

Health Skill:

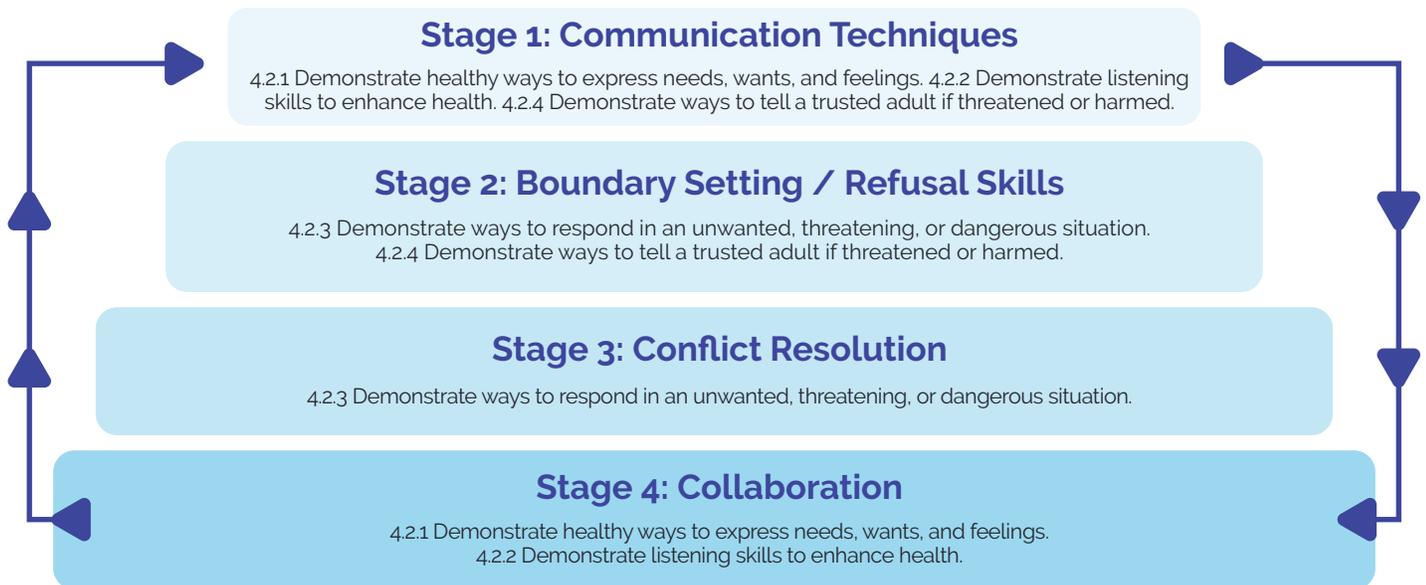
Interpersonal Communication



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 2: Refusal Skills & Boundary Setting

The *Interpersonal Communication* health skill model continues with *Stage 2: Refusal Skills & Boundary Setting* to teach students to advocate for themselves and set appropriate, healthy boundaries in relationships. The strategies used in *Stage 2: Refusal Skills & Boundary Setting* are designed to help students practice using a strong voice and safe strategies when they face pressure to do things that feel unsafe or unhealthy for them. By the end of *Stage 2: Refusal Skills & Boundary Setting*, students in all grade-levels will have foundational strategies for saying *no* in high pressure social situations and maintain healthy boundaries. Students who master these techniques will be better equipped to follow through on healthy decisions in relationships and set appropriate boundaries to feel safe and comfortable with others.

The Steps:



Grades PreK-2 Framework

Students in grades PreK-2 are inherently curious and social. As young students begin developing relationships and learning the rules of interacting with others, it is important to give students guidance on establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries. To set students up for healthy relationships, teachers should provide students with skills to maintain appropriate boundaries. Because early elementary students have a particular curiosity in their own bodies and the bodies of others, skills in this health model will focus on appropriate touch and physical boundary setting. They will explore the importance of rules in society that provide boundaries to protect and keep people safe. Sharing is also an important boundary for students to practice at this age. Students in grades PreK-2 should spend time deciding when and how they want to share and practice kind ways to communicate that they do not wish to share their belongings if they are not comfortable. 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 2: Refusal Skills & Boundary Setting* for grades PreK-2 means students will be able to explain how rules keep them safe, recognize appropriate versus inappropriate touch, and verbalize their personal boundaries for their possessions.



Stage 2: Refusal Skills & Boundary Setting

The Steps:



Step 1: Listen to My Feelings

Step Overview: When learning to set boundaries, it is important to listen to your feelings. Our bodies tell us when we do not feel safe or comfortable and learning to recognize these feelings allows us to know when we need to state a boundary or say *no*. This step allows students to stop and think about how they are feeling in order to recognize when their boundaries are crossed. In this step, it is important for students in grades PreK-2 to focus on two types of boundaries: boundaries for their bodies and boundaries for their belongings. Teachers should spend time focusing on these two types of boundaries and incorporate additional boundaries when students are ready.

Sub Skill(s):

- Name my feelings
- Define boundary
- Know my boundaries for my body
- Know my boundaries for my stuff



Step 2: Say No

Step Overview: Step 2 of *Refusal Skills & Boundary Setting* teaches students how to state their boundary clearly and assertively, whether that is just saying *no* or stating what they need the other person to stop and do differently. Students should practice identifying when situations need a firm *no* and when boundaries may be a little more complex, like sharing personal belongings or playing with one another.

Sub Skill(s):

- Identify situations that require saying *no* or getting help
- Use a refusal/boundary setting strategy
 - Say *no* firmly and loudly. Stand tall and be clear.
 - Avoid or leave the situation
 - Politely decline
 - Get help from a trusted adult



Step 3: Look Back & Learn

Step Overview: Learning to reflect takes practice and intention. After an individual upholds a personal boundary, it is important to reflect on how they feel. It is possible that upon reflection, they will need to seek additional resources or help in case the situation comes up again in the future. 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):

- What is my boundary?
- What do I say if someone is crossing boundaries for my body?
- What do I say if someone wants me to share, but I don't want to?
- When should I get an adult to help?



Teaching Tips

- Use movement to help students understand the concept of boundaries. For example, tape off an area of the room and prompt students to enter and exit the boundary.
- Practice *Stage 2: Refusal Skills & Boundary Setting* with sharing belongings. Prompt students to identify objects they are okay with sharing and others they are not. Then, have students practice asking for consent for borrowing and saying *no* if they do not want to share.
- Use role play to give students an opportunity to practice communicating and upholding their boundaries.
- Be sure to include the following situations when learning about seeking help from a trusted adult when boundaries are crossed: sexual assault or harrassment, talk of self harm or suicide, threats toward others, etc.

See *Teaching Progression* for suggested learning activities.