

Should Students Be Required to Wear School Uniforms?

Although traditionally adopted by private schools, more and more public schools are opting for mandatory uniform requirements. In 2008, only one eighth of public schools required students to wear uniforms. By 2011, that number had increased to one fifth. The trend toward adopting uniforms continues to rise, but not everyone agrees with the change. Supporters of uniforms say that they make schools safer while reducing economic disparity and honing student focus. Opponents say that uniforms threaten children's right to individuality and have no positive effects on behavior or academics.

Pros

Student safety is a significant factor when schools are considering a uniform code. One school in Long Beach, CA, studied assault, fighting, robbery, and vandalism rates before and after it adopted uniforms in 1994. The school found that after 2 years of adopting uniforms, these crime rates dropped significantly. There were fewer firearm and drug-related incidents as well. Uniforms can also make it easier to keep track of students and spot intruders in a school. Studies have also found that teachers perceive their students more positively when they wear uniforms; teachers assume students are better behaved and more academically proficient when they wear uniforms. Discipline, safety, and dress seem to be linked in the minds of educators in many schools.

Other studies found that adopting uniforms improved attendance, graduation rates, and discipline. A 2010 study found that uniforms helped to decrease the absence rates of girls in middle and high school. Another study saw girls' language test scores improve by three percentage points after uniforms were required. School leaders have found that mandatory uniforms make it easier for students to prepare for school in the morning—meaning fewer late arrivals. Uniforms also allow teachers to spend less time disciplining students for dress code infractions. This added learning time then benefits students who spend more time in class.

School leaders also note that the removal of fashion concerns allows students to focus more on their schoolwork. They spend less time worrying about outfits and fitting in because everyone wears the same clothes. Uniforms can help to make differences in students' economic statuses less



visible; privileged students, for example, will be wearing the same outfits as their less privileged classmates. Income distinctions can become less obvious, allowing for decreased peer pressure and bullying. In fact, 86% of school leaders said that uniforms had positive effects on peer pressure, while 64% noted that uniforms reduced bullying.



Most parents and teachers support mandatory uniforms, according to multiple surveys. Uniforms can actually save parents money—families can spend less on school outfits because there are fewer choices. The estimated cost per child is \$150 or less per year.

Finally, supporters contend that uniforms do not infringe on the students' right to free expression. Students can still express their individuality in other ways. A 2012 survey found that 58% of eighth graders felt that they could still express themselves, even when wearing uniforms. In this way, mandatory clothing does not discriminate or deny free speech.

Cons

The main argument against mandatory uniforms involves the students' right to express themselves. Critics argue that uniforms can restrict the freedom of students as guaranteed by the First Amendment. Choice in clothing can be critical to the developing identities of kids and teens. There are also cases in which certain clothes can be part of supporting social awareness. At one school, students were sent home for wearing pink T-shirts in support of breast cancer awareness. This kind of rigid interpretation of rules discourages creativity and social participation.

Uniforms can also actually increase violence and lower achievement. A 2007 study found that implementing the use of uniforms actually increased violence and discipline incidents in already violent schools. The study found no positive effect on behavior, and even suggested that the introduction of uniforms might have contributed to negative effects in the school. Uniform mandates have also been accused of taking attention away from other efforts to improve safety in schools and to boost student performance.

Opponents point out that uniforms can actually emphasize the economic divisions they attempt to erase. The majority of schools with mandatory uniforms are located in poorer neighborhoods, meaning that uniforms are becoming associated with poverty and, troublingly, with minorities. Schools with a minority population of 50% or more were 24 times more likely to require uniforms than schools with a minority population of



5–19%. Uniforms also cannot conceal social status. Poorer families may not have the money to replace damaged uniforms, meaning children will come to school in torn or tattered clothing. This wear on the uniforms will be more obvious when compared to the state of the uniforms of more privileged children.

This kind of comparing of the self to others (i.e., social comparison) is a large concern for many students. When everyone is wearing the same clothing, it is much easier to see small differences between students. This comparing can lead to poor self-image, especially in girls whose body differences (tall, short, plus size) become obvious when every girl wears the same skirt or top. A 2003 study from Arizona State University found that in nonuniform schools, students had better self-concept.

