



# Merit College Preparatory Academy

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## MERIT DRESS CODE POLICY

### **1. PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY**

The Board of Trustees recognizes that student dress and grooming directly impacts the education of students. Experience and research have demonstrated that the learning atmosphere is improved when students dress and groom appropriately. Appropriate student dress and grooming promotes an effective learning environment free of unnecessary disruption and distraction. In addition, appropriate student dress and grooming helps increase school and student safety and security. Certain fads and extremes of dress and grooming tend to attract undue attention to an individual, and accordingly, interfere with or disrupt the educational process.

The Board of Trustees emphasizes the importance of cooperation among school officials, parents/guardians, and students to ensure appropriate dress and grooming (hygiene and cleanliness of self and clothing), and further recognizes that parents/guardians are primarily responsible for their students' dress and grooming. The Board of Trustees delegates to the school administration the responsibility to see that each student adheres to the dress and grooming standards set forth in this policy.

A higher standard of dress encourages greater respect for individual students and others and results in a higher standard of behavior. It also prepares students for the dress code requirements of the workforce. Our dress code requirements indicate appropriate school dress for normal school days. All students are expected to be in dress code at all times while on campus during school hours, during school events, while doing fieldwork and other off-campus activities. MCPA dress code is intended to be strict enough to support the educational goals, vision, and standards upheld by the school, yet not so restrictive that families will find it difficult to abide by. Dress Code adherence will be checked daily by staff, faculty, and administrators. Students are expected to remain in Dress Code clothing at all times while on campus, including before school and after school unless other permission is obtained from an administrator.

### **2. GENERAL STANDARDS**

- 2.1 The school administration may determine that certain types of student clothing and grooming are prohibited which:
  - 2.1.1 Draws undue attention, distracts, disrupts, and/or interferes with the educational environment at school or at a school activity or event.
  - 2.1.2 Endangers the health, safety, or welfare of the student or others.
  - 2.1.3 May cause damage to school facilities or equipment.
  - 2.1.4 Does not conform to generally accepted community standards.
  - 2.1.5 Appears as an obvious attempt to challenge this policy or the authority of the school.

- 2.2 Student dress and grooming must conform to the requirements of a special class or school activity or event which requires special dress or grooming and in which the student expects to participate.

### **3. SPECIFIC STANDARDS**

#### **3.1 Shirts**

- 3.1.1 Collared shirts, polo shirts, Henley style shirts, blouses and t-shirts are approved.

Sweaters, hoodies, and light jackets are permitted. The hood on jackets and hoodies are not to be worn up in the school.

- 3.1.2 Emblems are allowed. Words, symbols, or images that support or represent drugs or drug use, skulls, alcohol or alcohol use, gang references, swearing, and pornography are not allowed.

- 3.1.3 T-shirts and pull over sweatshirts are permitted.

- 3.1.4 Bare shoulders and midriffs are not allowed.

- 3.1.5 Sleeves are to be no shorter than a cap sleeve.

- 3.1.6 No skin can show under the shirt. Undershirts must be worn under low tops.

- 3.1.7 See through shirts are not permitted.

#### **3.2 Pants, shorts and skirts**

- 3.2.1 Approved pants include dress pants, slacks, cords, cargo style and blue jeans.

- 3.2.2 Pants, shorts and skirts are to be worn at the hip at all times.

- 3.2.3 Shorts, skirts are to be no shorter than 3 inches above the knee when worn without leggings.

- 3.2.4 If wearing leggings/exercise pants/lycra pants, the top/shirt must be fingertip length.

- 3.2.5 Colored denim is acceptable.

- 3.2.6 Sweats, track pants, warm ups, sports shorts, yoga pants, or pajama pants are not permitted.

- 3.2.7 Pants, skirts and shorts must be hemmed at the bottom with no frayed edges and no holes.

#### **3.3 Shoes**

- 3.3.1 Shoes are to be kept in overall good condition with no holes or rips. Flip flops are not permitted.

#### **3.4 Ameritus Dress**

- 3.4.1 Ameritus Dress is usually held in conjunction with Ameritus Assemblies

3.4.2 Ameritus Dress is Business Professional for all students and staff: slacks, suit, dress, skirt, blouse, button up shirt, tie, dress shoes.

- 3.4.3 No jeans. No athletic shoes.

### 3.5 Formal Wear Events – Homecoming, Prom and Sweetheart’s Dance

- 3.5.1 All formal wear must conform to Merit Dress Standards.
- 3.5.2 All will wear semi-formal attire, formal gowns or pantsuits.
- 3.5.3 Suits or sport coats are encouraged to be worn, but at a minimum, they are expected to wear formal wear. This includes Slacks, nice shoes, and a nice shirt. Ties are encouraged, but are not required.
- 3.5.4 Sleeves must be at least 2 inch in width. No spaghetti straps or strapless dresses.
- 3.5.5 Necklines cannot be low cut in the front or the back. The front of the dress must not fall below your armpit line. The back of the dress must not fall below the point of a shoulder blade.
- 3.5.6 Skirts must reach to at least the fingertips when the arms are hanging down by the sides, front and back. This also applies to slits in dresses. Dress must also be the appropriate length even if leggings are worn underneath the dress.
- 3.5.7 Dresses may not be extremely tight or form fitting. Be aware of the material that gathers and rises when you walk.
- 3.5.8 The following will not be permitted:
  - 3.5.8.1 Two piece formal gowns or pants and a top where the midriff is showing.
  - 3.5.8.2 Dresses with revealing cut outs.
  - 3.5.8.3 See through gowns. This includes sheer/mesh overlays that do not have material underneath.
  - 3.5.8.4 Shorts.
  - 3.5.8.5 Torn clothing.
- 3.5.9 If your attire is questionable, students are encouraged to show their evening wear to administrators beforehand to determine if it is dance appropriate. The determination of the appropriateness of student dress and grooming shall rest with the director/assistant director.
- 3.5.10 Students and their dates who are non-compliant with the dress code will not be admitted to the dance or will be escorted out of the dance. No refunds will be given for dance dress code infractions in when these students are asked to leave.

