

Change Essential To New Dress Code

Staff Editorial

Just when you thought it wasn't possible, the dress code at Nation Ford High School has enraged students even more than last year. The 2016-17 student handbook has a new installment stating that no torn or tattered clothing can be worn during the school day. In the 2015-16 year, rips were permitted if they met the dress code standards (not past 4" above the knee or exposing undergarments). Students are furious, and some have decided to disregard the rule completely. The rule was put in place to avoid making adults uncomfortable with having to make a "judgement call" to tell if the holes met the 4 inch rule, according to Principal Jason Johns and Assistant Principal Pamela Pittman.

A main issue for the students about this new change is that administration changed the code on the *online version* of the Student Handbook in June but didn't send out any email or notification to the students that the dress code had been changed, nor was there any information on the school website homepage. After the students had already purchased school clothes that abide by last year's dress code, on the second day of school, administration called a school meeting and announced the change in dress code.

"We take ownership of that," said Mrs. Pittman, "After that second day we went on to tell people not to wear [the clothing violating dress code] and didn't charge people with violating dress code."

On the third day of school before first block, four students had already been assigned to attend In School Suspension for violating the dress code due to wearing ripped jeans.

According to the Student Handbook, "... [students will not dress in anything that] is not immodest or revealing and does not interfere with the educational process." Yet at a school pep rally (which was held during school hours), cheerleaders' uniforms were well above the 4 inches rule and can barely cover their matching under garments. Are these uniforms

considered "immodest" or is the violation of dress code justified for girls who are 'performing' for the school?

"The whole purpose of dress code, is to not spend time on dress code," said Mr. Johns. During an interview, Mr. Johns proposed the idea of enforcing a "no dress code" rule. This seems to be the most logical way to go about spending the "least amount of time possible" on the dress code issue. How is it possible to spend a minimal amount of time on a dress code that restricts most clothing that modern-day teenagers wear? Although he would like NFHS to run on such a policy, he says he is afraid that it would seem like the school is adapting an "anything goes" policy instead of a "no dress code."

Mrs. Pittman seems to have a different approach, "I just can't support that," she said. Both administrators

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believe that no policy at all would not work out because of the choices students would have to make for themselves, such as deciding what would be appropriate in a school setting.

In an article entitled "My School Doesn't Have a Dress Code-and it Works," published online by an online community for women sponsored by Time Inc. in October of 2015. "A popular argument in favor of dress codes is to allow students to focus solely on academics, without distraction of certain clothing. However, this is not how the real world works." The teenage authors of this article explain how their school ran without a dress code, and functioned well without issues. "Being in a classroom environment with all genders in all types of clothing, the guys learned to look

past external appearance and treat the girl in the crop top the same as their friend in basketball shorts. Best of all, they did it on their own."

Mr. Johns is proud to say that NFHS has adopted a "gender neutral" dress code, which technically is true. The Student Handbook does not have a dress code sectioned by gender, although the dress code seems to have an extensive list of banned clothing, and the majority is worn by females. A list of a few specifically targeted items consists of the following: clothing...should not expose midriff, no hair curlers or rollers, no cleavage, bare shoulders, exposed back or underarm area, halter tops, skorts or skirts that do not meet the 4" above the knee mark, tights, yoga pants, leggings, jeggings, and no sign of undergarments can be visible. In contrast, there are about four points made that seem to specifically target males. As a result, most students found to be violation of the dress code are females.

It is not right that females are automatically accused of being less likely to wear modest clothing when males get away with wearing whatever they please, for the most part. From the NFHS In School Suspension records, this year there have been 98 people thus far who have been admitted for dress code. Out of the 98 who were sent to ISS, only 24 of the students are males.

Toward the end of this school year in April, administration and student council will be holding a meeting together to discuss dress code and other controversial topics in the Student Handbook. Mr. Johns and Mrs. Pittman both agreed that they are open to change and are excited to see what the Student Council has to say.

Change is a must at NFHS and many other public schools across the country. Dress code is not only an inconvenience but it is a cultural issue. Even within a "gender neutral" dress code, the standards are not equal. The controversy will be an ongoing issue until the NFHS dress code is reasonable and enforced equally among all students.