

Dress codes inconsistent and unenforced



Me vs. the World
Annalise Bassett

Dress codes. Most people groan at the thought. I know I do. As annoying as dress codes can be, they are pretty important. Without

them, we would have people going around school with their pants sagging around their knees or wearing crop tops as short as sports bras. Unfortunately, our dress code is worded vaguely and often not enforced consistently. The majority of people follow dress codes very closely, while a few do not. Even a majority of the people I see breaking dress code are barely pushing it; they break it with shirts that only show stomach when they move against the dress code when the rips are above the knee.

Earlier this year, freshman Connor Bassett, my brother, wore a concert band t-shirt that had the sleeves cut off. That morning, our mom had asked if that was going to be okay with the dress code. I said "Of course," because we have never been told sleeveless shirts were inappropriate, as long as they were wide straps. During lunch, he told me he had been dress coded and had to change. He was told "boys don't wear tank tops." This, of course, is sexist and does not comply with what the dress code says.

"If you go into the planner, and you look at the dress code section, there is absolutely nothing that specifies that you cannot wear sleeveless [shirts]," said Bassett. "In the freshman orientation, it said you can't wear spaghetti straps, but it said you could wear lasagna straps." Although it may not say anything about boys wearing tank tops, the dress code does say that tight muscle shirts and 'bro tanks' are prohibited. My brother is not the most muscular guy, and the shirt was not remotely tight around his body. How are his shoulders less appropriate than girls', and why would it matter if arm muscles show?

Despite being dress coded himself, Bassett said he believes the dress code is most commonly unfair towards girls.

"For boys, I mean you can pretty much find any clothes really easily that will apply to the dress code, and there aren't even that many rules against boys. But, for girls, they have so many rules against spaghetti straps and stuff

like that. I think it's [ridiculous] because they don't have the same standards for each one," he said.

To be fair to our dress code, it is pretty lenient. In middle school, I remember getting dress coded for wearing a skirt that was not perfectly knee-length, although it covered everything and looked fine. How was an inch of my thigh inappropriate? I do not think it was. It was just a way for them to control us.

The dress code at FC only states "...shorts that are considered to be distracting or distasteful..." are restricted. But this wording is still vague and allows the dress code to be at the discretion of teachers and administrators. One administrator might find clothing above the knee distasteful, while another might not care as long as a student's underwear was not showing.

Such an issue came up at the end of August at Highland Hills Middle School (HHMS). Eighth grader Toby Bidlack went to school wearing a shirt that read, "Why be racist, sexist, homophobic, or transphobic when you could just be quiet?" This instance is complicated, but the girl was told the shirt could be distracting. Bidlack said she does not believe the dress code is fair, because the staff does not enforce everything equally.

"Teachers never enforce the dress code. Girls can come into school with their behinds hanging out of [their] shorts and crop tops."

While I agree that Bidlack's shirt could be distracting for some, "distracting" is, again, vague. Each and every staff member, and even most students, is going to have a different definition of "distracting."

Defining every part of a dress code would be difficult. School administrators could outlaw opinions on clothes altogether, but that takes away from our right to freedom of speech, which was established for students in the Supreme Court case *Tinker v. Des Moines*.

While it might be hard, FC, HHMS, and schools everywhere need to define dress codes more thoroughly and make sure they are equally enforcing the rules across the entire school population. As students, we should stand up for ourselves. If we think we are being unfairly dress coded, we should ask questions.

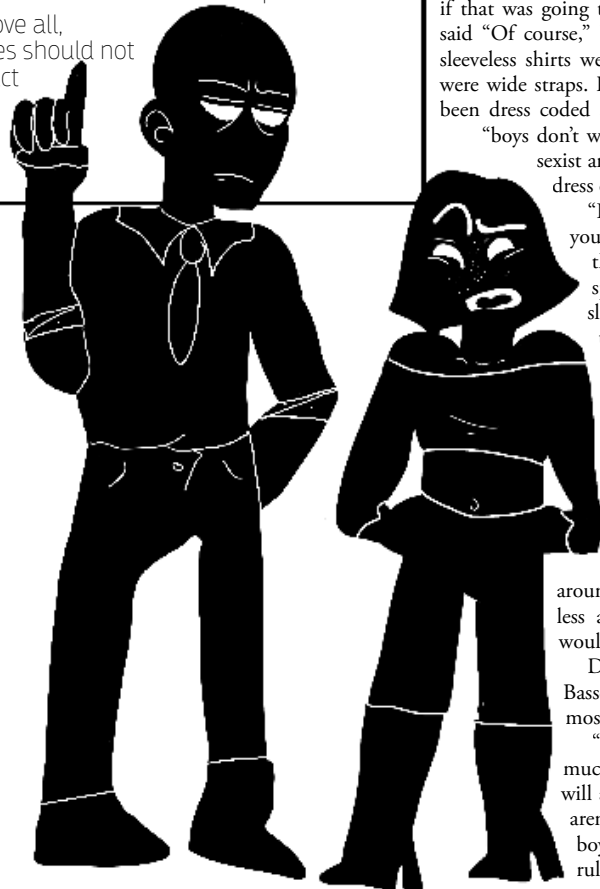
If they really do not want kids wearing crop tops, that is fine; just enforce it across the entire school. Define what length shorts and skirts should be instead of making it subjective, and enforce the rules between both genders.

Dress codes are necessary. We know this. But what is unnecessary is vague wording, unequal enforcement, and unfair rules.

Sam Haney / The Bagpiper

Top Dress Code Rules according to assistant principal Joe Voelker

1. No crop tops or spaghetti straps
2. Boys "shouldn't" wear tank tops
3. Above all, clothes should not distract



To vote on a poll for a change in dress code, go to [@FCHSBagpiper](https://twitter.com/FCHSBagpiper) on [Twitter.com/FCHSBagpiper](https://twitter.com/FCHSBagpiper).