

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 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
Help My Team



Step 2
Include Others

Grades PreK-2 Framework

In grades PreK-2, students focus on being an active member of a team and including others. This stage allows for students to play together to work on appropriate, healthy collaborative strategies. *Stage 4: Collaboration* at the PreK-2 level focuses on sharing and inclusion. Practicing these skills through play will help students form appropriate relationships with their peers and build a stronger classroom community. Teachers should also incorporate strategies from other stages in order to help students collaborate. 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 4: Collaboration for grades PreK-2* means students are able to positively impact their team and include all members of their team when working toward a common goal.



Stage 4: Collaboration

The Steps:



Step 1: Help My Team

Step Overview: When collaborating on a team, an individual must first examine the role and responsibility they have. Students begin this health skill by naming characteristics of good teammates and practice being a member of a good team by participating on a team with a specific role. This step guides students to manage their behavior to remain kind and helpful during collaborative work. Because sharing is a major developmental skill for PreK-2, students should learn that sharing is an essential responsibility of each student to make a good team. By completing a specific role to help the team be successful, students examine the impact of an individual on a team.

Sub Skill(s):

- Share
- Be a good teammate
- Do my job



Step 2: Include Others

Step Overview: When collaborating, it is important that all members of a team are included. Step 2 of Collaboration begins with students analyzing how individuals feel when they are included in a group and practice empathetic strategies for those who are excluded from a group. In order to make sure all students are intentionally included in group or team work, students should use specific inclusion strategies and complete a task demonstrating the use of these strategies in a team.

Sub Skill(s):

- Understand why including others is important
- Ask people to join the team



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 during group work or to reflect after group work.
- Share the strategies from *Stage 4: Collaboration* with other school staff 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 through 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.