

Board vetoes H-F dress code plan to allow exposed midriffs

BY MARILYN THOMAS
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The District 233 school board decided a proposed change to the Homewood-Flossmoor High School dress code went a bit too far.

At its June 21 meeting, board members agreed students should have full coverage to the pant/skirt line – no exposed midriff will be allowed.

The change was one of several discussed by a special committee that met this past school year after students asked for changes to the dress code. Associate Principal Craig Fantin told the board he worked with the Parent Disciplinary Committee, select students and the interim principal on changes.

The committee recommended to keep in place a ban on hats and hoodies in the school buildings, but it did agree to allow head scarves.

It recommended to allow students to wear tops with spaghetti straps. The old rule said tank top straps had to be at least 2-inches wide.

And the committee agreed to recommend midriff clothing articles. That's where the school board took exception.

"I'm not OK with our relaxing the dress code to reflect what's happening on TikTok or social media," member Steve Anderson said. "I believe it's our job to set a standard that's respectful and reflective of how young people are expected to dress in their daily lives beyond high school and college."

Member Pamela Jackson agreed. She said she's had two teens graduate from H-F, and they were "policed for their attire and I appreciated that....I just think the kids need to focus on learning, and they already have enough distractions." She wondered: "Where do we draw the line?"

Member Nate Lagardy said there needed to be a distinction between school and

outside school. He didn't want to see students wear clothing they'd wear to a party or the beach.

Member Debbie Berman was in favor of the change. She said H-F has held the line on showing undergarments and low pant lines. She didn't believe bare midriffs were going to lead to students wearing inappropriate clothing. She also was glad that the policy was now gender neutral. She said it shows the school district is supportive of all students, regardless of their sexual orientation.

Member Cynthia Turnquest thought the school board was likely to make the job harder for administrators "by asking staff to check where a student's navel is and where mid-torso is."

Board President Gerald Pauling said he wanted the committee to know the board was grateful for its time and work on the dress code. He called it "valuable," but he too agreed with his colleagues that the midriff idea was a no.

"There's a standard that a majority of our board members believe how our environment ought to be, and that is aspirational and so this isn't about anything other than wanting students to dress in the ways that aspire a certain type of environment," Pauling said.

The board also agreed that students will no longer need to wear lanyard IDs at school. When students returned to class in August 2021, after being away due to the pandemic, the policy for the IDs was not enforced.

Each student will still receive the paper ID, but administrators asked the board to approve a change to the policy on wearing the lanyards. The board agreed that students will be required to present upon request an ID either on paper via the lanyard, or electronically on their phones.

IDs carry bar codes and are used for everything from paying for food in the cafeteria to reporting in to tutoring classes to getting on an activity bus, Fantin said.

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BY CHRONICLE STAFF

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sign, she said.

Murry is a certified balloon designer and has been designing for eight years.

"Doing balloons is very soothing to me," she said. "And it gives me a chance to be creative. I love it when a customer says, 'You have full creative freedom.' That's the best thing to have."

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