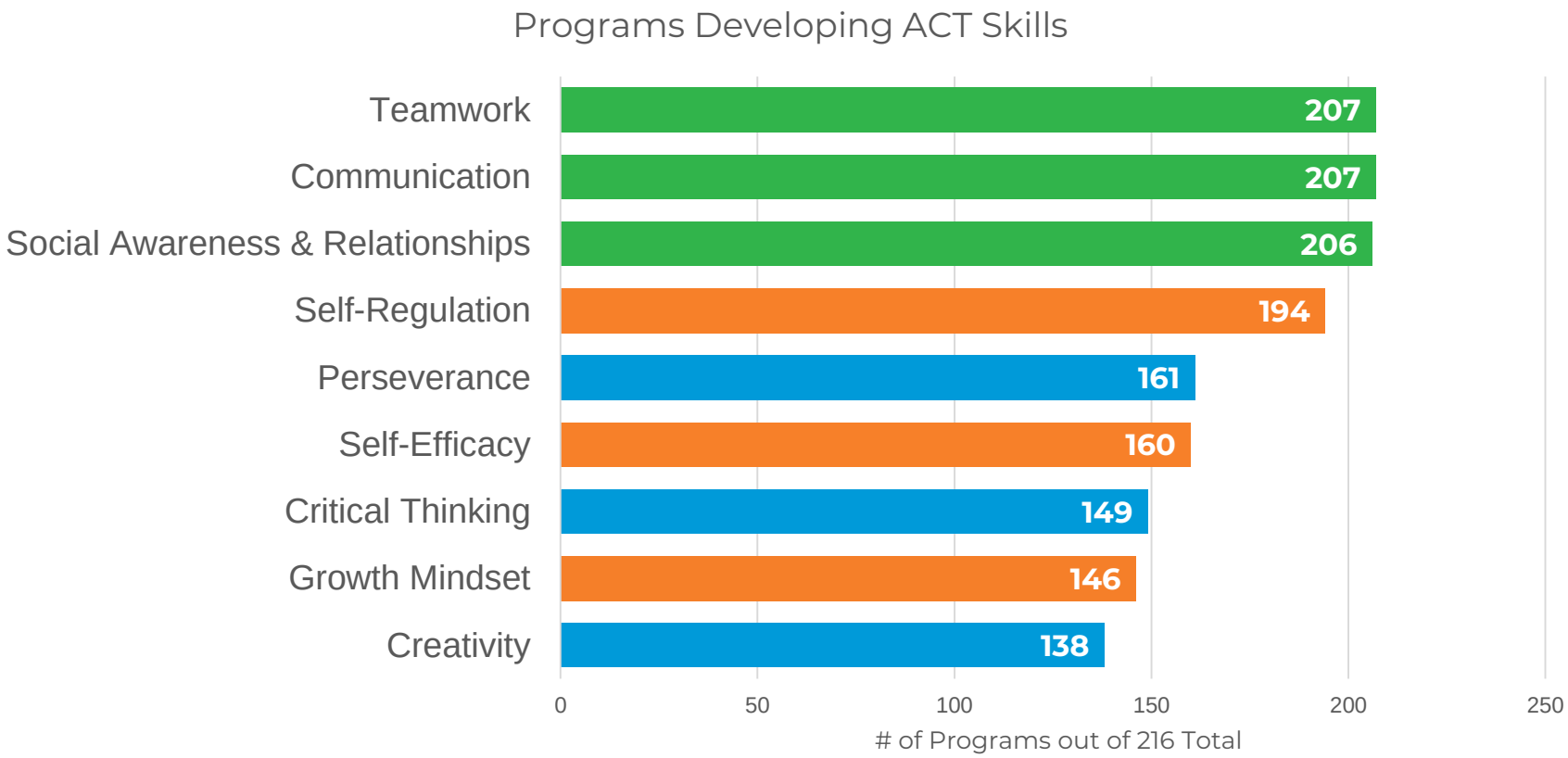
Boston
After School
& Beyond

The ACT Skills: Communication

The Achieve-Connect-Thrive Skills

Connect Skills are the most widely taught



Representative of 2023-2024 School Year

What is Communication?

Communication is making clear and compelling oral presentations, sharing ideas, clarifying information as needed, and adapting communication styles to meet audience needs.

Communication is important for interacting with others and conveying one's thoughts and feelings, but communication skills are also important for career preparedness. Young people with strong communication skills will share ideas or information with others effectively, ask and answer questions, listen actively, and be able to summarize key points.

Why Communication?

- 95.5% employers surveyed: Communication is most important competency

  National Assoc. of Colleges and Employers, 2023

- Positive relationships (w/ teachers, adults) linked to improved grades and social skills

  Pierce et al., 2010; Hamre and Pianta, 2001; Murray and Greenberg, 2000

What does Communication look like?

- Expresses ideas, complex thoughts, emotions clearly through words
- Listens actively (non-verbal communication like eye contact, posture, nods)
- Contributes productively (moves everyone to goal)

PEAR, Communication Rubric
Lahl, 2022

Sociedad Latina, Casey Atkins Photography

What does a lack of Communication look like?

