October 2015

Dress
Code

truthfully

Verdadera

Editor-In-Chief's Note

On our topic, censorship, and submissions quotas

Dear readers,

We would first like to thank those of you who picked up a copy of our September issue, submitted an experience or opinion, and/or supported us through social media. Our goal this month is to broaden Verdadera's relevance further than the walls of Monta Vista.

As we were sitting around a table fanning ourselves with paper plates and sipping ice water at our October topic meeting, a few people brought up the fact that we could get dress coded at school for dressing for the weather. We tossed a few hypothetical outfits and complaints around, and watched a few youtube videos. We understand Monta Vista is far from sending a six-year-old home for wearing a skirt that doesn't cover her knees, we decided dress code was a valid topic for discussion, figuring it wouldn't be hard to find people with something to say about it.

Speaking of our content-obtaining process, while we were confident we would get submissions, it is a general practice that each staff member solicit a minimum of two as part of their job requirements. In past years, Verdadera was sometimes unable to publish and eventually went out of print because of a lack of submissions; this requirement, along with online submissions forms, were intended to prevent this. This week, we received a rather angry complaint about this requirement, asserting that "forcing" people to write submissions took away from the authenticity of our submissions. We appreciate feedback from our readers and have taken this seriously. From now on, all Verdadera staff will have no submissions quota; they will instead be required to take appropriate action to ensure that those who are willing to write for Verdadera have the resources to do so. This means you will be seeing quite a few posts on social media as we try to reach out to as many people as possible.

Another comment that came up during our meeting was censorship. In our September issue, we included the word "s**t-talking" in one of our submissions - not because we don't pay attention to what we publish, but because we believed taking it out meant taking away part of a student's voice - which Verdadera promises to *give* in our mission statement. However, since we are a school publication and want to invite any and all audiences, we will replace middle letters with asterisks, as seen above.

Please note that while our staff members have individual opinions, the publication itself will remain neutral. Every side of the argument is included; we are, after all, predominantly a platform for all voices. Thank you for reading and let us know what you think through email or one of our November submission forms.

Thank you,
Gloria Zhao & May Cui

P.S. Please do not try to guess who wrote which submission.

Monta Vista's Current Dress Code*

Although district Board Policy and Administrative Regulations subscribe to the philosophy that grooming and style of dress is primarily a matter between the student and parent, Monta Vista, does have both mandatory and discretionary guidelines. The following mandatory guidelines are enforced at school and at school events. Students may not go shoeless, wear gang-related clothing, colors or symbols, display vulgar or obscene images, languages or symbols, or display references to drugs, alcohol, or tobacco. Spikes and excessive metal clothing are not allowed.

Discretionary guidelines are to advise students and parents of modes of dress that may be considered a distraction to learning. If a staff member believes a student's mode of dress is a distraction to learning, students may be directed not to dress this way in the future, or be asked to cover up with another article of clothing. To ensure their dress is appropriate for school, students should avoid exposure of extensive areas of midriff, backless, strapless, or low cut tops, muscle shirts, extremely short skirts or shorts, and pants worn so low that underwear is visible. Students may be sent home to change.

