



## LCHS Dress Code: “The Rest Of The Story”

By: Bob Schaffer, Headmaster

One attractive feature of Liberty Common School is the school’s Dress Code. It’s an apposite balance struck between school uniforms that are often associated with private institutions and wide-open and unrestricted approaches often associated with large urban campuses.

And now you’re about to hear...the rest of the story:

“You’re starting to sound as casual as you dress,” said **Bob Benninghoff**, longtime engineer for the famous radio feature *Paul Harvey News and Comment*. The target of the sharp remark was none other than the radio master himself, **Paul Harvey**.

Harvey once described for his worldwide audience how he briefly succumbed to the trend toward casual office attire. After all, Harvey was admired because of his commentary, storytelling and news reporting – delivered entirely over the radio.

Since listeners could not see how he was dressed, Harvey found himself opting for the comfort of open collars, khakis and shirtsleeves at work. His appearance, he reasoned, should not have been a factor in his daily performance.

Yet it was.

Benninghoff perceived that he could hear a more casual tone in the doyen’s radio delivery, and it turned out he was not alone in sharing this opinion directly with Harvey. Others, too, had noticed a difference in Harvey’s radio performances. (An excerpt on this story can be found in the book *Paul Harvey’s America* by Stephen Mansfield and David Holland).

Harvey quickly realized his apparel affected his attitude. His attitude affected his performance. His performance affected the millions of listeners who tuned in every day to hear Harvey.

The more casual his clothing, the more casually he approached his craft. If he wanted to do his level best, he now knew he needed to resume dressing his best.

For Harvey, it was back to crisp shirts, pressed jackets and smart ties; and, back to the soaring ratings that placed him at the pinnacle of achievement in radio-broadcasting history.

As a charter school aspiring to reach the pinnacle of achievement in public-education history, Liberty's school policy promotes decent attire in order to foster a staid learning environment.

A respectable dress code has been part of Liberty's culture since the school's doors were first opened in 1997. The school's original charter notes "a dress code would help establish a desirable learning environment."

According to Liberty's teachers, there is a palpable relationship between the school's dress code and learning. For example, students behave quite differently when we reward them with "Free-Dress Days," and "Liberty T-shirt Days." Dressing down has a direct undesirable impact on attitudes in school.

The Liberty Dress Code has a positive impact on how students treat one another, how well they show respect for their teachers, their punctuality, and how well they're maintaining a focus on academic goals. Liberty cannot afford to get off track in these matters.

The administration and faculty at Liberty endeavor to enforce the school's Dress Code, tardiness and gum chewing in school. Students are reminded of their obligations in this regard at the beginning of each school year. All parents, too, are alerted to these expectations at parent meetings, in the Student/Parent Handbook, and in other school publications.

Liberty is fortunate to have a balanced Dress Code and rational disciplinary expectations. These clear guidelines minimize disruptions, and help mask social distinctions indicated by attire. They convey a sense of dignity and mutual respect; and, they help families save money when buying school clothing.

Moreover, Liberty's modest Dress Code strategy promotes the school's theme of *Common knowledge, common virtues and common sense*.

And now you know, as Paul Harvey used to say, "...the rest of the story. Good day!"