

To the Parents and Students of Villa Rica High School,

Change is not an easy thing to accept. We are all creatures of habit. I am as guilty as anyone of this. Each morning I come to school, start my computer, turn on the coffee pot, check my email, and write my Daily News. The pattern rarely changes. The same goes for my routine at home, the way I go certain places, even where I park at the mall. We are creatures of habit and change does not come easy.

It is our goal to change the perception of Villa Rica High School in the eyes of our students, the community, the system and the State. Our students consistently score as high as any students in Carroll County. Our 11<sup>th</sup> graders scored 97% on the Georgia High School Writing Test this past fall. That was well above the State average and by far the highest in Carroll County. The perception is that VRHS is not a quality school. When I enter the community, I long to share the many successes and achievements of our students; however, I am bombarded by negative comments regarding student appearance and behavior.

A few weeks ago we had an incident at school where several young ladies had a disagreement over a young man and a fight broke out, a fight that was over within 30 seconds. This was front page news for VRHS. We did not receive any mention of 97% pass rate on the GHSWT. This is the change we want to make, the perception. We want Channels 2, 5, and 11 to show up because we raised our graduation rate or our STAR student got accepted to Georgia Tech or UGA or even Harvard. It is our goal to have the students at VRHS recognized for all their many successes, not their few failures. Unfortunately our reputation precedes us.

Our new dress code is designed to do just this. Take the focus away from the negative and place it on the positive. As with any drastic change there will be those who oppose the idea. I welcome the comments and hope they are constructive and provide food for thought. It is communication and support that will build our reputation as the best school in Carroll County. The dress code changes are not a source of punishment for our students, quite the contrary. It is the goal of the administration, faculty and staff of VRHS to celebrate with our students. Our students are the best of the best and deserve to be seen as such.

The dress code for our students is not the only significant change being made at VRHS. I take heed of the words of a "concerned parent" who wrote in regards to the way the campus looks, I agree completely. It looks terrible in spots and we are addressing those areas also. Another parent commented on the professional dress (or lack there of) of the faculty and staff; again, I agree. We are going to present ourselves in that professional manner each and every day. The students of VRHS deserve a professional faculty. Students should not be asked to comply with any rule that does not have comparable, but not necessarily identical, directives that apply to faculty and staff members. VRHS faculty and staff members will represent our school in the manner that it deserves.

Change is inevitable, but that does not make it any easier to swallow. The changes that are coming to VRHS are coming to make the educational process better for our students. I am asking for the support and/or understanding from all our parents, community leaders and students in this endeavor. My Big Mama always said, "Change is like eating an elephant. You can only do it one bite at a time." So I challenge you to sidle up to the table, grab a fork and let's put this pachyderm in the past. It will take me forever to eat that elephant, but WE can devour her quickly if we do it together.

Now is the time for the Villa Rica community to come together, show that VR pride and make VRHS the best it can be, because together, WE ARE VR!!!

Sincerely,

Dennis K. Brown  
Principal  
Villa Rica High School