

Introduction should  
be worn or not  
becomes very



## **Introduction**

There has been a tug of war going on between the students, parents, teachers, school administration, and the community as well as policy makers about the issue of school uniform. Some prefer to implement the use of school uniform citing various benefits such as improvement of discipline in schools while others see the whole issue of school uniform as a cover up of failed social issues in a school community. This has left the field open for discussion among all the stakeholders. Some schools enforce use of school uniform while others are not of the opinion. Others have simply opted to the use of particular dress codes instead.

Do school uniforms improve discipline and motivation for better education? This is the question that many people would like to get answers for and this paper discusses the importance of school uniform with the aim of showing that if it is implemented it will significantly contribute to upholding of discipline. A wide variety of examples are given to illustrate the significance of using school uniform.

## **School uniform**

School uniform is the kind of clothes that are specially tailored with similar color and type for students in order to maintain uniformity in a school setting.

The use of school uniform has generated a lot of heat both at the school, community and also at the political arena. Proponents and opponents have taken stands on either side arguing whether or not to have school uniform in schools. Some schools prefer having the uniform, others prefer use of dress

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codes, yet others prefer doing without the uniform at all (Peterson 1): “ In Miami, 196 of the 328 public schools require uniforms this year, more than twice as many as last year; in Cleveland, two-thirds of the public schools have adopted uniforms” (Lewin 1). Both sides may have valid reasons for their claims but a closer look at the issue clearly indicates that there are way too many benefits which will accrue from using the school uniform than not.

## **Discipline at School**

Discipline is one of the most important aspects of learning that contribute a lot to the overall performance of students. Schools that maintain high degree of discipline are also likely to realize excellent performance. Opponents claim that school uniform has nothing to do with discipline but they need to understand that students are at the ‘ prime mind modeling stage’ of their lives whereby it is very easy to influence them either way. Discipline comes with good behavior of the students and one of the best ways to promote good behavior is to implement school uniform. It has been claimed that “ students do not feel that school is a place of work but rather a place to hang out with friends and socialize; their unprofessional behavior is reflected in the manner in which they present themselves” (Duvall et al. 1). How do we restore back the discipline and school professionalism? By implementing school uniforms which will help students have the feeling of school professionalism and take education seriously. It has been argued that maintaining dress code in schools may prove to be very difficult task for school management.

With the changing in lifestyles and dress fashions determining what should be worn or not becomes very difficult. Sometimes students will take

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advantage of trends and fashions to validate wearing of miniskirts, sagging trousers, transparent clothing, all in the name of freedom of expression.

What school uniform critics don't realize is that some of this kind of dressing may distract other students, especially those who need extra effort to focus on studies. How do you expect teenage boys to concentrate in studies when some girls in their class are scantily dressed all in the name of fashion and self-expression? Aren't they taking away your right to a favorable learning environment? Duvall et al claimed that school uniform " positively benefit the school climate, promotes a professional setting in which the focus of the school is on education and academic success" (Duvall et al. 1). Conducive school climate is everyone's right and that is why use of school uniform should be emphasized.

Casual dressing in schools is usually difficult to regulate due to continuous changes in lifestyle and fashion. As the school administration tries their level best to maintain dressing sanity in schools conflicts always arise. Students will sometimes be sent home for days, get punishments and parents will also get involved. In the process students get frustrated, more defiant and less disciplined. The principle of South shore was quoted claiming that " students were " dragging', sagging' and lagging'; I needed to keep them on an academic focus; my kids were really into what others were wearing"(USDE 1). All these can actually be done away with by implementing school uniform in our institutions.

## **Crime and gang control**

Crime in schools, according to a report by U. S department of Education, has become a common phenomenon.

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Some of the clothes and jewelry brought to schools are very expensive hence promoting theft. In addition, fashionable clothes are likely to make concealing of weapons easier. At times criminals may have the freedom to access the school as they will hardly be noticed. All these factors lead to one thing, crime. To instill sanity and discipline and prevent these criminal activities we need to seriously consider how effective the school uniform can be. The same report claims that: In response to growing levels of violence in our schools, many parents, teachers, and school officials have come to see school uniforms as one positive and creative way to reduce discipline problems and increase school safety.(USDE 1) The use of personal clothes at schools has been highly criticized due to the fact that it creates a chance for the formation of clique and gangs in schools. Certain gangs or cliques will have a tendency of dressing particular to publicize their identity.

These gangs usually wear gang colors and insignia. These gangs are hardly likely to concentrate in studies and in addition they may be associated with bullying and intimidation which in turn affects the performance of other students. A report by Oregon Legislative claims that school uniform goes a long way in “ Helping prevent gang members from wearing gang colors and insignia at school”(OLPR 1). School uniform will help not only the gangs and cliques to have discipline and focus on education but also the rest of the school.

