

A Tool for Every Teacher

(Grades K-8)

Frequently asked questions about role modeling
and teaching to positively impact your students



Topics include:

- ◆ media literacy
- ◆ healthy eating
- ◆ physical activity
- ◆ healthy weights
- ◆ healthy body image
- ◆ eating disorders



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Body Image & Self-Esteem	3
How to Model	4
Problem Solving	5
Tips for Teaching	6
Curriculum Supports	7
Healthy Eating	8
How to Model	8
Problem Solving	8
Tips for Teaching	9
Curriculum Supports	13
Physical Activity	14
How to Model	14
Problem Solving	15
Tips for Teaching	17
Curriculum Supports	18
Weight	19
How to Model	19
Problem Solving	20
Tips for Teaching	21
Media Literacy	24
How to Model	24
Tips for Teaching	24
Curriculum Supports.....	26
Eating Disorders	27
Problem Solving	27
Tips for Teaching	27
Curriculum Supports	28
Parent Involvement	29
Curriculum/Lesson Plans/Resources	31
References	35
Index	37

Introduction:

According to the Ministry of Education, “teachers can have a decisive influence on students by modeling the behaviours, values, and skills that are needed to develop and sustain healthy relationships and by taking advantage of ‘teachable moments’ to address immediate relationship issues that may arise among students”¹. No matter what subject you teach, as a teacher, you may have the greatest influence on a child’s health, of any other adult outside the home². The question remains, what are the things we do that influence students, either positively or negatively? It is not always clear what we should be saying or doing. This guide, along with the training will

allow you to incorporate these concepts into your whole school environment and positively impact the body image and self-esteem of your students.

A student’s body image and self-esteem can be influenced by many factors including:

- Media/Society
- Teachers
- Parents
- Friends
- Physical environment
- Social environment (School Climate)





Q: What is Self-esteem?

Self-esteem is the value you place on yourself. It is the image you have of yourself, measured against what you think you should be (with regard to your talents, skills, intellect, social skills, physical abilities and appearance).

Low self-esteem results when you don't measure up to your expectations (feel rejected or depleted). High self-esteem is when you do measure up to your expectations (feel accepted, energized and competent).

It is normal for self-esteem to fluctuate throughout life with adolescence being one of the most fragile times. Thoughts and actions can reinforce self-esteem in either direction. Teachers can help improve students' self-esteem by helping them develop competence in a variety of areas including: education, work, sports, personal interests, relationships, etc. By taking the focus away from appearance, students "may achieve a more rounded self-concept where appearance is only one of many attributes"³.

Q: What is a healthy body image?

Body image is a part of self-esteem and is a person's perception of his or her body size, shape, and attractiveness. Body image also includes a person's attitudes and feelings about his or her body and how they think others see them⁴.

A healthy body image means feeling "at home" in your body. A healthy body image also means you know how to take care of yourself and you feel good in your body. Instead of striving for a "perfect body", you find other ways to feel good about yourself⁵. Positive body image is linked to good self-esteem, and these two qualities build a student's confidence.

BODY IMAGE & SELF-ESTEEM

How to Model:

Q: How do the things I do and say affect students' body image and self-esteem?

Your students are always watching and listening. What you say and do has an impact on what students see as “normal”. The goal is to make what is “normal” include positive messages rather than negative messages. Teachers and staff should avoid commenting on their own and other people’s appearance at school. When children hear adults criticizing or admiring the bodies of others, they may copy this behaviour by teasing other children about their bodies. Students

may also assume that adults will look at them and judge their bodies. If they hear adults express dissatisfaction with their bodies, they may think that being an adult means being unhappy with your body².

Teachers and staff members can be positive role models by being aware of their verbal and non-verbal behaviours in front of students by showing healthy eating behaviours, being active and demonstrating a positive body image².

<i>Try to avoid:</i>	<i>Focus on:</i>
Making negative comments about your own body	Making positive comments about your accomplishments (e.g. learning a new activity or skill)
Talking about dieting or weight loss with other staff	Talking about improvements in your strength, endurance, trying a new vegetable or learning something new
Engaging in conversations about diets, weight loss or fat	Changing the subject or re-directing the conversation (e.g. ask what they are doing that weekend)
Complimenting people on their appearance (e.g. weight loss)	Compliment people on their good qualities and personality traits

Problem Solving:

Q: How can I role model a positive body image when I don't have a positive body image of myself?

Research indicates that teachers can support students in accepting and loving their own bodies, by examining the role they play as models⁶.

Start by examining your own beliefs and attitudes about body size, eating, activity and how you feel about yourself.

Some questions you can ask yourself are⁷:

- Am I dissatisfied with my shape or size?
- Do I talk about body weight or shape? Who do I talk to? Who can overhear?
- Do I feel guilty when I eat certain foods?
- Am I trying different diets to lose weight? Do I talk about my diets?
- Do I see physical activity as a chore, or a way to lose weight?
- How many times have I heard, or said, "Oh, you have lost weight, you look wonderful!"?
- Do I feel I would be happier if I lost weight?
- Do I think that overweight people have made bad choices about what and how much they eat?
- Do I make comments about myself or others? (e.g. "I feel fat", "she is nice and skinny")

If you answered yes to any of these questions, these may be issues that have a negative impact on your own body image and self-esteem and these feelings may unintentionally transfer to your students.

It is not necessary for you to be without fault, if you can focus on promoting a healthy body image through positive health messaging (enjoying foods, fun physical activities) instead of problem based messaging (weight loss, inactivity, obesity). By role modeling and teaching students about healthy eating, physical activity and accepting their own bodies, you may find that your own body image changes in a positive manner.

