September 23, 2019

Dear Benton Harbor High School Families,

One of our strategic goals for the district is to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students and staff. We strive for an environment that is free from threats, aggression, and assault. As the school year started, we have had major concerns that include physical altercations (fights) and concerns with dress code violations that disrupted our learning environment.

Our school administrators will do everything within their power and authority to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students and staff. This letter serves as a reminder to parents/guardians and students of their responsibilities under the Student Code of Conduct.

**Fighting**

- Students who engage in fighting (a physical altercation) or who promote fighting will be subject to disciplinary action, including dismissal from campus. (See page 7 of the Student Code of Conduct.) Based on the discretionary factors provided in law and depending on the severity of the fight, students may be recommended for expulsion up to 180 days. We will not tolerate fighting.
- Students who fight or who incite or promote others to fight may also be reported to local law enforcement. (See page 10 of the Student Code of Conduct.)
- Students who engage in fighting or other anti-social behaviors may also be recommended a Personal Education Plan. (See page 37 of the Student Code of Conduct.) While there are a range of options, this could involve an online education delivery that prohibits the student from being on campus.

**Dress Code**

- Students who violate the dress code will be dealt with accordingly. (See page 25 of the Student Code of Conduct.)
- If a parent/guardian does not bring the student appropriate clothing when such an attempt is made to reach the parent/guardian, then the student may be sent home to retrieve more appropriate clothing.

By immediately addressing these concerns, we will have the ability to provide a safe and orderly environment and focus on teaching and learning in our schools.

Thank you for your continued support in addressing these issues with your children. I look forward to collaborating with you to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Educationally yours,

Patricia L. Robinson, Interim Superintendent
BENTON HARBOR AREA SCHOOLS DRESS CODE POLICY

The Benton Harbor Area School District’s dress code is designed to provide students with an educational environment that is conducive to the learning process and free from distractions. The policy is designed to prevent distractions including health and safety hazards that may disrupt the educational environment.

Category 1 - Non-compliance to dress code

Category 2 – Repeated non-compliance

Students have the right to express their own individuality in their apparel, provided that such dress does not conflict with the student dress code established for all students in the school and/or Benton Harbor Area School District. The principal or designee has the discretion to determine if a student is properly groomed or dressed appropriately. If necessary, parents/guardians will be called to bring proper clothing so that the student may resume his/her regular schedule. Repeated violations of the dress code will be treated as a violation of district dress code requirements and expectations.

Students are expected to adhere to the student dress code and are expected to exemplify proper grooming standards in a manner that projects an appropriate image for the student, the school, and the Benton Harbor Area School District. Clothing and/or accessories shall not endorse any item or product related to tobacco, alcohol, other controlled substances, profane language or sexual activity.

The Benton Harbor Area School District acknowledges the right of a parent that a student be exempted for the mandatory dress code requirements on the basis of religious objects.

Dressing and Grooming

The Benton Harbor Area School District encourages students to take pride in their attire at the school. The dress and groom of students becomes the concern of the school if it causes disruption of the educational program, it is offensive to others or it is inappropriate. Stunts should dress in a manner that takes into consideration the educational environment, safety, health, and welfare of others. Therefore, students’ clothing shall adhere to the following guidelines for both male and female students:

Shirts/Tops

- Shirts must cover to the point of the shoulders.
- NO half-length shirts, tank top, strapless, backless, cut-off, halter or bare-midriff shirts or blouses shall be worn.
- No sheer or see-through garments will be permitted unless worn over a shirt that meets dress code guidelines.
- Shirts must have appropriate coverage of undergarments.
- Undergarments must be covered at all times.
- No cleavage shall be visible. Low cut blouses, tops, sweaters, etc., with plunging necklines are not permitted.
- Garments with inappropriate language, advertising gang affiliation, alcohol, or drugs are not allowed.

Pants/Shorts

- Pants and shorts must be worn at the natural waistline. Belts must be worn if pants will not stay at the natural waistline. Exposure of undergarments will not be tolerated.
- The minimum length of any garment regardless of what it is called must be no shorter than mid-thigh.
- Cut-outs or holes should not be present above the knee.
- Slits in skirts cannot be higher than mid-thigh.
- Form-fitting pants (yoga, leggings, jeggings, tights) must be covered with a top/sweater reaching the mid-thigh.
- Lounge pants, such as pajamas, are not allowed.
- Leggings/tights will not be considered a substitute for pants.
• Athletic shorts must follow dress code regulations except during athletic periods or activities as approved by the coach.

Shoes

• Students shall wear appropriate shoes
• Slippers, cleats, "heelies" and other similar footwear are not to be worn.

Hats/Hoods/Caps

• Upon entering the school buildings, all hats, hoods (attached to hoodies) and caps must be removed during school hours.
• Hair-wraps, skull-caps, wave-caps, and bonnets are not allowed and must be removed during school hours.
• Sunglasses (other than prescription) are not to be worn during school hours.

In the event that a student is not following the dress code, the administrator/staff member will address the student in private, in an attempt to come up with a solution by using the following guidelines:

• Give the student the option of removing the articles and/or accessories that do not conform to the dress code.
• Allow the student to get another clothing item from his/her locker and change.
• Refer to the student to the administration office to contact the parent/guardian to bring the student appropriate clothing.