

# Why 'Black and Orange Spirit Day' is Now a Thing

A Massachusetts elementary school recently made national headlines after canceling its annual Halloween costume parade and announcing it would henceforth observe "Black and Orange Spirit Day."

"[T]he costume parade is out of our ordinary routine and can be difficult for many students," Brendan Dearborn, principal at Boyden Elementary School principal, [wrote](#) to parents. "Also, the parade is not inclusive of all the students and it is our goal each and every day to ensure all student's [sic] individual differences are respected."

It's not unusual for schools to skip participation in Halloween. But the school's explanation demonstrates a problem C.S. Lewis observed in modern education. In his overlooked 1944 essay "[Democratic Education](#)," Lewis complained that education was suffering from an unhealthy and excessive egalitarianism.

*“The caucus race in Alice in Wonderland, where all the competitors won and all got prizes, was a ‘democratic’ race: like the Garter it tolerated no nonsense about merit. Such total egalitarianism in education has not yet been openly recommended, but a movement in that direction begins to appear. It can be seen in the growing demand that subjects which some boys do very much better than others should not be compulsory. Yesterday it was Latin – today, as I see from a letter in one of the papers, it is Mathematics. Both these subjects give an ‘unfair advantage’ to boys of a certain type. To abolish that advantage is therefore in one sense democratic.”*

Education, Lewis observed, was becoming increasingly focused on ensuring that no student feels different or inferior. He saw a major flaw in this “democratic” education.

“The more you concede to it the more it will demand,” Lewis wrote.

The problem isn’t that Boyden Elementary canceled its Halloween parade. Nor is it the poorly-chosen, Orwellian-like euphemism “Black and Orange Spirit Day.”

The problem, Lewis would likely say, is its unhealthy and excessive focus on equality, which is merely a social conception. “It has no place in the world of the mind.”

Such a focus on egalitarianism likely produces a certain amount of academic equality and (faux) self-esteem, but it achieves this by prioritizing the interests of a few to those of the many.