

THE TRIBAL TRIBUNE

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Liz Hipes // editorial cartoon

Distracting guidelines

Sleeves too narrow? Top too low? Shorts too short? If any of these fashion faux pas apply to you, you may be subjected to a dress code violation that involves a warning against further violations and being forced to wear a big, baggy, yellow t-shirt so as to cover the distracting outfit.

While yellow shirts certainly hide the clothing in question and very well may encourage the student to think more carefully when choosing an outfit, it's not-so-subtle shade of neon is in itself a distraction. Walking by someone in the dreaded and gaudy garment is like driving by a car accident: it's too hard to ignore, so staring and gawking ensues instead.

Obviously clothing that's too revealing or inappropriate for any other reason isn't acceptable in a school environment -- it's high school, not a Lil Wayne video. But if the goal is to eliminate distractions from learning, the yellow shirts seem a bit counter-intuitive. So how can a dress code be regulated in a fair, effective, and non-distracting way?

Well, as many other laws and legislatures are created and enacted, the dress code could be formed by a group of people and different aspects of the dress code could be voted on by said group until we have a dress code that's fair and agreeable.

In this instance, a council formed of students, teachers and administrators could meet together and discuss what they like and don't like about the present dress code policies and make changes to them until everyone is happy with the result.

For example, the fingertip length policy has been criticized for not taking into account the fact that one person's fingertip length appropriate shorts aren't the same as another person's due to varying lengths of arms, fingers, legs, and torsos, all of which create too much variability for this rule to be fair or effective. The complaints with inadequate or vague policies could be addressed and rectified so that clothing that is too short could be consistently and fairly called out while not relying on any test or measure with too many variables.

Then there's the matter of the yellow shirt. Again, inappropriate clothes don't have a place in a learning environment because they're distracting. However, covering said clothing up with a bigger, brighter distraction doesn't resolve the issue at all. An alternative solution that would eliminate the diversion caused by improper attire without creating another distraction would be to use school attire to replace the inappropriate article of clothing.

So if a student wore shorts that were too short, they could borrow a pair of Wando sweat-pants or longer shorts and return them the next day. If a top is too revealing or display anything obscene, that student could borrow a Wando t-shirt or sweatshirt with the same return policy. That way, the individual violating the dress code is in no way distracting to other students and wouldn't necessitate the drop off of alternate articles of clothing by a student's parent, who may have a hard time doing so with the current dress code due to work, distance or other factors.

Additionally, this council of students, teachers and administrators could establish a more concrete standard for what is and is not okay to wear and create a greater level of understanding among the three groups of the school's population for issues regarding the dress code, which hopefully would decrease the number of students that are involved in dress code violations as well as the number of instances each student has with the dress code.

While the specific examples could vary, the concept of giving students a bigger say in their school and allowing them to be more vocal in school policies in order to improve them is an idea that can be applied to multiple facets of the school environment and increase communication between different bodies of the high school population.

Editorial