BODY IMAGE & SELF-ESTEEM

Tips for Teaching:

Q: How can I teach students to have positive self-esteem?

- No matter what subject you teach, it is important to do activities with students that help them explore some of their positive qualities and learn to verbalize these (e.g. 5 things I like about myself are, 5 things I can do well).
- Have students practice providing each other with positive feedback. Try having students tell a partner one great quality they have, (perhaps starting with friends and then moving on to others once they are comfortable). It is also very important to teach students how to kindly receive compliments. This will help build positive habits and build self-esteem in the students receiving the compliment. Having this as a normal everyday part of class will not only build self-esteem but also some very valuable social skills.

Q: How can I make students feel good about themselves and their bodies without focusing on appearance?

A number of factors contribute to students feeling good about themselves including intellectual abilities, physical abilities, social skills, interests and body image. Helping students increase confidence in their unique talents and abilities reduces the emphasis they place on physical appearance³.

Examples of things to compliment students on include:

- Handwriting
- Leadership skills
- Manners
- Accuracy on the beanbag toss
- Sharing
- Kindness
- Humour
- Friendship
- Any improvements and effort you see in a student

Curriculum Supports:

- **School Resource & Program Catalogue:** A list of curriculum resources, teaching materials and tools for teachers for all grades on a variety of health topics. Contact your Public Health Nurse for a copy: www.healthunit.org/school/curriculumsupport.html
- **Every Body Is A Somebody: A Research-based Active Learning Program To Promote Healthy Body Image, Positive Self-Esteem, Healthy Eating And An Active Lifestyle For Female Adolescents, Facilitators Guide.** It has activities to help you teach about: 1) Media family and friends, 2) Self-esteem and body image, 3) Dieting (avoid talking about behavior techniques page 99), 4) Healthy eating and active living, 5) Stress management, 6) Relationships. Fits with Curriculum for grades 5-8. Available to borrow from the Health Unit, or order online at: www.bodyimagecoalition.org
- **The Student Body: Promoting Health at Any Size:** Developed by the Hospital for Sick Kids. This teacher training module is designed to help alert teachers (and parents) to the factors that can trigger unhealthy dieting among children, and ways to prevent it. It addresses six areas of concern: Media and Peer Pressure, Healthy Eating, Active Living, Teasing, Adult Role Models, School Climate. These six learning modules utilize animated vignettes, videos and background information for teachers (and parents) so they can experience some of the positive and negative factors affecting body image and other risk factors for disordered eating. Available in English and French: www.research.aboutkidshealth.ca/thestudentbody/home.asp
- **Go Girls! Program:** This is a mentoring program for grade 7&8 girls that consist of 2 hour sessions once a week for 7 to 10 weeks. In this program girls learn concrete skills around balanced eating, physical activity, body image and self-esteem. Offered through Big Brothers Big Sisters Lanark 613-283-0570 or Leeds Grenville 613-345-0281 or 1-866-344-9972

HEALTHY EATING

How to Model:

Q: How do my eating habits at school influence my students?

If children see teachers eating or drinking nutritionally poor choices, or see their teachers dieting to lose weight, they receive the wrong message from one of their major influencers. When students see teachers eating healthy foods and beverages and enjoying them, they are more likely to eat healthy foods and beverages themselves.

Teachers and all adults in schools can positively influence students' food choices by role modeling positive eating habits². Positive eating habits include enjoying eating all foods without creating a fear or guilt about particular foods.

Problem Solving:

Q: What do I do if a student is always bringing in unhealthy lunches and snacks?

It is important not to single out children for unhealthy lunches or snacks. According to the Ministry of Education, students "have variable amounts of control over the food they eat at home and the food they bring to school. Teachers need to consider these realities and be aware of issues such as poverty, food allergies and sensitivities and cultural practices"¹. Contact your Public Health Nurse for strategies to promote healthy foods at school (e.g. parent resources, newsletter inserts).

Consider the foods available at your school (e.g. classroom celebrations, tuck shops, hot lunches, fundraisers, etc.) and discuss Nutrition Tools for Schools © with your Public Health Nurse to promote healthy food choices with activities, guidelines and resources to use at school, at home and in the community.

<i>Try to avoid</i>	<i>Focus on</i>
Regularly drinking coffee, pop or energy drinks while teaching	Drinking milk or water while teaching
Skipping breakfast and lunch	Eating breakfast and lunch
Eating unhealthy snacks at school	Eating nutritious foods/snacks at school
Rewarding students with food	Rewarding students with non-food items
Verbalizing feeling guilt related to eating certain foods (e.g. "I was bad today I ate fries" "I shouldn't have eaten that" "no thanks, I am being good today")	Eating a variety of "everyday" foods from the food groups as well as occasional "sometimes" foods. Enjoy them all guilt-free.

Tips for Teaching:

Q: What is the best way to teach students about healthy eating?

The best way to teach students about healthy eating (also known as balanced eating) is to focus on the importance of food to give us energy to learn, play, grow and keep our bodies functioning. Balanced eating also means eating when you are hungry and stopping when you are full. Eating regular meals and snacks throughout the day is normal and healthy for children. It is important to use a flexible approach and avoid rigid food rules and guidelines (e.g. good food, bad food, junk food, etc.) which can contribute to body image and eating concerns.

Use *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* as the basis of your teaching. By teaching students about the four food groups and which foods fit in each group, you can help them to learn what a well-balanced eating pattern should be.

