

An Introduction to AUSD's Revised Dress Code

In July, the Board of Education approved changes to AUSD's dress code. We want to help you understand what the changes are and why the district developed them.

The process started in 2016, when a small group of Lincoln Middle School students and their teacher began working with their school administration on their dress code. In 2017, the group brought their concerns about the existing dress code to the Board of Education. The policy, they noted, was enforced inconsistently between and within school sites. It also had a disproportionate impact on girls. That is, because more of the policy was focused on girls' clothing than boys, girls were being sent out of the classroom for infractions more often than boys, which meant they were losing more class time than their male peers.

Besides, the students and teacher noted, measuring the widths of straps and lengths of shorts in class or pointing out that a student was showing too much skin was resulting in embarrassment and shame for students. Such feelings can make it hard for students to concentrate on learning and can create long-term issues with body image.

As a result of the students' advocacy, the district convened a small work group to review existing policy and practices across school sites, research model policy language, conduct focus groups, and engage stakeholders on proposed changes. The resulting changes were based on three key principles:

- All students are encouraged to dress in a manner that is comfortable and conducive to an active school day.
- Students should be able to wear clothing without fear of or actual unnecessary discipline or body shaming.
- The student dress code should serve to support all students to develop a body-positive self-image.

The elements of the new policy are detailed in the pages that follow. You can also find information – including FAQs - on the new policy on this [webpage](#). The policy is currently in a pilot stage; the district will be collecting feedback from students, families, and staff throughout the fall and will summarize the feedback for the Board in December, 2018.

"We believe these changes will reduce inequitable and unnecessary discipline and help us maximize learning time," says Steven Fong, AUSD's Chief Academic Officer. "Districts across the country are adopting similar revisions for similar reasons. We are excited to be moving forward with such a student-centered approach."

A Summary of Board Policy 5132

Under the revised policies, students *must* still wear:

- Bottoms
- Tops
- Shoes
- Clothing that covers genitals, buttocks, and areolae/nipples with opaque material

Courses that include attire as part of the curriculum (for example, marketing, public speaking, and job readiness) may include assignment-specific dress, but the assignment should not focus on covering students' bodies or promoting culturally specific attire. And teachers can require shoes for certain activities (such as physical education or shop).

Students *may* still wear:

- Hats, including religious headwear
- Hoodie sweatshirts (over head is allowed)
- Fitted pants, including leggings, yoga pants, and "skinny jeans"
- Sweatpants, shorts, skirts, dresses, pants
- Midriff baring shirts
- Pajamas
- Ripped jeans, as long as underwear is not exposed
- Tank tops, including spaghetti straps, halter tops, and "tube" (strapless) tops
- Athletic attire
- Clothing with commercial or athletic logos provided they do not violate the guidelines in the 'CANNOT Wear' section below
- Sun-protective clothing, including but not limited to hats, for outdoor use during the school day (Education Code 35183.5)

Students *cannot* wear clothing with:

- Violent language or images
- Images or language depicting drugs or alcohol (or any illegal item or activity) or the use of same
- Hate speech, profanity, pornography
- Images and/or language that create a hostile or intimidating environment based on any protected class
- Visible underwear or bathing suits of similar design -visible waistbands or straps on undergarments worn under other clothing are not a violation

- Helmets, hoods, or other headgear that obscures the face (except as a religious observance)

The new policy must be implemented by all staff consistently. Because it is new, both principals and teachers will receive training on the purpose and spirit of the new dress code and how best to enforce it (i.e., with the least impact on learning and self confidence). Staff will also be trained in how to use positive language to explain the code and address violations.

Discipline

Students can't be removed from class for violating the policy unless it's a violation of the "cannot" or "must" sections. Even then:

- The loss of class time should be kept to a minimum.
- Students can't be forced to wear clothing that is not theirs.
- Parents/guardians shouldn't be called during day to bring alternative clothing unless by student request.
- Discipline shouldn't be given disproportionately based on gender, race, body size, body maturity.
- Students shouldn't be shamed or measured in front of the class for what they're wearing.