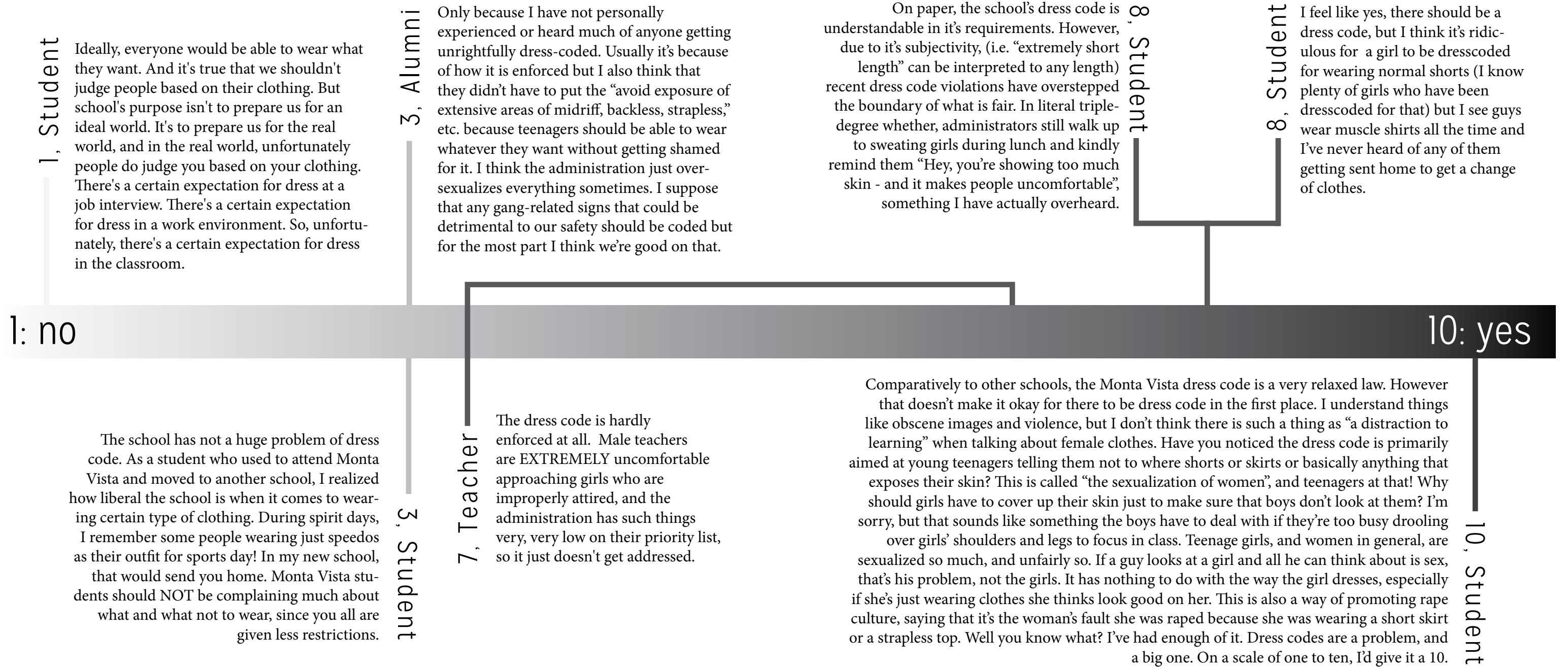*as written in the Student Planner

Further Resources

"Dress Code Sexism" by Laci Green (Youtube)
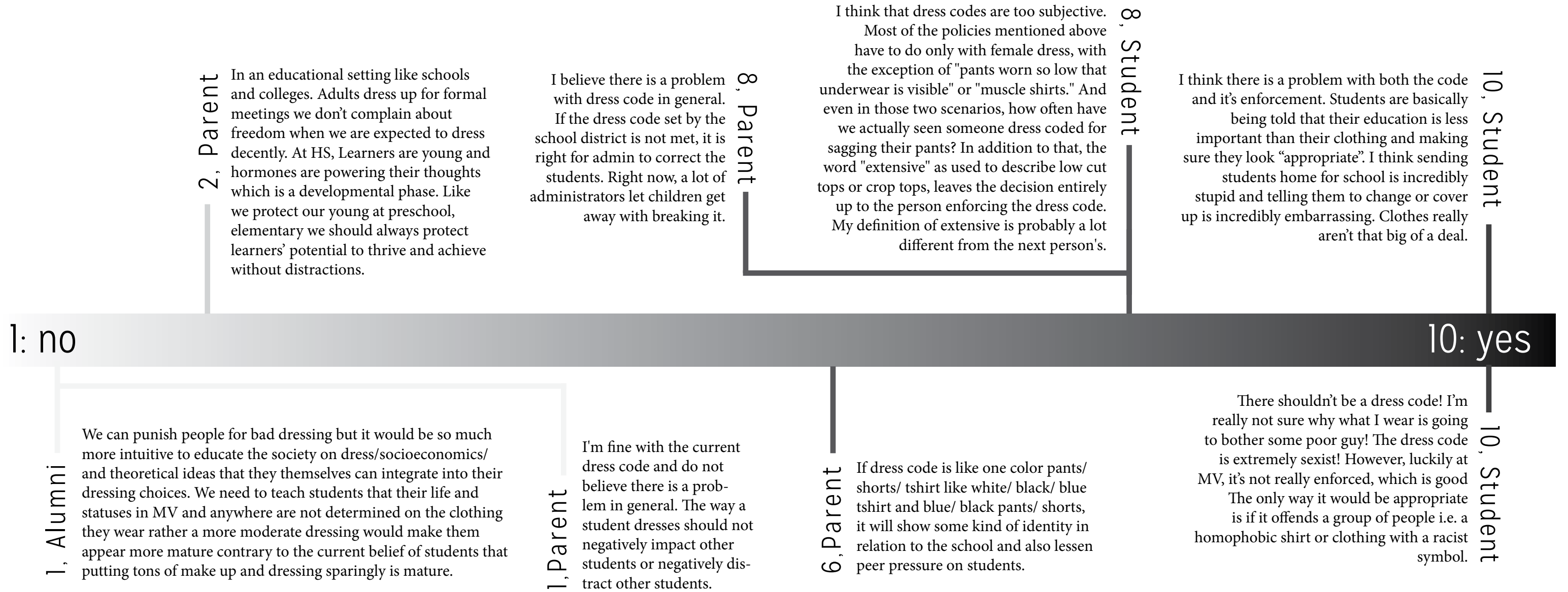*"Dress Codes in Schools"* by Jill Hamilton.
"School Dress Codes" by Bárbara Cruz
"Society's Child: Identity, Clothing, and Style" by Ruth. P. Rubinstein
"Dress Code and Uniform Policy (a Look at Current and Present Trends)" by William III

1, Student

Ideally, everyone would be able to wear what they want. And it's true that we shouldn't judge people based on their clothing. But school's purpose isn't to prepare us for an ideal world. It's to prepare us for the real world, and in the real world, unfortunately people do judge you based on your clothing. There's a certain expectation for dress at a job interview. There's a certain expectation for dress in a work environment. So, unfortunately, there's a certain expectation for dress in the classroom.

3, Alumni

Only because I have not personally experienced or heard much of anyone getting unrightfully dress-coded. Usually it's because of how it is enforced but I also think that they didn't have to put the "avoid exposure of extensive areas of midriff, backless, strapless," etc. because teenagers should be able to wear whatever they want without getting shamed for it. I think the administration just over-sexualizes everything sometimes. I suppose that any gang-related signs that could be detrimental to our safety should be coded but for the most part I think we're good on that.

8, Student

On paper, the school's dress code is understandable in it's requirements. However, due to it's subjectivity, (i.e. "extremely short length" can be interpreted to any length) recent dress code violations have overstepped the boundary of what is fair. In literal triple-degree whether, administrators still walk up to sweating girls during lunch and kindly remind them "Hey, you're showing too much skin - and it makes people uncomfortable", something I have actually overheard.

8, Student

I feel like yes, there should be a dress code, but I think it's ridiculous for a girl to be dresscoded for wearing normal shorts (I know plenty of girls who have been dresscoded for that) but I see guys wear muscle shirts all the time and I've never heard of any of them getting sent home to get a change of clothes.

1: no   **10: yes**

3, Student

The school has not a huge problem of dress code. As a student who used to attend Monta Vista and moved to another school, I realized how liberal the school is when it comes to wearing certain type of clothing. During spirit days, I remember some people wearing just speedos as their outfit for sports day! In my new school, that would send you home. Monta Vista students should NOT be complaining much about what and what not to wear, since you all are given less restrictions.

7, Teacher

The dress code is hardly enforced at all. Male teachers are EXTREMELY uncomfortable approaching girls who are improperly attired, and the administration has such things very, very low on their priority list, so it just doesn't get addressed.

