

**GENDER EQUITY FOR ALL**  
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# **SEXIST DRESS CODES**

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# SEXIST DRESS CODES BY VEDAHARSHITA KOLIPAKULA



## MY SHOULDERS ARE NOT THEIR PROBLEM.

*Or, the Issue with Sexist Dress Codes.*

School is supposed to be an institution for educating children, but it is blatantly apparent that many schools hold wrong intentions regarding what is truly important. There seems to be an unnecessary obsession in terms of what students, but more specifically, feminine and LGBTQIA+ individuals choose to wear to school. While some regulations, such as intolerance to swimwear, pajamas, etc. are reasonable, some rules are taken too far and create room for doubt. Are a girl's shoulders really "revealing" or "distracting"? Or are the feminine individuals objectified and taken to be merely flesh and skin, rather than the complex and capable individual they are? Are "doo rags"—usually referred to in racist terms—genuinely a distraction to students, or are schools just blatantly racist toward people of color? The truth is that the school system has had both past and present tendencies to enforce unnecessary regulations that target minorities of various genders, races, and ethnic backgrounds.

The impacts of being dress coded are not confined to wearing embarrassing sweatpants or shirts that read "Dress for Success," or any other type of catchphrase indicated to create a sense of shame within an individual. Dress coding proves to be incredibly contradictory and ironic towards its purpose of "enforcing success within the classroom."

By being dress-coded, an individual is forced to miss class, and will have to waste extensive periods changing their “inappropriate” clothing to school-issued clothing intended to be more “modest.” By doing this, school dress codes are doing the opposite of their objective: diminishing the ability of students to learn in an area where the main goal is to allow individuals to do exactly that.

So what can we, as feminine individuals and minorities do to combat this issue? There are multiple things you can do to ensure that your situation is fair. One step to be taken is to know your rights. As students, we can become feeble when faced with administration, teachers, and staff members who seem to have more power. However, we must remain confident and remember that we are just as human as them – we deserve to feel secure within our skin.

## **WHAT TO DO ABOUT BEING DRESS-CODED?**

If dress coded, students can take several steps to rise against the injustice they face. The first step is to remember to stay calm and respectful and build a professional character while talking with administrators. Otherwise, you risk losing their attention and the conversation may quickly turn aggressive and unproductive.

Secondly, ask the staff member which section of the dress code you are in violation of. Keep a record of their response, any questionable remarks, and any class time missed. If you feel that you have been discriminated against, appeal to the staff member's supervisor, and involve anyone you feel may be of assistance. This could include your parents or any friends that have faced similar injustices.

The bottom line: school dress codes are often sexist, racist, and classist in ways that take away from educational equity. We're fighting to change this, and you can take action with us here if you witness gender discrimination through dress codes in your school/district.