Jennifer O’Dea is a Professor of Health Education and Nutrition Education at the University of Sydney. *Everybody’s different* (2007) is the culmination of O’Dea’s 25 years’ experience as a health educator, nutritionist, researcher and academic. The text is based on a trialled research program which improved self-esteem and body image in adolescent participants. O’Dea found that “the successful implementation of a self-esteem program alone can ward off the development of body image concerns and eating problems in young people, as well as provide a general protective mental health effect” (p. ix).

Using a mixture of case-studies, research findings, information, classroom activities and work sheets, *Everybody’s different* leads educators to a whole-school approach for promoting health in students. O’Dea details how to apply the self-esteem approach in primary and secondary schools to:

- Improve body image
- Prevent eating problems and childhood obesity
- Foster health, nutrition and physical activity in children and adolescents (p. ix)

This text achieves its aims. Each chapter provides definitions of the major concepts, presents clear research outcomes and summarises how to practically use the research. Although much has been written on the meaty topics of body image, self-esteem, puberty and weight issues, it is O’Dea’s ability to comprehensively connect all these topics into one resource which is a major strength of the book.

Although *Everybody’s different* is written for boys and girls, it can easily be adapted to the single-sex environment. The text is set in the Australian context and is clear in expression and sequence. O’Dea never preaches but feels free to state facts bluntly; “Many things make us who we are, not just how we look” (p. 14).

Of particular interest to educators in girls’ schools is the link between disordered eating, low self-esteem, and poor perceptions of body-image around the sensitive time of puberty in girls. O’Dea states that “weight gain in pubertal girls and boys is a natural consequence of growth…for every centimetre increase in height, a child or adolescent can expect to have an approximate correlating 0.5 to 1 kilogram increase in body weight” (p. 25). Adolescent girls “do not understand the link between height increase and weight increase and they mistakenly believe that any weight gain must be fat” (p. 25). Therefore the role of teachers “in allaying students’ body image concerns and fears is of paramount importance, as this is a crucial stage when dieting and disordered eating may be averted” (p. 26).

*Everybody’s different* was published in 2007. There are some parts of the text that are dated, particularly Chapter 5 on Media literacy for a positive body image. The rise of social media and smart phone technology has expanded rapidly since 2007; some examples from this chapter are irrelevant, however the fundamental principle of teaching girls to be media literate and critical consumers of the media, still apply. Likewise, some of the photocopiable work sheets seem outdated, with clip-art pictures and old examples. These ideas could easily be adapted to suit today’s educational context.
The only part of Everybody’s different which seemed to jar with the rest of the text were some of the ‘true story’ case studies. Examples of teachers labelling students as ‘fat’ in front of their friends, forcing students onto scales, and making one girl run until she has a severe asthma attack, seems ridiculous, even if the case studies are meant to serve an educational purpose.

O’Dea follows the principle of ‘First, do no harm’ (p. 36) when she discusses positive approaches to food and nutrition, and how to deal with weight issues and prevent child obesity. This is important reading for educators who are developing school based programs. Chapter 9 also tackles issues such as preparing teachers to undertake these programs, particularly if some educators are “personally susceptible to body image and eating problems themselves” (p. 279). This is an interesting and thorny matter that O’Dea raises and discusses comprehensively. Chapter 9 also covers the vital areas of prevention versus treatment, issues of referral, teacher attitudes, and the eating and exercise behaviour of school professionals as models.

Everybody’s different leaves no doubt about the benefits of positive body image and self-esteem in the girls in our schools. It is an important text that should have a place in every girls’ school. O’Dea strikes a good balance between theory, research and practical advice. Perhaps an updated version of this text would make it invaluable as an educational resource.