How to Encourage Healthy Body Image at School

- Introduce students to a variety of images that reflect diverse physical abilities, body sizes, and outward appearances through reading materials, posters, and homework assignments.

- Continue to reinforce the message that bodies come naturally in all shapes, sizes, weights, and colours – and that all bodies are to be respected.

- When discussing bullying, include examples, such as:
  - a child being excluded from the group
  - a child getting teased about his/her weight or shape

- When teaching about puberty, discuss the natural weight gain that precedes major growth spurts for boys and girls. (The average weight gain can be included in the discussion.)

- Teach children that all bodies are good bodies. Encourage them to accept their bodies and care for them by practising healthy habits and being kind to themselves.

- Compare food to fuel (ex: Just like a car needs “fuel” to continue operating, you need “food” to continue growing and developing in a healthy way). Explain the importance of carbohydrates, fats and proteins in a healthy diet. Teach kids to eat for energy, health, and pleasure.

- Promote physical activity because it is fun and supports good mental and physical health. Changing children’s body shapes and sizes should never be the goal.

- Avoid using measurements of body size (ex: scales, calipers, weight tables) as indicators of health.

- Choose respectful language when discussing bodies and health.

- Examine your own values and beliefs about body size and weight. Model a healthy body image and a flexible approach to eating and exercise.

Teacher Resources

- **Beyond Images** (National Eating Disorder Information Centre, Canada)
  Lesson plans for Grades 4-8 exploring key issues around body image and self-esteem as well as media messaging and critical thinking skills.
  [www.beyondbodies.ca](http://www.beyondbodies.ca/)

- **Body Image Friendly School Resources** (Australia)

- **Healthy Bodies: Teaching Kids What They Need to Know** (Kathy Kater, USA)
  Lesson plans for Grades 4-6 teaching about body image, eating, fitness, and weight concerns. Adaptable for all ages.
  [http://bodyimagehealth.org/healthy-bodies-curriculum/](http://bodyimagehealth.org/healthy-bodies-curriculum/)

- **The Student Body: Promoting Health At Every Size** (Ontario)
  Teacher Training Modules About Media and Peer Pressure, Healthy Eating, Active Living, Teasing, Adult Role Models, School Climate
  [http://thestudentbody.aboutkidshealth.ca/](http://thestudentbody.aboutkidshealth.ca/)