

# TEACH

May/June 03 \$3.85

Education for Today and Tomorrow

**Let's Talk About Sex:**  
Is Sexual Health  
Education Working?

**The Double Cohort:**  
A Student Perspective

**The Body Image Project**

**Tomorrow's Health**

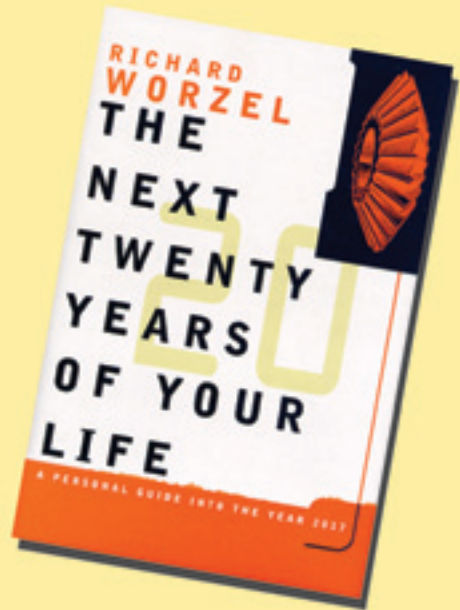


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Another academic year has flashed by. Time, it seems, is moving very quickly and it is a shock to realize yet again that we have been doing this for more than 10 years now.

Over the course of the 2002-03 academic year, we have covered important topics which we feel, will help you deliver the best education possible to your students. Some of these topics include such things as AIDS Awareness and in particular, the terrible conditions that exist in African nations. We covered Global Citizenship and the efforts of UNICEF and the largest gathering of world leaders ever who focused on children during a special session of the United Nations. There, for the first time, children participated in the proceedings. If we are to understand cultures around the globe and actively take part as citizens of this new order, then exploring these issues is vital. It is particularly so given the events that have taken place where countries operate in each others' backyards with greater frequency.

Earlier we also covered how award-winning teachers incorporate the use of technology in the classroom. We looked to these individuals because they are leaders and innovators and offered ideas, resources and models to emulate. We hear about lack of resources, a lack of technological tools in schools and when they are available, they are under-utilized or not integrated properly. But not always.

You read about the AWAL program which helps teachers understand the world of jobs and careers, provides specific training for that purpose so they, in turn, can help students with the transition from school to work.

Last fall, we produced a special issue of the magazine that celebrated 50 Years of Canadian Achievement in a wide range of fields. Again, this issue was filled with

resources, Web links and positioned with regard to the curriculum where possible.

So, there has been a wide range of material and as always the emphasis is on the usable and the pragmatic. This current issue is no different. The focus this spring is on behaviours and perceptions and how that can be manifested in the classroom.

We have a piece on what used to be known as Sex Education (now known as part of the Healthy Living curriculum in many jurisdictions) and it explores teaching strategies as well as the usefulness of this topic. What issues come up in class? How do you avoid embarrassment and awkwardness?

The reproducible insert or CURRICULA explores the topic of body image and how students, teens in particular, perceive themselves while outlining strategies and exercises for the development of a healthy body image.

We also hear from a graduating student on the trials, tribulations and perils of being part of the infamous double cohort contingent in the chaotic educational climate in Ontario.

Once again, we wish you all well for the summer and look forward to serving your needs and interests in the fall. ☺

Wili Liberman

**Next Issue**

- *Inclusion—Special Education in the Classroom*
- *Essential Service—Should teaching be so categorized*
- *Science-based Careers—Encouraging students to become scientists*
- *Futures, Web Stuff, CURRICULA and more*

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# TEACH MAGAZINE

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## Quebec Distributes 5000 Laptops to Students and Teachers

Quebec's Eastern Townships School Board is launching a three-year program with Apple Canada that will provide every teacher and student in grades 3 to 5 with their own iBook. Over 5000 laptops will be distributed in total, making the "Enhanced Learning Strategy" the first school board-wide laptop initiative in Canada. Along with hardware and software, Apple will provide both technical and curriculum integration training to meet Quebec's new pedagogical standards.

"Smaller classes do not automatically make for quality education - teachers do. Students have to have good teachers," says Ronald Canuel, Director General of the Eastern Townships School Board. "This is why the initiative is so large scale. We decided to make this program for either all the students and teachers or none of them."

Canuel likens teachers to orchestra conductors: "Let teachers conduct the classroom as if it were an orchestra. Conductors know that each part of the orchestra is important and needs to fulfill its potential."

There is a reason why the program, also referred to as the Denis McCullen Initiative, doesn't include the word "laptop" in its name. "We are approaching technology as a tool for learning," Canuel explains. "Technology is important, but is not the focus."

Apple recognized this, and won the bid for the program. "The Board decided to partner with Apple because Apple presented their bid as a partnership...not just the technology," says Canuel. "Every other supplier focused on the software, while Apple focused on professional development and training...Apple's offer to show teachers how to use the technology to engage and teach students was very important."

To avoid focusing too much on technology and too little on content, Canuel says the Board will train teachers to

establish subject matter. In a power point presentation for Biology, for example, the student will not be graded on the presentation, but on the content.

Ergonomics is another concern. "We have spoken with physiotherapists and are concerned about the issue," says Canuel. "Students will not sit at their laptops all day long staring at the screens."

As for additional teacher workload, Canuel says teachers already work from home, and that the laptops will not make much of a difference.

Why did the Board decide to fund a technology program and not, for example, building repairs? "At graduation, parents hold schools accountable for their students' quality of education, not the paint on the walls," says Canuel. "This is more important than paint."

Damage and theft are minor concerns. "Students should be given more credit," says Canuel. Pointing to devices such as cell phones and disc men, Canuel says that students are used to handling technology and that they don't destroy their own stuff. "Why would they destroy the laptops?" he asks. Canuel is also confident that theft rates will not increase. "Every student will have a laptop," he says. "Who would steal something that everyone else already has?"

Addressing inappropriate Web use, Canuel refers to a similar laptop initiative that took place in Maine. The teachers regularly checked students' cache files and if they found offensive Web sites, they would take away the laptop for one week. Students didn't visit the Web sites again, he says, because they didn't want their laptops taken away.

Maine experienced a problem with paper consumption, but quickly found a solution. With printers in every classroom, the students were printing in excessive amounts. When the printers were moved down the hall, paper consumption dropped. "Students no longer wanted to walk all the way to get their printouts," says Canuel. "It was as easy as that."

## Design a Web Page in 1/2 Hour – With Zero Experience

IBM Canada offers an excellent tutorial on Web page design for teachers. Using Netscape Composer (free and already installed on your computer with Netscape Navigator), the step-by-step tutorial explains how to create and develop a Web site without any prior knowledge or experience. In one afternoon, you can create a page with Web and email links, graphics, tables, and varied fonts, styles, and colours. Part of the Women in Technology Workshop, which brings together Toronto-area teachers to show them the advantages of technology and how to spark girls' interests in Web design, the tutorial is available at IBM Canada's Scitechmatics Web site, [www.can.ibm.com/k12/scitechmatics/dawp.htm](http://www.can.ibm.com/k12/scitechmatics/dawp.htm).



## Mississauga International Children's Festival June 4 - 7, 2003

Peel Region's largest educational event is coming to Mississauga next month. The 4-day annual event brings theatre, music, puppetry, dance, and storytelling to children ages 2 to 14. In line with this year's theme, From Outer Space to Inner Peace, the Festival will include a Canadian Author's Literary Series, Science Exploration, 46 hands-on workshops, and 42 performances. All programming is designed to help teachers deliver the Ontario curriculum – a teacher-approved study guide with assessment rubrics, a curriculum planner, and a teacher's hotline are provided. Through the Festival's Adopt-A-School campaign, sponsors provide funding for a busload of students. Onsite activities are free, and ticketed events are \$9 per show. For groups of 15 or more, tickets are \$6 each. For more information, contact the Children's Festival Box Office at 905-897-8955 or visit [www.kidsfestival.org](http://www.kidsfestival.org).



