# 8th grader suspended for wearing patriotic T-shirt

(by Stephen Mayer, KATU News) GRESHAM, Oregon — You don’t have to talk with eighth-grader **Alan Holmes** for very long to know that patriotism and support for the military are very important to him.

That’s in large part due to his older brother, who joined the Marines when he was just 19 and wound up serving abroad in Iraq.

Alan will never forget the day his big brother made it home safely.

“I was proud of him. I remember the day he came home and I was just so happy. I was little but I still remember it, he made me happy,” Alan said.

Ever since then Alan has tried to show his support for the troops, something he says he was doing when he wore a t-shirt with an image of the traditional soldier memorial (the Fallen Soldier Battle Cross), with a rifle, boots, and a helmet and bearing the words “Standing for those who stood for us,” to Dexter McCarty Middle School on Wednesday, Oct. 7.

But he says the principal spotted the shirt and gave him an ultimatum, switch shirts or face an in-school suspension. Alan didn’t back down.

“The principal, I asked him, is this considered a suspension? He said yes I’ll see you tomorrow and I left,” Alan said.

Alan still can’t understand why the image caused so much fuss.

“I was just upset. I was heartbroken. My brother, he means everything for me. Just being able to help and give back to the people who fought and died for us it just makes me feel good,” Alan said.

We checked the school dress code and it does bar students from wearing any clothes promoting alcohol, drugs, tobacco or violence.

Alan understands how people could be sensitive to images like that on his shirt given the recent school shooting, but he insists it isn’t a violent image. He says the image is being misinterpreted by school officials. “This isn’t relating the violence,” he said. “The barrel is pointing down. It’s total gun safety.”

The district refused to comment, citing student confidentiality requirements. They said only that weapons on a shirt are not appropriate in a school setting.

**Questions**

1. The first paragraph of a news article should answer the questions who, what, where and when. In this article, you will find those answers throughout the article. List the who, what, where and when of this news item. (NOTE: The remainder of a news article provides details on the why and/or how.)

who: what: where:

when:

2. Describe the t-shirt 8th grader Alan Holmes was not permitted to wear in school.

3. What ultimatum did the principal give Alan when he saw his shirt?

4 Why was Alan not permitted to wear the T-shirt?

5. What comment did the school district make about the incident with Alan?

6. How did Alan defend his choice of T-shirt?

7. The school handbook specifically says “clothing with alcohol, tobacco, illicit drug and/or violence related references are prohibited.” Do you think the principal made the right decision regarding Alan’s t-shirt? **In a paragraph below, explain why or why not?**

8. The following are several Facebook comments about Alan’s t-shirt. Circle the ones with which do you agree. Explain your answers:

All students receive a “Student Handbook” that clearly states what the dress code is. Guns and other weapons are not allowed on shirts ect…

It’s NOT an anti-anything…it’s a keeping kids safe and maintaining an educational environment thing.

This is getting ridiculous. Why are we so offended by everything? He’s proud to be an American. He’s a kid. Have we lost sight of Freedom of Speech?

Stand your ground young man. It’s not a “gangster” shirt, it’s in support of the military.