

Chico Unified School District

Policy Regarding Body Image and Shaming

AB 10 (Lowenthal, 2023) focuses on the connection between well-being and learning by encouraging all school districts in California to educate the school community about body shaming. The law defines body shaming as “the action or practice of mocking or stigmatizing a person by making critical comments or observations about the shape, size, or appearance of the person’s body.” Body shaming can contribute to hostile school environments, often coinciding with bullying, and is associated with long-term effects on mental health, including anxiety, depression, disordered eating, and suicidal thoughts. Body shaming is frequently linked to broader systems of bias and discrimination, including racism, and ableism (discrimination against people with disabilities). It can also intersect with sexual and gender-based harassment.

Purpose

This model policy is to guide the district in creating environments where all individuals feel safe, supported, respected, and valued. It aims to:

- Educate students and staff about body shaming and its effects.
- Promote respect for diverse body shapes, sizes, presentations, expressions, and appearances.
- Establish prevention and response procedures.
- Recommend promising practices for fostering body positivity and body neutrality.

Definition of Body Shaming

California Department of Education, in collaboration with Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) Youth Advisory and All Children Thrive-CA, have defined body shaming as:

The mocking, stigmatizing, or commenting on a person’s body or appearance, which is perceived as negative, whether it is someone else’s or one’s own, regardless of the intent. It includes opinions, comparisons, observations, or gestures that result in emotional or mental harm, and demeans, judges, or marginalizes an individual based on their body or physical appearance. It may occur verbally, nonverbally, or online on social media and other digital platforms, and can escalate into social aggression, bullying, sexual violence and harassment, and cyberbullying.

Body shaming often overlaps with, but is distinct from, bullying and sexual harassment. Bullying is unwanted, harmful behavior that involves a real or perceived

power imbalance. This behavior is typically repeated over time. While bullying consists of a power imbalance and repeated behavior, body shaming can occur in isolated incidents and without intent to harm, yet it can still cause significant harm. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature. This includes making comments about someone's body, appearance, clothing, or perceived sexual behavior.

Chico Unified School District will:

- Integrate and implement prevention efforts that promote a culture of belonging, inclusion, healthy relationships, and restorative practices.
- Address body shaming across school settings, including physical education, health classes, and dress code, utilizing trauma-informed approaches.
- Extend these practices to school-affiliated online activities.
- Share clear and confidential reporting mechanisms if body shaming occurs to ensure that accessible support systems are in place.
- Incorporate data collection and use findings to refine policies and practices.
- Support student-led initiatives that promote body positivity and peer support.
- Support family engagement opportunities, such as workshops and resources, to extend body-positive practices into the home.

Suggested Resources:

- [The Body Positive](#)
- [Verywell Mind: Body Positivity vs. Body Neutrality](#)
- [Cleveland Clinic: Body Positivity vs. Body Neutrality](#)
- [Butterfly Foundation](#)
- [Bullying Prevention Training & Resources](#)
- [StopBullying.gov: Preventing Weight-Based Bullying](#)
- [Self-Compassion by Kristin Neff: Join the Community Now](#)
- [Transformative SEL Conditions for Thriving](#)
- [CASEL \(Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning\) District Resource Center: Equity Resources for School Districts](#)
- [Bodywhys: Be Body Positive](#)
- [The Kids Mental Health Foundation: Body Image Resources](#)
- [Embrace Hub: Body Image and Appreciation Resources](#)
- [Health Powered Kids: Self-Esteem and Body Image Activities for Kids](#)
- [Be Real USA](#)
- [Teaching Expertise: 20 Positive Body Image Activities For Kids](#)
- [Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Talking to Your Children About Body Shaming](#)
- [How to Handle Body Shaming in School - A Guide for Parents](#)

- [Weight-based Teasing and Bullying in Children: How Parents Can Help](#) 

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/mh/bodyshaming.asp>

Palos Verdes Peninsula

Addressing Body Shaming in Our Schools

Body shaming can take many forms — from teasing about weight or height, to comments about clothing or appearance, to gestures or comparisons meant to shame. The aim of [California Education Code § 232.7 \(Assembly Bill 10\)](#) is to promote safer, more inclusive environments where all students feel respected and free from stigma. When students experience shame, exclusion, or negative comments about their bodies, it can impact their sense of belonging, mental health, and readiness to learn.

What Parents & Educators Should Know (Grades K–12)

For Parents & Guardians

Children and teens often internalize harmful messages about “ideal” bodies just by seeing or hearing comments — whether from peers, media, or sometimes even adults. Comments that may be intended as “harmless teasing” can still carry emotional weight and contribute to self-esteem issues, anxiety, or disordered eating. As caregivers, it's helpful to:

- Model body-neutral or positive language (e.g. focusing on what bodies do, not how they look).
- Open conversations with your child about media, social media, and how they feel about their body.
- Encourage critical thinking: when they see images or comments that body-shame, ask “Who made that message? What’s its purpose?”
- Reach out to school staff if your child is affected by body-shaming remarks or environments.

For Educators & School Staff

Schools are powerful in shaping how students see themselves and others. Educators can:

- Integrate lessons and classroom practices that foster body respect, media literacy, and inclusive language.
- Interrupt or address body-shaming comments — even when framed as jokes — rather than ignoring them.
- Use restorative practices rather than purely punitive discipline when harm occurs, so students feel heard and relationships can be repaired.
- Provide professional development around body image, bias (e.g. fatphobia, racism, ableism), and trauma-informed practices.
- Ensure that reporting mechanisms are accessible and confidential, and that support systems (counselors, peer groups) are in place.

By proactively addressing body shaming, we help cultivate a school climate where all students feel safer, more accepted, and more able to focus on learning.

Additional Resources can be found on the CDE website here: California Department of Education — Assembly Bill 10: Body Shaming Model Policy & Resources

[California Department of Education](#)