## AskERIC (Educational Resources Information Center)

<http://www.askeric.org>

The AskERIC Web site belongs to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and is run by ACCESS ERIC which, in turn, is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement and administered by the National Library of Education. The ACCESS ERIC site contains the largest education database in the world, with over one million abstracts of documents and journal articles. This is the place for educational research.

The AskERIC site was the first registered education site on the World Wide Web. It's a site packed with resources, containing more than 2000 lesson plans, more than 25 listserv archives, over 3000 resources on a variety of educational issues, over 110 responses to questions received through the AskERIC Question & Answer Service and contains more than one million abstracts of documents and journal articles on education research and practice. There are six main components to this site.

The first component is the ERIC database. Over 1 million abstracts of documents and journal articles on education research and practice are available to search here. The database is updated monthly, ensuring timely and accurate information.

The second component is the AskERIC question-answer service. This service is available 24 hours, 7 days a week with a 48 hour response time to answer questions about education.

The third component is the AskERIC Question Archive. Contained in the archive are samples of responses that have been sent to the AskERIC service.

These responses may include ERIC citations, Internet sites, discussion groups, and/or print resource information. The archive is searchable.

The fourth component contains AskERIC lesson plans. Over 2000 unique lesson plans are arranged by subject area and searchable by keyword and by grade.

The fifth component is the mailing list archive to over 25 educational mailing lists. The mailing lists are archived using Hypermail software that allows sorting by subject, date, author or thread.

The last component is the AskERIC Update Newsletter. Each month the newsletter contains a database tip, Web site additions, lesson plans, new listings in the resource collection, question archive and a question of the month.

Check out this impressive site and see why it is now entering its second decade of service.



## An Internet Resource for Teachers

<http://www.gyrd.ab.ca/EducationLinks>

This Web site is a tribute to Alberta teachers who have spent much time and effort to organize educational resources on the Internet for the benefit of students and teachers.

The Internet can still be a huge waste of time for students and teachers in trying to find unique educational resources. This site goes a long way in organizing and updating links to those unique educational resources.

Buttons on the left side of the screen guide teachers to subject listings. Links here include Search This Site, What's NEW & COOL, Aboriginal, CTS, Fine Arts, FRIM/FSL, Just For KIDS, Language Arts, Math, Physical Education, Primary Education, Science, Social Studies and Webquest.

Additional subject listings appear in a table on the upper centre/right of the screen. Links here include 3V-Voice Video Vantage, Administrators, Associations, Careers, Government, Homework Help, INFO, ICT, Libraries & Galleries, Museums, On-Line News, Reference, Search, Teachers, Tech. Ref., and Tutorials.

Underneath this table are alphabetical titles of Web sites and great annotations of the sites available for browsing. A search option is available for those who prefer searching to browsing.

This site is also a great find for Canadian educators. There are many links available here to provincial federal and other Canadian resources.

For any teacher looking for updated sites to supplement their lesson plans and curriculum, this is one site that is worth the time to do some browsing. ☺

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## New Web-Based Teacher Resource

[www.schoolnet.ca/teach/bell](http://www.schoolnet.ca/teach/bell)

## Communications: Past, Present and Future

Interactive lesson plans that explore our technological society. Brought to you by TEACH Magazine. Sponsored by Bell Canada.



By Richard Worzel

Anyone teaching about health care and medicine should keep in mind how rapidly this field is changing. We are experiencing an explosion in medical and biological research that will revolutionize health care at least as dramatically as computers and communications in the latter half of the 20th Century. Yet, while these changes offer the potential to significantly improve our lives, they also come with ethical, moral, and philosophical challenges that humanity has never encountered before.

There are two primary reasons why medicine and health management are changing so radically. First, we are entering the first truly scientific era of medical research. In the past, medical advances have come from accidents – such as the discovery of radiation and X-rays – or from what might be called “voodoo research.” Many medical advances came from studying what medicine men and wise women in primitive societies did that seemed to work, and then trying to find the rational explanation for it. This is how digitalis, the basis of a family of drugs used for heart disease, was discovered, for instance. Today, though, we know enough about how cells and molecular biology work that we can say things like, “We know we can stop this disease from spreading if we can find a molecule with this kind of structure to plug into the receptors on the outside of human cells.” Then we use computers to screen

different kinds of molecules to find those that have the right geometry, and hence are likely to be successful at fighting a given disease, vastly improving the odds of finding a useful new drug.

The second reason for today’s rapid advances in health research is that we are using computers instead of laboratory trial-and-error, which is speeding up the pace of research by several orders of magnitude. The Human Genome Project was completed about eight years ahead of the original schedule, cost significantly less than expected, and is yielding more results than originally projected in large part because computers were used to perform gene sequencing – the grunt work of the project.

But computers are not only letting us do much of the heavy lifting in research, they’re allowing us to perform new kinds of research that have never existed before. One computer software technique, for example, called “genetic programming” lets researchers identify new drugs and diagnostics several orders of magnitude faster than traditional techniques by harnessing the kind of evolutionary process involved in life itself to come up with progressively better and better solutions to a given problem. Hence, this software will look at which genes seem to be implicated in a given genetically-linked disease, for instance, and suggest a range of possible combinations of gene interactions involved. It will then fit these proposed explanations to experimental data, discard those that provide the worst fit, and re-combine those that remain.

By repeating this process at

computer speeds, solutions evolve into explanations that are novel, and might never have occurred to human researchers, because the software has no preconceptions about what the right answer is. This is one technique from a broad, new field called bioinformatics.

And where will all this lead us? Into a revolution in human health. We will, for instance, be able to cure diseases that seem to be linked to individual genetic flaws, possibly by re-writing the genetic code of the cells involved. This will let us cure such diseases as Cystic Fibrosis, Multiple Sclerosis, and certain kinds of diabetes and cancer. It may be that in 20 years, a young woman may go in for a check-up, find that she has breast cancer, and have it completely cured without surgery in a matter of days. Far from being life-threatening, it will be no big deal.

We may develop artificial “anti-bodies” in the form of nano-bots, microscopic robots, that fight specific diseases, or that hunt for cancerous cells in our body, or that float through our blood stream looking for problems to report. Our health may be guarded by our wearable computers, which will monitor our health, heartbeat-by-heartbeat, and alert us to a problem or even call for an ambulance in an emergency.

We will develop new pharmaceutical drugs and new diagnostic tests that allow us to identify diseases more quickly, and



treat them more precisely. Today, a highly effective new drug works between 50% and 70% of the time. This means that it does not work between 30% and 50% of the time, and may actually produce harmful side effects. We are now starting to suspect this is because of SNPs (pronounced “snips”, and standing for Single Nucleotide-Polymorphisms), which are the minute genetic differences between one person and another. We are learning that individual differences may be the reason why one person responds well to a drug, while another reacts badly, and why diet can work wonders for one person’s cholesterol count, yet do nothing for someone else.

The net result of all these changes, and the many more I haven’t discussed, is that we are, one by one, going to pick off the diseases and conditions that kill us and destroy our health. This will naturally lead to longer and healthier lives – but what if we could cure old age itself? There are researchers who think that there is no natural life span, and that we die essentially because our body’s machinery breaks down. If we can fix the break-downs, say with new organs grown from our own genetic code, and stop the clock of aging, which researchers are contemplating, then we may live as long as we can afford to. Indeed, cost is a significant factor, both in paying for such treatments, and in living that long beyond the traditional retirement age of 65. And when I ask audiences whether they’d like to live to 200, for instance, most people say no. When I rephrase it and ask if they’d like to live to 200, but with the body of a 30 year old, I get a much more positive – or at least more thoughtful – response.

