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**An Elementary School Project for Developing Healthy Body Image  
and Reducing Risk Factors for Unhealthy and Disordered Eating**

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*Abstract*

*Negative body image and disordered eating patterns are prevalent among American adolescents, especially girls. Because attitudes are extremely difficult to change once they are established, researchers have proposed that prevention programs that aim to challenge prevalent cultural norms contributing to these problems be developed for older elementary age children who body image attitudes are not yet intractable. This article describes the short term outcomes of a school-based curriculum model for developing healthy body images and preventing disordered eating with 222 fourth and sixth grade boys and girls. Preliminary results indicate the curriculum positively influenced knowledge, attitudes, and intentions related to body image, the limits to control of body size and shape, the hazards of weight loss dieting, and unrealistic media images. While existing prevention curricula aimed at adolescents has had little positive impact, the promising effect of this curriculum appears related to 1) the targeted age-range, 2) lessons that teach critical thinking regarding the clash between cultural values and human biology, 3) the experiential pedagogy, 4) the emphasis on identity development from diverse sources that reflect competency and interests rather than image, and 5) critical thinking regarding the clash between cultural values and human biology. "Booster" lessons to reinforce these primary prevention concepts should follow as children progress through the transitional middle-school years.*

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