10, Student

Comparatively to other schools, the Monta Vista dress code is a very relaxed law. However that doesn't make it okay for there to be dress code in the first place. I understand things like obscene images and violence, but I don't think there is such a thing as "a distraction to learning" when talking about female clothes. Have you noticed the dress code is primarily aimed at young teenagers telling them not to where shorts or skirts or basically anything that exposes their skin? This is called "the sexualization of women", and teenagers at that! Why should girls have to cover up their skin just to make sure that boys don't look at them? I'm sorry, but that sounds like something the boys have to deal with if they're too busy drooling over girls' shoulders and legs to focus in class. Teenage girls, and women in general, are sexualized so much, and unfairly so. If a guy looks at a girl and all he can think about is sex, that's his problem, not the girls. It has nothing to do with the way the girl dresses, especially if she's just wearing clothes she thinks look good on her. This is also a way of promoting rape culture, saying that it's the woman's fault she was raped because she was wearing a short skirt or a strapless top. Well you know what? I've had enough of it. Dress codes are a problem, and a big one. On a scale of one to ten, I'd give it a 10.

Is there a problem with Monta Vista's dress code?

2, Parent

In an educational setting like schools and colleges. Adults dress up for formal meetings we don't complain about freedom when we are expected to dress decently. At HS, Learners are young and hormones are powering their thoughts which is a developmental phase. Like we protect our young at preschool, elementary we should always protect learners' potential to thrive and achieve without distractions.

8, Parent

I believe there is a problem with dress code in general. If the dress code set by the school district is not met, it is right for admin to correct the students. Right now, a lot of administrators let children get away with breaking it.

8, Student

I think that dress codes are too subjective. Most of the policies mentioned above have to do only with female dress, with the exception of "pants worn so low that underwear is visible" or "muscle shirts." And even in those two scenarios, how often have we actually seen someone dress coded for sagging their pants? In addition to that, the word "extensive" as used to describe low cut tops or crop tops, leaves the decision entirely up to the person enforcing the dress code. My definition of extensive is probably a lot different from the next person's.

10, Student

I think there is a problem with both the code and it's enforcement. Students are basically being told that their education is less important than their clothing and making sure they look "appropriate". I think sending students home for school is incredibly stupid and telling them to change or cover up is incredibly embarrassing. Clothes really aren't that big of a deal.

1: no   **10: yes**

1, Alumni

We can punish people for bad dressing but it would be so much more intuitive to educate the society on dress/socioeconomics/ and theoretical ideas that they themselves can integrate into their dressing choices. We need to teach students that their life and statuses in MV and anywhere are not determined on the clothing they wear rather a more moderate dressing would make them appear more mature contrary to the current belief of students that putting tons of make up and dressing sparingly is mature.

1, Parent

I'm fine with the current dress code and do not believe there is a problem in general. The way a student dresses should not negatively impact other students or negatively distract other students.

6, Parent

If dress code is like one color pants/ shorts/ tshirt like white/ black/ blue tshirt and blue/ black pants/ shorts, it will show some kind of identity in relation to the school and also lessen peer pressure on students.

10, Student

There shouldn't be a dress code! I'm really not sure why what I wear is going to bother some poor guy! The dress code is extremely sexist! However, luckily at MV, it's not really enforced, which is good The only way it would be appropriate is if it offends a group of people i.e. a homophobic shirt or clothing with a racist symbol.

Is there a problem with having a dress code in general?

Same Dress, Different Reactions*
Student

My friend got told to cover up when she was wearing a strapless dress. Nothing was really showing and her dress was completely fine but she had to wear a cardigan. I decided to wear the same type of dress the next day to see if the same thing would happen to me, but it didn't. I even met up with my counselor and he said nothing about it. If anything, my dress was less "appropriate" than my friends. I believe the reason she got dress coded was because she has a lot of cleavage and showing a lot is apparently horrible.