## **Discipline outside the schools**

Opponents of use of school uniform argue that it does little to improve on discipline outside the school compound claiming that students always wear personal clothes while at home (Brunsma 96). What they fail to see is the

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fact not only does school uniform enhance discipline in and out of school but also greatly enhances the safety of the students. A report behavior New South Wales department of education suggested that “wearing of school uniforms by students will assist school communities in defining an identity for the school within its community” (SWDE 6).

It can be argued that it may be very difficult for a student to involve in misconduct on the way to and from the school since it will be very possible to be noticed by the public. We have heard of cases of young school girls who have been rescued from men in lodgings and motels simply because they were easier to spot with school uniform. This is a twofold benefit, enhance good behavior and ensure safety of the kids as they move to and from school.

### **Sense of equality**

School uniform critics always argue that school uniform will do little to stamp out social class in schools (Brunsma 96). This might be true to some extent but a critical look at the issue proves otherwise. It is evident that all people are not socially and economically equal. Some students usually come to school with the latest fashion and designer clothing.

This makes the school look more of a fashion show than a school. This is not withstanding the ordeal that the less privileged students in the school often go through when they come to school every day and sees new fashion trends that they cannot afford. Uniformity brings about a conducive, professional environment which is a prerequisite for optimum academic performance. A report by Okun claimed that “the three highest scoring schools in the state

are all Chicago Public Schools and none of these three schools require uniforms" (Okun 1). These are some of the claims used by school uniform critics to discourage use of school uniform. However, such an argument lacks in one thing. It can be argued that some of the highest performing schools have students from well to do families, families where dressing may not be a point of focus or a form of excitement. The fact that students from these schools make them belong to a more or less the same social class.

In addition these students have high self-esteem and are self-motivated. Crime in these schools is likely to be less since all students comes from rich families. In such institutions students are likely to be disciplined whether or not they have school uniform. It should be understood that this is not the case in general public schools where students come from different backgrounds which raises the need for uniformity.

## **Personal rights**

Opponents of school uniform claim that they violate freedom of expression, individuality and speech and as such uniforms should not be implemented in schools (Brunsmas 96). However, it is worth noting that school uniforms do not in any way violate such rights and freedom. This is because the uniforms are a form of official clothing aimed at enhancing the school professionalism.

School uniform implementation policies always take into consideration the differences in the community (Stockton and Gullatt 1). Religious clothing such as Muslim code of dressing is always taken into consideration.

Uniformity in such instances may even be more enhanced by designing special clothing that resembles the school uniform for such individuals. U. S

department of Education actually gives a guideline to this effect“ Students may display religious messages on items of clothing to the same extent that they are permitted to display other comparable messages” (ED 1).

From the same guideline it is clear that freedom of expression is not taken away, students still have a way of expression using items such as buttons supporting a favorite political candidate. Additionally it may be argued that students only wear the uniform for less than a 8 hours a day, the only time they are in school, not too much to ask if it is meant to benefit them.

### **Supporting the parents**

It holds water to claim that not all the parents will be financially capable of buying a school uniform, though in most cases, personal clothes are usually more expensive than school uniform. The school uniform needs to be of the best quality and this will have to come at a cost. However, this should not be an excuse for not supporting school uniform use in schools. The school community should ensure that they have mechanisms such as special funds and programs to support families that cannot afford school uniform for their children. In addition, the government also has avenues such as grants and donations aimed at supporting parents who cannot afford school uniform. A report from U.

S department of education claimed that in Kansas “ Students receive their uniforms at no cost to them; the state and school district pay for the uniforms primarily with magnet school funding” (USDE 1). In Richmond, Virginia the following has been recorded: As a result of financial donations from businesses and other community leaders, the percentage of students



wearing uniforms rose from 30 percent in 1994-95, the first year of the program, to 85 percent during the current year. (USDE 1) It can also be argued that parents are more likely to spend a lot of money on personal clothes wardrobe for school children than they would otherwise have spent on school uniform.

SWDE claimed that uniforms are beneficial to the parents by “ making school clothing more affordable for families by eliminating the risk of peerpressure to wear transiently fashionableand expensive clothes” (SWDE 6).

## **Conclusion**

It is evident that school uniform plays such an important role in enhancing discipline and academic performance in schools. Whereas the implementation of school uniform has been criticized by many it has become evident that the benefits of school uniform are so imperative that we cannot simply ignore them. School uniform brings uniformity and professionalism in the learning institutions making it more conducive for learning. School uniform enhances discipline in schools by minimizing theft and criminal activities in schools. Discipline both in and out of school is also increased.

In some schools students come from different social backgrounds which raises the need for uniformity. School uniform helps prevent gang members from wearing gang colors and insignia at school. It has been found that school uniform do not in any way violate the freedom of expression, individuality or speech. In addition parents will be supported in all ways to ensure that they are not overburdened by school uniform costs. Thus school uniforms should be implemented in schools to enhance discipline and

increase performance. There is a need for all the school administrators to encourage use of school uniforms.

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