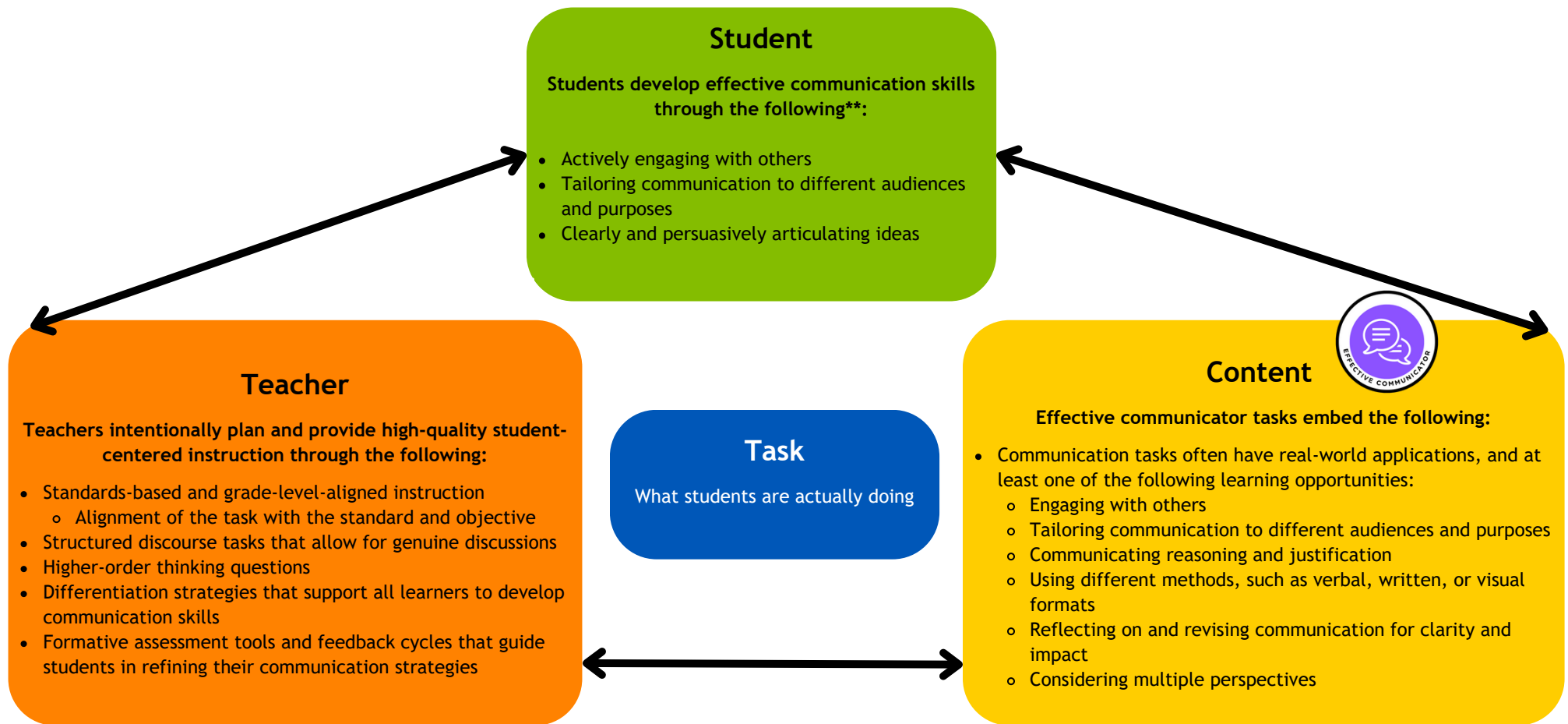


Norwalk Public Schools Effective Communicator Theory of Action

By designing and implementing high-quality, student-centered communication tasks, we empower students to develop and refine their written, verbal, and digital communication skills, so they can clearly express their ideas and insights.