- Quiet, doesn't express thoughts, ideas, emotions
- Extremely talkative, doesn't listen or engage (monologue)
- Express frustration/anger through actions
- Disagrees with peers disrespectfully

PEAR, Communication Rubric
Lahl, 2022

Dudley Street School, Casey Atkins Photography

How to Encourage Communication

1. Accountable Talk

2. Active Listening

3. Low-Stakes Practice

1) Accountable Talk

- Accountable to the learning community, knowledge, rigorous thinking
- Sentence starters to respectfully disagree, restate, clarify, introduce new opinion
- “I” statements vs. judgment
- Evaluate discussion contributions on quality, not quantity

PEAR, Critical Thinking Rubric
Tapcuoglu, 2018
Victoria State Government, 2020
Lahl, 2022

Sociedad Latina Escalera, Casey Atkins Photography

2) Active Listening

- Show you are listening (eye contact, follow speaker, nod, sit up)

- Activities that require building on what others say (e.g. fishbowl)

PEAR, Critical Thinking Rubric
Lahl, 2022
Atherton, 2023

Tierney Learning Center, Casey Atkins Photography

3) Low-Stakes Practice

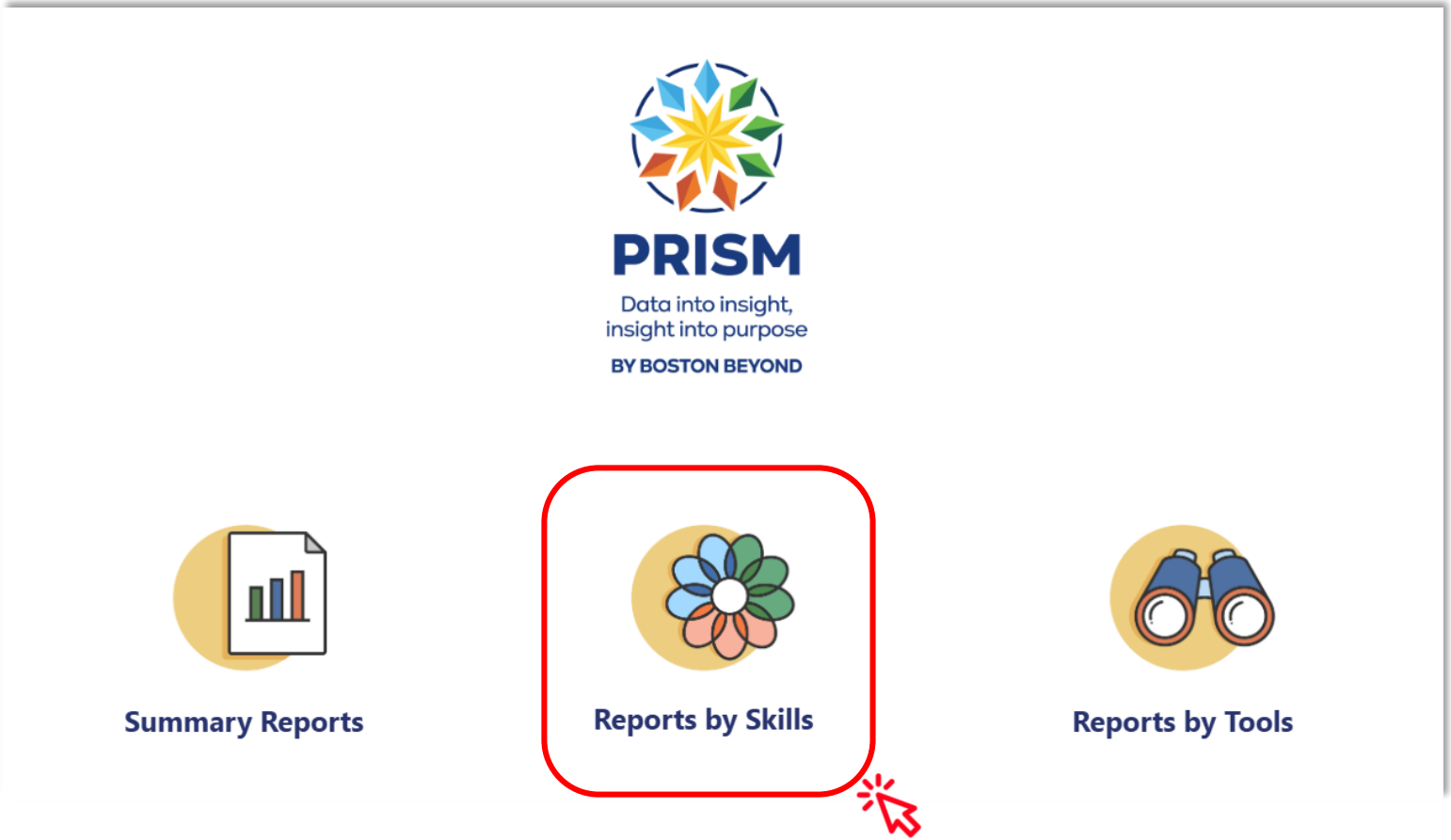
- Provide low-risk opportunities to communicate
  e.g. pair-share, small group
- Scaffold with non-verbal participation to help organize thoughts and encourage verbal sharing
  e.g. post-its, Padlet

PEAR, Critical Thinking Rubric
Martin, 2023

Boston Plan for Excellence, Casey Atkins Photography

Building Communication beyond school

Don’t forget the Reports by Skills in the PRISM



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