

Health Skill:

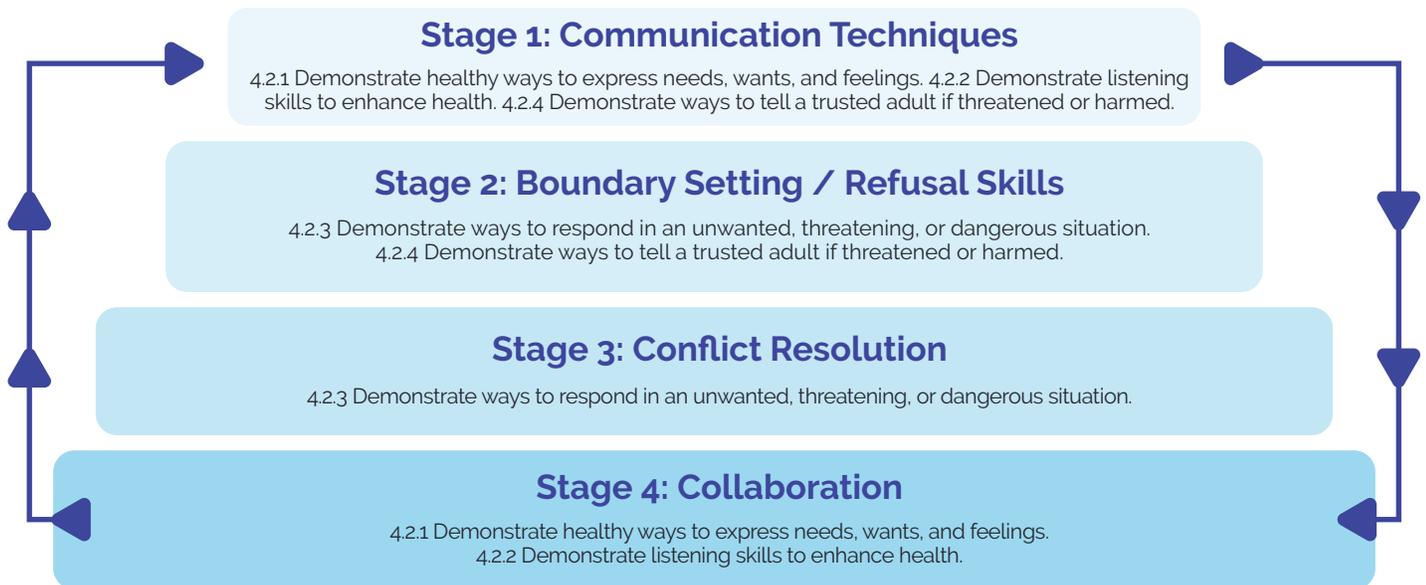
Interpersonal Communication



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.



Teaching Progression:



Step 1: Listen

SUB SKILL(S):

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

VALUABLE VOCABULARY:

*listen, look,
face-reading,
body language,
importance*

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

How can I show others that I am listening? Why is it important to listen to others?

NHES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

(4.2.2) Demonstrate listening skills to enhance health. (4.2.3) Demonstrate ways to respond in an unwanted, threatening, or dangerous situation.

Step 1: Listen | Sub Skill: Explain Why Listening Is Important



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 1:

Introduce *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* by explaining to students the importance of interacting with others. Ask students to explain why they think being able to share ideas and feelings is important. Chart student responses to ground the class in the importance of mastering *Stage 1: Communication Techniques*. Explain that there are strategies people use when they interact with others to make sure people feel included and heard.

Language of Health Literacy:

Listening is important because _____.

Listening helps me _____.



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 2:

Teach students the importance of listening by analyzing a character from a story who has difficulties with listening. Model asking and answering the following questions while reading a story:

- What does it look like to listen?
- What does it look like to not listen?
- Why do we need to listen?

TEACHING NOTES:

- See the *Resource Bank* below for a suggested book.



Teaching Progression: Step 1 | Listen (Cont.)