There are several teaching tools available to teachers including *Eating Well With Canada's Food Guide: A Resource for Educators and Communicators*. This resource provides tips and tools to complement each recommendation in *Canada's Food Guide*. *My Food Guide* is an online interactive tool to help students personalize the information found in *Canada's Food Guide*.

Q: How do I teach about calories and nutrients?

The new curriculum expresses the importance of paying more attention to nutrients than to calories¹. Calories only tell you the energy you get from foods and don't differentiate between foods or take other qualities of foods into account. When teaching, provide a basic description that calories are the energy that comes from food. Avoid activities that involve counting calories, instead focus on the importance of different nutrients and how they can be obtained through a variety of foods.

• **MAIN TEACHING POINTS** •

- Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide and My Food Guide are excellent tools to help teach students about healthy eating
- There are no "bad" or "wrong" foods for children, use "sometimes foods" and "everyday foods" instead
- Teach students to listen to their hunger and fullness cues

HEALTHY EATING

Q: What is the best way to teach students about serving sizes?

It is important to teach students to follow their hunger and fullness cues with regular meals and snacks using *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. You can use simple household articles to show what different serving sizes look like for each food group⁴.

(Note: you can also bring in measuring cups to demonstrate serving sizes)

Sample Representations of Serving Sizes		
Vegetables and Fruit:		
125ml (½ cup) of bingo chips	=	1 serving of fruit or cooked vegetables
Hard ball	=	1 medium sized piece of fruit
Light bulb	=	½ cup fresh, frozen or canned vegetables
Golf ball	=	30 ml (2 tbsp) of dried fruit
Grain Products:		
32 pieces of string 32 cm long	=	1 serving of cooked spaghetti
Light bulb	=	½ cup of pasta
Hockey puck	=	½ bagel
Tennis ball	=	¾ cup cereal
Milk and Alternatives:		
Carton of milk – 250ml	=	1 serving of milk
Yogurt container – ¾ cup	=	1 serving of yogurt
3 dominos	=	50g (2 oz) of cheese
Meat and Alternatives:		
Deck of cards	=	75g (2.5 oz) cooked meat
Golf ball	=	30ml (2 tbsp) peanut/nut butter

Q: Should I be talking to students about “bad foods” or “wrong foods”?

Labeling foods as “bad” or “wrong” may make children think they should never eat those foods, or may foster an unhealthy association between food and guilt which can lead to negative body image and disordered eating⁸. To create a more positive message, foods are better classified as “everyday” and “sometimes” foods. Foods which are high in nutrients and belong to a food group are considered “everyday foods” and foods which are low in nutrients are “sometimes foods”⁴. By teaching about balanced eating using *Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide*, you can show students which foods fit into the four food groups and teach them that other foods can be enjoyed in moderation or as a treat.

Q: Is it okay to reward students with food?

As you know, rewards given in the classroom can be an effective way to encourage positive behaviour; however, role models should not reward students with food or withhold food as punishment⁴. Using food to reward students has many negative consequences that go far beyond the short-term benefits of positive behavior and can lead to an unhealthy relationship with food⁹.

It is best to reward students with non-food items such as pencils, erasers or stickers. Rewarding students with things such as outdoor playtime offers the benefits of a healthier lifestyle by teaching students that physical activity is enjoyable and part of a healthy lifestyle¹⁰.



HEALTHY EATING

Consequences of using food as a reward

- **Contradicts nutrition messages:** Nutrition lessons taught in the classroom are contradicted when children are rewarded with unhealthy food choices. It is important the students receive the same messages in the curriculum and classroom environment¹¹.
- **Contributes to poor health:** Foods commonly used as rewards (e.g. candy, cookies) may contribute to health problems in children including dental caries¹².
- **Encourages poor eating habits:** Research has shown that foods used as rewards become more desirable to children than if they had not been used as rewards. Children should learn to eat in response to hunger and satiety signals. Eating food rewards during class teaches students to eat when not hungry as a reward to themselves. The association of food with emotion or behaviour may contribute to lifetime habits of rewarding or comforting themselves with food¹³.

Non-food Rewards

The ideas listed below are suggestions of non-food rewards and can be modified for different grade levels.

Free	Low-Cost
Verbal praise	Stickers
Reduced or no homework	Stamps on student's hand
First in line	Pencils, pencil toppers
Walk break from class	Jump ropes
Extra reading time	Enter draw for paperback book
Help teacher (e.g. distribute handouts, errands to office)	Crayons
	Trip to treasure box (non-food items)

Curriculum Supports:

- **School Resource & Program Catalogue:** A list of curriculum resources, teaching materials and tools for teachers for all grades on a variety of health topics. Contact your Public Health Nurse for a copy: www.healthunit.org/school/curriculumsupport.html
- **Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide and Educators' Guide:** Contact your Public Health Nurse to order copies or go to: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/alt_formats/hpfb-dgpsa/pdf/pubs/res-educat-eng.pdf
- **My Food Guide:** An online interactive tool that can help students personalize the information found in Canada's Food Guide, go to: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php
- **Discover Healthy Eating:** A resource addressing nutrition, body image, eating disorders and oral health. Provides the nutrition background required to teach healthy eating. Available in English and French. Contact your Public Health Nurse to order copies or go to: www.toronto.ca/health/dhe_index.htm
- **Teach Nutrition:** This site contains curriculum-based units and activities, reviews frequently asked questions about nutrition and offers free nutrition workshops. Available in English and French. Go to: www.teachnutrition.org
- **The Student Body: Promoting Health at Any Size:** Developed by the Hospital for Sick Kids. This teacher training module is designed to help alert teachers (and parents) to the factors that can trigger unhealthy dieting among children, and ways to prevent it. It addresses six areas of concern: Media & Peer Pressure, Healthy Eating, Active Living, Teasing, Adult Role Models, School Climate. These six learning modules utilize animated vignettes, videos and background information for teachers (and parents) so they can experience some of the positive and negative factors affecting body image and other risk factors for disordered eating. Available in English and French: www.research.aboutkidshealth.ca/thestudentbody/home.asp
- **Additional Information:**
 - Kater, K. (2004). *Real kids come in all sizes*. New York: Broadway Books.
 - Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2005). *"I'm, Like, So Fat!": Helping your teen make healthy choices about eating and exercise in a weight-obsessed world*. New York: The Guilford Press.
 - Satter, E. (2005). *Your child's weight: Helping without harming (Birth through adolescence)*. Madison: Kelcy Press.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

