ASSIGNMENT III: PERSUASIVE WRITING IN CONTEXT
Suggested time: 40 to 50 minutes

Read the situation described below and use it to complete the assignment that follows.

The Situation

The Prosper High School administration is considering a proposal brought forward by the Parents' Advisory Council to adopt a school dress code. Supporters of the proposal express concern over student clothing choices that are frequently too revealing, inappropriate, or unsafe. Opponents of the proposal believe that a dress code would infringe on the rights of both students and their parents.

In deciding whether to accept the proposal, the Prosper High School administration has invited concerned individuals to make their views known. You are Quinn Whitley, a Grade 12 student at Prosper High School. You have considered information and opinions from a variety of sources (see pages 14 and 15). After considering the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal, you have reached a decision. You now need to write a persuasive speech or letter that clearly develops your position.

The Assignment

> **Write a speech or letter that will persuade the Prosper High School Administration either to ACCEPT or REJECT the proposal to adopt a school dress code.**

In preparing your persuasive speech or letter, BE SURE TO

- study the information on pages 14 and 15
- consider your purpose and audience
- present a clear argument that explains the reasons behind your decision
- use an appropriate tone

Remember that you must clearly and directly choose either to **accept** or to **reject** the proposal.
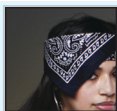
Prosper Students' Advisory Council
The Proposed School Dress Code will ban the Following:

Halter-tops, tube tops, off the shoulder tops, or low-cut tops of any kind
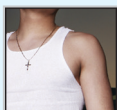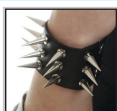
Extremely short shorts, skirts or dresses

Bandannas, hairnets, insignias on clothing which are crude, vulgar, profane, sexually suggestive, or advocate racial/ethnic prejudice, and alcohol or drug use, or gang affiliation

Exposed undergarments
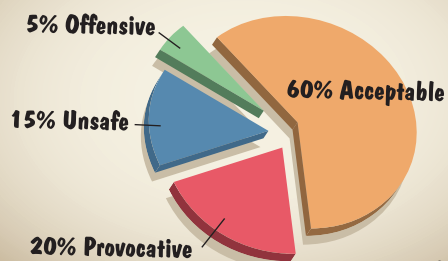
White sleeveless undershirts

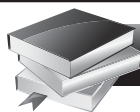Chains, jewelry, shoes and other clothing with points or spikes

Bare midriffs

Students who do not comply with the Prosper school dress code must return home and change or a school T-shirt will be provided.

Prosper High School Parents' Advisory Council
Categories of Student Dress (by Percentage %)

5% Offensive
60% Acceptable
15% Unsafe
20% Provocative

September 2012

Academic Journal
News   Studies   Journals

Student academic performance is more strongly linked to external factors than it is to cognitive ability. According to Dr. Sean Wells of the University of Western Canada, students are negatively influenced by the distractions of regular classroom settings.

"Conventional classrooms are filled with numerous distractions that are visual, auditory, and psychological in nature. When these distractions are reduced or removed, it becomes easier for students to focus on the material being studied."

Key findings of the study include:

- removing a single distraction improved concentration by 20%

- students in test groups with no distractions performed 30% higher on cognitive assessments

- psychological factors affecting student performance were hardest to control

FastPoll.com

Do you think the Prosper High School should have a dress code for students?

Results

Group	Yes	No	Undecided
High School Students	64%	22%	14%
High School Staff	82%	5%	13%
Parents	21%	53%	26%

Comments

User: **coolgirl11** (Janey Marcel)   "quote" edit

The school can have a dress code when they buy me a new wardrobe

User: **steve&marlene123** (The Johnsons)   "quote" edit

As parents, we resent outside authorities making decisions for our children. That's our job.

