

# **Olympia School District**

## **Dress Code Committee Recommendations**

Presented to the School Board October 22, 2018

# Dress Code Intent

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.

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.

# Committee Intent:

- 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 rapport with students
- To free all students to dress comfortably based on their personal style and self-identified gender without fear of discipline, shame, and interruptions to their education
- To free parents/guardians to make personal decisions regarding student appearance
- To provide a district-wide, consistent, equitable, and fair policy that limits dress choice to situations where there is a unique safety hazard (e.g. science labs, woodshop, playgrounds, etc.), emotional well-being (e.g. hate speech, promotion of alcohol and drugs, violent images, pornography, etc.), and damage to school property (e.g. cleats)
- To create a safe environment where all students feel welcome and appreciated
- To ensure consistent discipline for dress code violations with policies for similar minor violations and to minimize interruptions to student education

# Our Values:

- 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.

# Goals of a Student Dress Code:

- 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

## **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 following “must wear” and “may wear” categories need to meet this basic principle.

# Students Must Wear:

- Shirt
- Bottoms (pants/sweatpants/shorts/skirt/dress/leggings)
- Shoes; activity-specific shoe requirements are permitted (e.g. athletics)

\* High-school courses that include attire as part of the curriculum (e.g. professionalism, public speaking, and job readiness) may include assignment-specific dress.

Similarly, courses requiring specific clothing for safety, such as closed-toed shoes in wood or metal shop courses, may be enforced.

# Students May Wear:

- Hats, including religious headwear (face must be visible)
- Hoodie sweatshirts - wearing hood is allowed (face must be visible)
- Fitted pants, including leggings, yoga pants and “skinny jeans”
- Midriff baring shirts
- Pajamas
- Ripped jeans, as long as no more than underwear’s waistband is visible
- Tank tops, including spaghetti straps, halter tops, and “tube” (strapless) tops
- Athletic attire
- Clothing with commercial or athletic logos provided they do not violate what students cannot wear



# 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
- Underwear worn as bottoms (visible waistbands or straps on undergarments are not a violation)
- Bathing suits
- Helmets or headgear that obscures the face (except as a religious observance)

\*Gear and attire appropriate for athletic activities should be worn.

# Training for School Staff

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 consistently enforce the dress code once 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.

# Implementation

As this dress code is more lenient than the current district guidelines, a violation involves partial nudity, hate speech, violent images, and/or promotion of drugs or alcohol. In any of these cases, it is imperative the offending student be removed from class out of consideration of the other students' wellbeing, comfort, and safety. Once a student is in compliance with the dress code (either by covering the item of clothing or changing), they may return to class.

Schools may choose to introduce the updated dress code to student populations as appropriate.