How to Model:

Q: How do I role model physical activity for my students?

It is important for students to see adults incorporating physical activity into their day and view this as a normal, fun and positive experience.

<i>Try to avoid</i>	<i>Focus on</i>
Talking negatively about physical activity or making it sound like a chore or unpleasant.	Letting students see you being active at school (e.g. walking, running, biking) and enjoying it.
Refusing to participate in games and activities. Giving the impression that it is not normal for adults to be active.	Joining students in gym class and Daily Physical Activity (DPA), showing that people of all ages and body types can participate.



Problem Solving:

Q: What do I do with a student who can't do an activity?

If you have a student who physically can't perform an activity due to weight or ability, it is important not to make this obvious. Don't be afraid to modify the activities to work for your students. The activities they are learning should be directly connected to the individual students' needs and abilities¹.

Modify the activity before they start, each student can create their own personal goals based on their physical abilities. To increase self-esteem, give the student an achievable goal they can reach and feel good about and gradually modify the goal as they improve.



<i>Try to avoid</i>	<i>Focus on</i>
Encouraging students to be active to lose weight. This can have unintended negative consequences such as making them more self-conscious about their body/weight.	Encouraging all students to try activities, move to their ability, play and have fun. This is more likely to help increase their self-esteem and physical activity level.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Q: How do I make activities inclusive?

<i>Try to avoid</i>	<i>Focus on</i>
Taking away physical activity as punishment (or giving it as punishment)	Incorporating physical activity into the classroom whenever possible
Having winners and losers and games where kids are eliminated	Complimenting students on their skills, abilities, effort and improvements
Being rigid about rules and how games need to be played	Modifying games for the group- replace balls with rubber chickens or beach balls to make it appear fun rather than structured and competitive
Playing really long games where participants stay the same	Changing up the participants regularly, keep it moving and mixing it up, (this makes it more about participation than skill)
Sticking to competitive, traditional team sports that only suit certain students	Introducing variety, choice and non-traditional activities to suit all different interests and skills, (ask students what they like to do, incorporate these ideas, or let students create the games)
Expecting boys and girls to enjoy participating in the same activities	Offering activities for girls only to accommodate their interest and comfort with their bodies and abilities away from the boys
Restricting students to activities that involve team play	Introducing individual and recreational activities such as walking, running, dance, yoga, hiking, weight lifting, gymnastics

Tips for Teaching:

Q: What is the best way to teach about physical activity?

Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Children and Youth outlines the importance of physical activity and the variety and time needed to benefit health. Teachers should not promote physical activity as a way to lose weight.

In fact, weight and weight loss should not be discussed with students. All students should be encouraged to participate in enjoyable and sustainable physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle⁴.

Encourage non-competitive physical activity and introduce children to a variety of new things so they can find their favorite activities¹⁴.

By keeping physical activity inclusive to all activity levels, modifying and changing up your games and avoiding winners and losers, it can be fun for everyone.

Q: How can I use physical activity to promote a healthy body image?

By engaging students in physical activity, you can put the focus on what their bodies can do rather than what their bodies look like. Teaching students the joy of being active and to notice how their bodies feel and perform will help to promote a positive body image⁴. Teachers can teach students that no matter their age, height, weight, natural abilities or skills, they need to be physically active to be healthy and strong⁴. Students may feel better about their bodies after physical activity, knowing they are staying healthy and strong.

• MAIN TEACHING POINTS •

- Focus on what their bodies can do rather than what their bodies look like
- Physical activity should be promoted as part of a fun and healthy lifestyle, not as a way to lose weight

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Curriculum Supports:

- **School Resource & Program Catalogue:** A list of curriculum resources, teaching materials and tools for teachers for all grades on a variety of health topics. Contact your Public Health Nurse for a copy: www.healthunit.org/school/curriculumsupport.html
- **Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth:** There are guides available for teachers of children (age 6-9) and youth (age 10-14), as well as other guides (e.g. for families) online, go to: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/pag-gap/index-eng.php
These can also be ordered through the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit.
- **The Student Body: Promoting Health at Any Size:** Developed by the Hospital for Sick Kids. This teacher training module is designed to help alert teachers (and parents) to the factors that can trigger unhealthy dieting among children, and ways to prevent it. It addresses six areas of concern: Media & Peer Pressure, Healthy Eating, Active Living, Teasing, Adult Role Models, School Climate. These six learning modules utilize animated vignettes, videos and background information for teachers (and parents) so they can experience some of the positive and negative factors affecting body image and other risk factors for disordered eating. Available in English and French: www.research.aboutkidshealth.ca/thestudentbody/home.asp
- **Jiggi Jump:** This is a K-3 resource that has a CD and booklet with music and accompanying movements led by children's entertainers that help kids get moving. Available to borrow at the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit or order online at: www.jiggijump.com
- **DPA Resources:** There are a variety of resources available at: www.ophea.net/dpa to support you in getting your kids moving, in or out of the classroom and to meet the (DPA) requirements.
- **Activ8:** This is a Physical Activity Challenge program that emphasizes personal development and has modifiable challenges (including lesson plans) for each grade. This K-8 resource is available at: www.ophea.net or from the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit.
- **Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card:** Provides statistics and data on influences and outcomes of physical activity for children and youth. Can be found at: www.activehealthykids.ca
- **WeMuv:** The program was created to encourage kids to balance daily physical activity and screen time as it uses a special pedometer that provides currency to play in a virtual world full of fun. This grade 3-6 resource is available to purchase at: www.wemuv.com

