



An open letter to all TMS students:

As I enter my second year, I am reflecting on how things went last year and what lessons I learned being in a new school. I watched some traditions and practices that have been here for years and I saw a few changes. The H.S.A. posted a survey at the end of the year so that I could get feedback directly from your parents. It was very helpful and interesting to read all of the comments. I truly appreciate the support and help I received last year because it made my transition enjoyable and smooth.

One tradition that I observed last year was the Monday sweatshirt/t-shirt phenomenon that happens mostly in 7th grade. After a weekend celebration, students who attend a party will wear clothing they received as a party gift to show their support for the student who had the celebration. As the year rolled on, I noticed this more and more. I had conversations with students, teachers, parents, administrators, and community leaders throughout the year to gain some different perspectives. I learned many things and heard many opinions. While I can see both sides of the argument about whether or not everyone should wear the clothes on Monday, I have come to the conclusion that it has a negative impact on the school community. I understand the intention of having these mementos is never to hurt anyone's feelings or send a message of exclusion, but unfortunately these are the unintended consequences.

This letter is to ask for your help, students, and empower you to make decisions that will send a positive message. I am not banning the practice of wearing shirts from parties, but I am asking you to not wear them all on the same day. As you mature, you begin to realize that you can have an impact on the lives of others. There are a few ideas I hope you consider if you are thinking of handing out shirts at a party.

Maybe telling your friends not to all wear the shirt on Monday will avoid having someone feel like they were not worthy enough to be on the invite list. Maybe just having a great celebration on the weekend is enough and you don't need further validation on Monday or Tuesday or whatever day. Maybe instead of a shirt or sweatshirt, something else is given out that doesn't have to be worn in school. Maybe you even tell your parents that they can use the money they would spend on shirts for something else, perhaps a charitable donation. Maybe this is the year our 7th graders start a new tradition.

This letter is not intended to start a debate or to have further discussion. It is to share with you my views on something I observed over the course of the year and to ask for help in making our school better. As always, thank you for your help and support.

Sincerely,

John D. Fabbo