

August 31, 2018

Dear Parents,

The 2018-2019 year has begun and your students have brought wonderful life back to our campus yet again. I wanted to take this time to introduce myself and express my goals for my time here at Saint John Paul II Academy. The year before my arrival at SJPII, I was working as the Director of Student Affairs for the University of Dallas. This experience gave me a unique perspective on formation of the adolescent mindset—specifically on the response to authority and rules. Put simply, the objective of the Office of Student Life is to aid in the education and formation of the student outside of the classroom. Our goals are in support of the mission of SJPII and aimed at attaining the values of respect for self and others as well as a sense of responsibility and maturity. I expressed to our students at orientation that our rules are meant to be visible signs of our mission and direct tools to aid in the exercise of our education. Learning is a serious endeavor and our policies are meant to remove distractions so as to make way for effective study.

This summer, our faculty convened and evaluated different areas the school could work on this year and by a general consensus the committee made recommendations to administrators on what policies and procedures should be addressed. We acknowledge that our past has been lax and inconsistent in addressing some of the infractions to our student-parent hand book—but this is a fault of ours that can no longer be excused. Our rules are here to stay. With regard to our uniform policy, I must rely on your support as parents in meeting our requirements. There are three areas in which we currently struggle to meet the minimum requirements of our policy: shoes, personal grooming, and uniforms. I would like to clarify that our written uniform policy and specifics have remained unchanged for the past three years. 1) Our students must wear either all black or all brown dress shoes, OR all black or all white athletic shoes. We currently see several students wearing colorful shoes or dressing their shoes with colorful laces. 2) Our personal grooming requirements state that young men may not sport facial hair and must come to school clean shaven. The hair (for young men) must also fall no longer than the bottom of the shirt collar and cannot be tied up in a bun. 3) Our uniform shorts must not fall shorter than three inches above the knee. We would like to see from our dress code, a uniformity across the board. With regards to this last policy, I believe that we currently face two main problems which may have been key reasons to the state we find ourselves in today. First, uniforms must be purchased through Lands End. In theory, Lands End should be providing shorts that meet the length requirement—they advertise our school specific shorts as ‘bermuda’ shorts or ‘chino shorts’ with a minimum inseam of five inches. What I have come to learn is that there are several complaints about our uniform provider which hinder the ability to secure an appropriate fit for our students. The school has permitted the purchase of a comparable pair of shorts from other providers to students and families who have a valid complaint about Lands End (i.e. no sizes/cuts will fit



appropriately). This exception must be approved with the school in advance. Unfortunately, the problem is that many students use that excuse to purchase shorts from anywhere and they often do not meet the length requirement. Second, the method of dress code checks has been to have teachers inspect student uniforms in the classroom— if they determine the length is too short, they will provide the student with either a warning or a demerit, which I will follow up with via email. No teacher will use a ruler to measure the length of shorts; as such I believe the "fingertip rule" was adopted as an easy way for teachers to determine if the length was even close to the three inch regulation, and unfortunately, it seems its convenience replaced all monitoring of the dress code length requirement. The "fingertip length" unit of measurement, does us no good as every student is different and does not ensure we are complying with our length requirement. We are very sorry for the inconvenience that this may present to our students, especially our seniors who are approaching the end of their time here at SJPII. We ask for your support in reaching an appropriate solution. Our uniform, dress and presentation says a lot about our school and we would like to have our appearance match the quality of our education.

Parents, please take some time to evaluate your students' uniforms. If your son needs to get a haircut, or your children need to get appropriate shoes, please assist them there. If your student has complained that they are too cold on campus, please secure for them a sweater or jacket that complies with the uniform— I would kindly add that sweaters and jackets be worn as they are intended to fit (oversized and purposefully baggy should not be permitted). If you find that your uniform shorts do not come close to a three inch above the knee or a 'bermuda' length please either secure a pair of shorts that will work or have your child attend school in the alternative uniform— pants. The front office currently has a small supply of donated shorts from previous students; if you know your child does not have school shorts please direct them to our supply while they last.

We are very thankful for your cooperation and I welcome any questions, comments or concerns on this or any issue regarding student life.

Sincerely,

Mr. Lucas Preble  
Assistant Principal for Student Life