

## BEYOND IMAGES FOR EATING DISORDER PREVENTION BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

### Media Literacy Promotion for Eating Disorder Prevention

Media literacy promotion has been identified in multiple systematic reviews as the most promising universal eating disorder prevention strategy (Watson et al., 2016; Le et al., 2017; Schwartz et al., 2019). As eating disorder risk factors increase in youth during the adolescent years, engaging them in school-based prevention programming starting at the elementary level and spanning multiple grades is prudent.

### About Beyond Images

*Beyond Images / Au delà de l'image* is a free media literacy-based curriculum developed by the National Eating Disorder Information Centre in partnership with Ontario teachers. Written *by teachers for teachers*, this free curriculum is intended for use with students in grades four through eight, and aligns with provincial learning expectations. The original version was expanded in 2016 with the addition of lesson plans from *Confident Me* by the Dove Self-Esteem Project and updated in 2022 with content from a new version of *Confident Me* developed specifically for use with youth in Canada. *Beyond Images / Au delà de l'image* consists of discrete five-lesson units for each grade level.

In alignment with findings from research examining effective universal eating disorder prevention programs, *Beyond Images / Au delà de l'image* is formatted such that it:

- supports a mixed-gender audience
- is comprised of multiple sessions
- is interactive
- includes activities that involve small-group work

Within the span of the five grade-specific learning units, *Beyond Images / Au delà de l'image* is written such that it shares these features with other evidence-based universal eating disorder prevention programs:

- integrates activities that address peer influences
- integrates activities designed to decrease social comparisons
- prompts students to explore of lack of realism in media images of body ideals
- prompts students to explore costs of pursuing appearance ideals
- includes exercises in which students challenge appearance ideals

## Implementing Beyond Images

Students who participate in the full suite of lessons will be engaged in the activities that research indicates promotes media literacy and the development of resilience against negative societal pressures to conform to appearance ideals. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that schools implement *Beyond Images / Au delà de l'image* in its entirety so that students, in a scaffolded manner starting in grade four, have an optimal opportunity to develop an important set of knowledge and skills that reduces the risk of developing an eating disorder.

### References

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