Parent

The first time I asked, my son said there is no dress code at MV. At the high school where I teach, we have dress code battles throughout the year, but usually in the hot weather when the girls like to cover as little skin as possible. A year later, when I found out MV hade one, I asked my son about the dress code, he said "I guess there is one, but no one seems to enforce it."

Parent

The dresscode is not enforced, there doesn't seem to be any consequence for not following dress code. My child sees others wearing non-dress code outfits and feels it is okay to wear. It's a struggle at home for not allowing kids to wear certain clothes at school. If school enforced strict dress code it would eliminate family stress in this matter to a great extent.

"The way that people dress makes them part of an army, dressed in their own uniform, determined to do something."

Eight Years Ago...*
Alumni

In my freshman year on the second day of school, I picked out a denim skirt to wear which I had just bought, and a tank top. I was walking to one of my classes when a male staff member stopped me, and told me that my outfit was both inappropriate and distracting to other students. I missed two class periods, when the office refused to let me go to my classes until I had changed, and my mom was in a meeting and could not drop of a change of clothes until an hour later.

Even though it was almost 8 years ago, I still remember how embarrassed and ashamed I felt, and I don't think I will ever understand why it's okay for a grown man to tell a teenage girl she has to miss class because what she's wearing is inappropriate.

The Muscle Tank*
Student

A boy in my class was wearing a muscle tank top for the Welcome Back Rally, which not only broke the dress codes since it was not "following mandatory guidelines...enforced at school and school events" (Monta Vista High School Planner, 15), but also exposed his entire torso and chest (I am talking extreme sideboob to the point where it would be no different if he wasn't even wearing a shirt).

I found it unfair that he did not get dress coded for wearing the tank top, as it exposed "extensive areas of midriff" (15). When he went up to the teacher to ask a question, nothing happened. If the student was a girl wearing the same clothing, even with a bra underneath, she would have been asked to change right away, because its "a distraction to learning". I feel like either the dress code needs some changes or both girls and boys needed to be looked at equally for dress code violations. Yes, I agree, some girls do wear clothing that exposes a but too much, but so do boys, and I have yet to hear a boy getting dress coded in my two years at Monta Vista, but girls are getting dress coded all the time. How can "pants worn so low that underwear is visible" (15) and over exposed chests and torsos be allowed, but wearing halter tops, exposing the upper back only, be prohibited? I don't see a fair treatment here, and something needs to be changed right away.

Student

For a rally I wore my Bull Spirit shirt that I cut into a muscle tank. My sports bra was showing a little bit through the side, and an admin called me over to tell me I had a "nice and inappropriate bra" showing. Also I've been coded for wearing shorts and halter tops because they're "too revealing".

Student

Nothing really is censored unless it has to do with drugs. I don't get it, how is wearing clothes with weed on it worse than a person coming to school half naked? COME ON MV STAFF, just let us wear what we want to wear.

"I dress how I feel. I just go off emotion. I can't prepare my outfit a day before. Everything I wear is spontaneous"

"Wearing the correct dress to any occassion is a matter of good manners"

*titles are created by the Verdadera team

Student

My friend told me about this one time that she wore a regular pair of shorts and an admin came and warned her about what she was wearing because "a lot of leg was showing".

Student

I saw a student dressed in a really see-through top, and since we share a bunch of classes, I noticed a bunch of people staring at her. While it had no harm, it could've been a potentially dangerous situation. The way people looked at her was not a look of respect. It was materialization. And I don't think that it was their fault...

Moving Ideas*
Student from Another School

As a freshman who attended Monta Vista (but now moved), I experienced some instances where others were dress coded. Personally, I have never been dress coded but people who wore too short shorts, or skirts were the ones that got caught.

My opinion is that if people decide to wear certain clothes to school, let them. If their parents let them walk out of the house with that clothing, it must've been appropriate enough, or at least monitored. My opinion is that students should have all parts of the body covered, that may be distracting in any way. Countless number of girls have been dress coded at dances, which is a little bit offensive. It takes time and effort and also self-confidence for a girl to get a dress that suits them and wear it to a dance, so if there are authorities that constantly tamper with that freedom, it is highly unfair. Students should be given a chance or a warning before being dress coded.

