

A timely message for young people

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REGULAR READERS may have noticed a fascinating front page story Thursday about a presentation made to a full Beloit Memorial High School assembly by a gentleman by the name of Dr. Adolph Brown III.

Dr. Brown popped up out of the crowd attired in a baggy t-shirt, saggy pants and a wig with wild braids. In his presentation he didn't hold back or play the role of politically correct speaker. He told the youngsters if they want to succeed they should "pull up your pants or join me on my prison tour." He held up a shirt that said "Sex Symbol" — with artwork showing wedding rings.

When Dr. Brown, who grew up in the projects and endured the murder of a brother, switched out of his costume into professional business attire he told the kids, "It's not how you start, it's how you finish." He told the high schoolers to "dress in the way you want to be addressed."

WE KNOW THERE are plenty who may say, "Stop picking on how the kids look. Young people need to feel free to express themselves."

To a point, we agree. Creating look-alike robots is not the goal of an education.

At the same time, though, messages like the one delivered by Dr. Brown are incredibly important and deserve more attention than a fleeting occasional assembly.

Otherwise, a legitimate question is, "What now?"

HERE'S WHY IT matters for young people who will soon be charged with making their way in the adult world.

Appropriate dress and proper manners are expressions of discipline and respect.

Discipline and respect are major difference-makers in building toward a successful life. In the school environment, and in some other institutions, young people may expect a soft touch that still accommodates the incremental development of children. But when they leave those halls the world of work and business is built upon performance and teamwork, and one's every contribution — good or bad — is measured and judged. An inability or unwillingness to fit in — to bring high levels of discipline and respect to bolster outcomes every day — is unlikely to be tolerated

That can be a culture shock for young people. In fact, it has been a culture shock for young people generation after generation. Everybody goes through it, at one time or another.

The point: Schools cannot do enough to stress the importance of fitting in, being disciplined, being respectful of professional culture. It's as much a part of education and preparation for post-school success as reading, writing and arithmetic. Dr. Brown's presentation was great. Now, what's the follow-up?