

What is beautiful?

Talking with teenagers about body image

EARCOS Teachers' Conference
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Monna McDiarmid and Michelle Vogel

Think about the story
of you and your body.

Express that as one phrase.



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Michelle Vogel
Learning Support Specialist
New International School of Thailand

Let's start at the very beginning.
(A very good place to start.)

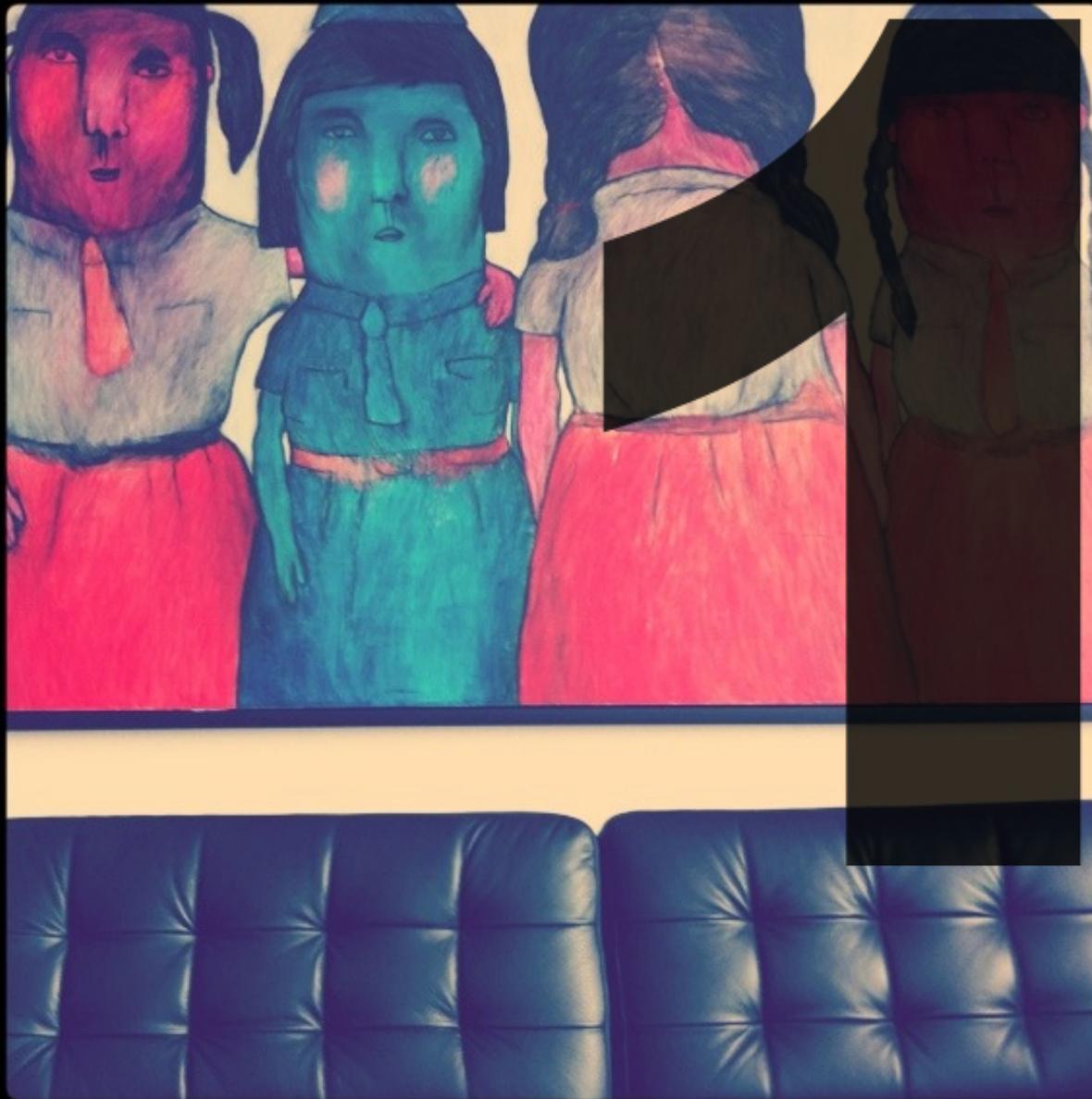


Children are hard wired for struggle when they get here. When we hold that perfect little baby in our hands, our job is not to say, “I need to keep her perfect.” Our job is to say “You are imperfect and you are wired for struggle and you are worthy of love and belonging.”

