

From: Jula Hughes
Date: November 28, 2014
To: Shame Thomas <shane.thomas@nbed.nb.ca>
Subject: Dress Code Suspensions

Dear Mr. Thomas,

I am writing as a parent of a daughter at FHS and another daughter who is hoping to be an FHS student after finishing up middle school, and as a law professor engaged in research and teaching on discrimination and legal remedies for it, to express my profound concern over the decision to discipline students who organized or participated in the protest regarding the school's dress code.

School is a central location in the lives of young people and they learn not only from the curriculum, but they are also introduced to the world of being an engaged citizen. I have always respected the leadership at FHS, particularly through the music program, of fostering an environment of engagement, respect and good citizenship.

Sexist dress codes have no place in such an environment, though I appreciate that we may hold different opinions on whether the current dress code should be so described. But where there can be no dispute is that students should be encouraged to engage as informed and critical citizens with the world that surrounds them, and for students, a large part of that world is the school. As a society, we do not suffer from an overload of critical thinkers.

We do not suffer from an abundance of women participants in political process. Students are not abandoning the mall in favour of democratic engagement in large numbers. So when we see critical thinking, engaged young women and democratic engagement, we need to recognize these for what they are: very precious, scarce resources that need to be nurtured.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to reverse any disciplinary action, celebrate student engagement and support young women as they struggle to find voice and respect in a society that remains hostile to them.

Sincerely,

Jula Hughes

Dr. Jula Hughes
Associate Professor
Faculty of Law
University of New Brunswick