As a teenager, I learn from my mistakes and believe that my peers do too. Dress coding should be less looked at and more liberal since it's an individual's choice. Of course students should follow the rules made by the staff, but this should NOT be a big deal on campus. Monta Vista is a very racially common school, I'm sure many people agree but don't state it so blatantly. Monta Vista is mostly Asians and Indians, with a few other races too (which are also significant, don't get me wrong!) but the chances for our school to have a major problem in dress coding is highly unlikely. This school is very academically competitive, so the chances of students caring more about how they are presented is less likely, but then again this is all MY opinion, so I'm sure there are other ways people look at it.

*titles are created by the Verdadera team

Student

In ninth grade, last year I came into high school thinking life was going to be like all the movies I've watched about high school. I thought people would judge me if I didn't dress a certain way. I used to really dress up and put a lot of time into my make up and outfit. I guess it just seemed really important, like I wouldn't be the person I am without my costume. I was only trying to dress like the other girls, not trying to stick out or anything. But one day, a teacher called me out. I felt horrible. I've never felt stung so deep, like I was really ashamed. I tried to laugh it off and curse about how stupid the teacher was. But deep down, I felt like I wasn't myself anymore, like I didn't like me.

More Parent Opinions...

What I have observed in and around Monta vista is the fact that if there is a dress code, it is not being practiced by the students and also I get the impression that the school is not enforcing it strongly. Girls are wearing shorts that exposes their legs too much , dresses that are too short and it is prevalent everywhere. I have not seen anyone do anything about it in the past years and in the present. I have seen girls caked up with make up and dresses that would be representative of a runway model rather than a serious high school student.

I have difficulty with my daughter with the dress code. Can you have the dress code made into a skit that is funny and presented via video during announcement time to the whole student body?

In an educational setting like schools and colleges dress code is necessary. Adults dress up for formal meetings but don't complain about freedom when we are expected to dress decently. At HS, Learners are young and hormones are powering their thoughts which is a developmental phase. Like we protect our young at preschool, elementary we should always protect learners' potential to thrive and achieve without distractions.

Also it is not just parent and child issue. When we need to build or buy things for school and the learners, all three entities -parents school students work together don't we? Students dress decently at home and come to school to change into provoking style. Therefore it is important that school joins hands with parents to monitor and set up expectations consistently at school. It is not ok to say that learning setting is not your responsibility which includes limiting visual distractions.

It's a bad reason to be dress coded based on discriminations, race, cultural differences, religion, gender and such. Unfortunately though I'm noticing girls are disrespecting school's dress code most of the time.

To back up my statement above, I still see everyday girls with very low cut blouses, excessive cleavage exposed (with the help of push up bras it has become all too easy), all shoulder straps in the wrong places, low rise pants with belly buttons visible, particularly indecent is wearing extremely low or torn out shorts that shows butts hanging out completely. It makes me wonder if MVHS has a pool party every day? Why do they get unnoticed at administrative level when the entire public sees them. Why are they allowed to dress like it everyday even though dress code is violated? Is the administrative office justifying that they are not showing underwear? Is that a reasonable rule shouldn't it be based on cleavage and butt exposure instead? Given the fact that most of them don't wear underwear anymore!?

This is a collective voice in the community not just mine as an individual. We were not able to approach the office confidently bc if the office didn't care whether dress code is strictly implemented or not (evidently) on a daily basis, would they care to hear us and take action was our thinking. Discuss my comments with parents you will see them coming forth. Thank you for this opportunity.

"Go Change"

When I was little, I laughed with reckless abandon, read books in public, sang at the top of my lungs in the shower, and at one point refused to wear anything but dresses for days on end.

When I was little, I didn't worry about the messiness of my uncombed hair, the perpetual full moonness of my cheeks, the number of calories in milk, or the amount of skin I was showing.