How to Model:

Q: How can school staff be sensitive to the topic of weight?

Students learn how they feel about themselves from the people around them. Their perceptions are affected by the way you feel and talk about yourself and others. Students absorb what they hear outside of the classroom too. Lunchroom talks, talking to other teachers about weight issues and dieting also affects how students view their own bodies.

Role model by showing students that weight is not important by not discussing it.

For example, if students overhear teachers talking about weight or dieting, this can send the message to students that dieting and constant concern about weight are encouraged and part of normal behaviour. If a student overhears a conversation that starts with, “You look great, you’ve lost some weight haven’t you?” the student might get the message that losing weight will make you look better. Talking about weight can become a habit. To break this habit, try making your school a “Fat Talk Free” zone and get all staff to try to make the change together.



• MAIN TEACHING POINTS •

- Reflect on your own values, biases and attitudes
- Create an environment where students of all body shapes and sizes are accepted
- It is best not to discuss weight or weight loss with students, even if you think they are overweight
- Make your school a “Fat Talk Free” zone

WEIGHT

Problem Solving:

Q: What should I do if I have a student who is overweight?

Avoid singling out students. All students should be encouraged to pay attention to their hunger and fullness cues, eat according to *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*, and participate in fun, sustainable physical activity. Weight and weight loss should not be discussed with students of any size. Overweight and obese children and adolescents should not be put on a diet or encouraged to lose weight. Pediatricians recommend that overweight children and adolescents maintain their weight to allow them to grow into their weight and slim out naturally without weight loss¹⁵.

Q: What should I do if I hear weight teasing?

This is a form of bullying/harassment, start by following your school's bullying prevention plan. If you hear weight teasing, discuss the comments with the students to help them realize how harmful their behavior is. Teachers should be able to examine their own biases to create an inclusive and respectful learning environment¹. Try holding a classroom meeting to set expectations around teasing and bullying. Students can help set classroom policies and help work together to follow these¹⁶. For more information and tips to reduce weight bias in your school and classroom go to RUDD Centre for Food Policy & Obesity: www.yaleruddcenter.org/what_we_do.aspx?id=225

Try to avoid:	Focus On:
Having activities where some children will be singled out because they are physically unable to do it	Modifying activities to be inclusive of all skill levels without having the focus on any one child. Have all students set their own personal goals that they can achieve and feel accomplishment from.
Ignoring weight teasing, or being inconsistent when intervening	Intervening when you observe teasing of an overweight or underweight child
Using words like "good" and "bad", "healthy" and "unhealthy" which can lead to feelings of guilt and body image dissatisfaction	Using the terms "sometimes" and "everyday" foods instead

Tips for Teaching:

Q: What is considered a healthy body weight?

There is no one body weight that is healthier than another. Healthy bodies come in many shapes and sizes. Children's and adolescents' weight and shape are influenced by several factors, including heredity⁴. Many youth compare their bodies to their peers and unrealistic media images, which can lead to preoccupation and dissatisfaction with their weight and shape. By teaching students that if a person follows Canada's Food Guide and Canada's Physical Activity Guide, his or her body will be healthy. This can help strengthen children's body image by taking the focus away from weight.

Q: Should I calculate Body Mass Index (BMI) with students?

No. BMI is a tool that determines health risk in a population of people, not individuals¹⁷. BMI is also not suitable for growing children and teenagers⁴. Research has demonstrated that when compared to their average-weight classmates, students with a higher BMI felt more compelled to lose weight using unhealthy means (e.g. unhealthy eating practices with adverse physical and emotional consequences)¹⁸. By calculating a student's BMI, teachers may inadvertently trigger a desire to be thinner.

It is more meaningful to teach students that healthy people come in a variety of shapes and sizes.

• MAIN TEACHING POINTS •

- There is no ONE body type healthier than another body type
- Teach students that they are individuals with unique characteristics including their body types
- Many factors affect our body shape including heredity, which we cannot change
- BMI is not a tool to be used at school with students

WEIGHT

Q: Should I weigh my students?

No, your students are still growing and the number on the scale is not going to provide any valuable information, especially considering the variation in body types and developmental stages from one student to another.

Students will likely compare weights and begin to judge themselves and others based on the number on the scale. Talking about weight, or weighing students may lead them to become preoccupied with weight and could result in unhealthy behaviours. Taking the focus away from “weight” is best.



Q: How do I talk about physical activity and healthy eating for maintaining a healthy weight?

It is best to avoid linking weight to healthy eating and physical activity. If the topic of weight is brought up in the classroom, re-frame or re-direct the discussion to talk about balanced eating and physical activity. Teachers should promote physical activity and healthy eating as ways of maintaining a healthy body and feeling good about your body⁴.