~ Dr. Brene Brown

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*“Ms. McDiarmid, how can I
feel good about myself?”*

We identified body image and confidence as the most urgent programming needs at our school.

Now we needed to plan a program.



You are not alone.

Even if you are the only counselor,
your school is filled with experts
and collaborators.

{You just have to ask them.}

Gather your team
(or, if you prefer...
your programming posse).

{Here's a secret.
2 heads are better than one...
and 6 heads are amazing!}



NIST High School Programming Team, 2010-2011
Joachim Ekstrom, Monna McDiarmid, Michelle Vogel,
Brenda Manfredi, Randy Wallis and Damien Pitter



Phase One:
The Educational Program

We needed to raise awareness
and talk honestly about developing
confidence & a healthy body image.

We needed to create opportunities for:

1. active learning
2. authentic participation

But how?

Kids hate to be lectured to.
{We're not wild about it either.}

Format:

- A provocative question to begin the session
- Presentation with interesting images
- Several YouTube videos including the Dove “Real Beauty” campaign
- Discussions in pairs, small groups and the whole group
- Sharing of personal stories (Michelle and Monna)

Logistics

- Time: 80 minute period
- We divided the year group into girls and boys; their sessions were slightly different
- Each group was made up of approximately 50 students and 2 or 3 facilitators
- We began with Grade 10 students and then worked with students in Grades 8, 9 and 11
- We continued to fine-tune the session each time we worked with a new group of students



Here's what we wanted students
to consider, (re)assess and get
(un)comfortable with...

i. Beauty as a construct

*Consider the following question
in your small groups...*

What are the 5 most important
characteristics in a friend?

How many of these
characteristics are about
bodies or appearance?

Not even the
models in these
ads actually look
like this!



ii. Health

We all want to be healthy, vital, & energetic. We want to live long lives.

A woman's health and weight is a private matter (between herself, her doctor and her family & close friends)

We must stop disguising our fear/hatred of fat people as concern for people's health

iii. Treating others with dignity

Weight is not a moral issue

And being fat (or thin) is
not a character flaw

SPEAK
SPEAK
SPEAK
UP
anti bullying campaign



No one should be teased for being different

Re-thinking our stereotypes of fat and thin people

Where did these ideas come from?

Why do we think it's okay to say stuff about fat people that we would never say about any other group?

iv. Rethinking the way we think
about ourselves and beauty

Do these pants make me look fat?
(How do others feel when you ask that question?)

Fat is not a feeling.



Don't believe everything you think.

What if you believed that
there was more than one way
to be attractive?



~ I am enough ~



When presenting, it's okay to tell kids
you are feeling scared or vulnerable.

(They know how that feels.)

For us, being vulnerable
drove the program.



Bye-bye Perfect
Hello Courage!



Monna's Story

What's the **worst** thing a person can say about a woman's appearance?

The f-word

{FAT}



Round girl

Reverse anorexia



DESSERT



Shame stories



Decide that you are beautiful. It doesn't make sense to live your life any other way.

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Michelle's Story

NOT GOOD ENOUGH!