### 3.6 Dance – Performance/Practice

- 3.6.1 Girls are allowed to wear wide strap higher neck tank tops, fitted t-shirts, leggings, or sport short length shorts, or leotards.
- 3.6.2 Boys are allowed to wear t-shirts, shorts, and designated dance clothing.
- 3.6.3 Sweats may be worn until the body is warmed up and then removed. Tank tops must be covered before going into the halls.
- 3.6.4 Not allowed: midriff tops, spaghetti strap tank tops, low cut tank tops, or super short shorts.

### 3.7 Physical Education

- 3.7.1 Students must wear a t-shirt at all times. The only acceptable color for t-shirts is maroon, navy blue, or white (school colors). There will be no graphics on the t-shirt other than a small logo of the brand of the t-shirt.
  - 3.7.1.1 The sides must be complete, no open sides.
  - 3.7.1.2 All shirts must cover the midriff.
  - 3.7.1.3 No low cut shirts (Nothing that dips below the armpit line in the front or the back).
- 3.7.2 Exercise pants and shorts are acceptable. The only acceptable color for pants or shorts is maroon, navy blue, white (school colors), or black. There will be no graphics on the pants or shorts other than a small logo of the brand of the pants or shorts.
  - 3.7.2.1 Shorts need to be 4" or longer.
- 3.7.3 Shoes must be worn at all times.
  - 3.7.3.1 A different pair of shoes than the ones worn to school must be used on the gym floor.
  - 3.7.3.2 No sandals or open toed shoes.

### 3.8 Sports / Cheer / Fine Arts

- 3.8.1 The standard accepted sports uniform must be worn in its entirety.
  - 3.8.1.1 Jersey tops/t-shirts
    - 3.8.1.1.1 Full sides
    - 3.8.1.1.2 Covers the midriff and back, no exposed undergarments
    - 3.8.1.1.3 Nothing that dips below the armpit line in the front or the back
    - 3.8.1.1.4 Uniforms must have 2" straps
  - 3.8.1.1.2 Bottoms
    - 3.8.1.2.1 Shorts or skirts need to be 4" or longer.
- 3.8.2 Athletic Director must approve all uniforms and performance dress before purchase.

### 3.9 Additional dress code and grooming requirements

- 3.9.1 Clothing will be modest, neat, clean, and in good repair. Modesty includes covering shoulders, midriff, back, underwear, and cleavage.
- 3.9.2 Extreme clothing, which includes, but is not limited to, sagging clothing; excessively oversized clothing; clothing that is mutilated, torn, ripped, or frayed are prohibited. In addition, inappropriately short, tight, or revealing shorts, skirts, dresses, tank tops, halter or crop tops, and spaghetti strap tops are prohibited. Skirts, dresses, and shorts must be at least mid-thigh length when the student is sitting.
- 3.9.3 Clothing and personal items, such as jewelry, backpacks, fanny packs, gym bags, water bottles, etc., shall be free of writing, pictures, or any other insignias, which: (a) are crude, vulgar, or profane; (b) are violent or advocate hate; (c) signify gang affiliation; (d) concern or represent tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or illegal

substances; (e) concern or represent criminal or illegal activities; (f) infringe upon the rights of others; or (g) are sexually suggestive.

- 3.9.4 Hats and sunglasses are not to be worn in the school building during school hours, except as part of an approved school activity or event, for medical reasons, or for religious purposes.
- 3.9.5 Gang-related clothing, personal items, grooming, hair styles, colors, and paraphernalia are not allowed in schools or at school related activities and events. This includes, but is not limited to, tattoos, bandannas, chains, clothing, or jewelry associated with gangs, gang symbols, names, initials, and insignias. School administration in consultation with law enforcement agencies will determine what constitutes "gang-related" clothing, personal items, grooming, hair styles, colors, and paraphernalia.
- 3.9.6 Hair, including facial hair, must be maintained in a clean and well-groomed manner. Hairstyles and facial hair that draw undue attention, distract, disrupt, and/or interfere with the learning atmosphere at school or at school activities or events are prohibited.
- 3.9.7 Students are expected to use proper hygiene including cleaning the body and hair regularly, wearing clean and laundered clothing, proper oral health care, keeping hands clean, taking care of sickness before coming back to school.
- 3.9.8 Jewelry worn in any pierced body parts other than the ears must be removed or covered while on school grounds and during school activities. Clothing, jewelry, accessories, piercings, tattoos, chains, clothing, etc., which are disfiguring or draw undue attention that distract, disrupt, or interfere with the learning atmosphere at school or at school activities and events, and/or create a health, safety, or welfare issue are prohibited. Gauges in any body part is prohibited.

#### ***4. ENFORCEMENT AND DISCIPLINE***

School faculty, office staff, staff, and administrators are responsible for implementation and enforcement of this policy. The legal concept of "reasonableness" shall be the guiding principle. School administrators may approve exceptions to this policy for special school activities or events. Adherence to these dress and grooming standards will be the responsibility of the student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s). Any student violating this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action. Disciplinary action may include, but is not limited to, being asked to change, remove, or cover the clothing, personal item, or whatever else is at issue; in or out of school suspension; expulsion; exclusion or loss of extracurricular activities; probation; alternate educational placement; and/or referral to law enforcement authorities.

Approved by the Board of Trustees November 2018