Dress codes: a humble opinion

*by*[*The Prospect Staff*](http://www.theprospect.net/author/staff)*| on October 30, 2013*

[*http://www.theprospect.net/dress-codes-a-humble-opinion-9527*](http://www.theprospect.net/dress-codes-a-humble-opinion-9527)

The coming of a new school year often brings new attitudes, new perspectives, and new trends. It can also bring new rules. Recently, my school decided to start enforcing the dress code, a decision which, naturally, has generated a lot of controversy. We’ve always had one, but it was more of a formality than anything else; in fact, in my three and a half years of high school I’d never seen or heard of anyone being penalized for the way they were dresse…until, it seems, now.

Dress codes are one of those topics which seem to elicit knee-jerk reactions from people; those in positions of authority tend to wholeheartedly support them, while those that they target are equally against them. The common argument for dress codes tends to be that enacting standards of dress creates a more professional and ultimately more supportive environment for students, preparing them for the working world where there are high standards for the way employees dress. Now, this is a good idea in theory, but in practice does not work.

For one thing, dress codes tend to be unfairly biased against women and perpetuate the double standard prevalent in society that the amount of skin a woman shows is a reflection upon her character. Now, I don’t think crop tops and extremely short skirts are appropriate for a work environment, but neither are snapbacks and basketball shorts, which are both extremely popular clothing choices in my school. If a school were really interested in its students looking more professional, then dress codes would ban both types of attire. Yet, too often, girls in so-called “provocative” attire are unfairly targeted on the premises that their clothing is distracting. If showing skin is so distracting to boys, then why do we only place the blame on girls? Why do we make no effort whatsoever to teach boys not to objectify women and sexualize body parts that aren’t meant to be sexualized?

Dress codes also inhibit self-expression and creativity in students. People tend to take a lot of pride in how they dress, and restricting clothing choices also restricts individuality. Schools are supposed to be a safe haven for students to be able to express themselves without judgment as long as it is not hurting anyone else. If the administration enforces rules that so limit creative expression, what sort of message are they sending to students about tolerance and respect for others? Learning to respect other people’s life choices ultimately does much more to create a more cooperative learning environment than a set of arbitrary rules that determine what is and isn’t appropriate to wear.

I can understand school administrators’ desire to improve the environment in which students learn, and admire their efforts. However, I think they go about doing so the wrong way. If we really want to create a more learning-friendly  culture in schools, we need to be more inclusive rather than exclusive. Dress codes don’t put students on an equal playing field. It divides them.

Persuasive Writing Vocabulary

Op-ed:

Hook:

Thesis Statement:

Concessions Statement: