



Student Achievement Leadership Team
Resource Kit #12

Student uniforms and student achievement

August 2006

Ohio School Boards Association
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Dear school board members, superintendents and treasurers:

Every minute a teacher spends dealing with discipline issues or other distractions is a minute taken away from learning and student achievement. The effectiveness of school uniforms in reducing these learning interruptions, as well as creating a safer environment, is a much-debated topic.

Supporters say that uniforms improve student behavior, soften the differences among socioeconomic levels and increase students' self-confidence — all of which boost student achievement.

Detractors contend that mandatory uniform policies infringe on student rights, inhibit individuality and can be a financial burden on low-income families.

This Student Achievement Leadership Team Resource Kit examines school uniform history, presents the pros and cons, looks at uniforms' impact on student achievement and discipline, and explores the legal and policy aspects of this timely topic. Also included is a section highlighting what some Ohio public school districts are doing, as well as a list of resources you can use for further research.

If your district has already implemented a uniform policy, this resource kit will provide insights into what other school systems are doing. Districts without uniform policies can use the kit as a starting point to see if uniforms might help increase student achievement and safety in their schools.

Please study this information and share it with colleagues. Only by having an informed debate can we come to an informed local decision on the impact of school uniforms.

Linda F.R. Omobien
2006 OSBA president
member, Akron City Board of Education

School dress codes and uniform policies

by Wendell Anderson

Opinions abound on what students should wear to class. But it's not only the fashion mavens who express strong feelings about clothing. School board members, school administrators, teachers, parents and students also enter the debate.

Some people believe that requiring students in school settings to conform to a dress code improves student behavior, reduces differences among socioeconomic levels and enhances students' self-confidence.

The argument over school dress codes and school-uniform policies continues to rage in the meeting rooms, administrative offices and classrooms of public schools throughout the country.

Two fundamental questions fan the fires of debate:

- Are restrictive dress codes a sound idea in a society that, theoretically at least, celebrates diversity over uniformity?
- Do dress codes and school-uniform policies decrease school violence and increase performance?

Divided camps

The idea of school uniforms also appeals to many parents and teachers, especially in elementary and middle schools. Uniforms "are seen as a concrete and visible means of restoring order to the classrooms. Uniforms conjure up visions of parochial schools, which are perceived as safe, secure and orderly learning environments" (*Education Week 2001*).

In the other camp are some parents, civil libertarians and students, particularly older ones, who oppose dress codes in general and uniform policies in particular. "Critics point to the fact that uniform requirements cramp students' freedom of expression and amount to nothing more than a band-aid [sic] solution to the illness that ails our schools. They also point

to the financial burden uniforms put on lower-income families."

Codes and policies: Dressing up

Dress codes and uniform policies are not the same. Simply stated, dress codes state what must not be worn; uniform policies state what must be worn. The distinction is important, particularly in light of legal challenges. For example, dress codes that prohibit the wearing of clothing or symbols linked to gangs have been traditionally upheld by the courts, whereas uniform policies are sometimes viewed as violations of students' rights.

But uniform policies adopted to minimize gang-related violence are often viewed as issues of safety and upheld by the courts. The debate over what to wear at school has many levels and subplots.

Officials in a number of districts and schools in recent years have tempered their approaches by enacting stricter dress codes rather than forcing the wearing of uniforms.

But the solution remains far from easy. There are many layers to the debate.

Adapting to changing fashions

Part of the problem schools face with implementing dress codes is that youth fashions change frequently and radically. It's difficult for administrators to keep up; therefore, many schools adopt general dress codes.

In some respects, school-uniform policies are easier to maintain than dress codes. Part of the acceptance of uniforms has to do with style. The style of today's uniforms is more relaxed to suit the times. The traditional blazer, white blouse, plaid skirt for girls and dark slacks, white shirt, school tie for boys are still seen. But more modern styles such as white T-shirts with blue jeans, denim shirts or skirts, and khaki pants with cargo pockets are not uncommon.

After President Clinton called for uniforms in his 1996 speech, many schools answered the

call. And manufacturers and retailers also jumped on the bandwagon. In 1999, American families spent some \$1.5 billion on uniforms. Major retailers such as Sears and Kmart stock uniforms. About two-thirds of uniforms are sold during the annual “back-to-school” season.

But while the debate over dress codes and school uniforms rages, there is one point almost everyone agrees on: Student dress does not cause or will not cure all the ills facing our schools. Implementing a dress code or uniform policy should be only one of several changes designed to improve standards in schools, said

Jay Goldman, editor of *School Administrator*. A dress code “as part of a wider array of policies and practices is probably a very good thing,” he said. “If done as a supposed quick fix, it is a terrible idea. Nothing is a quick fix in education.”

Wendell Anderson is a research analyst and writer for the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management. This article was condensed from an Educational Resources Information Center’s Clearinghouse on Educational Management Policy Report, Fall 2002.

A brief history of school dress in the United States

The dictum, “Dress right, act right” was heard often in schools in the 1950s and ’60s during campaigns to curb “juvenile delinquency.”

In the 1950s, many school dress codes prohibited girls from wearing slacks. In the 1960s, many school administrators stipulated the length of girls’ skirts. Blue jeans, motorcycle boots and black leather jackets were considered dangerous attire on boys and linked to gangs.

In the 1980s, an effort to thwart growing gang activity in schools led officials to reexamine dress codes and consider policies requiring uniforms. Restrictive dress codes were introduced in many secondary schools with the intent of prohibiting gang attire.

Public school districts and individual schools have long established dress codes prohibiting certain apparel. The first public school known to have adopted uniforms was Cherry Hill Elementary in Baltimore, Md., in 1987. In 1994, the Long Beach (Calif.) Unified School District was the first school system to adopt a districtwide uniform policy.

The idea of dress codes and uniforms gained official sanction when President Bill Clinton endorsed the idea of public school uniforms in his 1996 State of the Union Address. Following Clinton’s direction, the U.S. Department of Education sent the “Manual on School Uniforms” to all 16,000 school districts in the United States. With guidelines in hand, school boards and administrators began to develop dress codes and uniform policies.

A string of major school violence incidents in the late 1990s intensified interest in using uniforms to improve school safety. Officials realized that uniforms not only made it easier to spot intruders, but they also improved the school climate.

It’s not precisely clear how many districts and schools now enforce a dress code or uniform policy. But the trend toward proscribing and prescribing what students wear to class continues to grow, along with the debate.

Source: Educational Resources Information Center

Research on uniforms and academic achievement

Following is a summary of some of the major studies on dress codes and uniform policies.

A 1995 study, "Violence and other antisocial behaviors in public schools: Can dress codes help solve the problem?" (White 2000), investigated the effectiveness of dress codes. The study identified the problems that students can get into because of their clothes and found that gang-related clothing, worn intentionally or unintentionally, can invite violence. Also, status clothing such as team jackets and designer sneakers can lead to theft and violence (White 2000).

In 1995, a year after implementing the first mandatory districtwide uniform policy in the country, the Long Beach (Calif.) Unified School District collected empirical data on the effects of uniforms on the school environment. The findings suggested that the district's schools were safer; however, the findings did not offer clear evidence that uniforms decreased violence (Wilson 1999).

A 1996 study titled "School uniforms and safety" found that school uniforms "reduce the emphasis on fashion wars and reinforce the acceptability of more practical, less costly school clothing." The researcher, M. Sue Stanley, also concluded that uniforms may have a positive effect on school safety, and, because they are a low-cost intervention unlikely to do harm, are worth considering (White 2000).

A 1997 study, "Effects of student uniforms on attendance, behavior problems, substance use and academic achievement," empirically tested claims made by uniform advocates, using tenth-grade data from the "National educational longitudinal study of 1988." Researchers David Brunσμα and Kerry Rockquemore succinctly stated: "Our findings indicate that student

uniforms have no direct effect on substance use, behavioral problems or attendance" (Brunσμα and Rockquemore 1998).

Summary

Very little conclusive research exists on the effects of student uniform policies and findings are inconsistent from study to study. In addition, the findings are primarily conducted from an administrator viewpoint. They neglect to address any possible negative impact on the psychological development of students including, for example, the importance of fashion to individuality and self expression. While studies note the apparent successes or failures of uniform policies, few attempt to explain why these policies succeeded or failed in their intended goals.

The level of parent/student/administrator involvement in policy, as well as student age and sex serve as predictors of compliance and success. Students who attend schools with mandatory uniform policies report feeling less satisfied with the dress policy than those who attend nonuniform schools. Female students reported the lowest satisfaction, due to a greater

concern for personal appearance and a greater need for self-expression than male students (McCarty 1999).

Age, in addition to sex, can impact student perceptions of dress policy. Research has consistently shown that younger students are more likely to support a uniform policy. A study conducted in 1997 documented one Puget Sound (Wash.) elementary school's transition from dress code to a two-year voluntary uniform policy. On the first day of class, 80-90% of kindergarten through third-grade, 65% of fourth-grade, and 35% of fifth- through

“I have never seen any study that showed a connection between style of dress and academic achievement.”

Dr. Pedro Noguera,
professor of education,
New York University

sixth-grade students wore uniforms. By spring, only 39% of students schoolwide wore uniforms at sometime during the week. During the second year of implementation, only 60% of students wore uniforms on the first day of classes. By January, participation dropped to 40%, with the highest concentration in the first through fourth grades. Almost no students wore uniforms in the fifth and sixth grade (Murphy 1997).

Another study, conducted in 1998, concluded that uniform policies are ineffective at a high school level (Brunsma 1998).

Involvement can increase uniform policy success. Implementation that involves parent and student input as well as administrator input, results in greater support. Often students are kept out of policy procedures, and as a result, are left uncertain as to the intended goals of uniforms (McCarty 1999). This lack of involvement can also lead to an impression of a “controlling” school environment, increased student/administrator friction and a general dissatisfaction with the dress policy (Martin 1998). In addition to allowing students’ input, greater satisfaction can be achieved by allowing some choice in garment selection — either through a variety of vendors, colors/patterns or styles, i.e., blouses, dress shirts, polos, sweatshirts or school T-shirts (McCarty 1999).

Studies of perceptions

Decreased gang violence

Gang violence is an issue that predominately plagues urban school districts. Gangs often use dress as a means of denoting membership and identification. By regulating dress through uniforms, school systems theoretically prevent

the expression of gang membership, and reduce outward violent expression toward rivals. California has enacted laws that ban the red and blue clothing that symbolize “crip” and “blood,” and give each school the right to implement dress codes and require uniforms as deemed necessary (Holloman 1996).

Gang symbols, however, change quickly and well-written policy does not always help school officials remain current.

“Everyone I’ve talked to who has gone to uniforms likes it, felt it’s increased discipline and respect, and will even claim achievements have gotten a little better because kids are more focused on their studies.”

Paul Houston,
executive director,
American Association of
School Administrators

Decreased peer competition

Adolescents are driven by a need for acceptance. This seems to be at odds with an equally strong need to express their individuality. Students want to “fit in” with their peers, and they achieve this through a sort of unstated dress code that is determined by fashion, not school administrators. School uniform policy is thought to reduce the power of status symbols and peer competition, while returning the emphasis in schools on academics (Stover 1990).

Increased school pride and association

The Long Beach Unified School District study covered two academic years between 1993 and 1995 and included grades four through high school. This study consisted of a survey that assessed student, parent and teacher perceptions, as well as data collected from the district regarding suspensions, class disruptions, playground violence and dress code violations. The survey covered topics including perceptions about school safety, association, behavior and academics, and perception about the uniforms themselves.

Though the data was not statistically conclusive, the survey results demonstrated that

school environment and safety were improved. Results regarding school pride were mixed: 68.7% of middle school students and 62.5% of high school students reported that school uniforms did not make them feel “more a part of the school.” Only elementary students (61%) reported feelings of increased school pride and association (Stanley 1996).

Though these changes were attributed to uniforms, one must take into account several other policy changes made at the time, including content reform, as well as other outside environmental affects (Brunsma 1998).

Increased positive attitude and environment

Environment has a direct effect on student behavior, achievement and self-esteem. Students who report a positive reaction to their school climate have a lower dropout rate, higher achievement, stronger academic commitment and higher self-esteem. Research supports the axiom, a positive environment breeds positive results (Murray 1997).

A similar survey was administered during the 1998–99 school year to 27 teachers in four middle schools in urban St. Paul, Minn. Two schools had implemented uniforms, two had dress codes; both were low to middle socio-economic class. The school climate survey tested teacher perceptions of six key components: safety, academic achievement, disciplinary problems, community climate, student/teacher relations and student behavior.

The survey revealed no significant differences in achievement or perceptions of safety, though schools where uniforms were worn believed uniforms created a safer environment. Where uniforms were worn, teachers perceived more

positive behavior and peer interactions. For example, more similar dress led to fewer cliques, which ultimately led to less teasing and self-esteem issues. Teachers had more rapport with students, as well as more interest in students as individuals. Teachers in schools where uniforms were adopted believed that, by taking away readily apparent differences, uniforms encouraged them to invest more time in getting to know individuals and prevented them from making rash negative judgments based solely on appearance. Overall, teachers perceived their school environment to be more positive and conducive to learning when uniforms were worn (Tucker 1999).

“There is absolutely no evidence documenting even a correlation between dress codes and better test scores, let alone a causal connection.”

Nadine Strossen,
president, American
Civil Liberties Union

Quantitative studies

Economic stress or benefit

The uniform industry is a growing one; sales have risen 22% over the past two years and grossed over \$1.1 billion. Many companies, including discount retail chains like Kmart, Ames and JC Penney, and brands French Toast and Bugle Boy, have capitalized on this recent rise in popularity. Schools differ in requirements, ranging from khakis and an oxford or polo shirt to specific brands and colors, so it is often difficult to measure actual sales.

Parents will rarely purchase more than two or three plain items, such as skirts, pants or blouses, but when those items feature a fashionable design detail — such as added zippers or pockets — they will often purchase more. Last season’s uniformed student bore a remarkable resemblance to their nonuniformed peers: capri pants, three-quarter length sleeve blouses, cargo and zip-off pants. The primary

difference was that of color. However, this may soon change, as many schools seek to differentiate themselves from their “navy” neighbors through the use of nontraditional “school” colors (Anonymous, 2001).

Uniforms for middle and elementary students can cost parents significantly less than they would spend on other clothing and can be very cost effective over the long run (www.eastbayri.com 2005). The cost of a standard school uniform wardrobe for a school-age child can be as low as \$100 to \$150 for a single school year. Conversely, the cost of outfitting a child in non-uniform clothing can be significantly greater.

In an era where appearance is over-marketed, many parents feel an obligation to outfit their children in the latest fashions. As children grow increasingly label-conscious, designer wardrobes can cost several hundred dollars each school year.

Programs exist in schools where uniforms are required to aid families who may not be able to afford these costs (Stanley 1996). However, research has shown that families who do buy uniforms spend more on clothing on average than families without these additional costs. The implementation of uniforms did little to decrease the student’s desire for expensive fashionable clothing; it just changed the setting in which they were able to wear it. Therefore, requiring uniforms may place undue stress on a family’s financial resources (Norum 1998).

Lessened theft due to dress

Dress is thought to be a factor in many behavioral incidents. Students, driven by a need for approval, often steal otherwise unattainable, expensive and fashionable items. The consensus

among educators seems to be that students care more about labels than learning (Holloman 1996).

Statistical data collected from the Long Beach study suggests that a uniform policy may have some effect on reducing theft. In the 1994–95 school year, the school district implemented its first uniform policy. Data collected in the spring of that year noted a 65% decrease in robbery from the prior year. Researchers speculate that

this decrease is a result of uniform use, however, it cannot be directly linked (Stanley 1996). In 1999, five years after implementation of the uniform policy, the overall crime rate has dropped 91% (Chatterjee 1999).

Logically, it appears that a uniform policy would be effective in that it removes many of the items that provide temptation from the school setting. However, these conclusions have not yet been clearly supported by research. In spite of this, many urban school systems continue to implement dress codes and uniforms to reduce dress

related violence (Holloman 1996).

Decreased absences/suspensions

In 1998, a study conducted by Brunisma examined the effects of uniforms on tenth-grade students. Surveys were taken at both Catholic schools with and without mandatory uniforms, and private schools with and without uniforms. Brunisma wished to determine “the Catholic effect,” in addition to the effect of uniforms on absenteeism, behavior, drug use and standardized test results. Results showed that students in Catholic schools where uniforms were mandatory were absent more often and scored lower on achievement tests than those Catholic students who did not (Brunisma 1998).

“[With uniforms] schools have fewer reasons to call the police. There’s less conflict among students. Students concentrate more on education, not on who’s wearing \$100 shoes or gang attire.”

William Ellis,
former police chief,
Long Beach, Calif.

The Long Beach study showed suspensions significantly decreased from the 1993–94 to the 1994–95 school year. Middle school suspensions decreased 36% and elementary suspensions were down by 28%. No direct correlation can be found between study results and uniforms (Stanley 1996). In 1999, five years following the completion of the study, suspensions were down by 90% (Chatterjee 1999).

Two urban Texas middle schools were used in 1996 to study the effect of school uniforms on behaviors and perceptions, and whether uniform type (formal versus informal) made a difference. Formal uniforms were defined as specific brands and styles dictated by the school. Informal uniforms were loosely defined

styles and colors, and allowed parents and students to select from a variety of manufacturers.

The year following implementation disciplinary referrals decreased an average of 30%. The formal uniform dress code school decreased less than the informal, at 11% to 45%, however the informal school had considerably more infractions made (Hughes 1996).

Increased academic achievement

In 1995–96, a study was conducted using two Charleston, South Carolina secondary schools, one with a uniform policy, and one without. Both schools had similar socio-

Pros and cons of a standard dress code

In 2001, the Clarksville-Montgomery County (Tenn.) School System surveyed the local community on dress-code issues. Results of the survey revealed the following perceived advantages and disadvantages:

Advantages

- diminishes exclusion of students based on what they are wearing,
- places stronger focus on academic performance,
- decreases opportunity for showing gang affiliation or hiding weapons,
- reduces family tension; saves time in the morning,
- decreases participation in violent activity,
- leads to higher academic performance,
- creates atmosphere of teamwork and pride in personal appearance and school,
- promotes safety; makes it easier to identify strangers in schools,
- increases self-esteem and reduces peer pressure,

- most cost effective to parents in the long run,
- reduces absenteeism,
- puts students on a more common ground,
- reduces discrepancies in administering dress-code justice.

Disadvantages

- requires an initial expense of purchasing the clothes,
- leads to inconsistent enforcement of the dress code in schools systemwide,
- causes problems with noncompliance,
- infringes on freedom of choice,
- hurts families who may not be able to afford it,
- causes everyone to look the same,
- becomes difficult to enforce in areas that are extremely transient,
- may contribute to negative behavior such as rebelliousness.

economic demographics and contained approximately the same ethnic ratios. The study administered language arts and mathematics tests, as well as a survey and Cooper's self-esteem inventory. The school with a uniform policy reported higher attendance, esteem and academic scores (Gregory 1996).

Decreased drug use and vandalism

Possession of chemical substances decreased significantly, down 69%, one year following the implementation of uniforms in the Long Beach Unified School District (Stanley 1996). In a follow-up study conducted five years following the implementation, vandalism had decreased by 69% (Chatterjee 1999).

Ohio professor studies school uniforms

A Youngstown State University (YSU) professor found that requiring students in Ohio urban public high schools to wear uniforms results in increased attendance and graduation rates and fewer student suspensions, but it does not improve academic performance in reading and math.

Virginia Draa, assistant professor of human ecology at YSU, surveyed school administrators and examined proficiency test scores and rates of attendance, graduation, suspension and expulsion between 1994 and 2002 at 64 high schools in eight large school districts, six of which have uniform policies.

Dr. Draa found that it takes some time for students and school personnel to adapt to a change and for the improvements to be noticeable. Changes do not happen overnight.

Draa taught in the Toledo and Youngstown city schools and was a program coordinator in the curriculum/instruction department in Youngstown before joining YSU.

Potential benefits of school uniforms

- preventing gang colors, etc. in schools;
- decreasing violence and theft because of clothing and shoes;

- instilling discipline among students;
- reducing need for administrators and teachers to be 'clothes police' (for example, determining whether shorts are too short, etc.);
- reducing distractions for students;
- instilling a sense of community;
- helping schools recognize those who do not belong on campus.

Potential problems of school uniforms

- students and parents argue that uniforms violate their freedom of expression (see below for more about what the Supreme Court has to say on this);
- parents raise concerns about the cost;
- families fear it might interfere with religious clothing like yarmulkes.

Parent and student support for uniforms

- make uniforms more casual — jeans and a knit shirt;
- allow students an outlet for their own expression: buttons to support political candidates, but not gang related paraphernalia;
- provide financial assistance to those parents who cannot afford the uniforms;
- accommodate students religious beliefs, which is required by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act;
- make your program voluntary if community pressure is too intense;
- institute an 'opt-out' provision — not including this provision would probably cause a court to rule against your program unless there is proof that lesser measures are ineffective;
- make uniforms an integral part of the school safety program;
- involve parents and students in selecting the uniforms.

Source: most of this information comes from the May 2001 *ERIC Digest*, a publication of the Educational Resources Information Center's Clearinghouse on Educational Management.

School uniform policy law

Ohio Revised Code Section (RC) 3313.665 permits school boards to adopt policies authorizing school uniforms for one or more buildings within the school district.

A school board wishing to adopt a school uniform policy must follow a deliberative process that is required by law. The school district must give at least six months' notice to students and parents that the uniform policy is being considered, and the board must afford ample opportunity for principals, staff members and parents to offer suggestions and comments.

School uniform policies also fall within a school board's general policy making authority established in RC 3313.20 and 3313.47.

Part of student discipline policy

A school uniform policy must be part of the general student code of conduct or discipline policy adopted by the school board, rather than a separate policy. As such, a uniform policy must be posted in a central location within the district and must be provided to students upon request. (See RC 3313.661.) Students also may be subject to disciplinary action for failing to follow a uniform policy.

Economically disadvantaged students

The law requires that any school uniform policy include some procedure to assist the parents of economically disadvantaged students to obtain uniforms. The money for this assistance may come from either the school district's funds or from other sources.

Other exceptions

Any school uniform policy approved by a school board also must allow exceptions for students participating in nationally recognized youth groups that have their own uniforms on days when these organizations have scheduled activities.

Pursuant to the Free Exercise Clause under the First Amendment to the United States

Constitution, there also may be situations where legitimate religious objections must be accommodated. Where required, this exception must be provided regardless of whether it is specified in the uniform policy.

Case law

Ohio's school uniform policy law has not been challenged in the courts. However, federal courts elsewhere have held similar laws to be constitutional and not in violation of students' free speech rights under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. (See e.g., *Canady v. Bossier Parish School Board* (CA 5 2001), 240 F3d 437.)

It appears that federal courts are inclined to follow the test established by the United States Supreme Court in *U.S. v. O'Brien* (1968), 391 U.S. 3673. Under this test, a school uniform policy will be permissible if it: (1) furthers an important or substantial interest of the school district; (2) is not intended or designed to suppress student expression and (3) does not impose greater incidental restrictions than necessary on the ability of students to communicate. (See *Jacobs v. Clark County School District* (D. Nev. 2005), 373 FSupp. 1162.)

Practical tips

Beyond what the law requires, school boards considering a school uniform policy also may wish to take these additional steps:

- research the experiences of other school districts with uniform policies;
- communicate the board's purposes and objectives in adopting a uniform policy; and
- maintain meeting minutes or other documentation of suggestions and comments about the proposed policy and the board's deliberations.

These additional actions may help a board diffuse controversy about a uniform policy and defend against any litigation brought against the board challenging the policy's legality.

Developing policy for dress codes/school uniforms

The major function of a board is policy development. Policy gives direction to the superintendent, treasurer and school community. It is difficult to imagine districts operating effectively without sound policies in force. All schools face certain recurring problems and it is to a district's advantage if these problems are dealt with in the same manner each time they occur. Policy development provides for consistency, which the public and boards of education constantly seek.

Good policy establishes the parameters within which the district operates. It communicates us what the board wants and why.

The board is ultimately accountable to its citizens for the way schools are governed and managed, and for the results achieved. With the need for continuous improvement plans and the local report card, written policies are important to a board working toward demonstrating accountability throughout the district.

Good policy encourages excellent education and business practices, assists in managing the district's resources and eliminates inefficiency.

Districts considering adopting a uniform policy should:

- solicit input from parents and students,
- research the experiences of other school districts,
- articulate the reason for the dress codes,
- report on the process.

It is essential to involve parents, teachers, community leaders and students in the development process.

A committee representing all segments of the community can help diffuse objections and promote the new policy once it is adopted.

When writing the policy look at the following factors:

Make certain that the policy does not restrict religious expression.

Various forms of religious expressions, such as wearing a head covering or a cross should be respected as long as students' expression of their religious convictions does not infringe upon the rights of others.

Provide as much flexibility as possible.

If student uniforms are adopted, schools must decide whether the policy is mandatory or optional. In schools where incidents of violence or gang activity are common, a mandatory uniform policy may be defensible. Otherwise, the policy should include an opt-out provision.

Protect students' rights to freedom of expression.

Students should be allowed to wear symbols that express their political or personal views on issues as long as their expression does not create a "material and substantial disruption to the educational process."

Provide assistance for economically disadvantaged students.

School officials should ensure that acquiring uniforms or complying with dress code requirements would not place an undue hardship on low-income families. Some schools arrange for uniform manufacturers to provide vouchers for students whose families cannot afford them; others raise funds or secure a grant to help; and others have instituted hand-me-down or swap programs.

Implement a pilot program where feasible.

Implementing a uniform policy on a limited trial basis, such as in a single school within a district may reveal unforeseen problems, provide a more accurate indication of the level of support, pave the way for a gradual phase-in, or even demonstrate that a change in policy is unnecessary. A pilot program also provides

school officials with an opportunity to further educate parents and students about exactly how the new policy will be put into effect.

Be prepared to enforce the dress code.

Administrators must ensure that any student-uniform policy or restrictive dress code is applied consistently and fairly. Consequences for failure to adhere to the adopted policy should be consistent as well. If a uniform policy has an opt-out provision and is voluntary rather than mandatory, students should not be harassed, ostracized or penalized for choosing not to participate.

Implement a dress code as a component of a school-safety program.

Obviously, issues that create unsafe schools will not magically vanish simply because school officials decide that students must change what they wear to school. A change in dress codes should be viewed as one element in an overall safety program.

Be sure the policy passes legal review.

Before any new policy is adopted, a draft needs to be carefully examined by the schools' or district's attorneys to make certain it is clear, appropriate and able to withstand any potential legal challenges. If revisions in the policy are needed, a final review should occur after the changes have been incorporated.

Be prepared to review and revise the policy as the need arises.

If issues or conditions arise that are not directly addressed by the policy, a committee consisting of teachers, parents, students and community leaders should meet to decide whether modifications are warranted. The committee also should engage in periodical assessments of the policy to determine if it is meeting its intended purpose.

Source: Adapted from Essex

Ohio school districts with uniform/dress code policies

Akron City, 11 schools
Cincinnati City, 45 schools
Columbus City, 44 schools
Dayton City, 23 schools
Lima City
Lowellville Local (Mahoning)
Mansfield City
Miami Valley Career Technology Center
Middletown City, 2 schools
Mount Healthy City
North College Hill City
Painesville City Local (Lake)
Portage County ESC alternative school
Princeton City, 1 school
St. Bernard-Elmwood Place City

Toledo City
Warren County JVSD
Warrensville Heights City, 1 school
Winton Woods City
Youngstown City

Districts considering uniform policies

Reynoldsburg City
Whitehall City

This list is not complete. If you would like to include your district on this list, please e-mail Scott Ebright at s_ebright@osba-ohio.org

Any dress code or uniform policy must be justifiable, reasonable and manageable. The challenge for school officials is to develop uniform policies that respond to the needs of their district or school without being unduly restrictive. Forcing dress codes or uniforms without the cooperation of the whole school community only invites problems.

In spite of the best intentions and input of school board members, parents and even

students, the onus for implementing and enforcing a dress code or uniform policy ultimately falls on principals and teachers. Principals and teachers must continually work to balance school safety and academic achievement with students' rights and individualism, not an easy task. And adding the job of "fashion police" to teachers' already heavy workloads is bound to put a strain on individual teachers, schools and even districts.

Ohio case studies

Akron City

Dave Butz, principal, Findley Academy
(330) 761-1635

Findley Academy is an Akron public elementary school serving 385 students, grades K-5. Findley serves one of the poorest communities in Akron. More than 90% of Findley's students qualify for the Federal Free Lunch Program. Findley's annual student mobility rate approaches 50%.

The school has required uniforms since the 1993-94 school year. It took approximately one year of planning before the implementation of Findley's school uniform policy. This planning included staff meetings, parent meetings and parent surveys.

The rationale for uniforms is:

- Maintain a serious academic atmosphere.
- Eliminate competition related to dress.
- Students are not "put down" because of their dress.
- Uniforms save parents money. Uniforms are regularly recycled (passed down from older students to younger students). Students are wearing uniforms today that were originally purchased more than 10 years ago.
- Eliminate dress trends that are often inappropriate. Twelve years ago we could not have foreseen the oversized clothes and "drooping" pants. This dress trend is a problem at many schools. Uniforms have eliminated this problem at Findley.

Over the years, there has been very little parent resistance to uniforms. They have been required at Findley for so long that students take them for granted. Seldom does a student complain.

There are social service agencies that provide uniforms to needy families. The school also maintains a number of donated uniforms that are given to students as needed.

There must be 100% compliance to the uniform code. There are letters sent home to parents who come to school out of uniform. There are progressive consequences to violations to the code. A refusal to comply with the uniform requirement could result in suspension.

It is naive to believe that uniforms alone will eliminate behavior problems and increase academic achievement. It is impossible to quantify the impact uniforms have in these areas. There is a strong belief among Findley teachers that uniforms do provide a positive impact on behavior and academic achievement.

Columbus City

Kwesi Kambon, director, equity and multicultural education
(614) 365-5000

In August 2005, the school board approved a student dress code policy that is enforced in district schools and at school functions not open to the public. The guidelines are “intended to prevent disruption of the classroom atmosphere, enhance classroom decorum, eliminate disturbances and minimize distractions of other students. They also are intended to help protect the health and welfare of the individual student.” Under the policy, principals retained the authority to further define dress code requirements at their individual schools. Such additional dress requirements typically have broad parent and faculty support.

Forty-four district schools have augmented the Columbus City Board of Education’s uniform/dress code with either use of specific clothing colors and types of dress or a formal uniform. Students not complying with a school-specific dress code are not removed from school but rather discussions with the student and his or her parents attempt to address any barriers to the student’s wearing of appropriate school-specific dress.

Key parts of the Columbus Public Schools’ districtwide dress code (per district policy) include:

- concealment of undergarments;
- dress, skirt length and shorts not shorter than mid-thigh;
- no bare midriffs or see-through clothing;
- no sleepwear or tight, form-fitting clothing;
- no writing across the seat area; no flip-flops, slippers/bedroom shoes and beach shoes;
- no hats, caps or other types of head covering (other than for religious purposes) or sunglasses inside buildings;
- pant waists not more than one inch bigger than the correctly measured student waist size and pant inseams appropriately sized for the student and not touching or dragging on the ground; and
- no clothing or jewelry with writing, pictures or any other insignia which are crude, vulgar, profane, sexually suggestive or which advocate negative racial, ethnic, gender or religious prejudice or use or glorification of drugs, tobacco, alcohol or violence.

This more general districtwide dress code went into effect in the fall of 2005 with strong parental and community support.

Kwesi Kambon will lead a committee charged with completing a feasibility study on school uniforms in the Columbus Public Schools. The committee will represent students, parents, guardians, teachers, administrators and others appropriate for inclusion and is expected to meet for the first time in May. The committee will present its findings to the board of education in the fall of 2006 and a recommended course of action will result. Any change to the district’s current student dress code policy would not take effect during the 2006–07 school year but rather at the start of the 2007–08 school year because there is a six-month family notification requirement for school districts implementing such a policy.

Lima City

Kevin L. Reeks, director, public relations and marketing
(419) 996-3410

Starting in the 2006–07 school year, elementary and middle school students in the Lima City Schools will begin wearing uniforms. The high school students will begin in the 2007–08 school year. The Lima City School District has 5,100 students and is the smallest urban district in Ohio. The goal of the Campus Wear (uniform) policy is to provide a professional dress environment aligning to the district's mission to provide a climate in which every student learns.

The rationale for uniforms is:

- establishing a culture which models the world of work;
- establishing a culture in which teacher coaching will focus on preparing students for life beyond the school experience;
- establishing a foundation which supports the diversity of our students while establishing expectations for a successful future;
- establishing a culture where student choice is respected while providing parameters, which lead toward successful employment;
- establishing a common foundation which is enforceable in a data driven environment.

The district's only prior experience with uniforms began in the mid 1990s at Lima South Middle School where students wore uniforms until 2002. The uniforms were discontinued because a group of South parents at that school were concerned that no other schools in the district had uniforms. The parents were not against uniforms, but they did not want their children to be different. When the uniforms were discontinued, a group of parents met with the superintendent to revise the district dress code. While well written, the dress code was not consistently enforced districtwide and parent interest in uniforms continued.

In April 2005, a group of parents and staff met to look at the issue of uniforms. They decided to survey parents, students (grades 3-12), staff and members of the community on the possibility of uniforms. Surveys were completed by hard copy and online via the district's Web site in May 2005.

Of the 3,615 surveys completed, 1,755 were students; 1,466 were parents of students enrolled in the Lima City Schools; 294 were staff; and 100 were community members. The results showed that 68% of the adults favored uniforms while 74% of the students opposed them. After the survey, several meetings were held to decide if uniforms should be pursued, and then to determine what the uniforms should include. Parents, staff and students participated in the discussions. During the process, the group decided it wanted choices for students. As the uniforms evolved to include choices, the uniforms were renamed Campus Wear.

This spring, events will be held to present campus wear to students, parents and the community. The campus wear items include four colors of bottoms — pants, skirts, skorts and shorts — in khaki, black, blue or gray; four colors of tops — long or short sleeved polo or oxford cloth shirts — in red, white, light blue or gray. Several communications, in a variety of formats, have and will continue to inform parents and students of the Campus Wear requirements.

Vendors are being interviewed to provide the best prices, and area thrift stores are aware and positioned to help. A campaign to provide for students unable to afford Campus Wear (as stated in the Ohio Revised Code) is being conducted with businesses and individuals. Challenge requests also have been sent to local foundations.

If you are considering a uniform policy for your district, become very familiar with RC 3313.665 and follow it. Make sure you have ample parent interest and use a community engagement model to make sure all voices are heard and actions reflect these discussions. Let the media help you show the process to others by making sure they are aware of all of the meetings.

As for implementation, if you do not have a department that can handle the extra work, and it is considerable, be prepared to portion out different functions to various departments. For example, our food service department is covering the applications for Campus Wear assistance along with the free and reduced lunch forms. This will be easier for our families that need assistance and the food service department is very familiar with this process.

Middletown City

Michael Valenti, principal, Stephen Vail Middle School
Lynda Gallagher, principal, Rosedale Elementary School
(513) 423-0781

Of Middletown's 11 schools, just two have uniform policies; Stephen Vail Middle School and Rosedale Elementary School. Vail's uniform policy was implemented in the 2000–01 school year and Rosedale's the following school year.

The two schools have very different demographics. Vail has a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students while Rosedale Elementary has very few. However, principals, parents and students of both school principals report that school uniforms are a benefit to all students.

Michael Valenti, says that the uniform policy has had great success with the support of parents, students and staff. "At least 95% of students wear uniforms each day. Staff has seen attendance increase and disciplinary actions involving dress code violations decrease since the policy has been implemented," he added. Vail has fundraisers that provide funds for needy students to purchase uniforms.

Rosedale's Principal Lynda Gallagher hopes that uniforms are here to stay. "I believe that the uniform policy allows students to concentrate on school work rather than the distraction of clothing. It's obvious that our parents agree. Over 95% of our students wear the uniform," she said.

Both schools allow students to "opt-out" of the uniform policy. But, the majority of students wish to wear the uniforms.

Mount Healthy City

Lori Handler, executive director, personnel and staff development
(513) 728-4960

Mount Healthy City Schools recently adopted a districtwide uniform dress code to begin in the 2006–07 school year.

Citing safety as a primary reason for a uniform dress code, the policy brings a number of other benefits that moved the board of education to vote in its favor. Positive school climate, improved behavior and academic achievement, elimination of gang-related clothing, ease of identifying students who don't belong, added resistance to peer pressure and preparing students for a world beyond high school are all reasons the district embraced the policy.

The policy, now in effect at five of our schools, will be expanded next year to include all K-12 students in eight schools. North Middle School was the first school in our district to implement a uniform dress code in 2001. In its first year, they noticed suspensions and expulsions were down.

These positive results prompted other schools in our district to institute a uniform dress code, as well. Parents from schools in our district without a uniform dress code liked what they saw, prompting them to request the board to change the policy to include all students.

Before the February vote to change the policy, the Mount Healthy City Board of Education held a special board meeting in January to gather public input. Parents of students in the three schools without uniforms were then surveyed to gauge support. Of the 59% reached for the survey, 71% said they favored a uniform dress code.

To include parents and community members in the decision-making process, a committee was formed to decide on the required attire. Once the attire had been decided, letters were sent home with all students. Signs were posted in the hallways at school and an article was included in the district newsletter.

The committee struggled with issues regarding belts, logos and shirts. Logos are allowed if they are small enough to be covered with a fist. Belts are required, but some students will cut off belt loops to get around that rule. The committee countered by stating that “pants must be worn at the natural waist.”

They further went on to say that oversized clothing is not permitted, and all shirts must be tucked in. Polo-style shirts must have three buttons instead of two. Shirts with two-buttons, they learned, are cut tighter and cropped shorter so the midriff shows. That’s why three-buttons were specified.

When implementing a uniform policy, the best advice is to allow at least a year for the change. Keep parents, students, staff and the community apprised of each and every step along the way, including area retail stores so they can stock the appropriate clothing for your students. Once a decision has been made, stick to it and communicate the details of the new policy well in advance. So when the time does actually arrive, the transition to uniforms will be a smooth one.

Painesville City Local (Lake)

Chris Hanahan, director, public relations
(440) 392-5060

Painesville City Local (Lake) School Board is exploring the idea of expanding the “academically dressed” model currently in place at St. Clair Elementary School. The successful program was established for the 2000–01 school year and has been well received by students, parents and staff. Unlike a traditional “uniform” policy, where all students dress alike, “academically dressed” mirrors the adult code of “business casual.” Students can choose from a variety of solid-color slacks, shorts, and collared shirts and tops.

The idea of expanding the dress code sprang from discussions with parents and staff on how students from the five current elementary schools will merge into the three new elementary buildings being constructed. When the question was posed, a recent survey of elementary parents showed that approximately 84% of the parents either agreed or strongly agreed with the idea of expanding the academically dressed model to the other schools. Additional survey data are being collected from middle school and high school parents. The idea may even be considered as a districtwide policy. The board will continue to seek parental and staff input before a final decision is made.

State law allows local school boards to institute stricter dress codes, like academically dressed, in their districts, as long as they have a system in place to financially support children who require assistance in meeting the academically dressed code. The district must also provide six months notice prior to implementing a mandatory academically dressed code.

Princeton City

Tyrone Olverson, principal, Lincoln Heights Elementary School
(513) 554-4080

Lincoln Heights Elementary is one of eight elementary schools in the Princeton City School District. Located approximately 15 miles north of Cincinnati, the district serves the communities of Evendale, Glendale, Lincoln Heights, Sharonville, Springdale and Woodlawn. Lincoln Heights, an historically African-American community, became part of the Princeton City School district in 1969, 13 years after the district was consolidated. Lincoln Heights is one of three Title I elementary schools in the district.

The subject of school uniforms for Lincoln Heights Elementary students was first brought to the attention of the school administration by parents in 2002–03, who expressed concern about the growing student conflict over who had or didn't have certain fashionable items of clothing — Tommy Hilfiger shirts, Nike shoes, etc. The principal at the time, Bill Myles, formed a committee that included parents and faculty to study mandatory school uniforms at Lincoln Heights Elementary. It was determined that a uniform policy for the Lincoln Heights student population would be beneficial and support the administration's efforts to reduce disciplinary referrals, raise self-esteem and subsequently improve student behaviors schoolwide.

The current principal, Tyrone Olverson, started in the fall of 2003 and was responsible for implementing the new school uniform policy. The benefits of this decision became evident early on. Uniform dress eliminates the opportunity to judge the “haves” versus the “have nots.” Everyone is equal and there is no competition to dress a certain way or in a certain designer's label. No one stands out. One of the most impactful results is that uniform dress separates the learning environment from the home environment. The students' new and improved attitude indicated they understand their “job” at school is learning.

Parents sighted benefits, too. Uniforms eliminate the “I do not want to go to school, because I don't have something to wear” excuse. It eliminates the “drooping” of the pants look. Students look neater and the cost is less expensive than buying fashion clothing.

The first year also brought awareness of the policy's weak points. Navy colored pants and skirts were chosen because the color hid grass stains and dirt, however, they are virtually impossible to find in the stores after the beginning of the school year. They also amended the all white or all blue sweater to allow sweaters that are predominantly white or blue. Most sweaters have at least a logo or outside label.

Lincoln Heights does hold “Free Dress Days” that are tied to student performance indicators (attendance). This privilege could be tied to discipline, but it may alienate some students. However, on days where students are free to wear what they want, the school sees a significant increase in disciplinary referrals based on inappropriate student misconduct. The “Free Dress Day” also opens the door for students to push the envelope and wear inappropriate school wear (street wear).

In addition, tucking in shirts may be a concern for larger students. Make sure shirts are a reasonable length. Two color choices for both pants and shirts allow for more flexibility without compromising the look or results. For example, Olverson is hoping to add khaki pants and skirts as a second option. They are sold year round.

In closing, the experience at Lincoln Heights has been very positive for students, teachers, staff and parents. Of course, the students want teachers to wear uniforms as well.

Warren County JVSD

Margaret Hess, superintendent
(513) 932-5677

Since its inception in 1976, the Warren County JVSD has had work uniforms for students in specific programs. For example, health students wear medical scrubs, and automotive technology and collision students wear the blue coveralls that mechanics wear.

Beginning with the 2000–01 school year, all students were issued program shirts to wear to school. As they checked in at open house in August, they received shirts to wear along with parking passes and schedules. The first few years of the program, the shirts were provided by the school through its agreement with Coca-Cola. Those with lab uniforms, such as the automotive students, wore their work uniforms in lab, but had polo shirts for academic days.

Today, each program has its own uniform. Some programs design their own shirts; some shirts are created by WCCC graphics students. Walking around the school, you can quickly tell what program each student is enrolled in by his or her uniform. The marketing students sell most of the uniforms and offer polos and hoodies, which also can be worn at school.

Winton Woods City

Sharon Oakes, communications coordinator
(513) 619-2302

Uniforms have become a hot topic in school districts across the country. There is much research being done on the pros and cons of implementing a uniform dress code in our public schools.

The Winton Woods City Board of Education and administration looked at the uniform option as a way to enhance school safety and provide an improved learning environment for all students.

After much consideration and input from parents, staff members and students, the Winton Woods City School District implemented a school uniform pilot program at two of the district's elementary schools. The positive reaction from parents, staff and community members concerning the pilot prompted the board of education to consider expanding the program to include all buildings, grades K-12.

After conducting a parent, staff and student survey, which resulted in over a 70% approval for expanding the uniforms in all schools at all grade levels, the board approved the uniform policy in January 2005 for implementation in the 2005–06 school year.

A uniform committee consisting of staff, parents and students was formed to define what the uniform would look like. Administrators met to define the consequences of non-compliance to the uniform policy.

Uniform vendors were identified and local department stores were contacted and provided with a description of the approved uniform items. Parochial and private schools were contacted as a possible means to obtain second-hand uniform articles. This “out of the box” thinking resulted in hundreds of donated uniform items.

A massive internal and external communication plan was created and implemented to help assure a smooth transition. Letters to parents, email newsletters and updates, fliers, parent and staff meetings, cable television, media releases, phone calls to all student households, and the district Web site were all used to provide information and encourage two-way communication.

The communications coordinator was identified by the district as the person who handled all uniform calls or inquiries. This proved to be key in the successful transition. One person, providing clear, accurate and honest information, as well as the offer of assistance in locating and funding the uniforms, eased possible tension and negative impact.

When the school doors opened in August 2005, less than 2% of the district’s 4,200 students were not in compliance with the new uniform policy. There has been no negative press, angry parents at board meetings or student demonstrations.

Through research, communication, cooperation, and frequent evaluation, the Winton Woods City School District implemented a districtwide uniform policy in six months with no casualties.

Youngstown City

Mike McNair, supervisor, community relations and public information
(330) 744-6930

Youngstown City is an urban school district that explored the concept of uniforms in schools in the mid '90s and implemented them, districtwide in 1998. The exploration process included gathering input from students, parents, staff and the community. Although there were some vocal complaints about the lack of individuality that would occur since its implementation, the policy has been well received and adhered to.

The uniform is black or navy blue slacks with white or powder blue or navy blue polo shirts, black shoes or black tennis shoes without any markings or emblems. It was a bit of a problem finding tennis shoes without emblems. Assistant principals have blackened in white emblems to subdue the markings if they show. Shirts were initially to be tucked in, however, that rule was changed in 2003–04 (see letter below).

Undershirts, if they show, should be white, blue or navy blue. One of the most difficult challenges was the lack of individuality for the girls. When we initially allowed for business attire or semi-formal wear, the interpretations were so wide that the policy was left open to constant abuse. In deference to modesty, we chose the same standards for boys and for girls.

Following is an excerpt of the letter sent to parents the year when the ‘untucked’ issue was addressed.

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students:

In an effort to simplify the dress code and eliminate some problem areas, the district has made some slight changes. These changes were based on recommendations made by a diverse committee, which considered input from segments of all parties affected by the changes with particular consideration given to input from the district’s Student Advisory Board.

Remember that the reasons for a dress code were never meant to be punitive, but protective and preventive. The purpose has always been to show unity of purpose and allow a focus on the value of why students are in school. This helps create a safe, orderly environment for the students.

You will see that starting next school year (2003–04), the polo style shirt only must be worn by all middle school, junior high and high school students. This applies to both male and female students. Furthermore, students will be able to wear the polo style shirt either tucked in or left out.

Every year a committee of students, parents and staff reviews the policy and makes recommendations for changes. The way it is communicated includes back to school fashion shows, brochures and other advertisements in the summer to remind parents and students of what to buy for back to school.

Samples

OSBA sample policy

File: JFCA

STUDENT DRESS CODE

School dress should enhance a positive image of the students and the district and not threaten the health, welfare and safety of the members of the student body. Any form of dress or grooming which attracts undue attention, prompting a disruption of the learning environment or violating the previous statement, is unacceptable.

Requirements include the following.

1. dress and grooming standards require cleanliness in the interest of health, sanitary conditions and safety requirements.
2. when a student is participating in school activities, his/her dress and grooming must not disrupt his/her performance or that of other students or constitute a health threat to himself/herself or other students.
3. dress and grooming are not such as to disrupt the teaching/learning process.

Uniforms

The principal, after consultation with a building committee, may decide to implement a uniform requirement within the building. The committee, composed of the principal, teachers and parents, must request specific Board approval prior to implementing a uniform requirement. The request must be approved by the Board at least six months prior to the implementation date. The request presented to the Board may:

1. include a detailed and specific description of the uniform;
2. include a plan and funding source(s) for providing uniforms for students unable to pay for them;
3. be consistent with provisions of the District's dress and grooming standards; and
4. establish a process for a parent/guardian to seek an exemption from the uniform requirement or to transfer his/her child, contingent on available space, to a school that does not require students to wear uniforms.