When teaching about healthy eating the goal is for proper nutrition so the body can function and be healthy and for the enjoyment of eating a variety of foods. The goal of being active is to have a healthy, strong and flexible body and to have fun being active with your friends and family. A healthy body will happen naturally if these key things are in place so it is best to avoid discussing body weight altogether. The focus should be on health, not weight, health looks different for every body.

Q: What is the best way to teach about different body types?

The most important message for students is that they are individuals with unique characteristics including their physical characteristics. Instead of focusing on certain body types (e.g. endomorphs, ectomorphs, apple, pear etc.)⁴, it would be more beneficial to teach students that both height and weight are the result of the interaction of genetics/heredity and the environment. Teaching children about heredity and accepting a broad range of body sizes is important¹⁰.

Similar to eye, hair and skin colour, size of feet, body weight and shape are genetically determined to a large degree⁴. When teaching about genetics and heredity, tell students that all people are individuals. It is best not to teach that specific ethnic backgrounds have particular body types. You can discuss physical traits and get students to compare their own personal traits to their siblings, parents, grandparents, friends to find what is unique and what is similar.



A person with a healthy body weight⁷:

- Moves and uses their body as they wish
- Feels good about the food that they eat
- Enjoys eating a variety of foods
- Is active with their friends and family
- Sees that they are much more than just a body

MEDIA LITERACY

How to Model:

Q: How do I support positive media in the school?

Advocate for a school environment without these negative body image media messages. Try to support and create an environment that shows more realistic images of a variety of healthy body sizes and shapes on posters, displays, bulletin boards in the school common areas and in the classroom. It is also a good idea to avoid discussing stars and famous people in an idealistic light.

• MAIN TEACHING POINTS •

- It is good to teach students to critique the messages they receive in the media
- We can teach students that pictures of flawless models are edited to remove wrinkles, blemishes, etc.
- Addressing fad diets and their negative impacts on health can be helpful for students

Tips for Teaching:

Q: What is the best way to teach students about media influences that promote unhealthy body images and messages?

It is good to teach students that the physical images presented in the media are altered to appear flawless in every way and that nobody looks that way naturally. You can teach students that shapes and sizes are altered, blemishes, freckles, lines and wrinkles are edited out, photo images can be completely generated to create the “look of the day”. The media sends the message that if you try hard enough, spend enough money and suffer enough, you can look the way you want which will make you happy⁵.

By educating students on how the media enhances body features with props, makeup, lighting and computer techniques, they will be able to look at the media messages more critically and see how unrealistic and unnatural these images are⁵.

Q: How do I address fad diets and dieting that are glamorized in the media?

It is important to educate students that dieting and fad diets don't work. Healthy eating and physical activity is the best way to maintain a healthy body.



Teach students:

- Importance of all four food groups and the different nutrients they provide
- How to critique diets by comparing them to *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*^{4,9}. For example, does a diet eliminate an entire food group?
- Fad diets are based on testimonials and little scientific research and promise dramatic weight loss
- Fad diets that movie stars go on are usually unhealthy, extreme, short-term and are not maintained after the movie shooting. Fad diets are very hard on the body and are not something that can, or should, be maintained

Some of the risks of dieting include:

- Slowed metabolism
- Lack of important nutrients, which can cause fatigue and poor growth
- Lack of sufficient calories for adolescent growth and development
- Dramatic weight loss will be easily regained when the diet is discontinued because it is too restrictive^{4,9}

MEDIA LITERACY

Curriculum Supports:

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- **Media Awareness Network:** There are curriculum resources here and lesson plans to assist you in teaching your students about media literacy. These can be found online at: www.media-awareness.org or a hardcopy can be borrowed from the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.
- **T.V. & Me:** Packages public service messages into entertaining and age/grade appropriate lesson plans. These can be found online at: www.cca-kids.ca/tvandme or a hardcopy can be borrowed from the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.
- **The Student Body: Promoting Health at Any Size:** Developed by the Hospital for Sick Kids. This teacher training module is designed to help alert teachers (and parents) to the factors that can trigger unhealthy dieting among children, and ways to prevent it. It addresses six areas of concern: Media & Peer Pressure, Healthy Eating, Active Living, Teasing, Adult Role Models, School Climate. These six learning modules utilize animated vignettes, videos and background information for teachers (and parents) so they can experience some of the positive and negative factors affecting body image and other risk factors for disordered eating. Available in English and French: www.research.aboutkidshealth.ca/thestudentbody/home.asp
- **Safe Healthy Schools:** This website provides links to research, reports, how-to manuals, planning and assessment tools, lesson plans and student webquests. www.safehealthyschools.org
- **Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card:** Provides statistics and data on influences and outcomes of physical activity for children and youth. Can be found at: www.activehealthykids.ca
- **Dove Campaign for Real Beauty:** Links to resources for educators as well as videos illustrating photo-shopping and media techniques. Go to: www.dove.ca and click *Campaign for Real Beauty* and choose *Educators* or *Gallery*.

Problem Solving:

Q: What do I do if I suspect a student has an eating disorder?

It is important that students receive the help and support they need if they have an eating disorder.

Some of the signs and symptoms of disordered eating include¹⁹:

- Excess concern about weight, shape and calories
- Feeling fat when not overweight
- Feeling guilty about eating
- Strict avoidance of certain foods or unusual eating habits
- Noticeable weight loss
- Frequent weight fluctuation

If you suspect that a student may have an eating disorder, it is important to speak to their parents (you can include the student if it is appropriate) about your concern. Ensure that you show empathy and support for the family and student and try to consider any cultural or social issues that may make it hard for the parents/families to discuss issues⁸. Your Public Health Nurse can provide information about resources in the community parents may be able to access.