HITTT.com

"Results disappointing" says Rolling Hills' Principal
For the second straight year, provincial test results and high school completion rates have fallen in Rolling Hills. "We had hoped that the school uniform policy we introduced would have a positive effect," says Principal Julia Martin. "The theory was that students would be able to concentrate more on learning, but it hasn't worked out that way." ★★★☆☆

Prospero Players' season premiere "less than formal"
The Prospero Players attempt to bring a sense of style and grace to their new theatre continues to face challenges as patrons don't seem to get it. "Jeans and T-shirts, sweatpants, ball caps, toques, and hightops? This is an insult to the actors and community members who know what a formal occasion calls for." ★★★★☆

Fashion trends more "naughty" than "nice"
Short hemlines, short shorts, thigh-high boots, and stockings dominate the fashion circuit. But these and other fashions carry cautions when they are taken off the runway and into the workplace. "To embrace what's hot and current, trendsetters need to adapt what they see in the magazines in order to still dress appropriately in any situation." ★★☆☆☆

Prosper Community News

Snow Storm Leaves Students Stranded

November 5, 2012

… the Prosper school bus skidded off the road during the storm, and by the time the local fire department reached the bus, the temperature had dropped to minus 30°C. Many students were treated for mild frostbite. "The snow pack stalled the engine and we had no heat" said driver Rudy Weller. "It wouldn't have been as serious if the kids knew how to dress …"

PROSPER STUDENTS' UNION PRESENTS

BEACH BASH

PRIZES FOR HOTTEST BEACH WEAR

ACTIVITIES

* BEACH VOLLEYBALL * SURF MUSIC * HULA CONTEST *
* LIMBO CONTEST * FREE BURGERS AND HOTDOGS *
* SAND CASTLE BUILDING CONTEST *

The Town of Prosper

CITIZEN LINK

What is your opinion on the proposed dress code?

Derek Yee

freespirit000: My clothes express who I am. When u tell me what 2 wear, u are forcing me 2 b just like everybody else.

Charles Novak

nnspartners.com: When I entered the professional world I traded in my ripped jeans for dress pants and a tie. To be taken seriously, you have to dress the part.

Jolene Badger

jbdesigner30: My elders taught me that everything is in constant flux and changes with the times. So shouldn't our perspectives on appropriateness of dress and fashion reflect this as well?

I am Quinn Whitley, a grade 12 student here at Prosper High School and i do not think we should have a dress code in our high school. Our choice of clothing should be up to us, our parents, and the weather.

As the Johnsons say on Fastpoll.com, it is our parents job to make sure we are dressed appropriately. It is a parents job to look out for whats best for their children. If our parents allow us to wear jewlery with spikes or halter tops, then we should be allowed. The raised us so why cant we let them choose wat we wear?

Our clothing expresses who we are and what we stand for. Derek Yee wrote on the Citizen Link the same thing. We are our own individuals and we want our freedom to wear what we choose. As we were growning up everyone said be yourself, now that we want to be ourselves we are not allowed to.

The Student Union has already planned the Beach Bash and if the new dress code comes in we will have to cancel that. That would not be fair to the student who are looking forward to this and the Student Council who has put time and effort into making it possible.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and i hope you choose not to enforce the dress code as it will infringe on the rights of students and their parents. If you have anymore question feel free to contact me.

EXAMPLE PAPER—Satisfactory (S)

SCORING CRITERIA	RATIONALE	SCORE
Thought and Support (S) • A sufficient but generalized understanding of the issue is demonstrated.	A **sufficient** but **generalized understanding** of the issue is demonstrated in the statement that "i do not think we should have a dress code in our high school" because "Our choice of clothing should be up to us, our parents, and the weather."	
• The student's arguments are appropriate and straightforward.	The **student's arguments**—"it is our parents job to make sure we are dressed appropriately," "our clothing expresses who we are and what we stand for," and "The Student Union has already planned the Beach Bash and if the new dress code comes in we will have to cancel that" are **appropriate** and **straightforward**.	S
• Support is relevant but general, and may be occasionally lacking in persuasiveness and consistency.	**Support** is **relevant** but **general**, as in "If our parents allow us to wear jewellery with spikes or halter tops, then w should be allowed," "We are our own individuals and we want our freedom to wear what we choose," "That would not be fair to the student who are looking forward to this and the Student Council who has put time and effort into making it possible," and **occasionally lacking in persuasiveness**— "Derek Yee wrote on the Citizen Link the same thing."	
• The voice is clear.	The **voice** is **clear** in statements such as "Thank you for taking the time to read this and i hope you choose not to enforce the dress code."	

