



Introduction

What Are These Lessons?

Every Body is Good is a set of lessons designed to promote positive body image among children, particularly in the context of weight screening in school settings. Although the lessons have been created for use by physical education teachers in conjunction with the **EPEC**[®] curriculum, the lessons do not assume specific subject knowledge and can be easily used by other subject specialists, including science, health and life management teachers.

What Are the Key Messages?

Each lesson is based on one or more of six key messages:

- I accept people as they are and believe that the differences among us make the world more interesting and beautiful.
- I believe there is no such thing as a “perfect” body size and/or shape.
- I listen to my body and pay attention to its needs.
- I value my body and do my best to keep it healthy, especially by eating healthy foods and by being physically active.
- I value people for who they are and what they do, rather than what they look like.
- My body will change in its own unique way as I grow.

How Are They Organized?

There are two 20-minute lessons for each grade level. Each lesson features an “attention grabber” and an interactive classroom activity.

Why Were They Developed?

The lessons were developed because of needs identified in *The Role of Michigan Schools in Promoting Healthy Weight: A Consensus Paper*¹, written in 2001 by health and education professionals in coordination with an advisory group of experts in children’s health. Acknowledging the growing proportion of students medically classified as overweight or obese, the paper provides practical guidelines and policy recommendations for promoting healthy weight for all students.

While underscoring the need to address the issue of childhood overweight, the paper also draws attention to related issues with the potential to negatively impact normal, healthy growth. Such issues include pervasive social pressures to have a thin body and weight discrimination, which may contribute to poor body image and unsafe weight loss practices. These must also be taken into account when childhood overweight is addressed.

What Is the Concern About Weighing Children in School?

The consensus paper identifies potential benefits to children for conducting in-school weight screenings. Screening can objectively identify students at both ends of the weight spectrum who may benefit from additional evaluation and intervention. Screening may open the door for family guidance on healthier lifestyles and opportunities for physical activity.

The consensus paper also acknowledges that, given our culture’s overemphasis on appearance and the extreme social pressure children experience for excessive slenderness, screening has the potential for damaging children. Damage may take the form of pejorative labeling of children, diminishment of self-esteem, or increased susceptibility to eating disorders.

¹Paper can be downloaded from the Michigan Department of Education website <http://www.mde.state.mi.us>, from the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness website <http://www.michiganfitness.org>, or from the Educational Materials Center website <http://www.emc.cmich.edu>.

What Safeguards Could Prevent Damage from Weight Screening?

The consensus paper calls for the implementation of six safeguards to protect students' emotional well-being that should be put into place before a school initiates the practice of screening children for weight. These safeguards include

1. **Learning Environment.** Create a safe and supportive learning environment for all students and staff, regardless of their size.
2. **Classroom Instruction.** Provide classroom instruction that counteracts social pressure for excessive slenderness and enhance students' understanding of the healthy weight concept.
3. **Parental Permission.** Implement a system to notify parents of impending weight screening and obtain their permission.
4. **Referral System.** Do not screen children for weight problems unless there is a source of further assessment and help for families, regardless of income.
5. **Staff Training.** Train all school staff who conduct weight screening and document their proficiency in screening techniques and interpretation of results.
6. **Respectful Screening.** Design the process to assure that children are screened with privacy in assessment and result reporting, and that no child is labeled.

The *Every Body is Good* lessons have been developed so that safeguard #2 may be uniformly implemented throughout the state of Michigan.

How Can These Lessons Be Used in Conjunction with Weight Screening?

For each grade level there is one lesson suitable for use prior to weight screening and one lesson suitable for use after weight screening. The activities do not specifically refer to weight screenings. Teachers are encouraged to use the lessons with their classes regardless of whether their school conducts weight screenings.

Who Created These Lessons?

The lessons were developed through a collaborative effort between the Michigan Department of Community Health, the Michigan Department of Education, and the Michigan Governor's Council on Physical Fitness. Each lesson was carefully reviewed by a group of highly-respected health and education professionals. The Acknowledgements on page iii list the individuals who contributed to lesson development and review.

Who Can Answer Questions About the Lessons?

Questions about the lessons may be directed to the Cardiovascular Health, Nutrition and Physical Activity Section of the Michigan Department of Community Health (Phone: 517-335-8766) or the Coordinated School Health and Safety Program of the Michigan Department of Education (Phone: 517-241-4284).



Acknowledgements

Michigan Teachers Who Reviewed Concepts and Initial Drafts of the Lesson Activities

Laurie Bussell, Troy
Tammi Brummel, Grandville
Kristy Gibson Marshall, Lake Orion
Chris Lake, Parma
Debra Moinet, MA, Grand Rapids
Eunice Moore, Detroit
Su Nottingham, Waterford

Michigan Department of Education Reviewers

Elizabeth Haller, MEd
Merry Stanford, MEd, MSW
Nick Drzal, MPH, RD

Michigan Department of Community Health Reviewers

Karen Petersmarck, PhD, MPH
Shannon Carney Oleksyk, MS, RD
Briana Quinn, Student Assistant, University of Michigan School of Public Health

Michigan Governor's Council on Physical Fitness Reviewers

Glenna DeJong, PhD
C. Lee Kokinakis, PhD

Developer of Lesson Concepts and Activities

Kirstin Seimering, MPH, RD

National Consultant

Joanne Ikeda, MS, RD, University of California, Berkeley

Manuscript Preparation

Eileen Northrup

Project Management

Karen Petersmarck, PhD, MPH
Shannon Carney Oleksyk, MS, RD
Rochelle Hurst, MA
Trina Boyle-Holmes, MEd

Michigan Teachers Who Piloted the Curriculum

Laura Hall, Inland Lakes Elementary
Linda Moore, Inland Lakes Elementary
Colleen Miller, Green Elementary
Marilyn Goodrich, Parma Elementary
Kelly Mongson, Kaiser Elementary
Al Gulick, Warren Woods Middle
MaryEllen Hagerl, Inland Lakes High
Ann Schulke, Byron Center High

