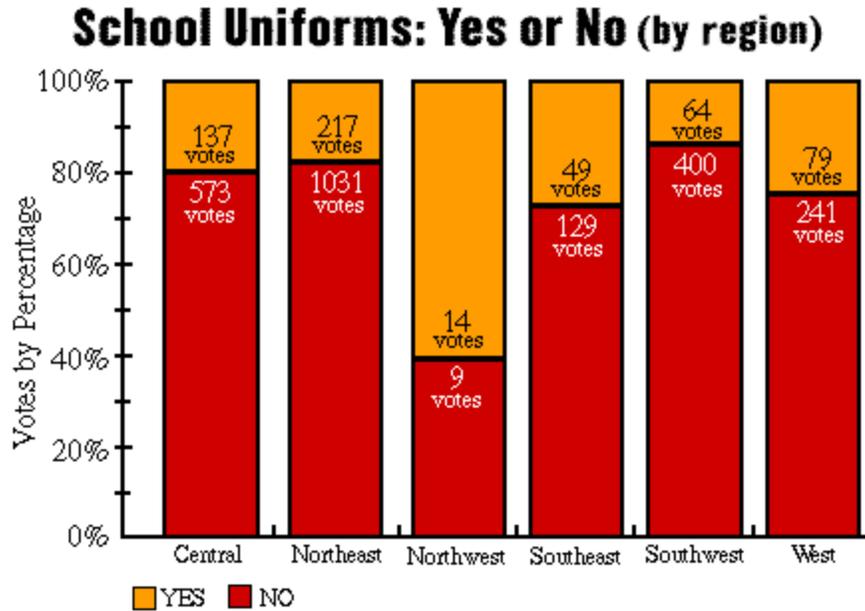


"School Uniforms" Student Survey Results



Heartland Institute

Parents Have Mixed Views of School Uniforms

Many of the parents in suburban Detroit interviewed by School Reform News indicated their support for public school uniforms. They also acknowledged they had no evidence their children would be safer because of uniforms.

W. Henry Cobb of Lathrup Village, Michigan is one parent in favor of uniforms. Cobb, whose children attended the Lathrup School District, said students should not be allowed to wear baggy pants and other pieces of clothing that could be considered "gang wear."

"I don't understand how children can learn anything dressing the way they do," said Cobb. "They are more focused on the types of shoes they have and not their studies. I know this [uniforms] will tilt the learning curve upward."

Michelle Gibson of Inkster is in favor of the navy-and-white outfits her child must wear to Meek-Milton Elementary School. The uniform code was instituted in Inkster in 1998.

"They're convenient. And they bring a good atmosphere to the school," said Gibson.

But Carole Bell, a former teacher and parent of students in the St. Clair Shores school district, feels that blaming the lack of school success on what students wear does not address the real concern. She wrote a letter to The Detroit Free Press recently, stressing the need for schools to teach the basics of reading, writing, and math, rather than worrying about uniforms.

"Schools can't cover everything," Bell wrote. "Rather than worrying about what kids wear, schools should concentrate on developing learning skills and call on parents to take responsibility for social behaviors."

Are School Uniforms a Good or Bad Idea?

Pros of a School Uniform

- ✓ School uniforms spare kids and their parents of the time-consuming, troublesome ordeal of picking out a set of clothes every day. During the rushed morning hours before school, picking out the right set of clothes, especially for girls, can take up a lot of time. Many kids would be happy to be rid of the hassle, and they can save their 'good' stuff for outings and weekends.
- ✓ Among the reasons why school uniforms are a good idea, the most strongly stated one is that they promote equality. Distinctions made on the basis of economic status are reduced. With everyone dressed alike, there is a hope that kids will judge others based on character instead of the clothes they wear.
- ✓ School uniforms can save parents a lot of money as they then only need to buy their kids casual clothes to wear on the weekends. Otherwise, parents need to constantly replenish their child's wardrobe with the latest fashions, which can be very expensive. They would need to provide clothes for 5 days of every week plus weekends, sports and club activities. This can be economically taxing for parents, and the constant demand for new clothes will be very stressful. Uniforms are a special money saver during the growing years, when kids outgrow their clothes every few months.
- ✓ While bullying may not stop, use of uniform at least prevents students who aren't dressed fashionably or according to the latest trends, from getting picked on for their choice of clothes.
- ✓ It prepares children for working life where they often need to wear uniforms, or at the least dress conservatively or follow a dress code. Also, the purpose of attending school is to learn, and anything (such as clothes) that take away from that goal, needs to be discouraged.
- ✓ Casual dressing leaves school administrators with the complex task of setting a dress code as well as monitoring students' apparel. They need to check inappropriate clothing such as strapless, halter, and midriff baring tops and too-short skirts and shorts. They also need to keep an eye out for inappropriate insignia on the clothes, such as slogans for alcohol and cigarettes, and symbols such as the Nazi symbol or vulgar language.
- ✓ It promotes more safety on campus as well as on field trips. Outsiders are easily identifiable and it is easier to account for one's own students.

Cons of a School Uniform

- ✗ Many people feel that uniforms are a method of reining in the creativity and freedom of expression of students, and passing on the message that conformity is important.
- ✗ Some parents feel that the safety of students is compromised by uniforms. In the events of natural disasters or emergencies, such as earthquakes, tornadoes, fires or terrorist attacks, it would be really hard for parents to identify their child from the midst of a milieu of similarly clothed children.
- ✗ Contrary to popular belief, even with uniforms on, certain children will get picked on by others. Cliques will still be formed and students will find ways (such as weight, complexion, financial status) to pass judgment upon their peers.
- ✗ School uniforms are very often unflattering, and it can damage a child's self-image.
- ✗ A uniform divides two institutions which is enough to develop fights between the two school groups, which consequently results into a serious rivalry. Students from rival institution are easily identifiable because of their uniforms while they are on the way to school or returning home, resulting into bullying or terrible fights between two school groups.