SCORING CRITERIA	RATIONALE	SCORE
Writing Skills (S) • The selection and use of words and structures are occasionally effective. • This writing demonstrates basic control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.	The selection and use of **words** and **structures** are **occasionally effective**, as in "As we were growing up everyone said be yourself, now that we want to be ourselves we are not allowed to." This writing demonstrates **basic control** of correct sentence construction, usage, and grammar: "I am Quinn Whitley, a grade 12 student here at Prosper High School and i do not think we should have a dress code in our high school" and "It is a parents job to look out for whats best for their children."	S

Dear Prosper Highschool Administrators,

My name is Quinn Whitley, a grade 12 student of Prosper High School. I have heard your proposal to adopt a school dress code and I would like to tell you what my opinion about all of this. I humbly accept this idea.

Firstly, the students need to know where they are going and need to know how to properly dress for it. You can't go to school wearing the same clothes you could wear for a metal band concert. That's just not right. Sure, students may complain about not being able to express themselves because they're being forced to wear clothes that they don't like but it's for their own good. Like in the stranded bus incident, who would wear sleeveless shirts and short shorts in that kind of weather? They will go out to society wearing suits and ties anyway, so why not start dressing appropriately now?

Secondly, the learning atmoshpere in the classroom will improve if there are fewer distractions. Students will concentrate more on the lesson than looking at other stundents' distracting clothes. Some students may also talk to others that they couldn't talk before because of their imposing clothes. They may even gain even more friends by wearing more acceptable clothes than before.

Lastly, about the events that require students to wear certain clothing. Those could be allowed due to it being a school event and happens just once in a schoolyear. Of course, they are allowed to wear anything they wish, it just have to fit in with the criteria of the event. If it's a beach wear event, they're supposed to wear clothes for the beach; if it's a sweater contest, only sweaters are allowed, that sort of thing.

Thank you for your time in reading this letter and I hope you will make the right choice. I hope you will consider these ideas in passing the dress code proposal.

Sincerely,

Quinn Whitely

EXAMPLE PAPER—Proficient (Pf)

SCORING CRITERIA	RATIONALE	SCORE
Thought and Support (Pf) • A thoughtful and competent understanding of the issue is demonstrated.	A **thoughtful** and **competent understanding** of the issue is demonstrated through the student's discussion of reasons for "passing the dress code proposal," including the need to understand how to dress appropriately, the need to improve student concentration in class, and the allowance for exceptions to the dress code for special events.	
• The student's arguments are well considered and sound.	The student's **arguments**—"Firstly, the students need to know where they are going and need to know how to properly dress for it," "Secondly, the learning atmosphere in the classroom will improve if there are fewer distractions," and "Lastly, about the events that require students to wear certain clothing. Those could be allowed due to it being a school event and happens just once in a schoolyear"—are **well considered** and **sound**.	Pf
• Support is accurate and occasionally purposefully chosen to reinforce the student's ideas in a logical and clear way.	**Support** is **accurate** ("Students will concentrate more on the lesson than looking at other students' distracting clothes" and "Of course, they are allowed to wear anything they wish, it just have to fit in with the criteria of the event") and **occasionally purposefully chosen** ("You can't go to school wearing the same clothes you could wear for a metal band concert") to reinforce the student's ideas in a **logical** and **clear way**.	
• The voice is competent.	The **voice** is **competent**, as in "I humbly accept this idea" and "That's just not right. Sure, students may complain about not being able to express themselves because they're being forced to wear clothes that they don't like but it's for their own good."	

SCORING CRITERIA	RATIONALE	SCORE
Writing Skills (Pf) • The selection and use of words and structures are frequently effective. • This writing demonstrates competent control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.	The **selection** and use of **words** and **structures** are **frequently effective**—"Like in the stranded bus incident, who would wear sleeveless shirts and short shorts in that kind of weather? They will go out to society wearing suits and ties anyway, so why not start dressing appropriately now?" and "If it's a beach wear event, they're supposed to wear clothes for the beach; if it's a sweater contest, only sweaters are allowed, that sort of thing." This writing demonstrates **competent control** of correct sentence construction, usage, and mechanics in sentences such as "Firstly, the students need to know where they are going and need to know how to properly dress for it" and "They will go out to society wearing suits and ties anyway, so why not start dressing appropriately now?". **Proportion of error in terms of the complexity if the response has been considered.**	Pf

Dear Prosper High School Administration,

My name is Quinn Whitley and I am a grade 12 student at Prosper High School. I am writing this letter to discuss the matter of whether to bring in a student dress code or not. I will be advocating on the side of not bringing in a dress code. Dress codes are things that should be reserved for private schools. They take away from the individuality of the students and freedom of expression. It also creates an environment of high stress and conformity, as well as causing the students to buy new clothes to fit into the dress code that they might not be able to afford.

