

Dress code in school should be applied

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School dress code has always been a controversial topic in the United States mainly because of American culture. Many school dress codes or uniforms have come from England. Uniforms in public school reduce economic and social barriers between students, encourage discipline and affect positive attitude by increasing self-confidence, school pride, and a sense of belonging, and create a safe environment in the schools. In the 1960s United States began adopting school uniforms in public schools but even now it is controversial whether or not they should be implemented throughout the country.

The idea of uniforms came from England where their purpose was to encourage docility and obedience toward authority. However, England and United States used the uniforms to distinguish the lower class from the elite parochial schools. Even though the public schools did not start to look at uniforms until the 1960s, private and Catholic schools had uniform policies which were questioned for much of the first half of the twentieth century (David L. Brunnsma, 2004). In 1960, people protested against school uniforms implemented by Catholic and private schools.

The protests were based on different concerns, such as: 1) Uniforms became an invasion of parents' rights; 2) the inherent statement that uniforms make of conformity and similarity was being questioned; 3) At that time, the school uniforms were expensive for poorer families; and 4) children will eventually find out social class boundaries, etc. (Brunnsma, 2004). Uniforms take away from visible difference between student socioeconomics and removes pressure to dress a certain way. Students can then focus more on their schoolwork and less on what their peers are wearing.

In the book *Rights of Student* the author states, “ Some students may feel ostracized because they cannot afford the latest fashions that are popular among their classmates” (Hudson and Marzilli, 2004). Former president Bill Clinton encouraged the idea of school uniforms in his 1996 State of the Union address. He said, “ If it means that teenagers will stop killing each other over designer jackets, then our public school should be allowed to require the students to wear school uniforms” (Hudson and Marzilli, 2004).

Clinton also stated: “ If it means that the schoolrooms will be more orderly, more disciplined, and that our young people will learn to evaluate themselves by what they are on the inside instead of what they're wearing on the outside, then our public schools should be able to require their students to wear school uniforms”(Hudson and Marzilli, 2004). Uniforms are not only used to avoid socioeconomic difference and remove peer pressure to dress a certain way, but also used to increase safety in public schools.

Schools in United States had to implement dress code regulation to provide and improve a safe environment for student and faculty. After the Columbine shooting, schools’ safety awareness brought attention to dress codes in schools. Schools began implementing uniforms that prevented students from wearing gang-related apparel like trench coats and baggy pants, which enable students to hide weapons easily. Teachers and principals of students wearing uniforms can quickly see if there are non-students present in the building depending on the colors of the uniforms.

School personnel can quickly notice a person that is a non-student on school grounds, preventing a trespasser who might cause harm at the school. One

can agree with Jamuna's viewpoint in the book *Students' Rights* when he said, "Of all the potential benefits of school dress policies, none is more important than improving school safety" (Jamuna, 2005). Another aspect is how student dress affects attitudes in school and throughout adult years. Uniforms encourage discipline, sense of belonging and school pride, which can facilitate later on in life in the work place or even in their personal lives. Some students and parents object to dress codes. However, the majority of school administrators recognize that well-drafted student dress codes help provide a better learning environment. Students need to learn how to dress for success. (Hudson and Marzilli, 2004) A person must have the appropriate attire to dress for a job interview. Should the school be no different? In the United States, schools and parents have disagreed over school uniforms. Some believe they violate or restrict a student's right to freedom of expression.

There have been cases where the students have taken legal action against schools and won. The most popular is *Tinver v. Des Moines Independent Community School Districts*, where the school implemented a dress code policy that armbands could not be used in the school (Raskin, 2003). Tinver's and a group of adults and students' purpose were to publicize their objection to the hostilities in Vietnam. "Petitioners John F. Tinver, 15 years old, and Christopher Eckhardt, 16 years old, attended high school in Des Moines, Iowa. Petitioner

Mary Beth Tinver, John's sister, was a 13 year-old-student in junior high school" (Raskin, 2003). However, the first Amendment protects freedom of

verbal speech and uniforms does not qualify as express conduct because it contains no particular message. In the book *Rights of Student who's Arthurs* are Hudson and Marzilli states, "Restrictions on students dress are not designed to suppress free expressions; rather, they are a way to improve the educational environment" (Hudson and Marzilli, 2004). Opponents also believe school uniforms inhibit student's individuality.

Teenagers express their feelings by the garments they wear. Uniforms take away this form of expression. Why should school districts try to make everyone look the same? For United States students, wearing uniforms may be viewed as too formal in a casual school atmosphere and too limiting of individuality. Parents may perceive that uniforms are less expensive than what would ordinarily be worn every day (Brunsmma, 2006). School uniforms can be adopted from childhood onward, but adolescence is a time when uniforms may be adopted in the United States (Kim, DeLong, and LaBat, 2001).

The third reason opponents disagree is that they believe uniforms inhibit a student's freedom of choice. The United States focuses on teaching freedom of choice, therefore opponents feel there is no ethos in teaching when uniforms are implemented. In website called *Children's School Uniforms, Pros and Cons*, Dorit Sasson says, "A School uniform is an issue which has caused a lot of debate in the last few years. Many students feel they lose their identity when everyone is required to wear the same clothes to school" (Sasson, 2007). However, there has been a survey that shows students support school uniforms.

In the article Sasson also says, “ Some English students have recently come out in support of school uniforms. According to a survey of 1, 300 teens, 67% of the boys and 52% of the girls prefer wearing uniforms to school” (Sasson, 2007). The author of Students’ Rights supports the idea and says, “ Though the majority of public schools do not require uniforms, the feedback is very positive from those who do” (Jamuna, 2005). In conclusion, dress codes should be applied in all public schools for the following potential benefits. First they reduce economic and social barriers between students.

Secondly, they are essential to the school environment by promoting school safety, encouraging discipline and boosting positive attitudes. Though opponents believe school uniforms violate or restricts a student’s right to freedom of expression, inhibit student’s individuality and student freedom of choice, the fact remains that as Hudson and Marzilli state, “ School should be more about discipline than fashion. School uniforms help decrease tensions in school, reduce socioeconomic differences, improve safety, and remove distractions. ”