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 3:

Ask students to show the class an example of bad listening. Give students paper and drawing materials. Tell students that you are going to give them directions drawing an image. While describing the drawing, instruct students to be “bad” listeners.

Debrief the experience with the following questions:

- How did it feel to have “bad” listening in the classroom?
- Were you proud of your work?
- What made it hard to follow the directions?

TEACHING NOTES:

- Allow students to be silly, while also maintaining any group norms that are non-negotiable (e.g. hands to yourself, respecting other people’s belongings).



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 4:

Show students a video of a character learning the importance of listening. After watching the video, have students identify how the character learned from mistakes to become a better listener.

To process the video, ask students the following questions:

- What did the character learn about listening?
- Why is listening important?
- What did the character do to listen that you could do?

TEACHING NOTES:

- See the *Resource Bank* below for suggested video.



Teaching Progression: Step 1 | Listen (Cont.)

Step 1: Listen | Sub Skill: Use Listening Strategies



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 1:

Explain to students that there are certain ways to show we are listening and to show we care about what the other person is saying. Model for students the appropriate listening behaviors:

- Not speaking
- Eye contact
- Body language
- Facial expressions



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 2:

Give students new directions for drawing. This time, instruct students to be good listeners by using the strategies you modeled.

Debrief the two experiences with the class by asking students about the difference they felt each round. Use the following questions to debrief the good listening:

- How did it feel to have "good" listening in the classroom?
- Were you proud of your work?
- What made it easier for you to follow the directions?
- What listening strategy is easy for you?
- What listening strategy is still hard for you?

TEACHING NOTES:

- Give students positive feedback by narrating the appropriate listening behaviors you see in the classroom. For example, "I see great eye contact from Jimmy," and "I know Maria is listening because they are nodding."



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 3:

Practice the skill of listening to directions by playing a game with students. Have students play a game, such as Simon Says.

After students finish the game, have them reflect on how and why they listen by answering the following questions:

- What can distract us from listening?
- Why do we need to listen to others?
- How do we show we are listening?

TEACHING NOTES:

- See the *Resource Bank* below for specific directions for Simon Says.



Teaching Progression: Step 1 | Listen (Cont.)



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 4:

Have students practice these listening strategies with one another. Have students get into small groups (2-3) to tell stories. Students should tell a story about something that is easy for them to explain.

- Debrief with students using the following questions:
- How does it feel to be a "good" listener?
- How do you feel when someone is truly listening to you?

TEACHING NOTES:

- Example Prompts: Tell your partner/group about your favorite holiday; or tell your partner/group about what you did on the playground today for recess.
- While students talk with each other, walk around the room to give feedback to students and continue to narrate positive listening behaviors you observe.



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 5:

Show students pictures of different people interacting, some with examples of "good" listening strategies and some with examples of "bad" listening strategies. Have students identify the "good" and "bad" listening strategies they see in the photos.

Step 1: Listen | Sub Skill: Listen To Stay Safe



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 1:

Explain to students that often we must listen carefully to be safe. Give students an example of when a person needs to listen in order to remain safe in real life (e.g. person directing traffic, parent/guardian in a parking lot, teacher during a field trip). Ask students for an example of a time when they needed to listen to remain safe. Prompt students to explain why listening can keep them safe in these situations.

Language of Health Literacy:

Listening to ____ is important. I listen to them because _____.

I need to listen when _____. I need to listen then because _____.

I need to listen at _____. I need to listen here because _____.



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 2:

Show students pictures of situations, people, and places, some showing listening that is important to stay safe and some showing listening that is not as important for their safety. Instruct students to shout, "safe," if the picture shows a situation that isn't dangerous. Instruct students to shout, "listen," if the situation requires them to be listening to keep themselves safe. Ask students to explain why it is extra important to listen in some situations more than others. Then, have students share how they would use the listening strategies learned earlier to keep themselves safe.

TEACHING NOTES:

- Model and provide the *Language of Health Literacy* to support students explaining their answers.



