

Promoting Positive Body Image – A Resource for Educators



This resource supports school staff and others with promoting positive body image and relationships with food for children and youth. It also offers tips and resources to guide staff with addressing weight-based bullying and what to do if they are concerned about a student's eating.

Supporting Health and Educational Outcomes with a Comprehensive School Health Approach

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Physical and Social Environment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use body diverse visuals • Remove scales • <u>Avoid comments around dieting, weight or body shape (yourself and others)</u> • Schedule adequate time for eating • Frame physical activity as fun and social, not as a way to control weight • Ensure desks and chairs fit all bodies • Talk about all <u>foods neutrally</u> (e.g. No good foods, bad foods) • <u>Do not connect food, eating, or activity to body size</u> | <p><i>Teaching and Learning:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use <u>Teach Food First</u> for nutrition education in grades K-8 • When teaching about health, disconnect weight from health. Instead, focus on adequate sleep, physical activity, self-compassion, self-regulation, and mindful eating. • Avoid food logs and calorie counting • Encourage critical thinking skills around social media/messaging related to food/weight/shape • Normalize increase in weight, body fat, and appetite during growth and puberty |
| <p><i>Policy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure <u>anti-bullying policies</u> include <u>body shape and size</u> • Create policies on <u>meal supervision roles</u> • <u>Have weight-neutral rationale for non-food reward policies</u> • <u>Respect parents' roles in food selection and offer support as needed</u> | <p><i>Partnerships:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with public health staff • Vet guest speakers (weight-inclusive, trauma-informed) • Refer to appropriate supports when <u>disordered eating/eating disorders suspected</u> • Partner with <u>Embody, Foundry, Health Authority, MCFD, and other youth service providers</u> |

Promoting Positive Body Image, Preventing Disordered Eating

| TEACHING TOOLS FOR EDUCATORS | |
|--|--|
| <u>Amazing Me</u> (Grades 4-5) | The Dove <u>Self-Esteem Project</u> and Discovery Education. Addresses media literacy, different aspects of bullying, and body confidence. |
| <u>Beyond Images</u> (Grades 4-8) | <u>Online lesson plans</u> from Canada's <u>NEDIC</u> (National Eating Disorder Information Center) |
| <u>Teach Food First</u> (Grades K-8) | A 2022 Canadian toolkit with lesson plans for K-8 teachers. |
| <u>Media Smarts</u> (Grades 3 and up) | <u>Body Image: Introduction MediaSmarts</u> Canada's Centre for Digital and Media Literacy includes literary programs, resources and lesson plans with the purpose of encouraging youth to develop critical thinking skills when engaging with various forms of media |
| <u>BCTF Body inclusive library collections</u> | Article by a teacher-librarian with suggested body-inclusive library books |
| <u>Teacher Fan Club</u> | Elizabeth Tingle is a teacher and a producer of the <u>Teacher Fanclub podcast</u> . Passionate about weight-neutral health education, she is a sessional instructor at the Werklund School of Education and the lab coordinator for the <u>Body Image Lab</u> at the <u>University of Calgary</u> . |
| VIDEOS | |
| <u>Dove Beauty Evolution</u> (1 min 14 sec) | A time-lapse depicting what happens behind the scenes in the beauty industry (Dove Self-Esteem Fund) - For grade 4 and up |
| <u>Poodle Science</u> (2 min 49 sec) | An animated video discussing the limitations of current research on health and weight - For grade 7 and up |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><u>50 people 1 Question</u> (4 min 13 sec)</p> | <p>A video asking 50 people from diverse backgrounds what they would change about themselves - For all ages</p> |
| <p><u>Dove Reverse Selfie</u> (1 min)</p> | <p>A short video that can be used with grades 6 and up to address social media and retouching apps. Have #TheSelfieTalk</p> |

The views and opinions in the videos may not necessarily reflect the views or positions of Vancouver Coastal Health and Embody.

| <p style="text-align: center;">RESOURCES AND INFORMATION</p> | |
|---|--|
| <p><u>Embody</u></p> | <p>A provincial program of Family Services of the North Shore that promotes eating disorders awareness and prevention, and offers educational resources and service navigation for individuals, families, educators, and health professionals.</p> |
| <p><u>Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre</u></p> | <p>A website by PHSA (Provincial Health Services Authority) with resources for school professionals, parents, youth, and health professionals to support wellbeing.</p> |
| <p><u>Body Image and Eating, from Foundry BC</u></p> | <p>Foundry BC’s web pages for youth aged 12-24 years, on Body Image, Disordered Eating, and Eating Disorders. Includes a body image and eating self-check for youth.</p> |
| <p><u>Looking Glass Foundation</u></p> | <p>Looking Glass Foundation provides programs, services, and resources to support individuals affected by disordered eating and eating disorders.</p> |
| <p><u>Mental Health and Weight Bias</u></p> | <p>Four-page resource developed for schools to address weight stigma in schools from Ontario Dietitians in Public Health (2020)</p> |
| <p><u>Weight Bias and Weight Stigma in Schools</u></p> | <p>Interior Health BC resource for schools to inform staff on weight bias and stigma and provide resources to create a weight-inclusive school environment (2022)</p> |



The causes of eating disorders are complex, however poor body image is a known risk factor.

These resources can help school staff identify signs of disordered eating and connect students and their families with appropriate supports, such as their primary care provider or local health unit.

- **[Guidelines for School Staff: Helping a Student with a Suspected Eating Disorder](#)**
(Embody, Vancouver Coastal Health, North Vancouver School District, West Vancouver Schools)
- **[Understanding Eating Disorder in BC School: A Guide for Trauma Informed Practices for School Professionals](#)** (Ministry of Education and BC Children’s Hospital)

This resource was developed and reviewed by health professionals and educators for the intended purpose of promoting positive body image.