A dress code for our high school is a bad idea. Students like to dress in ways that express who they are. Some dress in the fashion that is considered cool or others like to represent their culture in what they wear. With the implementation of a dress code the freedom of expression would be removed from the students. Only a small percentage of students actually dress in what is considered as ``crude or vulgar`` dress wear. You should not take the actions of a few and punish everyone. That is discrimination. If you only punish the people who are going overboard in what they wear in trying to either show to much skin or vulgar and profane things then punish them. Let everyone else dress like regular people and express who they are through what they wear.

Although bringing in a dress code seems like a good idea it can cause many issues. Not all students and their families have extra cash to burn. Some families are already very stressed in where and how they are going to get the bills paid on time. Implementing a dress code would burden them with more stress because they would need to purchase new clothing to fit the standards of said dress code. Also fun activities like the ``Beach Bash,`` where students go to bond and play and have a good

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time would be removed. They wouldn't be allowed to dress in their beach attire and just go to a school activity to have fun with their friends because of the dress code.

Although some studies show that taking away distractions such as outside appearances and how we dress improve our cognitive abilities and academics these studies are often very biased. They select people from a small group of people that will help their study get better results. The principal from Rolling Hills` even states that the introduced uniform policy did not work the way it should have. Even with the dress code the provincial test results and high school completion rates did not improve. Most parents agree that is okay what the students are wearing and there is no need for a school dress code.

Although we understand that implementing a school dress code may seem like a good idea, it would cause a lot more unrest then solving the problems. The real problem is only a small percent of the students who need to be treated according to what they do. Instead of solving the actual problem it would only create more and would cause students to lose identity because they can`t express who they are through the clothing they wear.

Sincerely, Quinn Whitley

EXAMPLE PAPER—Excellent (E)

SCORING CRITERIA	RATIONALE	SCORE
Thought and Support (E) • A perceptive and thorough understanding of the issue is demonstrated.	A **perceptive** and **thorough understanding** of the issue is demonstrated in the student's discussion of how implementing a dress code would "take away from the individuality of the students," cause "high stress and conformity," not improve "provincial test results and high school completion rates," and "punish everyone" for the "actions of a few."	
• The student's arguments are adept and convincing.	The student's **arguments** ("Students like to dress in ways that express who they are," "Some families are already very stressed in where and how they are going to get the bills paid on time," that the dress code will not "improve our cognitive abilities and academics," and "If you only punish the people who are going overboard in what they wear in trying to either show to much skin or vulgar and profane things then punish them") are **adept** and **convincing**.	E
• Support is well defined and purposefully chosen to reinforce the student's ideas in a deliberate and judicious way.	**Support** is **well defined** and **purposefully chosen** to reinforce the student's ideas in a **deliberate** and **judicious** way: "Some dress in the fashion that is considered cool or others like to represent their culture in what they wear," "Not all students and their families have extra cash to burn," "The principal from Rolling Hills' even states that the introduced uniform policy did not work the way it should have," and "Only a small percentage of students actually dress in what is considered as 'crude or vulgar' dress wear."	
• The voice is confident.	The **voice** is **confident**—"I will be advocating on the side of not bringing in a dress code."	

SCORING CRITERIA	RATIONALE	SCORE
Writing Skills (E) • The selection and use of words and structures are effective.	The selection and use of **words** and **structures** are **effective**, as in "Implementing a dress code would burden them with more stress because they would need to purchase new clothing to fit the standards of said dress code."	E
• This writing demonstrates confident control of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.	This writing demonstrates **confident control** of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics: "Let everyone else dress like regular people and express who they are through what they wear" and "They wouldn't be allowed to dress in their beach attire and just go to a school activity to have fun with their friends because of the dress code."	