Tips for Teaching:

Q: Should I be teaching about eating disorders and their signs and symptoms?

It is not recommended that you teach students about eating disorders and their signs and symptoms. Research has shown that teaching students about eating disorders may be harmful, as some students may come to glamorize disturbed eating behaviours. It is best to teach students about healthy eating, active living, self-acceptance, media literacy skills, and how to cope with weight and shape teasing¹⁹.

• MAIN TEACHING POINTS •

- Teaching about eating disorders may be harmful, as students may glamorize disturbed eating behaviours
- If you suspect a student has an eating disorder, it is important that you speak to their parents and provide them with resources to help and support them

EATING DISORDERS

Curriculum Supports:

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- **Local Resources:** Call your Public Health Nurse for information about local services, resources and programs for people with eating disorders.



Q: Are there resources available for parents to learn about promoting a healthy body image?

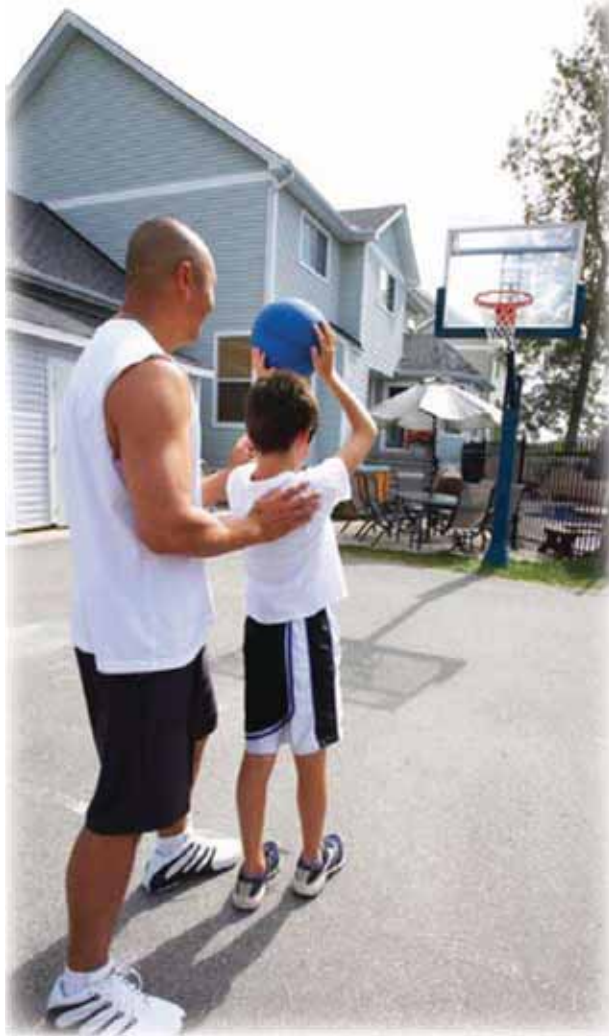
Parents are an important part of teaching their children about healthy body image. There are a variety of resources available for parents to learn about promoting a healthy body image.

Talk to your Public Health Nurse. The Health Unit has resources, newsletter inserts and information we can give you to send home to parents.




For body image resources for parents, go to:

- **RUDD Center:** Information for parents on weight bias and how to talk to their kids: www.yaleruddcenter.org/what_we_do.aspx?id=198
- **Ellyn Satter:** Tips on feeding your children and family. www.ellynsatter.com
- **Media Awareness Network:** Resources and support for parents on a number of issues such as media, violence, stereotyping and internet safety. Go to: www.media-awareness.ca
- **TV & Me:** Uses public service messages and practical tips and tools to help parents talk to their children about what they hear and see in the media: www.cca-kids.ca

- **Dads and Daughters:** Contains a number of tools and resources to help fathers understand and support their daughters with valuable tips on raising daughters at every stage of their lives: www.dadsanddaughters.org
- **Toronto Public Health:** A resource for parents to help their children be active, eat well and accept their bodies. Go to: www.toronto.ca/health/pdf/nm_helping_children.pdf
- **Peel Public Health:** A website with resources to help parents build a healthy body image in their children through healthy choices at home. Go to: www.peelregion.ca/health/commhlth/fostbi/fostint.htm
- **Additional Information:**
Kater, K. (2004). *Real kids come in all sizes*. New York: Broadway Books.
Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2005). *"I'm, Like, So Fat!"*: Helping your teen make healthy choices about eating and exercise in a weight-obsessed world. New York: The Guilford Press.
Satter, E. (2005). *Your child's weight: Helping without harming (Birth through adolescence)*. Madison: Kelcy Press.






Body Image Self-Esteem

-  **School Resource & Program Catalogue:** A list of curriculum resources, teaching materials and tools for teachers for all grades on a variety of health topics. Contact your Public Health Nurse for a copy: www.healthunit.org/school/curriculum-support.html
-  **Every Body Is A Somebody:** A Research-based Active Learning Program To Promote Healthy Body Image, Positive Self-Esteem, Healthy Eating And An Active Lifestyle For Female Adolescents, Facilitators Guide. It has activities to help you teach about: 1) Media family and friends, 2) Self-esteem and body image, 3) Dieting (avoid talking about behavior techniques page 99), 4) Healthy eating and active living, 5) Stress management, 6) Relationships. Fits with Curriculum for grades 5-8. Available to borrow from the Health Unit, or order online at: www.bodyimagecoalition.org
-  **The Student Body: Promoting Health at Any Size:** Developed by the Hospital for Sick Kids. This teacher training module is designed to help alert teachers (and parents) to the factors that can trigger unhealthy dieting among children, and ways to prevent it. It addresses six areas of concern: Media and Peer Pressure, Healthy Eating, Active Living, Teasing, Adult Role Models, School Climate. These six learning modules utilize animated vignettes, videos and background information for teachers (and parents) so they can experience some

of the positive and negative factors affecting body image and other risk factors for disordered eating. Available in English and French: www.research.aboutkidshealth.ca/thestudentbody/home.asp