Which leads us into the realms of philosophy: what is the purpose of our lives? At present, we think of our lives in three stages: childhood, adult or worker, and retired. Does this model make sense if you stretch it out over 200 years? How long is childhood? How long is retirement? What would you do with your time?

Indeed, the whole realm of health care is fraught with questions we’ve never encountered before. If we can select the genetic qualities of our children, are we morally justified in doing so? If we can tell, when someone’s 40, that they’re likely to suffer from Alzheimer’s disease by the time they’re 60, should we tell them? To whom does your genetic pattern belong if, say, you have a particularly disease-resistant genome? And to whom does information about your genetic defects belong? Should the government be privy to it? How about your banker or insurance agent? What about ethical questions, such as: if we can ensure that the child of deaf parents can hear normally, should the parents be allowed to choose to have their child born deaf so she can share in her parent’s culture?

These, and many other difficult questions await us. Perhaps we’ll need the longer, healthier lives we’ll live in order to start dealing with the answers. ☺

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*Futurist Richard Worzel lives in Toronto, and volunteers his time to speak to high school students as his schedule permits. Contact him through this magazine, or at [futurist@futuresearch.com](mailto:futurist@futuresearch.com).*



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# Let's Talk About Sex:

## *Is Sexual Health Education Working?*

By Sabrina Mehra

**F**or today's sexually-active adolescent, the consequences of poor decisions are potentially life-altering. Risk-taking behaviours and unhealthy habits can lead to unwanted pregnancy, long term emotional complications, and sexually transmitted diseases, some of which are fatal. Theoretically, educators have the power to provide their students with the information and critical thinking tools necessary to make healthy choices where sexual activities are concerned.

"Young people are constantly faced with important choices that must be made, and if one adopts unhealthy habits, it can have very severe consequences later in life," says Dr. Tom Wong, Director of the Division of Sexual Health Promotion and STD Prevention and Control at Health Canada. Wong's branch will release new guidelines for sexual health education in Canada in mid-May 2003. "Teachers have a golden opportunity to facilitate some very important dialogue on the subject of sexuality," says Wong.

However, whether or not teachers are equipped with the skills, support, and resources necessary to handle this golden opportunity remains an issue of debate among educators and health officials alike. With teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease infection among Canadian youth on the rise, and music videos and popular films propagating the idea that a sexually-promiscuous teen is a normal teen, some educators insist that the sexual health portion of the curriculum is not getting the scrutiny it deserves in Canadian schools.

Ensuring high-quality programs are taught on a regular basis must become a priority if sexual health education programs are ever going to be relevant to today's youth, says Dr. Alex McKay, Research Coordinator for the Sexual Information and Education Council of Canada. "Sexual health education is provided in bits and pieces and it's really not comprehensive enough or theoretically advanced enough in many cases to really have a major impact in terms of promoting sexual health in Canada," says McKay, author of *Sexual Ideology & Schooling: Towards Democratic Sexuality Education*. "That's not to say that there aren't good programs here and there, but I don't think it would

be accurate to say at this point that sexual health education being provided in Canadian schools is meaningfully contributing to adolescent sexual health in concrete behavioural ways.”

Reasons for this irrelevancy are numerous and debatable. Fear of parental backlash, jam-packed curriculums, and an emphasis on combatting low literacy and numeracy rates are just some of the reasons that administrators are allotting less and less time to sexual health education – and cutting back on resources to support teachers who require additional support in order to get through what can be, for many teachers, a terrifying ordeal.

“Generally, in elementary schools, the home room teacher teaches the health education, including the sexual education part, and the reality in our system now is that we don’t have a huge team of specialists to support those teachers,” says Gabriela Ostendorfer, a health consultant

and sexual health educator for the Calgary Board of Education. “Years ago, they had a whole team that would in-service teachers on everything from your own sensitivities around the topic, to how to be a really good teacher in that area, to how to be sensitive to children’s questions and needs. It was a really great way to in-service teachers, and so we felt very confident. We don’t have that anymore because of budget cuts.”

The quality and quantity of a teacher’s own sex education also play a role in the quality and quantity of sex education they provide. “There isn’t a lot of [sexual health education] training provided for teachers,” says Myra Stephen, Director of the Ontario Physical Health Education Association. “The only training is whatever is provided in teacher’s college – which tends to be limited – or training at the school board level after that, and that tends to be sporadic. Sometimes it’s great, and sometimes it’s nothing.”

But even with a reasonable dose of relevant training, the quality of sexual health education provided by qualified teachers is at risk if they’re visibly uncomfortable with the subject matter. According to Stephen, teachers need to be comfortable with more than just imparting facts about sexual health if they want to make a lasting impact. “I think when teachers are delivering information, they’re probably sticking to the facts, and students are most engaged when they’re talking about relationships,



*“There isn’t a lot of [sexual health education] training provided for teachers,” said Myra Stephen, director of the Ontario Physical Health Education Association.*

*“The only training is whatever is provided in teacher’s college – which tends to be limited – or training at the school board level after that, and that tends to be sporadic. Sometimes it’s great, and sometimes it’s nothing.”*

feelings, and the emotional impact of other decisions,” says Stephen. “I think what students want to know is what is titillating for them to talk about. They need to have the opportunity to talk about those things.”

Students also need to have the opportunity to practice the kinds of words they’ll need in order to be clear about what’s okay and what’s not okay in terms of their own sexual activities, says Toronto Public Health Nurse Lyba Spring. “It’s important for teachers to recognize that [students] need to have the opportunity to actually have words come out of their mouth,” says Spring. This could be accomplished through role-playing activities, she adds.

Teachers aren’t the only ones who become uncomfortable dealing with this topic in the classroom. Countless students have questions, but are reluctant to raise their hands for fear of teasing or humiliation. One way to accommodate these shy students

is to provide a question box in which they can submit their own sexual health-related inquiries anonymously.

The importance of this particular form of communication must not be dismissed or downplayed, says Ostendorfer. How teachers handle the question box and the respect that they give to answering the students’ questions is especially important. “Sometimes it’s just something to do at the end of class, and sometimes it turns into a joke thing,” says Ostendorfer. “I think teachers have to be really careful there because they’re modelling some behaviours and statements and students are just soaking it all up.”

School is not the only venue where students soak up information. When imparting information about sexual health, teachers are often forced to compete with the media’s portrayal of sexual behaviour – one that usually encourages unhealthy practices. “I keep thinking, what messages are 14-year-olds getting when they’re watching music videos?” says Ostendorfer. “If that’s where students are getting their information about how to be – if those are the role models – we’re in a bit of a sorry state.”

But teachers shouldn’t throw up their hands in defeat just because the media’s reach is so expansive. Teachers can incorporate the media’s portrayal of risky sexual behaviours into their lesson plans, says Stephen. “They can do things like bring in

advertisements and say, 'How is the woman portrayed? How is the man portrayed? What messages are being given?'" Stephen suggests. "I think by giving students the opportunity to really analyse and look at what they're being told and what they want to be told, it makes them smart consumers."

If fire fights fire, then educators should embrace the opportunity to utilize youth-friendly mediums like music videos and films to make their point, says Wong. "If commercial outlets can use music videos to target young people to sell their products, perhaps we and everyone concerned about the sexual well-being of our teens can use that same type of medium to impart appropriate information and affect young people in a positive way," he says.

Somewhere between lesson planning and in-class discussions, teachers must strive to maintain a balance between respecting diversity in the classroom and providing relevant information in a welcoming fashion. It's a daunting task – especially when faced with the possibility of aggressive, in-your-face parents. But according to Stephen, as long as teachers are honest, respectful, and acknowledge that both home and school have roles to play as far as sexual health education is concerned, students from many backgrounds should feel welcome. "Understand and make it clear that there's a partnership between the home and the school, focus on the facts, and really stay away from value judgments," she says. "Let the students make their own decisions with their families."

