

# School Dress Codes = 'Slut Shaming'? Give Me a Break

Lately, stories have been appearing in the news of young women who are outraged that their school required them to change their clothing or go home. The narrative typically heard is that school policies are sexist and prioritize boys being undistracted (by not seeing immodest dress in the classroom) over girls being allowed to learn (by staying in the classroom regardless of their dress).

A recent story in the [LA Times](#) has taken the story a level further by equating school dress codes with "slut shaming":

*Slut shaming wasn't a phenomenon that either [Mary "James" Salazar or her mother] expected James to encounter at school. But James, then 16, says she was kept out of class for most of a day in October because she wore a red spaghetti-strap dress, during a Los Angeles heat wave. A counselor told her she wouldn't be able to go back to class unless she put on a sweater. James said staff pointed out that her bra was showing, and told her that her clothes were too revealing and distracting.*

*James, now 17, says she told them that was sexist. She refused to change her clothes.*

*"I was there to learn," Salazar said at the anti-slut-shaming rally she and a friend organized at the school a few weeks later. "We should be able to express ourselves how we want to."*

When did upholding a dress code become slut shaming?

The L.A. Unified School District has a dress code for both genders, which the assistant superintendent, Earl Perkins,

says is intended to help students focus on their studies:

*“If young men come to school with their pants hanging down ... and wife beaters on, all my females are paying attention to them,” Perkins said. “If all my girls come to school with midriffs showing ... all my boys are focusing on them.”*

Let’s be realistic: immodest dress—from either gender—IS distracting. It’s also completely unsuitable for a school setting, and will not be tolerated in most workplaces after a student graduates. As long as schools are uniformly enforcing their dress codes while treating offenders with firm respect, then it’s hard to make a case for it being “shaming”.

