



POLICY

Title: **STUDENT DRESS**

Policy No.: 5020

Effective Date: 2024 June 25

Department: Learning Support Services – Equity
Director’s Services – Human Rights and Equity

Reference(s): Human Rights Code
Ontario College of Teachers Professional Misconduct Regulation
TVDSB Equity and Inclusive Education Policy
TVDSB Religious and Creed-Based Accommodation of Staff Policy
TVDSB Religious and Creed-Based Accommodation of Students Policy
TVDSB Accommodation Policy
TVDSB Accommodation Procedure
TVDSB Safe Schools Policy and Procedure

1.0 Intent and Rationale

The intent of this policy is to establish expectations for student dress in Thames Valley District School Board schools. It is the policy of the Thames Valley District School Board (“TVDSB”, “the board”) to provide learning and working environments that are free from discrimination and harassment. TVDSB staff are committed to their shared responsibility to ensure students feel safe and included at school and are treated fairly. This means affirming students’ identities and ensuring interactions with them are based on individual dignity and mutual respect.

The TVDSB acknowledges that dress codes in schools can create and maintain ideas about ‘appropriate’ dress that do not reflect students’ identities, including their gender identity, cultural identity, race, and creed. Dress codes can reinforce harmful stereotypes, such as those rooted in ableism, sizeism, cis-normative and heteronormative/heterosexist assumptions about gender identity, homophobia, and transphobia. Dress codes can treat certain groups of students differently than others, resulting in discrimination. They can also limit students’ ability to choose how they dress.

TVDSB students come from diverse backgrounds and have unique identities and experiences. Decisions about dress are personal and reflect students’ individual expression of identity and socio-cultural norms. These decisions are significant, and important to students’ well-being.

Students have a right to express themselves, including through dress. They have a right to make choices about their dress and to feel comfortable in what they wear. In doing so, students are affirmed in their ability to make choices that impact their bodies.

Administered By: **Learning Support Services – Equity**
Director’s Services - Human Rights and Equity

Amendment Date(s):

2.0 Objectives

To establish a consistent approach to student dress in all TVDSB schools that prevents and addresses the discriminatory and negative impact of individual school dress 'codes' that have a negative impact on students, including students who are Indigenous, Black, racialized; students who are female; transgender students; students of certain religions and creeds (e.g., Jewish, Muslim, Sikh); and students with disabilities.

To create a policy foundation for student dress expectations that treat students equitably, including students who are Indigenous, Black, racialized; students who are female; transgender students; students of certain religions and creeds (e.g., Jewish, Muslim, Sikh); and students with disabilities, as well as students with all body shapes and sizes, and all economic and social circumstances, by ensuring that:

- 2.1 Student dress does not promote, represent or incite hate or any other form of discrimination, consistent with TVDSB's commitment to ensure discrimination and harassment-free learning and working environments outlined in s. 1.0 above.
- 2.2 Student dress expectations in the TVDSB reflect the board's commitment to non-discrimination outlined in s. 1.0 above. For greater clarity, the TVDSB's approach to student dress will ensure that students who are Indigenous, Black, and racialized; students who are female; transgender students; students of certain religions and creeds (e.g., Jewish, Muslim, Sikh); and students with disabilities, are not negatively impacted by dress expectations.
- 2.3 Student dress expectations reflect the important role that dress plays in how students build healthy relationships and explore self-identity. Expectations will affirm both the rights of students to express themselves and their shared responsibility to maintain safe and inclusive Thames Valley environments.
- 2.4 Dress expectations are consistent for all TVDSB students, regardless of their school, location, or grade level.
- 2.5 Staff conversations with students about dress expectations are supportive and inclusive, and consistent with the TVDSB's commitment to equity, anti-oppression and non-discrimination outlined in s. 1.0 above and the Student Dress Procedure.

3.0 Application and Scope

This Policy and the Student Dress Procedure apply to all TVDSB students. The Policy and Procedure also apply to TVDSB employees in establishing the responsibilities of staff and administration to ensure the Policy and Procedure are implemented effectively.

Employee dress is governed by collective agreements and applicable health and safety regulations, professional ethics, and job requirements.

TVDSB acknowledges that students' rights to expression through dress may be limited where

they interfere with the rights of others, and/or with TVDSB's responsibility and legal obligation under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* ("the *Code*") to provide learning and working environments that are free from discrimination, including acts of hate or hate speech.

4.0 Key Terms

Ableism means a belief system that sees persons with disabilities as being less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and participate, or of less value than others. Ableism may be conscious or unconscious, and may be part of institutions, systems, or the broader culture of a society. It can limit the opportunities of persons with disabilities and reduce their inclusion in the life of their communities.

Bias means the conscious and unconscious attitudes, reactions, stereotypes, and categories that affect behaviour and understanding.

Caregiver means an adult who is responsible for the care, supervision, and support of a student. A caregiver may or may not be a legal parent or guardian.

Cis-normative means the biased assumptions created by society that all human beings are **cisgender** (only male or female) and have only a male or female gender identity and gender expression that matches the biological sex they are assigned at birth.

Disability means a broad range and degree of conditions that may have been present at birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time. Disability includes both physical and mental or developmental impairments and limitations, learning disabilities, and mental illness.

Discrimination means being treated badly for reasons connected to identity. These reasons are also called grounds and are protected by the *Code*. Discrimination can be direct or indirect, individual, or **systemic** (see definition below). It does not need to be intended. Discrimination includes hate activity.

Gender identity means a person's conscious sense of being male and/or female. This sense of self is separate and distinct from a person's biological sex.