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 3:

Provide students with blank paper and drawing materials. Have students draw a picture of a place they need to listen carefully to remain safe. Have students share their images with a partner.



Teaching Progression:

Step 2: Speak

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

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

How do I talk to others? How do I let others know how I feel?
How do I ask for help?

NHES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

(4.2.1) Demonstrate healthy ways to express needs, wants, and feelings. (4.2.3) Demonstrate ways to respond in an unwanted, threatening, or dangerous situation. (4.2.4) Demonstrate ways to tell a trusted adult if threatened or harmed.

VALUABLE VOCABULARY:

communicate, body language, voice, volume, feelings, telling v. asking

Step 2: Speak | Sub Skill: Explain Why Communicating Clearly Is Important



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 1:

Play a round of telephone with the class. Whisper a short phrase to a student. Then, have the student whisper the phrase to the next person. Continue this process until the last student receives the phrase and have them say the phrase out loud to the class, likely resulting in a very different phrase than what was originally said.

Ask students the following questions to debrief the activity:

- How did you let someone else know the phrase?
- What made it difficult to hear?
- What would have made it easier to hear?

TEACHING NOTES:

- See the *Resource Bank* below for suggested game rules.



Teaching Progression: Step 2 | Speak (Cont.)



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 2:

Define the word *communicate* for students. *Communicate* means *to give or get information*. Explain to students that we are constantly communicating with one another from the moment we wake up to the moment we go to sleep, and we communicate a variety of information, such as what we need, what we want, and how we feel. Tell students that if we are with people, we are communicating even without words.

Ask students how they communicated with others during the game of telephone. Ask students to name other ways they communicate with people. Create a bank of strategies from student responses, using images as necessary to support student comprehension.

TEACHING NOTES:

- Utilize different definitions to support the students in your classroom

Step 2: Speak | Sub Skill: Use Face And Body To Communicate



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 1:

Explain to students that we don't just communicate by speaking. People use their face and body to communicate with others. Have students turn to a partner. Ask students to communicate "happy" to their partner without speaking. Next, have students show various emotions to their partners without speaking (e.g. sad, scared, surprised). Ask students what they notice about the way they show these feelings compared to their partner. Prompt students to think about how different people communicate feelings in different ways.

Language of Health Literacy:

My face helps me communicate because _____.

My body helps me communicate because _____.



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 2:

Explain to students that when we use our bodies to communicate we are using body language. Just like spoken language, body language is used to let other people know how we feel. We can better know how our friends feel by noticing their body language, and we can also help our friends understand how we feel by using body language effectively. Ask students to shout out different emotions they feel and model expressing an emotion with your body. After each emotion, ask students to share what they notice about how you showed the emotion.



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 3:

Model the game of charades. Pick random feelings out of a bag and communicate the emotion to the class without words. Have students guess the emotion you picked out of the bag. Next, allow students to work in small groups to play charades. Have students select pictures of emotions or words out of a bag and try to get their group to guess which emotion they are trying to express. Move around the room and monitor student interactions.



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 4:

Create four corners with four major emotions, such as happy, sad, scared, excited. Read scenarios to the class that could cause students to have different emotions. For example, I just got a good report at school, and my family is going to celebrate. Have students move to the corner that they most associate with the scenario. When students get to the corner of their choice, ask them to act out that emotion with their entire body.

After the four corners activity, have students reflect with a partner by asking the following questions:

- How do you show when you are happy? Sad?
- How do you know when someone else is happy? Sad?
- What are the ways we communicate with our bodies?



Teaching Progression: Step 2 | Speak (Cont.)

Step 1: Speak | Sub Skill: Use Voice To Communicate



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 1:

Explain to students that our voice can tell people how we are feeling. Explain that speed, volume, and tone are ways we communicate how we feel. Watch a video showing the importance of voice. Have students watch the video twice, once to watch the video and describe the voice of the speaker. The second time, have students focus on body language and facial expressions.