Something about middle school changed that. Maybe you could attribute it to the supposedly "raging hormones" of those awkward years that made everyone hopelessly and unpredictably moody. Or maybe you could point fingers at the endless gossip and drama over who danced with who and who liked who and who was popular and who wasn't. Or maybe you could even blame it on a weak resolve.

I'm sure these are parts of the reason, but they can't be the whole story. Because hormones and gossip don't account for the loss of a carefree innocence and neither does my fragile disposition. You see, it's not just me. I see a little bit of it in everyone every day. It's impossible to miss. You can see it in the way people protect themselves-biting their tongues, holding back opinions, and settling for "I can't's and "I wish I was"s.

Some people might wave this off as a rite of passage, or a coming of age of sorts. But when did self-consciousness and insecurity become essential to growing up? When did it become completely normal for people to look at themselves solely through the views of others? When did others' opinions become unquestionable truth?

In case you're waiting for me to say that this is all because of oppressive and restrictive dress codes, I can tell you with confidence that dress codes do not have such a profound effect as to single-handedly obliterate all youthful innocence. What does matter about dress codes is their representation of societal pressures. I'm not trying to denounce dress code in its entirety, because there are some clothing choices that are not naturally suited for school, like swimsuits or just plain nudity. This is common sense. I'm talking about clothing deemed too provocative on the basis that it is a "distraction" large enough to justify the forced sacrifice of class time to "go change".

Such reasoning sends the message that what others think about what you wear matters so much that you could and should be sent out to change. That others' "distraction" because of your personal clothing choices is *your* problem and not *theirs*.

So why is it unsurprising that we seek validation from others? Not because of dress code itself but because of its greater implications that we must "fix" ourselves for the benefit of others. That we are somehow "broken" and shameful and disgraceful. That others' opinions are more important than our own opinions of ourselves.

But I refuse to accept this. It does not and should not have to be normal for all of us to struggle with self-esteem and insecurity. We are not "broken" or shameful or disgraceful. And the only thing that we should "go change" is the idea that we need to. — *Maddie Park*

Sense of Belonging

Conformity is the need to fulfill the feeling of belonging. Our Administration implements the dress code to set the expectations for what students wear. While some may disagree about what exactly it should consist of, most students at Monta Vista dress well within the bounds of the school's rules. These rules, however, are not necessarily the guidelines that confine us to what we choose to wear. In fact, our dress code is the product of the societal expectation that we as students should appear a certain way. Students are heavily influenced to dress like their peers because of our innate sense to feel belonged. Wearing anything that does not comply to societal standards brings with it a feeling of exclusion which scares most people. Peer pressure indirectly defines what we choose to wear to school on a daily basis.

During my freshman and sophomore year, I was judged by other students on campus because of my long hair which defied the look of a normal teenage boy. People would make comments about it and forced me to think of other people's interests before my own when I dressed. Prior to this criticism, I had never given a second thought to the length of my hair or my facial appearance. Now my hair is relatively short and I shave often. Others' criticism forced me to conform to the expectations of society.

Monta Vista is generally known for being an academically competitive high school. Students' aspirations to enter prestigious universities like Cal and Harvard have become the social norm, and are clearly reflected among our students' clothing through college merchandise. We are inherently self-conscious about what we wear because it is considered a representation of who we are. Students are pressured to conform in order to reflect the general interest of society through their appearance. I learned that some students here leave the house wearing clothes that their parents approve of, only to change on campus at beginning of school into more socially accepted clothing. Sometimes, what is changed into may be considered provocative just for that sense of inclusion.

If you knew me you would know that a large portion of my wardrobe is dedicated to t-shirts, which I get from hackathons and tech events. These shirts are that not that special, but I still wear them often because they represent more than just clothing to me; they make me feel significant. They allow me to express my connection with the rest of the students who aspire to pursue a career in STEM, and give me something to identify with.