According to Spring, it would be unfair to limit information because of diversity. "It would be unethical not to answer certain questions because some kids aren't ready to hear it," Spring says. "The kid who asks the question deserves an answer, and because we're doing this in a group setting, everybody hears the answer."

Teachers tread in dangerous territory when their own moralistic judgments surface in the classroom, and one surefire way to avoid alienating students is to make a conscious effort not to make any assumptions where sex is concerned, Stephen advises. "Try to avoid assumptions, avoid assuming that all students are sexually active or are not sexually active," says Stephen. "Avoid assuming that all students are heterosexual."

For Spring, the best example of addressing diversity among students can be found in her handling of dating. "I can't make the assumption that all the children in front of me are going to be allowed to date, because some of them won't," says Spring. "Some of them come from families where the adults will help them find a mate for life."

Daunted? Squeamish educators are not alone. Resources are available, be they binders, in-service nurses, or Web sites for those educators who need the extra assistance.

One such online resource is [www.teachingsexualhealth.ca](http://www.teachingsexualhealth.ca), a comprehensive Web site sponsored by the Calgary Board of Education, Alberta Health and Wellness, and other educators and health professionals committed to achieving "excellence in teaching sexual health." There are three sections in the site: one for parents, one for students, and one for teachers. The section

for teachers provides lessons plans, advice on how to teach the subject, and access to supplemental resources such as pamphlets, fact sheets, illustrations, video kits, and in-service aid. "Right away you're using a more comprehensive approach, and I think teachers feel more supported with that Web site," says Ostendorfer.

Stephen recommends the Planned Parenthood resource, *Beyond the Basics: A Sourcebook on Sexual & Reproductive Health Education*, for similar reasons. "It's a great resource that

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*"If commercial outlets can use music videos to target young people to sell their products, perhaps we and everyone concerned about the sexual well-being of our teens can use that same type of medium to impart appropriate information and affect young people in a positive way,"*

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talks about reducing inhibitions and setting a tone and creating a comfortable atmosphere and how to answer questions in a factual way, as opposed to a value-laden way," says Stephen.

What impact do sexual health education programs have on an individual's sexuality? Not much, according to McKay – but that has the potential to change. "In order to become really effective and impacting on those issues like unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, sex education programs really need to focus on behavioural skill building and the ability to communicate effectively and assertively with partners around sexuality issues," he says. "When it reaches that kind of level, sexuality programs may have quite a positive impact on people's sexuality in a more general sense."

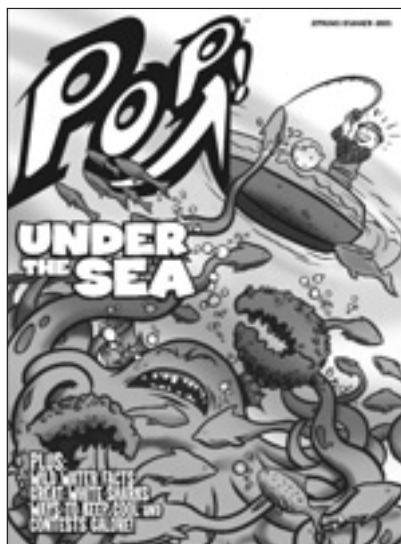
It might need improvement, but the ramifications of discontinuing sexual health education altogether would be disastrous. "People would argue and say the school shouldn't be teaching it at all," says Ostendorfer. "But then, who?" ☹

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*Sabrina Mehra is a writer and columnist based in Vancouver, BC. She can be contacted via e-mail at [sabrina@sabrinamehra.com](mailto:sabrina@sabrinamehra.com).*



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8 page Reproducible Insert

## The Body Image Project

*by Jean Greig*

Rare is the person who hasn't looked in the mirror at some point in their life and disliked what they saw. For some it may be minor dissatisfaction: a less-than-firm abdomen, thinning hair, an imperfect nose. For others, body dissatisfaction can become so extreme that it expresses itself in self-hatred and self-destruction.

Millions of women and men across Canada battle to some extent with body dissatisfaction. It is a battle that often begins early in life. Children as young as two or three already internalize messages about how bodies are supposed to look from their toys, television, and movies, and the adult conversations they overhear.

But "body wars" (as author Margo Maine terms it) are truly declared during the pre-teen and adolescent years, when susceptibility to outside opinions and peer acceptance are at a peak. Particularly for girls, the carefree androgyny of childhood gets replaced by a set of rigid expectations about how an adolescent girl should act and appear. A relentless bombardment of

images from television, magazines, movies, fashion magazines, and countless other sources reinforces the expectations that were introduced back in early childhood by Barbie and Power Rangers: females should be thin and beautiful, males should be strong and powerful.

The battle is taking its toll on our children. A 1992 Health and Welfare Canada study found that 37 percent of 11 year-olds, 42 percent of 13 year-olds, and 48 percent of 15 year-olds said they needed to lose weight. A 1986 US study found that 46 percent of 9 year-olds and 81 percent of 10 year-olds restricted eating through diets. And in 2001, researcher Jennifer Jones and her colleagues reported that 27 percent of Ontario girls 12-19 years old had disordered attitudes and behaviours around eating, and 15 percent were predicted to develop a full-fledged eating disorder such as bulimia or anorexia nervosa.

It is not only girls who are struggling with body image. Health Canada reports that 21 percent of 13 year-old male students

and 25 percent of 15 year-old male students feel they need to gain weight. Steroid use has skyrocketed. In a recent survey, about 83,000 young Canadians, overwhelmingly males, reported using steroids at least once. Almost half of them were using steroids primarily to “improve” their physical appearance. And while females still make up 90-95 percent of eating disorder sufferers, the number of young men with eating problems is growing.

Adolescence never has and never will be an easy time of life. But in this era of supposed enlightenment about sexuality and gender issues, preoccupation with body image is getting worse, not better. One piece of evidence: the incidence of eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia – perhaps the most extreme manifestation of body dissatisfaction – has increased 200 percent over the past 20 years.

Carla Rice and Vanessa Russell, co-authors of a recently published educators’ handbook on the issue, define body image as “... the mental picture a person has of her body as well as her associated thoughts, feelings, awareness and behaviour.” Body image is influenced by the messages we receive about our bodies from families, friends, social networks, institutions, and the larger culture.

And those messages are everywhere. On television, in movies, magazines, advertising, music videos, images of the ideal body besiege us. For girls, it is thin, small-breasted, and waif-like – “a boy’s body with breasts”, as one fashion observer wrote. For boys, it is tanned, cut, and powerful. Just try to find an average woman’s body in a fashion magazine, or a normal guy in a copy of GQ. Surrounded on all sides by images of the ideal, it is not surprising that many of our kids become obsessed with trying to achieve it.

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*“In a recently survey, about 83,000 young Canadians, overwhelmingly males, reported using steroids at least once. Almost half of them were using steroids primarily to improve their physical appearance.”*

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The school environment also plays an important role in the development of body image. For pre-teens and adolescents, the school environment is the day-to-day world where ideas are tested and lessons learned. Often those lessons are very hard. For girls in particular, it can be “open season” for comments on their bodies during the late elementary and intermediate years. Fat girls suffer terribly at the hands of their peers. Fat or very skinny boys don’t fare much better.



Even those who aren’t so far off the ideal can be plagued by a negative body image. Many average-sized adolescent girls become obsessed with losing weight and turn to dieting and more extreme measures, even though it is perfectly normal and healthy for girls to gain weight during puberty. Boys, conversely, may be worried about not gaining enough weight. Body size isn’t the only issue. During adolescence, good looks, fashionable clothing and popularity become the markers of success. Those that don’t measure up feel like failures, and may get harassed to boot. Self-esteem plummets, and the result can be withdrawal, silence, and self-hatred.

