

OSD Dress Code Recommendations

Student dress codes should support equitable educational access and should not reinforce gender stereotypes. Student dress codes and administrative enforcement should not reinforce or increase marginalization or oppression of any group based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, household income, gender identity or cultural observance. This dress code is specifically intended to address recent and escalating controversy and conversation both in Olympia and across the nation about overreaching and detrimental dress codes for some K-12 school students.

Our values are:

- All students should be able to dress comfortably for school without fear of or actual unnecessary discipline or body shaming.
- All students and staff should understand that they are responsible for managing their own personal "distractions" without regulating individual students' clothing/self expression.
- Teachers can focus on teaching without the additional and often uncomfortable burden of dress code enforcement.
- Students should not face unnecessary barriers to school attendance.
- Reasons for conflict and inconsistent discipline should be minimized whenever possible.

I. GOALS OF A STUDENT DRESS CODE

A student dress code should accomplish several goals:

- Maintain a safe learning environment in classes where protective or supportive clothing is needed, such as chemistry/biology (eye or body protection), dance (bare feet, tights/leotards), or PE (athletic attire/shoes).
- Allow students to wear clothing of their choice that is comfortable.
- Allow students to wear clothing that expresses their self-identified gender.
- Allow students to wear religious attire without fear of discipline or discrimination.
- Prevent students from wearing clothing with offensive images or language, including profanity, hate speech, and pornography.
- Prevent students from wearing clothing with images or language depicting or advocating violence or the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Ensure that all students are treated equitably regardless of gender/gender identification, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, body type/size, religion, and personal style.

II. RECOMMENDED DRESS CODE POLICY

The primary responsibility for a student's attire resides with the student and parents or

guardians. The school district and individual schools are responsible for seeing that student attire does not interfere with the health or safety of any student, and that student attire does not contribute to a hostile or intimidating atmosphere for any student.

Students should be given the most choice possible in how they dress for school. Any restrictions must be necessary to support the overall educational goals of the school and must be explained within the dress code.

Districts should set the student dress code and enforcement policies for their entire district and take steps to ensure that all schools in the district adopt and follow it. Too often, individual schools create their own student dress codes and enforce them in different ways that result in inequities within districts and in many cases policies and enforcement that are not consistent with the law or the district's intent.

1. Basic Principle: Certain body parts must be covered for all students

Clothes must be worn in a way such that genitals, buttocks, and nipples are covered with opaque material. Cleavage should not have coverage requirements. All items listed in the “must wear” and “may wear” categories below must meet this basic principle.

2. Students Must Wear:*

- Shirt.
- Bottom: pants/sweatpants/shorts/skirt/dress/leggings
- Shoes; activity-specific shoes requirements are permitted (for example for sports)

* High-school courses that include attire as part of the curriculum (for example, professionalism, public speaking, and job readiness) may include assignment-specific dress. Similarly, courses at any level that require specific clothing to meet safety requirements, such as closed-toed shoes in wood or metal shop courses, may be enforced, but neither of these situations should focus on covering a student's body or promoting culturally-specific attire.

3. Students May Wear:

- Hats, including religious headwear
- Hoodie sweatshirts (over head is allowed)
- Fitted pants, including leggings, yoga pants and “skinny jeans”
- Midriff baring shirts
- Pajamas
- Ripped jeans, as long as underwear is not exposed.

- Tank tops, including spaghetti straps, halter tops, and “tube” (strapless) tops
- Athletic attire
- Clothing with commercial or athletic logos provided they do not violate Section 4 below.

4. Students Cannot Wear*:

- Violent language or images. • Images or language depicting drugs or alcohol (or any illegal item or activity) or the use of same.
- Hate speech, profanity, pornography.
- Images or language that creates a hostile or intimidating environment based on any protected class.
- Visible underwear. Visible waistbands or straps on undergarments worn under other clothing are not a violation.
- Bathing suits.
- Helmets or headgear that obscures the face (except as a religious observance)

*Gear and attire appropriate for participation in athletic activities can and should be worn for those activities.

III. INTENT

The intent behind the recommendations for the new dress code policy are as follows:

- To free administrators, educators, and staff to focus on their primary responsibility of student education without the additional burden of dress code enforcement which can be uncomfortable as well as undermining to rapport with students.
- To free all students to dress comfortably for school based on their personal style and self-identified gender without fear of unnecessary discipline, shame, and interruptions to their education.
- To free parents/guardians to make decisions with their children regarding student appearance and grooming.
- To provide a district-wide consistent, equitable, and fair policy that limits dress choice to only those situations where there is a unique safety hazard (e.g. science labs, wood shop, playgrounds, etc.), emotional well-being (e.g. hate speech, promotion of alcohol and drugs, violent images, pornography, etc.), and damage to school property (i.e. cleats).
- To create an environment where all students feel welcome and appreciated for who they are
- To ensure discipline for dress or grooming violations be consistent with discipline policies for similar minor violations and minimize interruptions to student education.

IV. TRAINING FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, & STUDENTS

A school dress code is most effective when school administrators and teachers are trained to understand and embrace the intent of the code, how to apply and enforce the code equitably, and how to talk about the dress code and the reasoning behind it.

