



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. The purpose of the dress code is three-fold. First, to act as a deterrent to distractions caused by certain fads and extremes of dress and grooming that tend to attract undue attention to an individual, and accordingly, interfere with or disrupt the educational process. Second, to establish guidelines of modest dress. Third, to promote a standard of presentation for our students to represent the vision of Merit Preparatory Academy as individuals who strive to stand out as principled leaders.

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 school related activities.

2. GENERAL STANDARDS

- The school administration may determine that certain types of student clothing and grooming are prohibited which draw undue attention, distract, disrupt, and/or interfere with the educational environment at school or at a school activity or event.
- Endangers the health, safety, or welfare of the student or others.
- May cause damage to school facilities or equipment.
- Does not conform to generally accepted community standards.
- Appears as an obvious attempt to challenge this policy or the authority of the school.
- 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.
- Religious and cultural dress observance is acceptable

3. SPECIFIC STANDARDS

Shirts

- Words, symbols, or images that support or represent drugs or drug use, political activism, skulls, alcohol or alcohol use, gang references, swearing, or pornography are not allowed.
- Bare shoulders and midriffs are not allowed.
- Sleeves are to cover the shoulder.
- No skin can show under the shirt. Undershirts must be worn under low tops.
- Undergarments may not show

- See-through shirts are not permitted.
- No tears, and no holes are allowed

Pants, shorts and skirts

- Pants, shorts and skirts are to be worn at the hip at all times.
- Shorts and skirts are to be no shorter than mid-thigh
- Pajama pants are not permitted.
- No skin tight or see through clothes allowed.
- No tears, and no holes are allowed in pants, shorts, dresses, or skirts

Shoes

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

Ameritus Dress

- Ameritus Dress is usually held in conjunction with Ameritus Assemblies
- Ameritus Dress is Business Professional for all students and staff: slacks, suit, dress, skirt, blouse, button up shirt, tie, dress shoes.
- No jeans. No athletic shoes.

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

- All formal wear must conform to Merit Dress Standards.
- All will wear semi-formal attire, formal gowns or pantsuits.
- Suits or sport coats are encouraged to be worn, but at a minimum, attendees are expected to wear formal wear. This includes slacks, nice shoes, and a nice shirt. Ties are encouraged, but are not required.
- Sleeves must be at least 2 inch in width. No spaghetti straps or strapless dresses.
- Necklines cannot be low cut in the front or the back. The front of the dress must not fall below the armpit line. The back of the dress must not fall below the point of the shoulder blade.
- Skirts must reach mid-thigh, front and back.
- Slits in dresses may not be higher than mid-thigh.
- Dresses must be the appropriate length, even if leggings are worn underneath the dress.
- Dresses may not be extremely tight.

The following will not be permitted:

- Two piece formal gowns or pants and a top where the midriff is showing.
- Dresses with revealing cut outs.
- See through gowns. This includes sheer/mesh overlays that do not have material underneath.
- Shorts.
- Torn clothing.

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.

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 when these students are asked to leave.

Dance – Performance/Practice

- Midriff tops, spaghetti strap tank tops, low cut tank tops, or super short shorts are not allowed.

Physical Education

- T-shirts may not have open sides.
- Shirts must cover the midriff.
- No low cut shirts (Nothing that dips below the armpit line in the front or the back).
- Shorts and sweats cannot have holes, tears, rips, or mesh in them.
- Shorts need to be 4” or longer.
- Shoes must be worn at all times.
- No sandals or open toed shoes.

Sports / Cheer / Fine Arts

The standard accepted sports uniform must be worn in its entirety.

- Uniforms must have full sides and cover the midriff and back
- No exposed undergarments
- Nothing that dips below the armpit line in the front or the back
- Uniforms must have 2” straps
- Shorts or skirts need to be 4” or longer.

The Athletic Director must approve all uniforms and performance dress before purchase.

Additional dress code and grooming requirements

- Clothing will be modest, neat, clean, and in good repair. Modesty includes covering shoulders, midriff, back, underwear, and cleavage.
- Extreme clothing, which includes, but is not limited to, sagging clothing; excessively oversized clothing; clothing that is mutilated, torn, ripped, or frayed is prohibited.
- Inappropriately short, tight, or revealing shorts, skirts, dresses, and shirts are prohibited. Skirts, dresses, and shorts must be at least mid-thigh length when the student is sitting.
- 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.
- Only hats with Merit logos are allowed.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 are 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; alternative educational placement; and/or referral to law enforcement authorities.

Approved by the Board of Trustees: September 17, 2019

Revised: May 16, 2023