Many schools attempt to deal head-on with issues of sexual or racial harassment, but “appearance-based” harassment is often ignored. Merryl Bear, Executive Director of the National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC), believes that appearance-based harassment is “under-identified” in schools, partly because body image is so culturally sensitive, and partly because too many staff are not knowledgeable about the issue. Teaching materials on body image are available but application in schools is “spotty,” says Bear. She hopes that 3 new NEDIC manuals sent to 870 Ontario high schools will prompt those schools to give the issue more attention.

Bear has a number of cautions about addressing body image, and especially eating disorders, in the classroom. “We need to be careful about the way we present information,” Bear says, “so that we are not teaching maladaptive behaviours.” For example, putting too much emphasis on healthy eating and exercise can result in young students becoming obsessive about weight and fitness, possibly leading towards disordered eating behaviour rather than away from it. “The emphasis should be on healthy lifestyles,” she says.

Similarly, having a recovered sufferer of anorexia or bulimia speak to a class has been known to trigger eating disorders in other students. “The person talking is often thin, articulate, apparently accomplished. Other girls look at her and think: ‘I want to be like that,’” warns Bear.



## ACTIVITIES

In spite of these warnings, professionals agree that it is critical that schools address the body image issue. For Rice and Russell, body image is an equity issue. Not all bodies are created equal, and factors such as gender, race, natural size, sexual orientation, social class, and ability all have an impact on how a person may develop, including physically. They encourage educators to attempt to build school environments where “all student bodies are represented and affirmed.”

There is only so much that can be done within the school environment to combat the enormous expectations of society and the damage those expectations inflict on our youth. But we can help our students to recognize, understand, and challenge those expectations. We can also work to create a safer and more welcoming environment for students, in all their shapes and sizes, so that they can face the challenges of growing up from a position of confidence and self-acceptance.

## CURRICULUM LINKS

Classroom activities on body image issues can be applied to several areas of the junior, intermediate and secondary school curricula, including:

- Elementary and secondary Health and Physical Education curriculum expectations around identifying healthy eating patterns; the relationship between healthy living, body image, and self-esteem; healthy body weight; peer and family relationships; identifying harassment; physical and non-physical abuse; conflict resolution; respectful behaviour; etc.
- Elementary and secondary Art curriculum expectations around analyzing and creating media art works; analyzing how media arts can effect the lives of various audiences; creating dramatic performances (Much Better Music Video activity).
- Language and English curriculum expectations around critical and analytical thinking about the media; using technology to search for and share communications; written and oral communications skills.
- Numerous courses within the secondary Social Science and Humanities curriculum, such as parenting, fashion, food and nutritional sciences, issues in human growth and development, psychology, philosophy, and others.



### Setting Ground Rules (all levels)

(adapted from *EmBODYing Equity*)

**Materials:** none

**Time:** 30 minutes

Talking about body image issues in a classroom setting may be difficult for some students, especially in a mixed gender group. It is critical that the classroom atmosphere be safe and respectful so that all students can speak freely.

Ask students to close their eyes and think about a group experience that left them feeling vulnerable, upset, or angry. Ask them to think about what happened to make them feel that way. Then ask them to think about a group experience that went well for them, and what elements made it positive.

As a group, talk about what will make a classroom discussion about body image a safe and positive experience for everyone. Try to get the students to be as specific as possible. For example, if the students say “be respectful,” ask them what specific actions would be disrespectful or respectful (e.g., snickering at another student’s comment, not interrupting another student). Make a list on the board or on a large sheet of paper that can be posted in the classroom. Remind the class of the ground rules each time they are doing body image activities.

It is possible that talking about body image will bring up strong emotions or even disclosures of abuse, self-harming, or harming of others. It is important that a safe and confidential outlet for such disclosures be identified. However, you should also explain to the students your obligation as a teacher to report certain types of disclosures. Most students will have heard this already and it will not come as a surprise to them.

### Body Image Brainstorm (all levels)

(adapted from *EmBODYing Equity*)

**Materials:** none

**Time:** 20 minutes

The first step in doing work on body image is to develop a definition of the term and some language for talking about it. Write the words “Body Image” on the blackboard. Ask students to brainstorm what comes to mind when they see these words. Don’t block responses at this point; anything goes. Record the responses.

Now ask students to think about all messages they get about how their bodies should look. Where do these messages come from? Responses might include parents, friends, other students, advertisements, magazines, etc. How might these messages affect how they feel about their own bodies?

Develop a classroom definition of body image based on the students’ responses.

Ensure that the definition includes: what a person perceives about their body, what others have told them about their body, and how they feel about their body. Post the definition in the classroom, along with a list of the different sources of body image messages.

Ask the class to consider how others' expectations might affect how an individual feels about his or her body. What might a person feel they can or cannot do based on their image of their body? What are the different expectations for boys and girls? The discussion could also include consideration of how body image messages are different depending on racial background, sexual orientation, ability, or social class.

### Junior Division activities

#### Icebreaker – Body Image Bingo

(adapted from *EmBODYing Equity*)

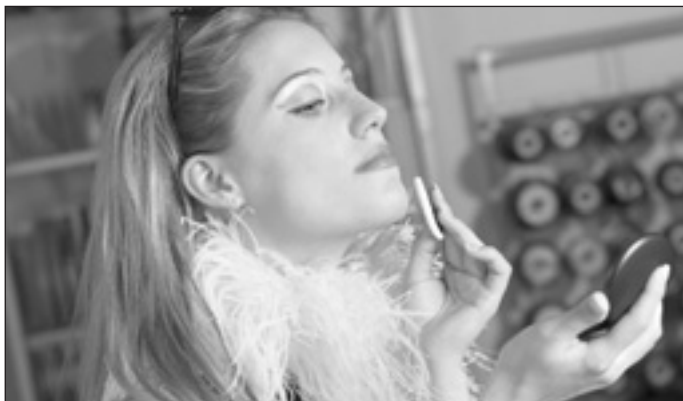
**Materials:** Body image bingo cards, one small prize

**Time:** 20 minutes

This activity is designed to help students get comfortable talking about body image issues with each other. Before class, create bingo cards with statements about body image such as: worries about weight; dislikes his/her hair; has ever been on a diet; wants to be taller; wants to be stronger; wants to be shorter; loves to eat; knows the number of calories in most foods; believes that sexism, racism, and homophobia can affect how we feel about our bodies (cards can also be photocopied from *EmBodying Equity* manual). You will also need one small prize.

Ask the students to walk around the class and try to fill all squares on the bingo card with the names of those who fit the description. Only one name should be written per square and no name should be repeated. Give the prize to the first person who fills their entire bingo card.

Ask students which square was easiest to fill and which was the hardest. If the statement on sexism, racism, and homophobia is included, this can be a good opportunity to discuss how discriminatory and judgmental attitudes can affect body image.



#### Real vs. Ideal collage

**Materials:** magazines, scissors, glue, paper

**Time:** 45 minutes

This activity will help students become more aware of the images of men and women portrayed in popular media. Bring in a variety of magazines, or ask students to bring in magazines they like to read (but are prepared to destroy). Ensure that the collection includes numerous fashion, beauty, and fitness magazines as well as some current events or special interest magazines.

Place students in groups of 3-4 and supply each group with a variety of magazines. Ask the students to make two collages: one of "ideal" body types such as those of models, pop stars, bodybuilders, etc., and one of "real" body types of average people. Then ask them to come up with a list of words to describe the body types in both the real and the ideal collage and write them on the back of the collages. You may want to make single-gender groups so that boys can consider male body images and girls can consider female ones.

Have each group present their collages and read the words they have written on the back. As a class, discuss how the real and ideal body types differ. How likely is it that most average people will be able to attain the ideal body image? How important is it?

