Watch What You Wear: The Dress Code Dispute Continues

By Alex Haines-LeBlanc
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Last year, many students felt the shift in the way the Brooklyn Tech dress code was enforced, especially for girls. As students entered the building, girls wearing shorts were stopped and told by school staff to change into their gym uniforms. This became a regular event that students witnessed when swiping their I.D.s.

Brooklyn Tech does have a dress code, however most students are not familiar with it. It states in part, “Skirts, shorts or other garments covering the lower body must reach at least one hand width above the knee in length.” Some students feel that the dress code may be enforced indiscriminately. Students report that girls are called out for dressing inappropriately more so than boys.

The dress code also states that “clothing that promotes alcohol, drug use or offensive language is prohibited.” A marijuana leaf is an image that often shows up often on boy’s clothing, yet the boys are not told to change. A student who wished to remain anonymous said, “Guys shouldn’t be allowed to wear crude or offensive symbols. That’s just as bad as wearing short shorts, if not worse.”

Enforcing the dress code has come to mean making girls wear gym shorts, while all the other rules have been lost in the mix. Naomi Francois’13 stated that, “Our gym shorts are shorter than the stuff some girls wear—and that’s what they are forced to change into.” It is questionable whether gym shorts are a suitable alternative.

Some argue that the dress code enforcement is necessary and effective. Marinique Mora’13 said, “I don’t know why girls feel the need to wear sexy up outfits; we’re in school to learn, not seduce.” This does raise the issue that, although enforcing the dress code may be biased, it has a purpose. The humiliation of being called out does make you think twice about what you’re wearing, and makes many girls dress the way the Department of Education believes is appropriate in a school setting. The rules are intended to improve the learning experience of all students.

Marc Williams, the Assistant Principal of English, brought up another aspect of the dress code—state laws. He said, “The hardest thing about a dress code in any school, across the nation, is that state laws regarding dress codes are vague, and because they are vague, students may see some inconsistencies.”

When considering the school rules, students should remember the state laws in place; school officials don’t decide every aspect of student life. The staff has to work with the laws they are given, which, as Williams points out, are not always clear. “For example, state law says that clothing that is disruptive to instruction should not be permitted; that statement is subjective.” Although state laws do decide what goes into our dress code, they are merely an outline for how it is enforced.

Returning students have noticed that so far this year the dress code has not been as strictly enforced. However, the school year has barely started and the beginning is always hectic for students and staff members alike. As the weather will soon prohibit any kind of short garments, no one expects to see them until the spring. Williams said “You are more under the radar when the weather is colder and it [short garments] isn’t expected. Adults are thinking about enforcing it.”

Brooklyn Tech’s dress code is like any law or rule—it has a purpose in making students conform to an accepted standard for the good of all. However, if a rule is made, it should be enforced upon everyone and objective.

Igniting the SPARK of Our Generation

By Samira Ahmed
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High school is where people realize who they’re going to be when they’re older and where they create aspirations for themselves. After all, finding oneself in this world isn’t easy. Everyone will face problems and challenges. Nonetheless, one should be aware that they can face these challenges and get through them. One thing students should know is that, here in Brooklyn Tech, they’re not alone. Brooklyn Tech has a special program called SPARK. It stands for “Substance Prevention and Rehabilitation through Knowledge.” Whether a student faces family problems, attendance problems, academic problems, poor self image or esteem issues, grief or relationship problems, they can turn to SPARK.

Although it began as a substance abuse intervention or prevention program in the 1970s, SPARK is a program in which one can discuss anything and everything. Ms. Ramona, who has been a part of this program for 14 years, is the SPARK Coordinator of Brooklyn Tech. She runs group and individual counseling and workshops. There are also classroom presentations about sexuality, drugs, relationships, stress and anything other issue that may impact a teen’s life.

Students are able to get help from other students that may understand their issues. Besides discussing issues and receiving help, there are other benefits of attending SPARK meetings. “So many kids believe they are the only one with their particular issue and attending meetings and talking to people is a great way to see that you really aren’t alone. Also, you can make friends and learn social skills by being in a group,” Ms. Ramona says. She can be contacted in Room 17C7 (in the center section of the cafeteria) and is available Monday to Friday, 2nd to 9th period.

Students might wonder whether attending sessions is actually beneficial. “Yes, it’s a good venting tool. It’s stress relieving; everyone in Tech has stress. If you’re having a bad day, coming to a session can relieve you from some stress before you continue on with the rest of your day,” says Adam Melendez ’12. He goes on to add that one can meet new people, have long conversations with them and connect. Students can attend an individual or group session during their lunch period.

Melendez recommends students to attend the program if they’re willing to talk about personal matters with people that they probably don’t really know. If a student is not the type who can be open with strangers, they can have one on one conversations with Ms. Ramona. According to Melendez, “Ms. Ramona is down to earth and not judgmental. She’s very open to everything you say—whether she agrees with it or not. Besides, she’s also a very cool person. After all, she’s the leader of the girls step team!”

When one can’t handle whatever may come their way, they shouldn’t try tackling it alone. The best way of conquering these problems and them is by opening up. Students should be given the opportunity to talk to people who listen to them, understand where they are coming from, and have been in their shoes. Going to the same high school, student’s can understand each other. Therefore, it’s important for them to help peers and friends. SPARK is where this perfect opportunity is given.