Students participating in a nationally recognized youth organization may wear the organizational uniform on days the organization has a scheduled function.

Funding

District funds shall not be used to purchase uniforms without specific approval by the Board. The funding source for providing uniforms for students unable to pay may include one or more of the following:

1. donations, gifts or grants;
2. funds generated at the building level by students, staff, PTA/PTO's or business/community partners; or
3. any other source as approved by the Board.

[Adoption date:]

LEGAL REFS.: U.S. Const. Amend. I
ORC 3313.20; 3313.665

CROSS REFS.: JFC, Student Conduct (Zero Tolerance)
JFCEA, Gangs
Student Handbooks

Parma City School District dress code pilot

Parma City School District looked to pilot a dress code at two elementary buildings for the 2005–06 school year; John Muir and Pleasantview.

Below are the parent letter regarding the pilot and the guidelines the district distributed to parents for review in the winter of 2005.

While the idea to adopt a uniform policy originated in the community, a survey of parents (next page) reveals little support. The board of education did not adopt a uniform dress policy. However, the district reviewed its dress code and plans to modify it in some areas (no flip flops in elementary schools). Staff will begin to enforce it more consistently. District contact is Christina Dinklocker, deputy superintendent, who can be reached at (440) 885-8759 or **dinklockerc@parmacityschools.org**.

Dear Parent or Guardian,

As a district, we are presently reviewing our current dress code and considering whether to provide more specific guidelines for students. Due to the extent of this undertaking, we are seeking input from several sources including administrators, teaching staff and PTAs as well as yourselves. Enclosed you will find a document listing many of the proposed changes. Please review it and indicate your level of support for this grouping. If you have any concerns, please list them in the allotted space.

Rules concerning clothing for gym days and warm temperatures are still being considered and will be announced in the near future.

The purpose of this study is to continue our ongoing efforts to find ways to furnish the students of our district with an environment that encourages effective learning. Improving our students' comprehension and performance remains our primary educational goal. We feel a more defined and enforced dress code could prove to be a positive influence on that environment.

Should you have any concerns that cannot be fully expressed on the accompanying page, please contact your building principal or the deputy superintendent's office at 885-8759 to discuss your views. Your input is both valued and appreciated.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sarah Zatik

Superintendent of Schools

Parma City School District parent survey

Parameters for Student School Apparel

(Elementary grades and specific schools only as a pilot project)

- Closed toe shoes; no slippers. 2 inch heel or less.
- Solid colored trousers, including jeans without tears or holes.
- Trousers/jeans worn at waist level, with belt (if loops) and worn at appropriate length.
- Shorts/skirts/skortis permitted: solid color, worn at waist and 3 inches above the knee.
- Solid colored, collared shirts/blouses (turtleneck included) tucked in and with short or long sleeves.
- No sweatsuits/warm-up outfits permitted.
- Capri length slacks are permitted.
- No undergarments worn over clothing.
- Appropriate foot/leg coverings required: socks, tights, stockings.
- Solid colored sweaters and vests permitted over collared tops with sleeves.
- No headgear or hats permitted except for religious observance.
- No piercing other than ears.
- Hair of natural color or colored a natural color.
- No distracting hairstyles permitted.
- No make-up permitted.
- Spirit wear permitted at appropriate times as designated by the principal.

(Please circle your response)

(I do / I do not) endorse the parameters as listed above.

Name (optional): _____

Date: _____ School: _____

Comments: _____

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL BY MARCH 31ST.
THANK YOU!**

Lima City sample uniform dress options

Campus wear for elementary and middle school students

Goal — The goal of the Campus Wear policy is to provide a professional dress environment aligning to the District's mission to provide a climate in which every student learns.

- Pants** Colors: Khaki, Black, Blue or Gray.
Fabric: Cotton or Twill; No jeans, denim, corduroy, sweat or wind pants.
No side zippers; no leg pockets; standard front and back pockets only.
Length: cannot drag on floor and no higher than top of heel.
- Shorts** Colors: Khaki, Black, Blue or Gray.
Fabric: Cotton or twill; no jeans, denim, corduroy, sweat or wind pants.
No side zippers; no leg pockets; standard front and back pockets only.
Length: at least touching top of knee.
- Skirts/Skorts** Colors: Khaki, Black, Blue or Gray
Fabric: Cotton twill; no jeans, denim, corduroy, sweat or wind pant material
straight, cotton, at least touching top of knee; no slits.

In addition all pants, shorts, skirts and skorts will be fitted and hemmed, properly fitted at waist and may not be altered in any way except to fit properly.

- Shirts, Blouses** Colors: Red, White, Light Blue or Gray (no denim).
Short or long sleeved polos.
Short or long sleeved oxfords.
Shirts must be tucked in. No more than top two buttons unbuttoned on shirts or blouses. All shirts/blouses must have buttons.
- Sweaters** Colors: Red, White or Gray (no denim).
V-neck, crew neck and cardigan — shirts listed above must be worn under all sweatshirts and shirts must be tucked in.
- Shoes** No open-toed shoes — no flip flops — no slippers.
Shoes with closures must be worn as intended. Tie shoes must be tied.
- Socks** Must wear solid color socks, tights or hose.
- Belts** Standard dress belt in black/brown, or solid color belt in same color as pants, must be worn with clothing with belt loops. Belts must fit (no excessive length) and have a standard buckle.
- Ties** Neckties, bowties, optional, any solid color or stripes.

Head Gear No head gear (caps, hats, sweatbands, bandannas, curlers, etc., to be worn inside).

Jewelry No heavy metal or heavy chains allowed.

**Spartan
Sweatshirts/
T-shirts** Special days (limited), as designated by school or district.

For all clothing, excluding shoes, no logos/print permitted. No tattered, dirty, torn clothing permitted. Solid colors only. Undergarments (excluding T-shirt collars) shall not be exposed.

No see-through clothing permitted. Any special needs variations to the campus wear requirements must be approved by medical or IEP authorization.

**Toledo City Web site outlining uniform dress options
(www.tps.org/index.cfm?Article=947&SecName=30)**

Why has Toledo Public Schools adopted uniforms for elementary and junior high/middle school students and a districtwide dress code for high school students?

A decision to adopt uniforms was made because Toledo Public Schools believes in developing policies and practices that promote a positive academic, social, and behavioral climate. There is credible data indicating that adopting school uniform dress codes can improve a school district's overall educational climate.

Nearly 80% of elementary parents who responded to a questionnaire at parent/teacher conferences last November favored the uniforms. The same 80% approval was given by parents of junior high/middle school students. The families of high school students also had a variety of opportunities to provide input concerning the dress code that was adopted for high school students.

**Districtwide High School Dress Code
(Beginning the first day of school in the 2006-2007 School Year)**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Color(s)</i>
Tops			
No hooded clothing or no sweatshirts for either males or females. All tops must be tucked into pants/skirts. No zippers on shirts. No written material may be on shirts.	Blouses with a collar, polos with collars and turtlenecks	Dress shirts, polo or oxford button-down shirts with collars and turtlenecks	Any solid color
Bottoms			
No jeans or sweat suits for either males or females. Pants must be at waist and must be appropriately fitted (no cargo pants, no sagging pants).	Skirts (knee length or longer), shorts (knee length or longer), skorts (knee length or longer); slacks, Capri pants (uniform material type or corduroy)	Uniform material type pants, dress pants, corduroy pants and knee length shorts	Approved solid colors — dark blue/navy, black, khaki/tan or brown

Socks

Matching socks,
nylons or tights

Matching socks

Any color/pattern

Females and Males

Sweaters

Cardigans, pullovers or vests
No hoods on sweaters for either males
or females.

Any solid color

Shoes

Black or dark dress shoes with enclosed toes
and heels no higher than one inch.
No platforms. No slippers. Black or dark tied
laces in shoes designed for laces.

Black or dark colors

Athletic/Tennis Shoes

Athletic/tennis shoes may be part of the dress
code if they are solid black with black laces or
solid white with white laces.

Solid black with black
laces
Solid white with white
laces

Belts

Belts required for all slacks/skirts with belt
loops.

