

# How to Encourage Healthy Body Image at School

- Introduce students to a variety of images that reflect diverse
  - physical abilities
  - body sizes
  - outward appearancesthrough 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.beyondimages.ca/](http://www.beyondimages.ca/)
- **Body Image Friendly School Resources** (Australia)  
[www.youth.gov.au/sites/Youth/bodyImage/](http://www.youth.gov.au/sites/Youth/bodyImage/)
- **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/>
- **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/>