

Free research paper on a discussion of school uniforms

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The issue of whether or not to institute school uniforms in American public schools is a debate that has been going on for many years. Everyone seems to have an opinion on the topic, and neither side has more convincing arguments than the other for the most part. However, there are significant advantages to instituting the use of school uniforms in American public schools, and these advantages definitely sway the debate towards the use of school uniforms in public schools. In the United States, school uniforms are often associated with private schools, because many public schools do not have the resources to require uniforms for their students. Instead, most public schools in the United States allow for students to use their own clothing, as long as it falls within the guidelines of the dress code that the school has adopted. However, in recent years, more and more schools are adopting uniforms for use in the public school system.

In many places around the world, school uniforms are standard for all students, regardless of where they go to school or what type of school they attend (Carroll, 2008). For instance, most countries who still utilize the British school system, like schools in the United Kingdom or Hong Kong, require all students to wear uniforms to school. In these countries, there is no question about whether or not school uniforms are good or bad for the students; they are merely required, in the same way that adults are required to wear certain clothes to work (Carroll, 2008). Because the United States' public schools have no history of uniform requirements, however, changing the norm often sparks debate.

One very compelling reason for the use of school uniforms is a new reason. In the past two decades, the United States has seen a growth in incidents of

violence on school grounds. Often, this violence takes place when a student is bullied or otherwise ostracized for being different in some way (Carroll, 2008). Clothes are often one of the things that sets one student apart from another; a student whose family is poor or unable to buy new clothes may inadvertently set a student apart from his or her peers (Carroll, 2008). When this happens, the student may feel separate and alienated from the rest of the school, and if the individual is already prone to violence, he or she may end up hurting students in the school (Carroll, 2008). However, there is another side to this as well: students who are bullied by their peers who do not have a tendency to lash out violently towards others may still act violently towards themselves. According to Great Schools (2013), there has also been a rise in the amount of suicides that are linked to bullying in schools, and students who are committing suicide are doing so at younger and younger ages. Regardless of the type of violence-- inward or outward-- having school uniforms could protect some students against the type of bullying that comes from the type of clothes that the students wear, or the amount of money that their family has.

When schools do not have uniforms, the school is responsible for setting forth a responsible dress code for all students to abide by (Great Schools, 2013). However, as anyone with any experience with teenagers is aware, teenagers are constantly looking for ways to test the limits of their independence and the limits of the rules that they are governed by. This may lead to school administrators having problems with the dress code within the school, or dealing with student complaints of unfair application of the dress code; if there is a uniform and very clear uniform requirements, then it is

much easier for school administrators to adhere to the rules regarding appropriate dress at school.

Research also suggests that uniforms in schools help students concentrate at school much better. According to Great Schools (2013), research by a professor named Virginia Draa states: “ Draa's study concluded that those schools with uniform policies improved in attendance, graduation and suspension rates. She was unable to connect uniforms with academic improvement because of such complicating factors as changing instructional methods and curriculum.” While Draa said clearly that she could not state that uniforms were the cause of the improvement, she suggests that there is a distinct correlative effect between uniforms and school performance. She also suggests that this may be because uniforms allow students to focus better in classes, and prevents the formation of dress-based cliques (Great Schools, 2013).

In troubled schools, or schools with high levels of gang activity, instituting a uniform policy can remove the ability for gang members to identify as gang members and to recruit other students (Great Schools, 2013). While this is not a problem for all schools, schools that do have a gang problem have noted significant improvement in the behavior of their students when uniform policies have been instituted (Brunsma, 2004). As a potential way to deal with gang activity, requiring uniforms in school has been shown to be very effective very quickly.

Schools are also facing more pressure than ever from parents to ensure that the schools that their children attend are safe and secure. Identifying an intruder on campus can be difficult, particularly in high schools where some

students age more quickly than others and appear to be adults. However, when schools have uniform requirements, individuals that are not dressed in a school uniform are very quickly seen by school officials. This allows the school officials to keep a better watch over the students in their school, and to ensure that people who are not supposed to be on campus do not threaten the students in any way.

People who do not support school uniforms often cite the argument that students, particularly middle and high school students, are in the phase of their lives when they are trying to define themselves, and self-expression through dress is one of the ways that many teens and young adults choose to do so. This is an excellent argument, and one that should be closely considered by school officials; however, the potential safety benefits for a school are often outweighed by the rights of the students to express themselves by the way that they dress. Indeed, there are many ways for students to express themselves that do not involve the way that they dress; art, music, drama, and so on all offer creative outlets.

There may also be an argument that schools that attempt to institute school uniforms, particularly for middle and high school, will face resistance from the students. However, there is no reason for school officials to give in to student demands if the school officials truly have student safety as their primary concern. Many children will refuse to eat vegetables as well, but it is the responsibility of their parent or guardian to ensure that they are healthy and eat properly. School officials have a responsibility to keep the students in their school safe; if they do not because of pressure from the students, then they are shirking their responsibility as adults with authority in their

students' lives.

There are good arguments on both sides of the debate, and school uniforms may not be the best solution for every school. However, many schools in the United States would definitely benefit from instituting a school uniform policy. School uniforms have been shown to keep students safer in their classrooms, and also have been tentatively linked to better attendance and higher academic achievement, both of which are primary goals for schools in the United States.

References

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Conclusion