School Uniforms Save Parents Time, Money

Angella Benjamin, Beltsville

As a mother and a college student, it is a pleasure to voice my opinion on the fact that wearing uniforms to school can save time and money. There are some questions I would like to ask that readers might find very interesting. I don't have all the answers, but from my own experience I know this system does work.

The majority of public school students in Maryland and the District don't wear uniforms. Most of the students enjoy wearing regular clothes, especially name brands that are more expensive. Other students cannot afford name brands. Most of their clothes are from what other people gave them.

I cannot guarantee that a child will or will not learn better wearing a uniform, but I do know it saves time and money. My daughter wears a uniform to school and it only costs me \$130 for the school year. Depending on how her uniforms have been cared for, she will have them for the next school year, which will save me another \$130.

How many parents can spend \$130 on one child for the entire school year? In answering my question, remember you have to shop for the four seasons. Parents, how many times can you afford to buy new clothing? What does a parent have to lose in putting their child in uniform? How much time does a child spend in the morning trying to find something to wear? For the entire school year, how many times does a parent shop? How much do they spend? Remember parents, all you need for a child are five uniforms for the entire school year.

The time you spend going to different stores to get the clothes your child needs could be spent doing something else. There are uniform stores available. Walk in, get your supplies, and you are done for the day.

If wearing uniforms is so bad, why don't the Army, fire department, health workers, police and postal workers, go without uniforms? There is a logical reason. No one will be able to identify them. The Army wears their uniforms with pride. Why can't our children?

As I have mentioned earlier, I don't have all the answers to my questions. Neither can I guarantee that a child will learn better wearing a uniform. But from my own experience I do know for a fact that you will save time and money. And a child who cannot afford name brand clothes or change an outfit every day will appreciate this change.

http://ww2.gazette.net/stories/042706/prinlet173343_31943.shtml

Ironing out policies on school uniforms

By Carol Motsinger, USA TODAY

As the new school year approaches, more schools are requiring students to wear uniforms or otherwise restricting what they may wear — and parents are objecting. Their complaint: The policies trample students' right of expression and parents' right to raise children without government interference, says Vickie Crager, founder of Asserting Parental Rights — it's Our Duty, a parents rights group that opposes school uniforms.

Parents Laura and Scott Bell filed suit over an Anderson, Ind., uniform plan that will begin when students return to school Aug. 20. A hearing was scheduled today in federal court in Indianapolis. The Anderson policy requires black, navy or khaki pants or skirts and a solid-color shirt with a collar. "As a parent, we felt our rights were being violated," says Laura Bell. They have five children, ages 5 to 17.

The Bells' suit makes two claims: that the uniform requirement violates their children's constitutional right of free expression and that it violates the guarantee of a free public education. The Bells would have to pay \$641 for five sets of pants and shirts required by the policy, Laura Bell says.

About one in four public elementary schools and one in eight public middle and high schools in the USA have policies dictating what a student wears to school, says David Brunnsma, a sociologist who wrote *Uniforms in Public Schools: A Decade of Research and Debate* in 2005. Private schools first imported the British tradition of student uniforms to mark a student's social status, Brunnsma says. Urban public schools began to adopt uniforms in the late 1980s to reduce social pressure from fashion-savvy students. The idea spread to suburban and rural schools when President Clinton said uniforms make schools more orderly. As the trend grew, so did the opposition, Brunnsma says. Charles Rubright, lawyer for the Anderson school district, says the board expects uniforms to improve academic performance by eliminating distracting clothing and creating an orderly atmosphere.

Cyndi Regis of Congress, Ariz., says her son, Story Stringfellow, 9, doesn't wear anything inappropriate to Congress Elementary School. He wants to wear his Phoenix Suns T-shirts and jeans, she says, but he'll be required to wear a polo shirt and khaki or navy shorts or pants starting today. "We teach him to be himself and we encourage it," Regis says. "He's not out of line with what he wants to wear."

Toni Wayas, principal and superintendent of the Congress school and district, says parents suggested the policy and most families support it.

Most lawsuits against school uniforms fail, says David Hudson, a First Amendment scholar at the First Amendment Center in Nashville. Judges usually decide that uniform policies are meant to improve schools and not to suppress student speech, he says. The Supreme Court has not ruled on school uniforms, Hudson says.

Other lawsuits are pending:

•**Bayonne, N.J.** A group of parents have appealed a dismissal of their challenge to a uniform requirement of khaki bottoms and navy tops. Their lawyer plans to file a case brief Aug. 13. A judge ruled last year that the suit was not filed in time. School officials have said the uniforms foster school spirit, self-respect and self-discipline.

•**Napa County, Calif.** On July 2, a judge temporarily banned the enforcement of a middle school dress code while a suit challenging its constitutionality heads to trial. Under the code, students may wear only solid-color clothing with no logos or stripes. The code was designed to eliminate gang insignia, says Mike Pearson, principal of Redwood Middle School. Others who object to uniforms and strict dress codes make their case outside the courtroom. Nashville parents created Metro Parents Against Standard School Attire after the school board announced plans for uniforms this spring. "We perceive it as an educational fad," says Ashley Crownover, the group's spokeswoman. She says research does not support claims that uniforms increase safety or improve academic performance.

Some members of the group are considering suing or encouraging their children not to wear uniforms when school starts Aug. 13, Crownover says. "We expect our school systems to do a lot, but this is taking it too far," she says. "That's my job — to help my children learn what is and isn't appropriate clothing."