



ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINE

Title: Safe Schools: Appropriate Dress Expectations

Effective Date: July 13, 2001

Responsibility: Superintendent of
Program and Schools

1.0 RATIONALE

Under the *Safe Schools Act, 2000*, sub-section 302 (5), the Minister of Education issued a memo dated February 12, 2001 entitled “School Board Appropriate Dress Policies”. This Administrative Guideline outlines the following components to be addressed by schools:

- 1.1 a process that enables a majority of parents, through their school councils, to decide on what an appropriate dress policy should be for their own schools;
- 1.2 a requirement that school councils be involved in the development and implementation of the process;
- 1.3 a statement of principles upon which the policy is based (e.g., working towards safer and more respectful learning and teaching environments;
- 1.4 consistency with the Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (e.g., disability, religious beliefs);
- 1.5 an explanation for any term used (i.e., appropriate dress, dress code or school uniform);
- 1.6 expectations for student compliance with appropriate dress, dress code or school uniforms;
- 1.7 a process to address issues of affordability; and
- 1.8 a review/monitoring process for school level policies (e.g., frequency and effective date) which shall involve consultation with pupils, teachers, staff, volunteers working in the schools, parents and guardians, school councils and the public.

The Near North District School Board supports its schools in their expectations of appropriate student dress. This guideline provides a process by which parents can decide on an appropriate dress policy for students to support safer and more respectful learning and teaching environments. The definition of “majority of parents” should differ when addressing general appropriate dress expectations as opposed to addressing the question of school uniforms. Students are expected to comply with the school-based dress policies. Consequences for non-compliance with the school’s dress policy may vary in degree up to and including suspension.

2.0 PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Students have the right to learn in a safe and respectful environment.
- 2.2 Teachers and other staff members have the right to work in a safe and respectful environment.
- 2.3 An appropriate dress policy is most successful where parents have been extensively involved and active in the decision-making process.
- 2.4 Parents need to be involved in the decision-making process through their school councils who shall facilitate parental input on the development and implementation of appropriate dress policies.
- 2.5 Each school operates in a unique environment and with different community expectations and needs; however, there are common elements of appropriate dress that can be addressed board-wide.
- 2.6 Each school is expected to follow the Board's decision-making process outlined in this guideline.
- 2.7 The principal and school council shall consider the level of support among intermediate and senior students and implications for staff when addressing the question of school uniforms or other significant changes to the dress code.
- 2.8 Each teacher shall assist in developing co-operation and co-ordination of efforts among the members of the staff of the school in support of, and adherence to, the school's Dress Code.
- 2.9 Each student shall comply with Board and school dress expectations.
- 2.10 Provisions will be made for exceptions to the dress expectations in instances where the policies infringe upon religious beliefs, create problems for people with disabilities, or violate any other special circumstances covered by the Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

3.1 Appropriate dress -

The following board-wide expectations shall be included in each school Dress Code subject to the mitigating factors that follow the list:

- a) tops and bottoms must overlap;
- b) no underwear should be showing;
- c) no hats or bandanas are to be worn in school;
- d) no inappropriate messages (e.g., beer promotions, sexual innuendo or comments, references to drugs) are appropriate on articles of clothing or visible as tattoos;
- e) see-through clothing or clothing cutouts are not appropriate;
- f) bathing suits are not appropriate for the regular school day;
- g) backless outfits, spaghetti straps, muscle shirts and tank tops are not acceptable;
- h) shorts and skirts must meet the "fingertip test" (i.e., with arms straight down at the sides); and
- i) accessories and jewelry cannot be distracting or perceived as weapons;

The mitigating factors at the school include:

- The board-wide expectations may be amended/edited at the individual school by a majority vote of the School Council.
- The Principal may waive a particular board-wide expectation for special events such as “Spirit Days”.

Each school policy will include a definition of appropriate dress and will include the following components in the definition:

- School community expectations about what is appropriate,
- Reference to an annual report by the principal and school council to parents about the dress expectations,
- Right of the principal to interpret and apply school community expectations and standards relating to dress,
- General types of unacceptable messages on clothing,
- Acceptable presentation of clothing (e.g., no hats in school), and
- Safety issues presented by accessories (e.g., dangling jewelry items).

3.2 Majority of parents –

“Majority” will be 50% plus one of all parents who have children registered at the school, unless consideration is being given to a significant change in the dress code (e.g., a move to school uniforms) in which case the majority will be 66% of eligible families who have children registered at the school.

3.3 Sufficient interest -

This level of engagement will be determined by school council after consulting as per the process in part A below.

4.0 PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT/IMPLEMENTATION OF DRESS CODES

All schools have expectations of appropriate student dress. These expectations must be reviewed to ensure that they address the components outlined in the “Rationale” above. The following process will be used when the school is giving consideration to a significant change in the dress code or when a formal dress code is being considered.

- 4.1 The school council must determine if there is an interest in pursuing the issue through communication with parents, students, staff and the school community. This may be done through surveys, discussions, forums or other appropriate means. The School Council may decide that surveys or other appropriate means of communicating with the stakeholders would only be used if the Council itself raises the issue or if an individual or group raises the issue of school uniforms.
- 4.2 If the school council deems that there is not sufficient interest, no further action will be taken during that school year.
- 4.3 If the school council determines that there is sufficient interest, the process to be followed will address the components of the Rationale and Principles outlined in this guideline (above) and will specify timelines for action. Those timelines will identify how and when actions will address the preparation of information packages for families, the method to be used for voting (e.g., one vote per eligible family i.e., having one or more children registered at the school), the collection of feedback information, the presentation of the feedback at a school council

meeting, the decision of the school council, and the reporting of the decision to the school community.

- 4.4 If the feedback on a proposal for a significant change to the school dress code (including a proposal for school uniforms) results in a school council decision that there is not sufficient interest in implementing the proposal (i.e., less than 66% of families with children enrolled at the school), the issue will not be considered again for a period of two years.

5.0 PROCESS TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF AFFORDABILITY

School councils must address the issue of affordability in their dress codes in a manner appropriate to the school community.

6.0 REVIEW/MONITORING PROCESS

- 6.1 The Board will review its guideline on appropriate dress once every three years beginning the cycle in June 2001.
- 6.2 Each school will review its policy on appropriate dress regularly and will provide information about its dress policy at least annually to parents and students.
- 6.3 Consultations at the Board and school levels will involve opportunities for input from pupils, teachers, staff, volunteers, parents and guardians, school councils and the public.

Consultations may take various forms including, but not limited to, school council forums, school council meetings, surveys, meetings with stakeholders, electronic conferencing or teleconferences.