To support future readiness, effective communication learning opportunities should be embedded across all subjects. As technology becomes increasingly central to how people exchange ideas and information, digital communication must also be an essential component of these learning experiences.*



Critical Thinker Connection: Designing and implementing high-quality, student-centered tasks that require students to make their thinking visible strengthens both critical thinking and communication skills.

*Based on the Instructional Core from City, Elizabeth A., Elmore, R., Fiarman, S., & Teitel, L. (2009). Instructional rounds in education. Harvard Educational Publishing Group.

**See page two for further definitions for each of the effective communicator indicators



Norwalk Public Schools Effective Communicator Map



Students develop effective communication skills by actively engaging with others, tailoring their message to different audiences and purposes, and clearly and persuasively expressing their ideas. The three indicators of an effective communicator described below are further detailed in the accompanying Effective Communicator Map, which outlines specific criteria across grade bands.

Indicators			
Actively engages with others		Tailors communication to different audiences	Clearly and persuasively articulates ideas
Criteria	a. Engages in genuine discourse by actively listening and asking questions to deepen understanding.	a. Expresses ideas and emotions through a variety of communication modes (e.g., verbal, written, nonverbal, digital) and strategically incorporates multimedia elements.	a. Recognizes and expresses emotions while considering others' perspectives to engage in constructive dialogue.
	b. Develops empathy by recognizing emotions, considering others' perspectives, and demonstrating understanding through active listening.	b. Intentionally adjusts language, tone, and communication style to align with the audience, purpose, and context.	b. Consistently uses academic language throughout communication and justifies ideas with relevant evidence, while also acknowledging and responding to diverse perspectives.
	c. Reflects on personal biases and assumptions.		c. Seeks, interprets, and applies feedback to refine and enhance communication for clarity and impact.



Norwalk Public Schools Effective Communicator Map

This document outlines what an effective communicator looks like across grade-level bands, serving as a resource for educators and leaders. It aims to build clarity around the progression of communication skills in students, grounded in child development research, communication scholarship, and academic standards.



PK-K

Actively engages with others

- a. Practices active listening and uses facial expressions and/or gestures to show engagement.
- b. Recognizes and identifies emotions, and accesses basic strategies to manage uncomfortable feelings.
- c. Asks and answers questions to seek help, gather information, or clarify understanding.

Tailors communication to different audiences

- a. Uses words, drawings, and gestures to express ideas and feelings and help others understand their thinking.
- b. Demonstrates self-awareness by adjusting tone, volume, and intonation based on the audience, such as when speaking to peers versus adults.

Clearly and persuasively articulates ideas

- a. Identifies and expresses emotions and needs using strategies.
- b. Uses academic vocabulary when expressing thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Begins to organize ideas in a logical sequence when telling stories or sharing information.
- c. Understands feedback from teachers or peers and follows feedback to improve communication.

1-2

- a. Practices active listening and responds with relevant comments, connections, or questions during collaborative conversations with diverse partners.
- b. Identifies and regulates emotions using multiple strategies.
- c. Asks clarifying questions to deepen understanding.

- a. Uses speech, drawings, and written words to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.
- b. Adjusts vocabulary, tone, intonation, and style based on the audience.

- a. Identifies similar and different feelings of others and communicates this understanding.
- b. Uses academic vocabulary when communicating information logically and sequentially through spoken or written formats. Supports ideas with relevant facts or examples.
- c. Receives and applies feedback to revise communication and provides examples of the changes made.



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Actively engages with others

Tailors communication to different audiences

Clearly and persuasively articulates ideas

3-4

- a. Practices active listening by maintaining focus on the speaker, summarizing key points, and asking questions to clarify and deepen understanding.
- b. Demonstrates self-awareness and empathy by acknowledging others' emotions.
- c. Recognizes how individual experiences and values shape the way messages are received and works to understand others' viewpoints.