After the video, use the following questions for small group discussions with students:

- How does the character feel?
- How do you know?
- What did you notice about their voice?

TEACHING NOTES:

- See the Resource Bank below for suggested video.



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 2:

Model for students how voice can impact interpretation of words. Say several statements at different speeds, volumes, and tones. After each statement, ask students to identify how they feel. Explain to students that we sometimes say one thing but are actually telling people something different with how our voice sounds.

Have students practice using their voice to express their emotions. Tell students to show different emotions using speed and tone. Give students a simple sentence to say and an emotion or speed to say the sentence. Provide multiple practice opportunities, switching statements, emotions, and partners.

Debrief the activity by asking the following questions:

- How can speed change what a person is saying?
- How can volume change what a person is saying?
- How can tone change what a person is saying?

TEACHING NOTES:

- Example phrases and prompts:
 - "I am going to the store," in a fast, loud, excited tone.
 - "I can't wait to go to school," in a slow, quiet, angry tone.
 - "I want you to play with us" in a sad voice.



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 3:

Have students practice using appropriate volume with a partner. Place students into two lines facing one another. Have them say a phrase, such as "You're Awesome," just loud enough for the person in front of them to hear. Have students take a step back and say a new phrase loud enough for the person to hear. Repeat 4 - 5 times. Ask students what they noticed. Talk about volume of voice and impact of volume, making sure students understand that different situations require different volumes.



Teaching Progression: Step 2 | Speak (Cont.)



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 4:

Explain to students that we use different volumes for different situations. Have students identify when they should use different volumes in different situations. Read a situation and instruct students to stand for a loud voice, sit in a chair for a medium voice, and sit on the ground or lay on their belly for a low voice. Then, ask students to talk to a partner using that volume of voice.

TEACHING NOTES:

- Example situations: you're at a basketball game; you're in a religious building; you're at the library.
- Use different forms of movement to support the needs of your classroom.
- Provide phrases or prompts to support students practice using a variety of volumes.

Step 2: Speak | Sub Skill: Ask For Help



SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 1:

Explain to students that we often need to ask people for help. Sometimes when we are in need of help it can be difficult to ask for help because we are upset. Tell students that we are going to practice ways to ask for help even if they are really upset.

Read students a story about a character who was in need of help.

Ask students during the book:

- What does the character need?
- How do they ask for what they need?
- What obstacles are in the way?

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 2:

Explain to students that we ask different people for different things. In the classroom, we ask our friends to help us with work, and we ask the teacher to go to the bathroom. At home, we ask our family to help us get food or solve problems with our siblings. Today, they will practice how to ask people for things they want or need.

Introduce the *Language of Health Literacy* to support students in asking for help. Ask students what volume, speed, and tone they should use to get their point across effectively. Model using a variety of volumes, speeds, and tones to show students how these things change the message. Give students examples of sentences of someone asking for help and have them practice using different volumes, speeds, and tones.

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITY 3:

Read students a scenario and have them practice asking their partners for help.

TEACHING NOTES:

- Example Scenario: You are playing at recess and you fall down and scrape your knee. To ask for help say, "I feel hurt, and I need a bandaid. Can you please help?"
- Model and provide the *Language of Health Literacy* to support students asking for help.

Language of Health Literacy:

*I feel _____, and I need
_____. Can you
please help?*



See *Access Valid & Reliable Resources* for guidance on supporting students on locating trusted adults.



See *Stage 1: Advocacy for Self of Advocacy for Self & Others* for further guidance on supporting students asking for help.



Assessing Stage 1: Communication Techniques

Students in grades PreK-2 will have mastered *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* by demonstrating their ability to showcase the performance indicators identified in Standard 4. Use the student friendly language below to support rubric creation and feedback to students.

Standard 4: Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

4.2.1 Demonstrate healthy ways to express needs, wants, and feelings.

- I can tell others how I feel with my voice.
- I can tell others how I feel with my face and body language.
- I can use appropriate tone in my voice when speaking to others.
- I can ask for help.