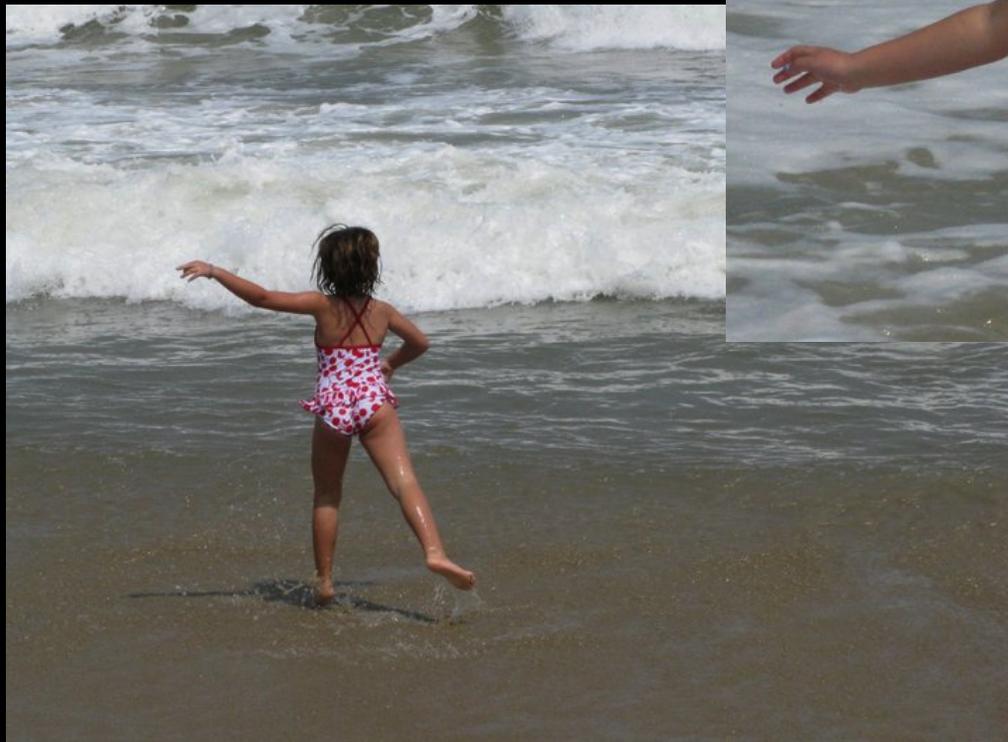


My Nightmare



Peace

Joy & Pleasure





Phase Two:
The “What is Beautiful” Campaign

We wanted to spread the message
that everyone is extraordinary
in their own way.

Sometimes the best program
is not a program at all!

Students and staff were invited
to a super power photo shoot.

{Thirty said YES!}

Join NIST's "What is Beautiful" campaign! Here's all you need to do:

- 1) Send a photo of yourself for your poster (at least 3000 px wide or high) OR have your photo taken in Room 4309 on Monday April 25 between 9 am and 3 pm.
- 2) Tell us what your superpower is, what quality in you is beautiful. This will be your poster's title. Ex. **Confidence** is beautiful.
- 3) Write a couple of sentences about your superpower or the quality that makes you beautiful. Ex. **"I trust in what I know and what I can do and in my ability to learn what I need to."**
- 4) EMAIL these three items to Ms. McDiarmid by Tuesday April 26.



What is Beautiful in you?















Damien created a short film using
the super power photographs +
the “What is beautiful” statements.

Amy Tachasirinugune



“Food is happiness.
I eat what I want when I want,
not fearing judgment.”

**NOT FEARING
JUDGEMENT**
is Beautiful.

“I have always been struck by those from all walks of life, who are passionate about things – everything from politics to ants! The key for me is to be able and willing to share your passion with others. This gives people insight into what makes the object of your passion worthwhile. Suddenly, you get to see a new beauty in something you used to think is mundane and dull – birds are birds, people are people after all. Go with someone who is passionate and you will see with new eyes. Passion awakes the sense of wonder and joy at being alive and its best when shared.”



Christopher Hines

PASSION is Beautiful.

Emily Chen



“I strive to pursue my dreams to make them a reality.”

DREAMING
BIG

is Beautiful.

“Some of my best memories have been with my younger sisters, despite our age, gender and size differences.”

Tim O’Leary



VALUING FAMILY is Beautiful.

Michelle Vogel



“I love the practice of yoga,
for there is no perfect pose;
each path is unique and
every step holds value.”

**FINDING JOY
IN THE MOMENT
is Beautiful.**

“I’m a complicated creature. I can be uptight sometimes
but I’m also kind and committed to helping others.
I know and accept myself.”

Monna McDiarmid



**SELF-
KNOWLEDGE** is Beautiful.

We recorded two of our seniors
singing and playing guitar for the
film's soundtrack

The Assembly

- Our admin gave us assembly time at the beginning of the school day
- Students entered the MPH and took a seat
- There was no introduction and no comments were made
- Students watched the film in silence and then went back to class

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We thought it would be cool
(yes, cool!)
to hang the “What is Beautiful”
posters in our MS/HS foyer

Teachers from the Art Department
gave us fantastic advice and support.

Kim found a local shop that would
frame the posters at a great price.

A few days later, the exhibit went up.



What is
Beautiful
in you?







Insert film