ensure that both people feel that the agreement is fair and balanced. The majority of this step is spent on students justifying agreements by explaining why the agreements are balanced and fair.

Sub Skill(s):

- Agree on what is fair
- Get help, if needed



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.
- 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.