4.2.2 Demonstrate listening skills to enhance health.

- I can use active listening strategies, such as eye contact, appropriate body language, and appropriate facial expressions to engage in conversations with others.
- I can identify possibly dangerous situations that need my full attention for me to be safe.

ASSESSMENT TOOL #1 (4.2.2)

Have students demonstrate “bad” listening strategies. Then, have students demonstrate “good” listening strategies. Use a checklist to track student behavior in order to collect data and provide feedback. Debrief the activity with students and make a list of “good” listener characteristics.

ASSESSMENT TOOL #2 (4.2.3)

Have students create a picture of a time in their life when it is important for them to be a good listener. After students finish their picture, have students share these images with a partner and act out the listening strategies they would use in the situation.

Literacy Extension: For students able to read and write, have them write a story for the picture, explaining why listening is important and the strategies they would use to stay safe.

ASSESSMENT TOOL #3 (4.2.1)

Have students create a play showing the class how a student feels when they are not included in a game and then when a friend asks them to play. Let students create the scenario using props if available. Remind students that they need to show the class emotions through body language and voice. Have small groups present their plays to the class. Ask the class the following questions:

- What emotions they observed?
- How did they know the characters felt that way?
- What body language did they see?
- What facial expressions?
- How was the tone, speed and volume used to make emotions clear?

**ASSESSMENT TOOL #4 (4.2.1, 4.2.4)**

Give students toys to create a situation where they would need to ask for help. Explain to students that they need to act out a time when they would need to ask for help. Ask students to use specific language when asking for help. Students can use the *Language of Mastery* from *Teaching Progression*. Have students practice the listening and speaking strategies learned throughout the *Teaching Progression*. Walk around to monitor students. Encourage students to use specific language to ask for help. Ask students about their situation using the following questions:

- What happened?
- Why does your toy need help?
- How would they ask?

Content Area Connections

Build content understanding through connections with other courses. Share suggestions with teachers to develop plans for content overlap and student language connections.

The use of effective listening and speaking strategies helps to create a safe and welcoming classroom. When planning for partner or group work, use the strategies learned in *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* to reinforce healthy ways of communicating. Use the strategies when teaching other content areas or share with colleagues, so students use similar language across contents, reinforcing student understanding. For example, during Math instruction prompt students to use active listening strategies during direct instruction of concepts.

Utilize content structures and topics in classrooms to reinforce student understanding and to support ongoing student development. *Stage 1: Communication Techniques* can be used across content areas when students are trying to communicate.

Reinforce the understanding that effective communication can help in all areas of life by exploring the following questions with students across contents. Add specific content information in place of the italicized words as necessary. These questions are meant to be used when students are interacting with others, during partner or group work. These questions are a guide for independent reflection when students are challenged to understand how best to communicate their needs, wants, and feelings, and how others may be communicating to them.

- What need, want, or feeling are you trying to communicate in *this moment*?
- How could you be a good listener in *this moment*?
- How could you use your voice to say your *needs, wants, or feelings*?
- How could you ask for help in *this moment*?



VOCABULARY REINFORCEMENT:

Utilize the vocabulary words below to reinforce student understanding and to showcase the ability to use words across content areas. For example, an entire grade-level team can decide to teach these words within the specific contexts of their classes to deepen understanding of vocabulary and language use.

listen, speak, voice, body language, facial expressions, speed, communicate, tone

Resource Bank

RMC Health

- [Health Education Skills Models](#)

National Health Education Standards

- [Standards & Performance Indicators](#)

101 Children's Books for Teaching Social Skills:

- <https://childhood101.com/books-friendship/>

Suggested Book for listening: Howard B Wigglebottom Learns to Listen by Howard Binkow

Cookies Crumby Pictures: Listen to Directions

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3b3d7bmlCc>

Bert and Ernie Can't Communicate

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjF4rKCR81o>

Listening Games for Kids

- <https://www.encourageplay.com/blog/listening-games-for-kids>