

# Students have voices also

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There are many ways to start a great essay as I've learned in school. You can start with an anecdote or you could start by asking a question. Some people choose to start with a broad and general statement known as the funnel method; others choose to start by defining words or using quotations. These are all effective ways to start an essay and are also all ways that I have learned about in school. Coincidentally, I have learned and mastered all these methods without the use of school uniforms.

School uniforms do not help you learn better, or behave more appropriately; they cannot stop you from being who you really are inside. When the school board first started considering uniforms for high schoolers, they overlooked one very important, very large, portion of the community: the students themselves. Clayton County has a massive student body filled with great minds and opinions but these leaders of tomorrow were not asked if they were for or against school uniforms. In my opinion, the wearer of the uniforms, the one it effects most should have a say- so on the issue. Sadly, we were not. We were not given the chance to practice our freedom of speech and in the battle our freedom of expression was taken with it.

Those who are for school uniforms have solid ground to stand on, and as of right now they are winning. Yet, their ground is beginning to crumble beneath them when you look into the facts. The reasons for uniforms are most frequently noted as: creating uniformity, reducing gang activity, eliminating dress code violations, reducing behavior problems, increasing pro-school attitudes, and increasing academic success. I have yet to understand how a piece of clothing that takes away a child's identity could possibly accomplish all it is said to. You must first know your target before

you can judge and fix it. The school board gave no better reason as to why 9th-12th graders should wear uniforms on their website than “ it proved to be successful in elementary and middle schools.

” Elementary and middle schools are not your target, therefore you cannot assume what has worked for them could possibly work for someone who is more mature, more developed, and more strong-minded. “ Requiring school uniforms is like cleaning and painting a deteriorating building,” says Mr. Brunsma, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. “ It will grab a community’s attention and grab students’ attention; but it will fade away if the excitement about education isn’t followed by some real reform acts.” The advantages of school uniforms can be disproved, such as they reduce gang activity and dress code violations.

Gang activity has about as much to do with clothing as anything else. Gangs are not commonly represented by a specific shirt or brand of pants. Gangs are more than just a bunch of kids making bad decisions; they have their own rules, their own codes, their own way of life. Small unknown facts about gangs to adults, gangs are represented by solid colors and symbols. So in theory would not insisting a school wear all a specific color promote more gang violence? Graphic tees with guns and drugs on them have nothing to do with gangs unless the designer was in fact, a gangster. The probability of that is very slim, so shirts like that is just fashion as is any other trend that sells.

Uniforms do not stop dress code violations. There will always be a girl with her skirt too short and there will always be a boy with his shirt too long,

that's just life. Uniforms are also costly, and for what reason? They will not protect you from getting in a fight and they will not protect you from getting picked on. Uniforms are an extra cost to parents, and students, that serve no significance in their future besides a dent in their wallets. If anything uniforms are a hazard to students' health and safety.

Take this scenario for example. The bell just rings for lunch and a fight breaks out in the cafeteria. A student pulls a knife on another student. The SRO officer frantically pushes his way into the crowd but it's too late, he got away. The officer turns to a nearby student and asks her what the culprit looks like.

She replies he was dark toned boy wearing khaki pants and a white polo. Living in a particularly African-American district and considering this officer and the student neither know the culprit personally, it would be like finding a needle in a hay stack. We are identified by who we are and for most teens today that is etched in stone by what we wear. Take away that you take away our freedom; you conform us into mindless drones that function the same way think the same thoughts and are doomed to make the same mistakes as those before us. That is not why we are legally bound to school for 11 years of our lives. Those in high school are not developing minds like those in elementary and middle schools.

They are people who, in today's times, have their own lives, own issues, own families. Some students even got a chance to vote in the most historical election in the world but were overlooked when it came to a simple vote, should we wear uniforms? We were not given the chance to say no. We were

not given a chance to say that uniforms are uncomfortable for some students and distracts them from their learning environment. We were overlooked when it came to our opinion that uniforms are not suitable for hands on classes such as home economics or chemistry. Previously there has been numerous times when a teacher has asked us to dress down for a lab.

It's not a style issue, it's a safety issue. This is not a "grown folk" issue, this is a student issue. It has been scientifically proven by David L. Brunσμα and Kerry A. Rockquemore that " Student uniform use is not significantly correlated with any of the school commitment variables such as absenteeism, behavior or substance use. In addition, students wearing uniforms did not appear to have any significantly different academic preparedness, pro-school attitudes, or peer group structures with pro-school attitudes.

" The real reason behind school uniforms in my opinion is to ' tidy-up' our tarnished and slaughtered reputation as a respectable school district. I'm not sure how that could be accomplished by forcing the students, in whose purpose serves to be educated, into a little gray box and calling it " reform". I don't see the world in straight lines and colored inside the lines with the same 8 crayons in the box. That's not America. We all have our own opinions, hopes, dreams, and aspirations.

If school uniforms are not helping us reach our desired outcomes then there is no real reason to force us inside that lonely gray box. Clothing is more than just pieces of fabric sewn together and draped across our bodies, it's what we live out our lives in. It's who we are and we are not all the same 8

crayons in the crayon box. Over 1, 300 students in Clayton County have expressed their disapproval in uniforms by signing an online petition. These are the same students who were not asked their opinions on their own lives. Help the students of today become the leaders of tomorrow.

Give the student a voice!