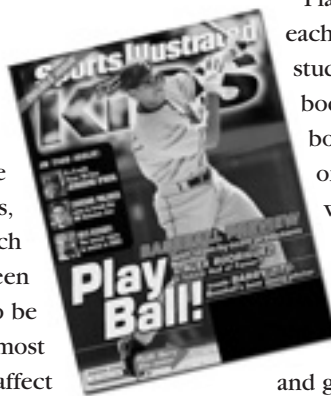
#### Five People I Admire

**Materials:** bristle board and other art materials

**Time:** 1 week to complete assignment, 45 minutes to present and discuss results

This activity will allow students to determine the qualities they admire in people and discuss them in the context of body image. Ask each student to come up with a list of five people they admire. Girls should select females and boys should select males. The people they choose could be living or dead, famous or obscure. They could even be family members or friends.

For one choice, the student should prepare a half-page report on what makes this person admirable in the student's opinion. Each report should include a photograph or other image of the person being described. Ask the students to display their reports in a creative manner, e.g., a poster on bristle board or a mobile. Post the projects for all students to see.





As a class, discuss with the students the people they admire. How many of the people were chosen because of physical characteristics? What do the other ones look like? How important are physical characteristics when it comes to being an “admirable” person?

### Intermediate Division activities (grades 7,8)

#### Icebreaker – This Is My Bag

(adapted from *Every BODY is a Somebody*)

**Materials:** paper lunch bags

**Time:** several days for collecting materials,  
45 minutes to complete activity

This activity will help students feel more comfortable about sharing personal information. Distribute a paper lunch bag to each student. Ask the students to collect six small items that represent who they are and put them in their bag. The items could relate to family, pets, hobbies, beliefs, achievements, goals. Give the students a few days to collect the items.

Place students in groups of 3-4 and ask them to explain the contents of their bag to the other group members.

As a class, discuss the many aspects which make up a whole person. How did the students feel sharing their bag with others in their class?

#### Body Image Perceptions

(adapted from *Every BODY is a Somebody*)

**Materials:** handout

**Time:** 30 minutes

This activity will help students understand how other people’s opinions affect how we think about our bodies. Distribute a handout with the following statements (or photocopy from *Every BODY is a Somebody*):

- My parents say that fat people are \_\_\_\_\_.
- My parents say that thin people are \_\_\_\_\_.
- My parents say \_\_\_\_\_ about my body.
- My friends like me because \_\_\_\_\_.
- I hang around my friends because \_\_\_\_\_.
- Boys say thin girls are \_\_\_\_\_.
- Boys say fat girls are \_\_\_\_\_.
- Girls say thin girls are \_\_\_\_\_.
- Girls say fat girls are \_\_\_\_\_.
- Girls say skinny boys are \_\_\_\_\_.
- Girls say fat boys are \_\_\_\_\_.
- Boys say skinny boys are \_\_\_\_\_.

- Boys say fat boys are \_\_\_\_\_.
- I feel \_\_\_\_\_ about my body.
- In the media, thin people are portrayed as \_\_\_\_\_.
- In the media, fat people are portrayed as \_\_\_\_\_.
- If I woke up tomorrow and was thin I would feel \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
- If I woke up tomorrow and was fat I would feel \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.

Ask students to complete the handout individually. Then place students in groups of 3-4, including both boys and girls, to discuss their answers.

As a class, have each group report back briefly. Initiate a discussion on how media, family, and friends influence the images we have of ourselves and others, and how negative influences can be reduced or combated.

#### Teen Magazine Analysis

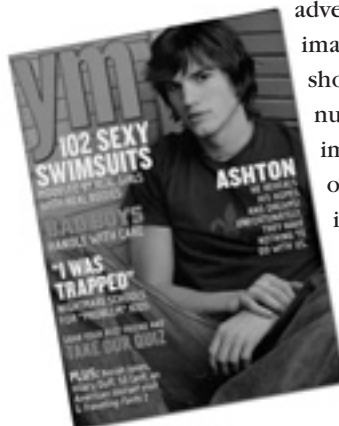
(adapted from *Every BODY is a Somebody*)

**Materials:** Teen magazines for boys and girls, chart paper

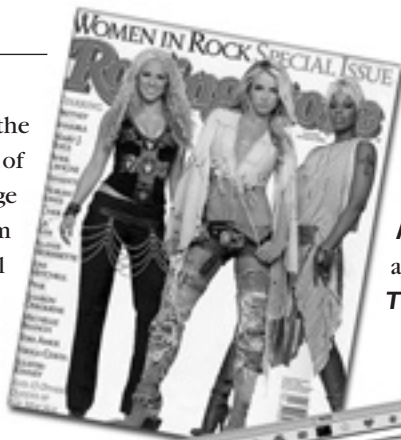
**Time:** 1 hour

This activity will assist students in developing a critical analysis of the media and the power of advertising. Bring in or ask students to bring in a variety of magazines they like to read, especially teen-focused magazines. Place students in groups of 3-4, including both boys and girls. Give each group a magazine and some chart paper.

Ask students to go through the magazine from cover to cover and record the following information: number of pages in the magazine; number of advertising pages in the magazine; number of advertising pages addressing body image (makeup, beauty, clothing, bodybuilding, etc.); number of advertisements showing idealized body images; number of advertisements showing average or large body images; number of articles addressing body image, beauty, or popularity; number of articles addressing political, social, intellectual, or athletic concerns. Each group should come up with a graphical way of illustrating their findings (e.g., bar graph, pie graph).



Ask each group to briefly report back to the class on what they found. What proportion of most teen magazines are devoted to body image issues? Are teen girl's magazines different from boy's magazines? How do the students feel about what they discovered? Do they think these magazines affect how young people think about their bodies? Will that change how they feel about reading the magazines?



### Much Better Music Video

(adapted from *Every BODY is a Somebody*)

**Materials:** videotape of assorted music videos, audiovisual equipment

**Time:** 2 hours plus out-of-class preparation time

Prepare or ask a student to prepare a videotape of several current music videos. Show the video to the class, then ask students to brainstorm different images they recall from the videos. Record these observations on the blackboard.



## Secondary Division

### Icebreaker – If I Could Be Anyone

(adapted from *Every BODY is a Somebody*)

**Materials:** none

**Time:** 20 minutes

This activity will help students feel more comfortable talking about personal values in a group. Have the students stand or sit in a large circle. Each student takes a turn to come to the middle of the circle and finish the sentence: "If I could be anyone, I would be..." The student may then briefly explain the reasons for his or her choice. The class should be given some prior warning about this activity so that they can think about their choices beforehand.

When all the students have taken their turn, discuss with the class the types of people that were chosen and why. How many of the selections were based on physical attributes? What are the dangers of selecting appearance as a desired quality in a role model?

With the class, discuss the following questions:

- How are women portrayed in the videos?  
How are men portrayed?
- Are the people's bodies in the videos average or ideal?
- How are images of bodies or parts of bodies used to generate feelings or ideas in the video?
- Does the way bodies are portrayed in the video affect how the students feel about their own bodies? Are the body images portrayed in the videos reasonably attainable by other people? Are they healthy?



Place students in groups of 3-4 and ask them to create a short section of a music video which incorporates positive verbal or visual messages about body image. The groups may select one of the songs included on the videotape or choose another popular song. Very inspired students could write their own song!

Ask each group to perform their video for the class. If videotaping equipment is available, the students could pre-tape the performance and replay it for the class, or tape it while performing for the class.

Alternatively, students could find one or several current music videos which portray body images in a positive way (eg., TLC's "Unpretty") and play them for the class.

### "The Cost of Perfect" Research Projects

**Materials:** research resources, Internet access

**Time:** 2 weeks to complete assignment,  
1 hour for class discussion

This activity will allow students to investigate in detail the complexities of a variety of body image issues. Ask each student to select a research topic from the list below, or choose a topic of their own with teacher approval. Provide the students with a list of research resources - the Resources section at the end of this article provides a number of good books, Web sites, and organizations with information on body image issues.