Society's establishment of a universal dress code may be somewhat of a restriction to students' choice, but the ability to be accepted in society by what you wear can be relieving. I feel the same way about my hackathon t-shirts. If asked why I wear them, I would have probably responded with "it was the first thing I saw in my cupboard". But the truth is, my clothing gives me an identity and a feeling of inclusion. And this identity makes me feel empowered. —*Saagar Godithi*

Dress Code Polling Results

Number of Responses: 256

Gender
67% Female
29% Male
4% Preferred not to answer

Grade Level
37% 12th Grade
21% 11th Grade
30% 10th Grade
2% 9th Grade
9% Past High School
<1% Not in High School Yet

How conservatively do you think you dress? (1-10 scale, 10 being the most conservative)
Average: 5.43

Top Five Choices:
23% 5 (58)
18% 4 (46)
17% 7 (44)
14% 6 (35)
10% 3 (26)

Should the following outfit be dress-coded?

1) Black Bralette
56% NO
44% YES

2) Sagging
44% NO
56% YES

3) Yoga Pants
95% NO
5% YES

4) Girl Wearing Tank
w/ Low Cut Sides
49% NO
51% YES

5) Man Wearing Tank
w/ Low cut sides
56% NO
44 YES

6) Backless Dress
@ School Dance
79% NO
21% YES

7) Dress w/ Side Cutouts
@ School Dance
81% NO
19% YES

8) Cutoff Shorts and Tank Top
89% NO
11% YES

9) Shirt w/ Marijuana Leaves
67% NO
33% YES

10) Marijuana leaf socks
58% NO
42% YES

11) Short Black Dress Costume
57% NO
43% YES

12) Horror Movie Costume
63% NO
37% YES

13) Mexican Stereotype Costume
61% NO
39% YES

14) Exposed Inmate Costume
12% NO
88% YES

15) Kimono Costume
84% NO
16% YES

For original pictures, refer to goo.gl/7UF2lu or use the QR code!
Mr. White's responses will be released on October 16th online.

Build Your Own Dress Code

Wear something your parents would be comfortable seeing you in. And, no one wants to see your undergarments.

I think people should be able to dress however they like in terms of showing however much they're comfortable with. The only things I think should be limited are clothes that express hate, racism, illicit activities, etc.

Wear something that suffuciently covers all of your private parts. Do not show up in underwear, lingerie, etc. Weapons are zero tolerance. If your grandma wouldn't let you roam around in it, why should your school?

Short-shorts are okay, crop tops are okay provided that the midriff is covered, no undergarments (or areas covered by undergarments) should be seen.

Clothes advocating violence, drugs, etc. aren't allowed at school. Costumes in which a person dresses up as a racial caricature are banned. Students can expose as much skin as they want unless they're showing genitalia.

Wear what you want as long as it's legal and not being rude to someone else inherently.

More so centered around professionalism and appropriateness within an educational environment than the amount of skin showing.

You can't show your bellybutton. You can't show any cleavage (that includes butt cleavage). Thighs and shoulders are fine.

Generally, there shouldn't be a dress code, although there is a line where things become inappropriate for school. Most people are within the line.

Don't show off underwear or more than 2 inches of midriff. No weapons unless for a school project, must be checked by office.

"Appropriate" clothing should be what the students feel comfortable wearing. Schools provide us with opportunities to learn (a great privilege), not observe other people's clothing.

About Verdadera

Verdadera, meaning "truthfully" in Spanish, is a student-run publication at Monta Vista High School which was initiated by Hung Wei, a Monta Vista parent herself. She envisioned a place where students, alumni, counselors, teachers, administrators, and even parents could freely express their thoughts on the controversial and challenging issues within the Monta Vista community.

The goal of Verdadera is to initiate an honest conversation between parents, students, and everyone overall. It can be hard to come to terms with feelings that students may not directly vocalize or even understand to begin vocalizing; therefore Verdadera serves as a platform to provoke opinions, thinking, and understand the change we all wish to implement.

We collect submissions from students, interview alumni, talk to parents and counselors, professionals, and much more. Verdadera strives to provide a 360 degree view of our reality and we hope you can help us achieve this.

Enjoy reading!

*Please note, while we do shorten and abridge submissions, we do not edit them to maintain the integrity of the original voice. This means grammar mistakes are left alone.

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