- a. Expresses ideas and feelings through multiple communication modes, and begins to incorporate multimedia components (e.g., images, audio, simple charts) to strengthen clarity and support main ideas.
- b. Adjusts vocabulary, tone, and expressive communication based on the communication goal.

- a. Acknowledges and begins to accept viewpoints and feelings that are different from their own.
- b. Uses academic vocabulary and communicates information logically and sequentially through spoken, written, or multimedia formats. Supports ideas with relevant evidence.
- c. Seeks and applies feedback from teachers and peers and explains reasons for revisions.

5

- a. Practices active listening and asks clarifying or probing questions to deepen understanding before forming a response. Engages in discussions by building on others' ideas and drawing conclusions from shared insights.
- b. Demonstrates self-awareness and empathy by listening to others with similar or different perspectives and emotions.
- c. Recognizes how personal biases and assumptions influence the interpretation of messages.

- a. Expresses ideas and feelings through multiple communication modes and utilizes multimedia elements to highlight and support key ideas, thereby enhancing audience engagement.
- b. Purposefully adjusts language, tone, and expressive communication based on the audience and communication goal.

- a. Identifies and communicates multiple perspectives of shared and different experiences.
- b. Uses academic vocabulary and clearly communicates ideas in a structured and purposeful way. Supports ideas with relevant facts, examples, or descriptive details through spoken, written, or multimedia formats. Begins to consider and address alternative perspectives or counterclaims.
- c. Explains feedback received, how it was incorporated into revisions, and how these changes supported communication goals.



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Actively engages with others

Tailors communication to different audiences

Clearly and persuasively articulates ideas

6-8

- a. Practices active listening and asks clarifying and probing questions to deepen understanding and challenge assumptions. Builds on others' ideas with relevant insights or offers new perspectives grounded in evidence.
- b. Uses self-awareness and rephrasing to communicate an understanding of others' emotions and perspectives.
- c. Becomes aware of their own personal beliefs, assumptions, biases, and can self-regulate.

- a. Expresses ideas and emotions by intentionally selecting appropriate communication modes and effectively incorporating multimedia elements to highlight key ideas and engage the audience.
- b. Communicates purposefully by making choices that align tone, intonation, and message with the audience and communication goal.

- a. Uses communication skills to engage in perspective-taking to understand others' viewpoints and emotional responses and responds constructively while expressing their own perspective.
- b. Uses academic vocabulary and develops arguments and explanations with logical reasoning, strong evidence, descriptive details, and/or examples. Thoroughly considers and addresses counterclaims or alternative perspectives.
- c. Seeks and applies feedback to revise communication. Provides specific examples of changes made and explains how the revisions strengthened their message.

9-12

- a. Practices active listening and poses high-level probing questions to explore the speaker's reasoning, claims, and evidence. Supports discussions by adding relevant insights or offering alternative perspectives.
- b. Uses self-awareness and active listening skills to understand others' feelings and opinions, even when they differ.
- c. Demonstrates an understanding of how personal beliefs, assumptions, and biases can shape the interpretation of a speaker's message.

- a. Expresses ideas and emotions by intentionally selecting appropriate communication modes and strategically using multimedia to support audience understanding, reinforce claims, and foster meaningful engagement.
- b. Communicates purposefully by making choices that align tone, rhetorical strategy, message, media, and other creative choices with the audience and communication goal.

- a. Uses communication skills to predict situations that could elicit strong emotions from others and adjusts communication style to express personal opinions and show perspective-taking.
- b. Uses academic vocabulary and communicates information so that listeners can follow their line of thinking. Strengthens ideas with relevant and credible facts, as well as original and authentic ideas. Anticipates and addresses counterclaims or alternative perspectives.
- c. Uses social/self-awareness to strategically adapt communication in response to audience feedback, including real-time adjustments. Explains the changes made and describes how these strategic adjustments improved the clarity and effectiveness of their message.