

Center for BODY TRUST

Dear Teachers and School Administrators,

We have the power to change how kids think about health in a generation. We have the power to shift the way children and adolescents inhabit their bodies. Together, we can reduce body shaming and bullying, as well as disordered eating and eating disorders. We know a path forward.

If you are reading this, we wonder if you have questioned how health curriculums do not adequately address the ways our kids are struggling to live kindly in their bodies. We want to introduce you to a different way of thinking about how to teach kids about health and bodies, while reducing harm.

1. Don't make health promotion programs about "obesity". These curriculums are filled with misinformation about fatness and tend to signal out the fat kids who already feel like crap. You can talk about health without pathologizing bodies. Ask people to stop using the "o" words (obesity and overweight). The Body Mass Index (or BMI) has no place on a report card or in a classroom. We shouldn't be using a formula for children that was created to assess the distribution of weight across an adult population of white people.
2. Lunchtime is an opportunity for kids to connect with their classmates and learn how to eat and share food with people. Many cultures outside of the U.S. consider lunchtime an educational period, the same as math or reading, not twenty minutes to shove their food into their mouths so they can move on "to more important things". Lunchtime is not a time to police kids' food or make negative comments about their food choices. All food is welcome. The term "junk food" should be removed from your vocabulary.
3. You are entitled to have your own personal food philosophy. Keep it to yourself. It's not the scope of practice for teachers to be assessing the nutrition of the foods students eat.
4. Avoid upholding food rules and policies that undermine the parent's ability to feed their children. FED IS BEST.
5. Sugary desserts and sweets should be seen as one of many foods a person enjoys throughout their lifetime. Demonizing sugar elevates its status. You may personally avoid sugar in your diet, but there is no reason schools should not be able to serve cake and sweets on birthdays and at celebrations. Kids with certain food allergies should be accommodated, but there is no such thing as a sugar allergy.
6. Kids that are restricting and restraining food should not be praised for it. Do not have different food rules for thin kids than you do for fat kids.

7. Find more ways to talk about eating disorders at school. Do not be afraid of talking about them. Eating disorders and disordered eating are more prevalent than you think.
8. Commenting on people's weight loss is never helpful and you may very well be reinforcing a person's eating disorder.
9. Look for healthism: ideas that support the pursuit of health as something that increases people's overall value and goodness. Root your teachings and communications in the idea that no one has to pursue health to be worthy of love, respect or belonging. And make sure your conversations about health acknowledge that the social determinants of health have a far greater impact on a person's health and well being than their personal lifestyle choices.
10. Movement activities should be an opportunity for play and recreation and not just appeal to kids with the most athletic ability. Be aware of the assumptions you make about what people's bodies can do based on size. Strength, agility, endurance, and flexibility are not size dependent.
11. Community-wide agreements about how you talk about bodies, weight, abilities and food is an extension of consent education. Talk about respecting people's boundaries.
12. Interrupt fatphobia in classrooms, on the playground, and in staff meetings and break rooms.
13. Review all your curriculums for anti-fat bias and do not tolerate it. Look for weight inclusive curriculums that include eating disorder prevention.

We know you are overworked and under-supported and that this list might feel daunting. Your commitment to weight inclusion matters. If we can help, [reach out to us here](#). One step at a time.

In Solidarity & Body Trust,



Center for BODY TRUST 

This letter was written for readers of our book, [Reclaiming Body Trust: A Path to Healing and Liberation](#). Here are some additional reading and resources:

- [The Bizarre and Racist History of the Body Mass Index](#)
- [The President's Physical Fitness Test](#)
- [What Happens When You Put a Kid on a Diet](#)
- [An Open Letter to Daycares, Preschools, Nursery Schools, and Elementary Schools](#)
- [Unlearning Diet Culture at School](#)
- [Educators: Please Stop Promoting Dieting and Weight Loss to Children](#)