**This is how you teach rape culture to 12-year-olds**

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[](http://d1o2xrel38nv1n.cloudfront.net/files/2013/04/Rape-culture-pic.jpg)

Ban the girls from wearing tight pants to stop them from “distracting” the boys.

That’s what Kenilworth Junior High School in Petaluma, CA, has done. [From KTVU:](http://www.ktvu.com/news/news/local/petaluma-middle-school-bans-too-tight-pants-girls/nXD6S/)

*At Kenilworth Junior High in Petaluma, a school administrator pulled all the girls aside Thursday afternoon and told them they couldn’t wear pants that were “too tight” because it distracts the boys.*

*Instead of heading to their last class Thursday, all the female students reported to the multi-use room and when they found out what it was about there was quite an uproar.*

*“It takes away like half of my clothes because I have a lot of yoga pants and leggings, so everyone’s kind of like mad about it,” said Makenna Mattei, a student.*

As a lover of leggings, I feel for Mattei, and for any student who now has to go and spend money that their family might not have  in order to adhere to the dress code. But I also want to make it clear that what this school is doing is inducting these kids into rape culture. By declaring that women are responsible for controlling men’s behaviour, the school is sending the message loud and clear: if men are “distracted” by you, or worse, it’s your fault for not dressing the way you’re “supposed” to.

That’s rape culture. To their credit, some of the parents see it that way, too.

*Some parents were bothered by this because they said it sends the wrong messages to girls. “It is not our girls’ fault that these boys have quote ‘raging hormones’ they can’t control,” said Lisa Simond, a parent of a student.*

Simond is exactly right. If you want to make a school a safe, productive learning environment for all your students, start by teaching them to respect each other’s bodies. Teach them to do that regardless of what their peers are wearing.

This bullshit dress code does just the opposite: it teaches boys that there are certain circumstances under which they don’t have to respect their classmates’ bodies and boundaries. And it teaches them that if god forbid they violate those boundaries, they won’t be held fully responsible: it’ll be her fault for wearing yoga pants, or a  belly shirt, or for drinking too much, or for walking alone, or for insert violation here. Finally, it teaches them that you just don’t expect that much of them. You don’t expect them to be able to control themselves, to treat their girl friends like human beings, to ignore “distractions” and focus on learning.

This is how you teach rape culture to 12-year-olds. And if you’re teaching it, don’t be surprised when, one day in the near or distant future, one of them commits an act of sexual violence. We sure as hell won’t be.