Black, navy, light or dark
brown or in the same
color to match the skirt

Ties

If students choose, they may wear a dress tie
that is tied.

Physical Education Classes

Students must wear a gym uniform as
determined by the school.

Junior High Student Uniform

What will the students be able to wear?

Listing of Acceptable Clothing for Junior High/Middle School Students

<i>Item</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Color(s)</i>
Tops			
No hooded jackets. All tops tucked in.	Blouses with collars, polos with collars, or turtlenecks and/or mock turtlenecks and oxford tops	Dress shirts, polo or oxford button-down shirts with collars, or turtlenecks	white, light blue, dark blue, yellow, maroon (burgundy) No other colors, insignias, or logos. All tops in approved solid colors.
Bottoms			
No jeans or sweat suits for either boys or girls	Skirts, jumpers, slacks, knee length shorts, or skorts, capris — all items knee length or longer	Pants, knee length shorts	dark blue/navy, khaki/tan — all solid colors. Can be uniform, dress, or corduroy.
Sweaters			
No hooded sweaters	Cardigans, pullovers, vests	Cardigans, pullovers, vests	navy, white No other colors, insignias or logos.
Socks			
	Socks, nylons, tights, knee socks in solid matching colors	Socks	solid dark colors or white
Shoes			
Tennis shoes worn only in gym class	Black or dark shoes with enclosed toes/heels, no platforms, black/dark shoe laces for shoes that lace	Black or dark shoes with enclosed toes/heels, no platforms, black/dark shoe laces for shoes that lace	black, dark

Belts

Required for all skirts, slacks, shorts, skorts with belt loops

Required for all pants, shorts with belt loops

black, navy, light or dark brown. No other colors, insignias, or logos on belts.

Elementary Student Uniform Program

What will the students be able to wear?

Listing of Acceptable Clothing for Elementary School Students

<i>Item</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Color(s)</i>
Tops	Blouses with collars, polos with collars, or turtlenecks	Dress shirts, polo or oxford button-down shirts with collars, or turtlenecks	white, light blue, dark blue, yellow
Bottoms No jeans or sweat suits for either boys or girls	Skirts, jumpers, slacks, knee length shorts, skorts	Pants, knee length shorts	dark blue/navy, khaki/tan
Sweaters	Cardigans, pullovers, vests	Cardigans, pullovers, vests	navy, white
Socks	Socks	Socks	solid dark colors or white

Shoes

Black or dark shoes with enclosed toes/heels, no platforms, black/dark shoe laces for shoes that lace	Black or dark shoes with enclosed toes/heels, no platforms, black/dark shoe laces for shoes that lace	black, dark
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Belts

Required for all skirts, slacks, shorts, skorts with belt loops	Required for all pants, shorts with belt loops	black, dark
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Where can uniforms be purchased?

Some of the places where various uniform items may be available include: A.J. Wright, The Andersons, Elder-Beerman, Herman & Livingston, LLC., K-Mart, Kohl's, J.C. Penney, Rainbow, Schoolbelles, Sears, School Matters, Target, Value City and Wal-Mart.

If a parent cannot afford to buy uniforms, what assistance is the district providing?

The district is working currently with Lucas County Job & Family Services to devise ways eligible families may be able to receive uniforms for the 2006–07 school year. Notification will be mailed to families when details are determined.

What are the eligibility requirements?

The program extends to families who have a household income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Families will qualify if they have any of the following:

- Women, Infants and Children (WIC) card,
- proof of publicly funded childcare from Lucas County,
- Ohio Works First (OWF) cash and/or food stamps,
- current Medicaid card.

Recipients must:

- live in Lucas County and attend Toledo Public Schools,
- have a minor child who lives with a parent, caretaker relative, legal guardian or legal custodian,
- household must consist of an adult who is a United States citizen or qualified alien.

What is the application process?

(The following process was used last school year. Again, families will be notified of plans for the 2006–07 school year.)

Families filled out applications at the Thurgood Marshall Administration Building, 420 E. Manhattan Blvd., Rm. 108. The district processed and approved or denied each request, sending written communication to the applicant. Applicants had to present the following: a photo ID, proof of household income for the last 30 days, proof of legal guardianship of student(s) needing clothing, ID number for each student in grades K-8, and complete the application.

What is the first step for families new to Toledo Public Schools or returning from non-TPS locations?

The first step is to register the student or students in the district. Families go to their neighborhood school to register.

Once registration is underway, the family then will begin to receive necessary written communications from the district about the uniform program and other matters important to a student attending a Toledo Public School.

Internet resources

To download an electronic version of this SALT resource kit, please visit **www.osba-ohio.org/SALTkit12.pdf**. The electronic version contains live links to all the links that follow.

Analysis of the Effect of Uniforms on Public School Students with Regard to Positively Impacting Behavior (including but not limited to curbing violent activity)

<http://instruct1.cit.cornell.edu/courses/pam230/Paper%20Examples/PAM%20230%20Example%20Paper%201.pdf>

Cincinnati City Schools policy

www.cps-k12.org/general/BdPolicies/PL5134-2.pdf

www.cps-k12.org/general/Uniforms/uniform.html

Clearinghouse on Educational Policy and Management (more links within)

http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/roundup/Summer_2002.html

ECS site (more links within)

www.ecs.org/html/issue.asp?issueid=145

Education and Urban Society (abstract with PDF link of full report)

<http://eus.sagepub.com/cgi/content/short/35/4/399>

ERIC Digest 148 — May 2001 Uniforms and Dress-Code Policies

<http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest148.html>

Kentucky Center for School Safety Issues Brief on School Uniform

www.kysafeschools.org/clear/issues/unifrmreslts.html

Lima City Schools

www.limacityschools.org/apps/newsletter.nsf/97575ed763205f5585256ba5006a061d/5CFC73C231D8680185257124006E22D7

www.limacityschools.org/apps/newsletter.nsf/97575ed763205f5585256ba5006a061d/1388FC78D8AD93E785257124006DCF67

www.limacityschools.org/apps/newsletter.nsf/97575ed763205f5585256ba5006a061d/AE71FE52848CC69485257124006E3FCB

Long Beach (CA) Unified School District Uniform page

www.lbusd.k12.ca.us/uniforms/index.asp

Manual on School Uniforms, U.S. Department of Education

www.ed.gov/updates/uniforms.html

Mississippi State University article

<http://msucare.com/news/print/fcenews/fce03/030707uniform.html>

NAESP

www.naesp.org/ContentLoad.do?contentId=929&pageNum=2

www.naesp.org/ContentLoad.do?contentId=67

www.naesp.org/search/Search.do?query=uniforms&GO.x=0&GO.y=0&GO=GO

North Carolina Family Policy Council (has link to PDF)

www.ncfpc.org/PolicyPapers/Findings%200105-Dress%20Policy.pdf

Notre Dame study www.members.tripod.com/rockqu/uniform.htm

PBS Online NewsHour: School Uniforms, April 17, 1996

www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/uniform_4-17.html

Research in Middle Level Education Online

www.nmsa.org/Publications/RMLEOnline/Articles/Vol25No1Article5/tabid/524/Default.aspx

Savannah-Chatham County (GA) Public Schools

www.savannah.chatham.k12.ga.us/District/Academic+Affairs/School+Uniform+Policy/

School Administrator magazine article

www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0JSD/is_11_57/ai_77236972/print

School Dress Uniforms: A Review

web1.msue.msu.edu/msue/programs/cyf/public_html/cindy/Revisedrevoflit.htm

School Uniforms — Safety in Schools and Uniforms

<http://712educators.about.com/cs/schoolviolence/a/uniforms.htm>

School Uniforms: Panacea or Band-Aid

www.education-world.com/a_issues/issues060.shtml

Southeastern Louisiana University study

www2.selu.edu/Academics/Education/EDF600/swartz.htm

The Dress Code Debate and School Uniform Movement: A Selected Bibliography

www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/13/54/1354.htm

Virginia Commonwealth University's Commonwealth National Policy Institute

www.cepi.vcu.edu/policy_issues/school/dress_codes.html

Working to improve schools and education

www.ithaca.edu/wise/topics/school_uniforms.htm