- School administrators and teachers should be trained to understand the Intent of the code, the actual code, and how to enforce it with the least impact on student learning and self-confidence.
- School administrators and teachers must enforce the district dress code consistently, once it is adopted. School administration and staff should not have discretion to vary the requirements in ways that lead to discriminatory enforcement.
- School staff should be trained and able to use student/body-positive language to explain the code and to address code violations.

V. DRESS CODE ENFORCEMENT AT SCHOOLS

A school dress code is only as effective and fair as its enforcement. Historically school dress codes have been written and enforced in ways that disproportionately impact girls, students of color, and gender expansive students.

- Enforcement should be consistent with a school's overall discipline plan. Failure to comply with the student dress code should be enforced consistently with comparable behavior and conduct violations, including access to a student advocate or ombudsperson and appeals process.
- Enforcement for students in grades K-5 should be limited to safety and non-violence/non-discrimination and should not include messages predicated on body maturity or "professionalism."
- Violations should be treated as minor on the continuum of school rule violations.
- Students should never be removed from a classroom / lose class time solely as a result of a dress code violation; however, violations of the dress code that do not follow the Basic Principle in 1 above, are outside the bounds of what students must wear or include items under the Students Cannot Wear section may be removed from class. In these situations, administrators have discretion over how to rectify the situation with an emphasis on the student missing the least amount of learning time.
- Students should never be forced to wear extra school clothing (that isn't their own) when they are in violation of the code. That is akin to a dunce cap or scarlet letter. They can be

asked to put on their own onsite clothing, if available, to be dressed more to code. They may also be asked to turn shirts inside out if messages depict content that is disallowed under the “cannot wear” section.

- Students’ parents should never be called during the school day to bring alternative clothing for the student to wear for the remainder of the day.
- No student should be disproportionately affected by dress code enforcement because of gender, race, body size, or body maturity.
- The dress code should be clearly conveyed to students, not just in the student handbook which rarely gets read, but in other ways, too, such as posters, newsletters, etc.
- Students should not be shamed or required to display their body in front of others (students, parents, or staff) in school. “Shaming” includes but is not limited to kneeling or bending over to check attire fit, measuring straps or skirt length, asking students to account for their attire in the classroom, and directing students to correct a dress code violation during instructional time.

In order to ensure a dress code policy is equitably and consistently enforced, the committee recommends that the district should gather input of students, staff, and parents/guardians on the effectiveness of implementation after it has been in place for one school year. Further, the committee feels that in order to judge the effectiveness of and identify any ongoing issues with the policy, data should be collected on dress code violations dealt within the confines of the school as well as those issues rising to the level of an official discipline citation. This data could include school name, date of infraction, and type of infraction. If possible, the committee feels that it might also be helpful to include student sex/gender identity and race information if available.

VI. TEACHING ABOUT CONSENT, BIAS + SEXUAL HARASSMENT: A STEP BEYOND DRESS CODE

Schools have a role to play in setting clear anti harassment policies and in teaching curricula that promote positive messages about consent-only sexual activity. As part of this policy, the committee feels the district should include learning and discussion opportunities around the issues of consent, harassment, and bias for both staff and students. Many of the student behaviors that have traditionally been addressed with dress code policies would be better seen under the lens of consent, harassment or bias. Robust and comprehensive education on issues of consent, harassment, and bias would highlight that “no means no”, individual students are

responsible for their own actions, and consent is a must before/during any physical/sexual contact. This learning could either be part of this new dress code policy or as part of the district's health program. We believe education on consent, harassment, and bias would have added benefit to society by improving school, community, and workplace environments.

VII. RESOURCES FOR STAFF AND FAMILIES

Elementary Staff Teaching Resources

Teaching Tolerance, "I See You, You See Me: Body Image and Social Justice" K-2, 3-5 Lesson Plans

<https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/i-see-you-you-see-me-body-image-and-social-justice>

Huffington Post: "Teacher's Simple Chart Breaks Down the Idea of Consent for Kids"

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/explain-consent-to-kids_n_5bb4b5e1e4b0876eda99f4c9

Middle School Staff Teaching Resources

Tea and consent Video (2:49 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZwvrXVavnQ>

ADL, "Student Dress Codes, What's Fair?" Lesson Plan

<https://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/student-dress-codes-whats-fair>

High School Staff Teaching Resources

Tea and consent (2:49 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZwvrXVavnQ>

ADL, "Student Dress Codes, What's Fair?" Lesson Plan

<https://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/student-dress-codes-whats-fair>

Staff Resources

Teaching Tolerance: "Controlling the Student Body: Are Your Schools Dress Codes Doing More Harm Than Good?"

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2017/controlling-the-student-body>

ADL, "The Unspoken Message of Dress Codes: Uncovering Bias and Power"

<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/classroom-conversations/unspoken-messages-of-school-dress-codes-bias-power>

Family Resources

ADL, “Table Talk: Student Dress Codes”

<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk/whats-fair-and-unfair-about-student-dress-codes>

The Atlantic, “The Sexism of School Dress Codes”

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/10/school-dress-codes-are-problematic/410962/>