Heteronormative means the belief that people fall into only two distinct gender identities (male and female) with natural roles in life based entirely on the biological sex they are assigned at birth. This belief assumes that heterosexuality is the norm or default sexual orientation, and that sexual and marital relations are most (or only) fitting between people of the opposite sex. Biological sex, sexuality, gender identity and gender expression and roles are all aligned.

Heteronormativity is the dominant idea about sex and gender created by society. It is biased, prejudicial and discriminatory to all non-cisgender identities and non-heterosexual orientations and is the foundation of **heterosexism**, **transphobia**, and **homophobia**.

Heterosexism means assuming that heterosexuality is superior and preferable, and is the only right, normal, or moral expression of sexuality.

Homophobia means the irrational aversion to, fear or hatred of gay, lesbian, or bisexual people and communities, or of behaviours stereotyped as "homosexual."

Parent/guardian means an individual who is on record with the school as a parent or legal guardian of a student at the school.

Shaming in this instance means any judgmental behaviour that reinforces discriminatory cultural rules/expectations related to dress, body, gender identity, gender expression and/or sexuality.

Sizeist means prejudice based on a person's size. Sizeist usually refers to extremes in physical size, such as very tall or short, extremely thin, or obese.

Student dress means the ways in which students express themselves through clothing, headwear, footwear, and other accessories, hairstyles, jewelry, and makeup, as well as personal protective equipment required for some classes.

Systemic discrimination means attitudes, patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of the policies and practices of an organization or sector, and that create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage for people based on a protected ground of discrimination under the *Code*.

Trans or **transgender** is an umbrella term referring to people with diverse gender identities and expressions that differ from stereotypical gender norms. It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender (whose biological sex assigned at birth does not match their gender identity), trans woman (male-to-female), trans man (female-to-male), transsexual, cross-dresser, gender non-conforming, gender variant or gender queer.

Transphobia means the irrational aversion to, fear or hatred of transgender people.

TVDSB Learning and Working Environments means all TVDSB owned or operated places, premises, offices, and facilities; vehicles used for TVDSB purposes or on TVDSB property; schools and school-related activities; TVDSB-related functions, activities, or events; and online environments and activities, including electronic messages and postings on electronic and social media. Working environments include any land, premises, or location (including a virtual location) where an employee performs work or work-related duties or functions.

5.0 Rights and Responsibilities

5.1 Students

Students, together with their parents/guardians/caregivers, have the right to make decisions about their dress, consistent with this Policy and the Student Dress Procedure.

Students have the right to express themselves through their dress without fear of body-shaming, bias, or discrimination.

Students are responsible for following the expectations for student dress outlined in this Procedure.

5.2 Parents/guardians/caregivers

Parents/guardians/caregivers, together with students, have the right to make decisions about a student's dress consistent with this Policy and the Student Dress Procedure.

Parents/guardians/caregivers are responsible for educating themselves about this Policy and the Student Dress Procedure, and for supporting students to learn about and comply with the Student Dress Policy and Procedure.

5.2.1 School Councils

Principals will consult with school councils regarding the implementation of this Policy and the Student Dress Procedure in schools. School councils have an important voice regarding implementation, including ensuring all caregivers receive clear and consistent information regarding the Policy's purpose and rationale and the specific student dress expectations set out in the Procedure.

5.3 School staff

School staff are responsible for educating students about this Policy and the Student Dress Procedure, and for working collaboratively with school administration to support its effective implementation.

School staff are responsible, where applicable, for communicating student dress expectations where there are health and safety requirements related to specific classes, activities, or equipment, as outlined in the Procedure.

5.4 Principals and Vice-Principals

Principals and Vice-Principals are responsible for ensuring student health, safety, and well-being while also fostering a school environment that is inclusive and respects student choices and freedom of expression.

Principals are responsible for communicating with school councils and caregivers about this Policy and the Student Dress Procedure and how to implement them effectively.

Principals are responsible for engaging in dialogue with students and families related to student dress in a manner that is bias-aware, prioritizes education, affirms students' identities and protects privacy.

Principals are also responsible for supporting staff to understand the Policy and Procedure and for ongoing dialogue with staff about applying them at school.

Principals and Vice-Principals are responsible for applying and ensuring that school staff apply the Procedure fairly and consistently.

Principals and Vice-Principals are responsible for ensuring that student dress does not interfere with student or staff health and safety requirements.

Principals and Vice-Principals are responsible for ensuring that the Procedure is applied in a way that is equitable, anti-oppressive and non-discriminatory. This means ensuring that the Procedure is not applied in a way that treats students differently based on fundamental aspects of their identity protected by the *Code*, or in a way that otherwise results in increased marginalization or oppression of students.

5.5 Superintendents of Student Achievement

Superintendents of Student Achievement are responsible for supporting Principals and Vice-Principals to apply the Policy and Procedure and for monitoring their implementation.

Superintendents are also responsible for supporting Principals and Vice-Principals to resolve the concerns of students, caregivers and staff that may arise with respect to the Policy and Procedure.

6.0 Monitoring and Review

Monitoring and review of the Policy are to be based on the objectives outlined in s. 2.0. Through Policy Working Committee, Senior Administration will revise this Policy and corresponding Procedure based on feedback and input received from students, school councils, families and staff as it relates to student dress expectations that reflect the board's commitments to equity, anti-oppression and non-discrimination outlined in s. 1.0 above.

This Policy and corresponding Procedure will be reviewed, at a minimum, every 5-7 years or as needed. Prior to any review/revision of the Policy and Procedure, school councils, and home and school associations will have an opportunity to provide input on their implementation.