Each student should prepare a one-page essay on the topic of their choice. In addition, each student should prepare a poster display of what they have discovered. As much as possible, the posters should include photos, pictures, graphs and charts, key statistics, and other visual information as well as text.

Display the posters around the room and set aside some time for students to look at them. Then discuss with the class some of their findings. What information surprised the students? Did any of the information feel relevant in the context of their school or home environments? How did the students feel about what they discovered?

Possible research topics:

- How have beauty standards for women changed over the past 100 years?
- How have body expectations for males changed over the past 50 years?
- How prevalent is plastic surgery and what are some of the dangers?
- What are the financial implications of the beauty/body ideal? Who benefits?
- How prevalent is steroid use among young males and what are the health risks?
- What are the legal implications of steroid use?



- Are supermodels healthy?
- Do diets work?
- What is set point theory?
- How prevalent is dieting among young females and what are the health risks?
- Is it healthier to be slightly underweight or slightly overweight?
- How prevalent are eating disorders among young females? What are the dangers?
- Do boys suffer from eating disorders? What are some of the reasons?
- What kind of body changes are normal for girls/boys entering adolescence?
- What are healthy guidelines for eating and exercise for adolescent girls/boys?

### Final Activity – Body Image Wish List (all levels)

**Materials:** none

**Time:** 45 minutes

This activity will help students translate their learning about body image into a set of goals for their school and home environments. On the blackboard or a large list of paper, write two headings: "No more..." and "We support..."

Briefly recap the body image activities that the class has completed. Then ask the students to brainstorm a list of actions and behaviours that they believe are harmful to body image, self esteem, and healthy living. The list might include things like "making fun of someone's body," "stupid diets," "sexist videos." Write these in the "No more..." column. Then ask the class to brainstorm a list of actions and behaviours that will support positive body image, self esteem, and healthy living. The list might include: "complimenting people on their achievements rather than their looks," "having enough time to eat a healthy lunch," or "purchasing non-lookist products." Write these on the "We support..." list. Keep the lists posted in the classroom.

Encourage the class to act as ambassadors for positive body image and self-esteem throughout the school. Consider presenting the lists to a school assembly or student council meeting, or posting them in the school corridors.

## RESOURCES

### Books and manuals

*Adios Barbie: Young women write about body image and identity.* Ophira Edut and Rebecca Walker, eds. Seal Press. 1998.

*A Picture Is Worth A...? Media literacy, how media influences how we see ourselves and others.* Best Start Barrie. 1998. (Lesson plans for junior and intermediate classes on media influences and body image.)

*Body Wars: An Activist's Guide.* Margo Maine. Gurze Books: Carlsbad, CA. 2000.

*EmBodying Equity: Body Image as an Equity Issue - a manual for educators and service providers.* Carla Rice and Vanessa Russell. Green Dragon Press: Toronto, ON. 2002.

*Every BODY is a Somebody: An Active Learning Program to Promote Healthy Body Image, Positive Self-Esteem, Healthy Eating and an Active Lifestyle for Female Adolescents.* The Body Image Coalition of Peel: Peel, ON. 1997.

*That Body Image Thing: Young women speak out.* Sara Torres, ed. CRIAW Press: Ottawa, ON. 1999.

*The Beauty Myth.* Naomi Wolf. Random House: Toronto, ON. 1991.

*When Girls Feel Fat: Helping Girls Through Adolescence.* Sandra Susan Friedman. HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.: Toronto, ON. 1997.

### Web sites

Aboriginal Youth Network Health Centre ([www.ayn.ca/health](http://www.ayn.ca/health)) Information on health issues affecting aboriginal youth, including steroid use, body image, self esteem, and the role of the media.

Best Start ([www.opc.on.ca/beststart](http://www.opc.on.ca/beststart)) While Best Start's main focus is maternal and infant health, it has several resources on body image in adolescent girls. Check the resources section under body image.

Canadian Health Network ([www.canadian-health-network.ca](http://www.canadian-health-network.ca)) A source of extensive information on many health issues, this Web site has a youth section and a search engine for locating information on body image issues.

Canadian Women's Health Network ([www.cwhn.ca](http://www.cwhn.ca)) Extensive women's health information and links, including information on young women and girls and body image issues.

Drug Education and Awareness for Life ([www.deal.org](http://www.deal.org)) Co-sponsored by the RCMP and Industry Canada's School Net program, this Web site has information on drug use, including steroids and healthy living choices.

Health Canada ([www.bc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.bc-sc.gc.ca)) The "Just for You - Youth" section of this Web site has information on body image issues, including a section called Rage Against 'roids which addresses male body image and steroid use.

National Eating Disorder Information Centre ([www.nedic.ca](http://www.nedic.ca)) An excellent source of information on eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia.

### Videos

*Eating Disorders: Profiles of Pain* (video). 1997. Salt River Production Group.

*FRESH TALK: Youth and Sexuality. Part 1: Image.* 1991. Start Productions: Vancouver, BC. Young people talk about their thoughts and feelings about body image and issues such as lesbian and gay sexualities.

*Slim Hopes: Advertising and the Obsession with Thinness.* 1996. Kinetic Inc. (416-963-5979 or 1-800-263-6910).

*Still Killing Us Softly.* 1987. Kinetic Inc. (416-963-5979 or 1-800-263-6910) or National Film Board of Canada (1-800-267-7710).

*Thin Dreams.* 1986. National Film Board of Canada (1-800-267-7710).

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# Survival of the fittest

By Averard R. D'Souza



It's that time again. A time of re-birth, a time for cleaning and, for many Ontario teens, a time of great anxiety. The root of the anxiety stems from the double cohort, when 105,000 grade 12 and OAC students will be graduating together in June of 2003. The double cohort is a direct result of the discontinuation of Ontario Academic Credit (grade 13), implemented by the Harris government, and is causing graduating students more anxiety than ever before.

So what is all the commotion about, anyway? The real problem is uncertainty. There has never been anything comparable to the double cohort. Therefore, every action that the Ontario government and universities have taken has been based on speculation and estimations, as opposed to knowledge and experience. Based on statements made by the Ontario University Application Centre, the government speculations and estimations were far more conservative than reality. In essence, this translates to a definite increase in competition and a lack of preparation on the government's side.

Why do so many OAC and grade 12 students seem so stressed out lately? The major source of anxiety for university bound students is the dreaded cut-off average. A cut-off average is the average of a student's top six OAC marks (possibly including program prerequisites). These averages are inputted into university computers, where only the students with the top marks will be selected. Students are painfully aware that that one mark can mean the difference between university acceptance and rejection. The Toronto District School Board has also warned students to expect a 5 percent increase from the previous year's required averages, thus fortifying the fears of students. This, in conjunction with the statistic that 70 percent of Ontario teens will not go to university, is enough to convince a straight-A student that they will not have the marks to get into their desired program.

Talk of extra-curricular activities and volunteering requirements also has students confused. Students have been told that extra-curricular activities can greatly increase their chances of getting in. But does this mean it would override mark discrepancies?

In many cases, the time commitment involved with extra-curricular participation can have a damaging effect on one's final mark. Yet another mystery victims of the double cohort face.

Almost as scary as the competition is the price tag that comes with post-secondary education. The cost equates to roughly \$8,000 if living at home and \$15,000 if living on campus. This colossal expenditure can be one that scholarships and savings may not be able to cover. Furthermore, if you are relying on the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), you may want to rethink your planning. Competition from the double cohort will surely make qualifying for a student loan more difficult. Perhaps Darwin was on to something when he spoke of 'survival of the fittest.'

Starting early April, students will begin receiving their conditional offers of admission or refusal. "Conditional" is the key word, meaning that they are accepted into the university of their choice provided they maintain a minimum average. If all the spots are not filled in the first round of acceptances, the university will re-evaluate the marks for a second round of acceptances. However, for the thousands of students who do not receive a reply, they will have to continue holding their breath until June 9th, which is when all offers of admission and refusal must be sent.