Students themselves largely oppose uniforms. One survey conducted in 2012 found that 90% of students did not like school uniforms. Most students did not believe uniforms made them safer or connected them more to their classmates. Instead, students believed they should be free to choose their own clothes and save their families money. After all, the uniform industry takes in \$1 billion each year from school uniform purchases. It is possible that uniforms might be commercially, not academically, driven. These concerns make many students and families mistrustful of adopting school uniforms.

In summary, there are positive and negative components to adopting school uniforms. Which side are you on?

References

- ProCon.org. (n.d.). *Should students have to wear school uniforms?* Retrieved from <http://school-uniforms.procon.org>
- Public School Review. (n.d.). *Public school uniforms: The pros and cons for your child.* Retrieved from <http://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/public-school-uniforms-the-pros-and-cons-for-your-child>

GATE Reading - Days 11-14
Submit answers on notebook paper.

Consequences and Implications

A3

What are the potential positive and negative consequences of schools' adopting a school uniform policy?

Cause and Effect

A2

What are the effects of schools' requiring school uniforms on various groups? What are the effects on businesses, students, parents, teachers, and other groups? Use the article to support your answer. Make a chart to show each stakeholder group and the impact of mandatory school uniforms for each group.

Sequencing

A1

What arguments are most important to each side? List the top three arguments on school uniforms that are most convincing to you, from most to least. Provide a rationale for their importance.

SHOULD STUDENTS BE REQUIRED TO WEAR SCHOOL UNIFORMS?

Fluency and Writing - Days 1-14

Read for 20 minutes.
Choose a different question each day to answer on separate
sheet of notebook paper.
Pick 3 responses to submit.

Characters

1. Who are the main characters in the story?
2. Who are the minor characters in the story?
3. How do you feel about the characters? Tell why you feel that way.
4. Choose one character. Why is this character important to the story?
5. Do any of the characters change? In what way?
6. Do any of the characters do good things?
7. Do any of the characters do things that are wrong?
8. Choose one character. How would you describe this character's personality?

Setting

9. Where does the story take place?
10. Tell me what the place was like?
11. Have you ever been to a place like this before? Tell me about it.
12. Did the story take place a long time ago, now, or in the future?
13. How would you describe the setting of the story?

Mood

14. How did you feel while reading the book? Why did you feel that way?
15. What was the funniest part?
16. What was the saddest part?
17. What was the scariest part?
18. What was the most exciting thing that happened in the story?
19. What was the strangest thing that happened in the story?
20. What do you remember most about the story?
21. Did your feelings change as you were reading the book?
22. Would you recommend this book to someone? Why or why not?

Plot

23. Tell me the main things that happened in your story.
24. Were you able to guess what was going to happen at the end?
25. Can you think of another way the story might have happened?
26. Can you think of another way the story might have ended?
27. What happened in the beginning/middle/end of your story?

Style

28. What special words does the author use to help you hear/see in the story?
29. Tell me about any pictures the author has left in your mind.
30. What do you like about the way the author has written the story?

Author

31. What do you know about the author? How can you tell?
32. What is the author trying to tell you in the book?
33. What does the author have to know about to write this book?
34. What sorts of things does the author like or dislike?
35. Have you ever read any other books by this author? Would you like to?

Conflict/Resolution

36. Who has a problem?
37. Is there one problem or more than one?
38. How is the problem solved? How do you know?
39. Which type of conflict is in your book?
(Man-vs-Nature, Man-vs-Man, Man-vs-Himself)

Point of View

40. Who is telling the story? How can you tell?
41. Which point of view is used? (1st person "I" 3rd person narrative or 3rd omniscient)

The following activities are accessed via Clever (Discovery Ed and BrainPop).
Please submit a picture of the 3 Social Studies Quizzes and 1 Science Quiz.

Utilizing Discovery Ed (Access via Clever)

The Beanbody Histories: Civil War, Part 1: Seeds of Conflict

The Beanbody Histories: Civil War, Part 2: Understanding the Battles

History Kids: Causes of the Civil War

History Kids: Harriet Tubman: Conductor of the Underground Railroad

Animated Hero Classics: President Abraham Lincoln

Utilizing Brain Pop (Access via Clever)

- Civil War Causes (snap picture of quiz)
- Civil War (snap picture of quiz)
- Reconstruction (snap picture of quiz)

Science Activities

Utilizing BrainPop. (Access via Clever)

- Ecosystems (snap a picture of quiz)

Food Chains

Deserts

Underwater World

Savannah

Tundra

Tropical Rainforest

Artic Habitats