

Fashion Do or Don't?

Should public schools require students to wear uniforms?

"What should I wear today?" That's a question you might ask yourself in the morning. For some kids, the answer is the same every day—a school uniform. Officials in Elmira, New York, are currently debating whether students should wear uniforms in the next school year. Uniforms would contribute to "building pride within our school and community," Elmira Superintendent Raymond Bryant told *WR News*.



Mario Tama/Getty Images

New York City student Angelica Arseno tries on a school uniform in August 2001.

Mario Tama/Getty Images - ***New York City student Angelica Arseno tries on a school uniform in August 2001.***

Elmira is one of many school districts across the country considering a uniform policy. More than 10 years ago, 3 percent of all public schools **mandated**, or required, that students wear uniforms. That number is closer to 10 percent. Some school officials support the policy, hoping that uniforms will encourage students to focus on their work. Opponents, however, say students should be allowed to express themselves through their clothing.

Yes!

Uniforms make schools better places in which to learn, supporters say. They argue that dress codes often improve discipline and lessen bullying and teasing. "I think [uniforms help] students focus on their academics and not the latest fashion," principal Megan Mannion told *WR News*. Her school, Rankin Elementary School in Akron, Ohio, has had a uniform policy since 1995.

"The best thing I like about our uniform is the style, especially the shirts and sweaters," says Rankin fourth grader Clifton Harris. It's not just the look that makes the grade. Others argue that the new uniforms cut costs. "You save money to buy casual clothes for home," adds Rankin student Asmar Epps.

No!

A uniform requirement **violates**, or disregards, the right to freedom of expression, say some people. That right is protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. "I think students should choose their own clothing styles, rather than be told to wear a specific uniform," fifth grader Kaylie Vilayvong from Aurora, Missouri, told *WR News*. Her classmate Wade Fleetwood agrees. "Kids should be allowed to wear different styles of clothes."

Some parents are worried about the expense. Elmira would offer uniforms at a price between \$16 and \$26. "What's the school district going to do for people who can't afford them?" asked one Elmira father at a recent public meeting.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. According to this passage, in which public school district are officials deciding whether students should wear uniforms?

- A. Aurora, Missouri
- B. San Diego, California
- C. Elmira, New York
- D. Akron, Ohio

2. Read the following sentences from the passage: "Some school officials support the policy, hoping that uniforms will encourage students to focus on their work. Opponents, however, say students should be allowed to express themselves through their clothing."

Which of the following describes the relationship between these two sentences?

- A. The sentences outline a sequence of events.
- B. The sentences present both sides of an argument.
- C. The sentences provide a list of things.
- D. The sentences offer a problem and a solution.

3. After reading this passage, what can you conclude about the uniform debate in public schools?

- A. Most people are against school uniforms.
- B. Most people are in favor of school uniforms.
- C. People feel strongly for and against school uniforms.
- D. Most people don't have an opinion on the issue.

4. Read the following sentence from the passage: "Her school, Rankin Elementary School in Akron, Ohio, has had a uniform policy since 1995."

In this sentence, the word **policy** means

- A. supplies
- B. clothing
- C. meeting
- D. rule

5. The author's primary purpose in writing this passage is to
- A. teach readers about the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution
 - B. describe some public schools that require school uniforms
 - C. persuade public school officials to require students to wear uniforms
 - D. debate the pros and cons of uniforms in public schools
6. According to the passage, what are arguments for and against the cost of public school uniforms?
7. Based on the passage, do you think it is likely that more or fewer public schools will require school uniforms in the future? Cite evidence from the passage to support your answer.
8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

_____ some students support school uniforms, others are not in favor of them.

- A. Before
- B. Because
- C. So
- D. Although

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. The author seems to

- A. see both sides of the issue, but agrees that students should wear uniforms.
- B. tell both sides of the issue.
- C. think that kids should not have to wear uniforms.
- D. think that kids should wear uniforms.

2. Which of the following is an opinion?

- A. Uniforms are too expensive.
- B. Some teachers think that uniforms will help kids focus on their work.
- C. Some kids do not want to wear uniforms.
- D. Some kids wear uniforms every day.

3. Which of the following is *not* an opinion?

- A. In 2004, 14 percent of public schools required students to wear uniforms.
- B. Uniforms are less expensive than regular clothing.
- C. A uniform violates the right to freedom of expression.
- D. Uniforms make schools better places to learn.

4. The author says that people that support school uniforms think that the uniforms will "encourage students to focus on their work." In this sentence, *their* refers to

- A. the opponents.
- B. the uniforms.
- C. the work.
- D. the students.

5. School uniforms have a "look that makes the grade". Is this a fact or opinion? Explain.