Body Quest: Food of the Warrior

A recent review of *Body Quest: Food of the Warrior* in the March, 2017 issue presented an unbalanced commentary. *Body Quest* is not a weight-focused curriculum, but the review consistently emphasized body size and weight-related stigma. This curriculum has absolutely no focus on weight as a direct measurement or outcome, nor is weight used as an explicit or implicit teaching construct.

Body Quest is an evidence-based, general nutrition education initiative focused on preventing childhood obesity through positive healthy eating behavior reinforcement. It is widely published in peer-reviewed journals, including JNEB, and has received much national recognition.

According to the review, "School-based healthy eating interventions can increase weight stigma with their focus on 'good foods,' 'bad foods,' and 'appropriate body sizes.'"¹ The review cited what was termed a "nuanced example" from an activity to create discussion around social norms related to snacking. The point of the activity is to help children understand social messages related to eating. *Body Quest* has

zero focus on good foods, bad foods, or appropriate body size. In fact, there is no mention of these issues in the Leader's Guide or any other supporting *Body Quest* materials.

The 7 *Body Quest* superheroes give children a standard to emulate. In keeping with the superhero theme, students sign a vow card to: (1) try new fruits and vegetables, (2) share what I learn with my family and friends, (3) learn to eat healthy foods every day, and (4) have fun on my quest. This vow does not "instill guilt," as stated in the review, but gives students positive goals.

The review states that asking children to be brave by trying new foods is instigating an "unneeded fear." Being brave is a continuation of the superhero theme. Ellyn Satter, whose work was referenced in the review, posits that children should have responsibility to choose what and how much to eat. *Body Quest* gives children the same important rights while building healthy eating skills.

Overall, the *Body Quest* developers believe the review was biased in its

focus on weight-related stigma. The Guidelines for Authors of Educational Material Reviews for JNEB advise potential reviewers to declare any conceptual conflict of interest or strong personal objection to the content before submitting a review. It is possible the reviewer's background in bariatric surgery settings does not align well with the content and may color her view of general nutrition education.

Sincerely,

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1. Ferdinands AR. *Body Quest: Food of the Warrior*. *J Nutr Educ Behav*. 2017;49:271.

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