So what can you do if you do not get into any universities? Is it the end of your educational path? No, of course it isn't! There are many options for those who do not get accepted to university this year. These options include going back to high school and increasing marks, going to college, attaining gainful employment to pay for education, travelling and applying to universities outside of Ontario, or even Canada, for that matter. University is not for everyone, and is just one of many routes a student can take.

Keeping in mind the raised cut-off averages, potentially necessary extra-curricular involvement, tuition fees, student loans, and all the other barriers associated with post-secondary education, one thing is for sure: university bound students within the constraints of the double cohort suffer much more anxiety than those of prior years. After all, double the number of graduating students means double the competition. In addition, lest we not forget that the competition faced now will likely rear its ugly head in four years, when many of us either enter the workforce or apply for graduate school. But hey, only the strong survive. 🍀

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*Averard D'Souza is a graduating student from Thornlea Secondary School in Thornhill, Ontario.*

**T**he Tell Me More language series is designed to teach and provide developmental practice in the four major areas of learning a new language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. For each language in the series, there are three separate programs: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. We will be looking at the beginner French program.

Once you install the program, you start with a guided tour of the program's contents and navigation. After you take the tour, you can either select a guided learning path or explore specific areas that interest you on your own. If you take the guided learning path, you choose which area or areas you want to develop (speaking only, speaking and writing, etc.) and decide how much time and when you want to study each week – the program generates an end date based on your learning interests and lays out a specific lesson and practice sequence.

The program has 14 learning areas and 21 lessons in each area. If you are exploring the program on your own, you just click on the desired lesson in the Lesson Plan Manager. If you choose a guided learning path, the program takes you to your first lesson. As you go, the Lesson Plan Manager tracks what you have completed, and how well you did.

A set of headphones and a microphone are included with the software, so you can both listen and speak to the program. You may start with a simple conversation lesson, where you are asked a question and have a choice of three answers on the screen. If you are focusing on your reading or writing skills, you click on the correct written answer. If you are focusing on learning to speak, you speak the correct answer into your microphone and the response will light up if you have said the phrase properly. The screen has several ways to help you if you get stuck. The program also has lessons that clearly illustrate how to shape your mouth, tongue, and lips to get the right sounds in word pronunciation.

Many of the lessons focus on learning to speak the language – and this is where the voice recognition technology really comes into play. In one area, you choose the types of words or phrases you want to learn. You will hear and see a sentence written, as well as see the speaker's voice pattern emerge on the screen as he speaks. When you say the phrase back, your voice pattern appears directly under that of the speaker's. You also instantly get a score, and the program highlights any word(s) you need to work on. You also can play back your own response as well as your "tutor's" version of the word or sentence. This all happens in a flash, so you can easily keep hearing and repeating the phrase until you've got it right.

Tell Me More also has many grammar lessons and activities that can help you develop your knowledge of sentence construction and conjugation. One example is an activity where you have to re-sequence a group of words to make a sentence. If you have Internet access, you can email questions to an online teacher and get a response within 48 hours.

The Tell Me More language series is for people who are serious about wanting to learn a new language. The "beginner" programs require a basic knowledge (vocabulary and simple sentence construction) of the language in order to easily follow and do the lessons. If you have a basic knowledge of the language, the "beginner" programs will take you a long way.

For a teacher (or a student) who has an interest in using the program as a complementary tool to classroom instruction, Tell Me More also works very well. One big advantage for teachers is that the program gives your students tons of pronunciation practice and feedback, while you, the teacher, can focus more on the grammatical side of learning the language.

It is clear that the developers have really done their homework, in terms of assembling a very comprehensive base of instruction. The program has about 1000

lessons and if you put the lessons end to end, they represent about 130 hours of instruction and practice. The developers have also created a good introduction to the program for first-time viewers. The graphics and the content layout of the individual pages are easy to understand and navigate.

If you use the program solely to develop your speaking skills, the voice recognition/feedback part of the program is worth the value of the program in itself. This is about as close to a personal tutor as you can get.

The Tell Me More series has identical programs to the one described here for both Spanish and English. To order any program in the series, visit The CD-ROM Store at 345 Danforth Avenue in Toronto, ON, or call 1-800-250-9229. For further information, visit Learning Village at [www.learningvillage.com/html/rTellMeMoreFrench.html](http://www.learningvillage.com/html/rTellMeMoreFrench.html). ☺

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# Unionville High Brings Apple Video Journalism Course to Canada

By Jeremy Simon / Editorial Sponsorship

One of the most exciting trends in education today is the enrichment of outside opportunities that add 'real world' experiences to the learning process. Whether it's 'behind the scenes' tours of theatre performances, author/storyteller visits to schools, or other educational events 'packaged' by independent sources, the integration with the wider world can be stimulating and motivating for students.

Apple has recognized its opportunity to be part of this trend. Apple has introduced the Apple Digital Campus Curriculum (ADCC) which teams the company with other industry leaders to provide career exploration and workforce development opportunities for those in school programs.

## Video Journalism uses curriculum partners

One of the most popular ADCC offerings is Video Journalism. Developed with Turner Learning (developers of CNN Student Bureau), and Moviola, an Apple-Certified Courseware Provider, this project-based curriculum features Apple's Final Cut Pro, the video editing software of choice for video professionals around the world.

Until 2002, the only ADCC Video Journalism course sites were in US high schools. That changed when Unionville High School, north east of Toronto, became the first Canadian school to participate. Two teachers spearheaded the project: Jeff Young, a 26-year veteran

and head of the drama department who also teaches a course called Visual Arts Computer; and Jerry Berridge, a former Unionville student (class of '89) who is an audio/visual technician and is becoming a registered teacher. Jerry teaches the Grade 11 Communications Technology course.

The odyssey began in the Spring of 2002, when the pair obtained a \$5000 Innovations Grant from the school board and some additional budget from their Principal. Jeff traveled to Miami in July, 2002 for 10 days of curriculum training. "We worked on the CNN way of doing things," says Jeff, referring to the CNN Student Bureau's role as a curriculum partner. "All of the practical work was tailor made around Final Cut Pro. We brought our own digital cameras, and went at it full-tilt boogie!"

## Teach kids how to watch the news

The pair found it challenging to try something brand new while devoting an entire semester to someone else's curriculum. Says Jerry: "One of our early observations was that we had to teach kids how to watch the news. They don't watch news like adults do."

Then an amazing transformation occurred. After the first assignment was completed, newsgathering became a very natural activity for the students. They were able to clearly articulate the power of the medium. "They all became broadcasters in a very short period of time, not just with the editing but also doing interviews, finding camera angles and things like that," confirms Jeff. One community reporting assignment sent students to investigate the impact of having a major urban high school across the street from a strip mall. Some of the businesses were friendly and helpful, but others felt threatened. "The kids had the experience of getting shut

down in the stores, of having their interviews refused. One store manager shut down the interview right in the middle. Debriefing and brainstorming was exciting after that project," says Jerry.

In one semester, the students were required to produce three video news spots, and a short public service announcement (PSA) for an animal shelter, as well as a public service announcement for charitable organization Street Kids International (SKI). They had to demonstrate creative ways to use cameras and software, reincorporate what they had learned and show skill in Final Cut Pro.

## Conference call with CNN once a month

In addition to the teacher training in Miami, Apple's curriculum package included a set of PDFs, representing documentation for 10 or 12 course units, and training videos from CNN. Also included was a conference call with CNN once a month on a particular topic, enabling the students to ask questions. A special secure Web site lets students chat with course participants at other locations, as well as post and review work.

"There have been many visitors to the program, coming from as far away as Kuwait," says Jeff. The consensus view is that ADCC Video Journalism has been a big success. With its global scope and technology foundation, Video Journalism has brought real world experience to learning at Unionville High School. ❤️

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