

Understanding Weight Stigma at School

Why is Weight Stigma an Important Issue in Education?

The messages students receive in classrooms, hallways, and cafeterias shape how they see themselves and others. When students face weight stigma, whether from peers, school policies, or adult models, it can have lasting impacts on their confidence, participation, and overall well-being.



What is Weight Stigma?



Weight stigma refers to the negative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors directed at individuals because of their body size.

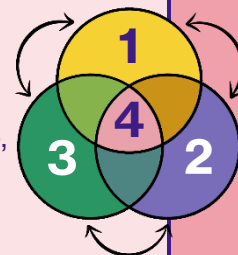
How Does Weight Stigma Appear?

- Bullying and Teasing
- Curriculum
- Classroom dynamics & Staff Attitudes
 - Making comments about a student's body
- Dress Code
 - Policies that penalize students for clothing that fits differently due to body shape
- School Events
 - Public Weigh-ins
- Physical Environment
 - Desks, chairs, cafeteria seating or PE equipment that doesn't accommodate all body sizes



What are the Impacts of Weight Stigma?

- 1. Psychological health:** low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, internalized bias
- 2. Physical health:** care avoidance, chronic stress, worsened health outcomes
- 3. Social health:** isolation, bullying, discrimination
- 4. Behaviors:** disordered eating, reduction in motivation to exercise, and overall social withdrawal



How Can You Help?

- Use inclusive, respectful language
 - Avoid commenting on students' bodies, food, or exercise habits
- Integrate body-positivity and size-inclusion into classes
 - Ensure health programs focus on well-being, not weight loss
 - Promote critical thinking about media and cultural messages
- Reflect on and challenge internal bias
 - Be mindful of how you talk about food, weight, and health



Be the Advocate They Need:

Change starts with awareness, but it grows through action.

- Reflect on your own bias
- Continue learning from others and having open conversations
 - Every time we speak up, we shift the culture towards more inclusivity