-  **Go Girls! Program:** This is a mentoring program for grade 7&8 girls that consist of 2 hour sessions once a week for 7 to 10 weeks. In this program girls learn concrete skills around balanced eating, physical activity, body image and self-esteem. Offered through Big Brothers Big Sisters Lanark 613-283-0570 or Leeds Grenville 613-345-0281 or 1-866-344-9972

Healthy Eating

-  **School Resource & Program Catalogue:** A list of curriculum resources, teaching materials and tools for teachers for all grades on a variety of health topics. Contact your Public Health Nurse for a copy: www.healthunit.org/school/curriculum-support.html
-  **Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide and Educators' Guide:** Contact your Public Health Nurse to order copies or go to: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/alt_formats/hpfb-dgpsa/pdf/pubs/res-educat-eng.pdf
-  **My Food Guide:** An online interactive tool that can help students personalize the information found in Canada's Food Guide, go to: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php

RESOURCES

📖 **Discover Healthy Eating:** A resource addressing nutrition, body image, eating disorders and oral health. Provides the nutrition background required to teach the healthy eating. Available in English and French. Contact your Public Health Nurse to order copies or go to: www.toronto.ca/health/dhe_index.htm

📖 **Teach Nutrition:** This site contains curriculum-based units and activities, reviews frequently asked questions about nutrition and offers free nutrition workshops. Available in English and French. Go to: www.teachnutrition.org

📖 **The Student Body: Promoting Health at Any Size:** Developed by the Hospital for Sick Kids. This teacher training module is designed to help alert teachers (and parents) to the factors that can trigger unhealthy dieting among children, and ways to prevent it. It addresses six areas of concern: Media & Peer Pressure, Healthy Eating, Active Living, Teasing, Adult Role Models, School Climate. These six learning modules utilize animated vignettes, videos and background information for teachers (and parents) so they can experience some of the positive and negative factors affecting body image and other risk factors for disordered eating. Available in English and French: www.research.aboutkidshealth.ca/thestudentbody/home.asp

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- Satter, E. (2005). *Your child's weight: Helping without harming (Birth through adolescence)*. Madison: Kelcy Press.

Physical Activity

📖 **School Resource & Program Catalogue:** A list of curriculum resources, teaching materials and tools for teachers for all grades on a variety of health topics. Contact your Public Health Nurse for a copy: www.healthunit.org/school/curriculumsupport.html

📖 **Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth:** There are guides available for teachers of children (age 6-9) and youth (age 10-14), as well as other guides (e.g. for families) online, go to: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/pag-gap/index-eng.php
Or can be ordered through the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit.

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📖 **Jiggi Jump:** This is a K-3 resource that has a CD and booklet with music and accompanying movements led by children's entertainers that help kids get moving. Available to borrow at the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit or order online at: www.jiggijump.com

📖 **DPA Resources:** There are a variety of resources available at: www.ophea.net/dpa to support you in getting your kids moving, in or out of the classroom and to meet the (DPA) requirements.

📖 **Activ8:** This is a Physical Activity Challenge program that emphasizes personal development and has modifiable challenges (including lesson plans) for each grade. This K-8 resource is available at: www.ophea.net or from the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit.

📖 **Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card:** Provides statistics and data on influences and outcomes of physical activity for children and youth. Can be found at: www.activehealthykids.ca

📖 **WeMuv:** The program was created to encourage kids to balance daily physical activity and screen time as it uses a special pedometer that provides currency to play in a virtual world full of fun. This grade 3-6 resource is available to purchase at: www.wemuv.com

Media Literacy

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📖 **Safe Healthy Schools:** This website provides links to research, reports, how-to manuals, planning and assessment tools, lesson plans and student webquests. www.safehealthyschools.org

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Eating Disorders

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Body Image 1, 3-6
Body Mass Index (BMI) 21
Body Types 2, 3
Calories 9
Curriculum 31-34
Diets 25, 27
Eating Disorders 27, 28
Healthy Body Image 3-6, 29
Games 15, 16, 18
Gender 16
Healthy Body Weight 20-22
Healthy Eating 8-13, 22
Hunger (cues) 9, 20
Inclusive 16
Lesson Plans 31-34
Media 24-27
Nutrition 8-13, 22
Nutrients 9
Physical Activity 14-18, 22
Parents 1, 29
Resources 31-34
Reward(s) 11, 12, 16
Role Model 1, 4, 8, 14, 19, 24
Self-esteem 1, 3-7
Serving Sizes 10
Teasing 20
Weight 15, 19-23, 27

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The design and images used for this resource are the property of the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit and may not be copied without permission.

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School Staff - a great deal of advice and feedback was provided from teachers and school staff through surveys and focus groups. Our sincere thanks go to them for providing us with their time and input to make this a better tool for all teachers.

Note from authors:

This resource was developed in order to create a change in the social environment in which our children/students live. We hope you will share and use this information to create a shift in the way we role model. We recognize that most people want to help children to be healthier and happier and hopefully this resource will help us to have this desired impact. Thanks to all who were involved!

Sincerely,

Danielle & Meena