

Should School Uniforms Be Mandatory in Public Schools?

Article 1: Should Students Wear Uniforms?

Some schools have a policy stating that students must wear uniforms to class. Normally associated with private schools, uniforms have become more common in public schools, too. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, uniforms are required at about 22% of U.S. public schools.

Many schools say uniforms make it easier for students to focus in class, and that uniforms promote inclusion. But some students think uniforms are uncomfortable, and that kids should have the freedom to express their personality through their clothing.

Are uniform policies the best way to keep kids focused on learning? Or should students be allowed to wear what they want?

TIME for Kids asked readers to weigh in. Here, two of them share their opinion about whether or not students should be required to wear uniforms at school.

YES! by Yuna Chong, 9 - Santa Clara, California

Uniforms are as much about safety as they are about inclusion. Teachers don't have to worry about losing sight of students at the playground or on a field trip. Also, when kids wear uniforms, both the older and younger students feel like they are part of the same group. I wear a uniform and feel like my school is one big team. I feel included.

I think it is harder to bully someone about his or her clothes if you are all wearing the same thing. When everyone is dressed the same, you don't have to worry about how you look or about wearing the latest trend. Parents can save money, as well! And in the morning, I can save time because I don't have to choose what kind of clothes I should wear.

NO! by Emerson Sperling, 12 - Sterling Heights, Michigan

I don't think kids should have to wear a uniform. If students are wearing the exact same thing, they can't express themselves. Kids should feel like they can be their own person. They shouldn't have to match. During

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school hours, we should also be comfortable.

If we're in scratchy shirts and uncomfortable dress pants, we're not going to focus very well. I get that the teachers don't want us focusing on everyone else's clothing, but it's still uncomfortable to be in a uniform all day. Also, parents have to go shopping and spend a lot of money on the uniforms.

If students could wear normal clothes, we'd be able to express ourselves, be comfortable, and not spend money on outfits that we never wear at home.

Source: <https://www.timeforkids.com/g56/debate-should-students-wear-uniforms-2/>

Article 2: The Perspective on School Uniforms

Traditionally favored by private and parochial institutions, school uniforms are growing in popularity in the U.S. Around 19% of American public schools and 57% of American private schools currently have a uniform policy in place. Consequently, each year parents are forced to shell out money on school clothes in addition to their kids' regular wardrobe. On the other hand, school uniforms can reduce both peer pressure and morning stress. So, are uniforms conducive to the learning environment, or are they extraneous?

Here are three arguments in favor of school uniforms and three against:

Three arguments in favor of school uniforms:

1. Uniforms create a sense of equality among students

When school uniforms are required, all students are expected to dress the same, regardless of their style preferences or socioeconomic status. Uniforms can promote inclusivity and, in turn, prevent envy and dissatisfaction among students, as there is no ogling of designer dresses or mocking of thrift store rags. Instead of using children as walking billboards for various brands, creating an atmosphere of "haves" and "have-nots," uniforms ensure that everyone is dressed the same, creating an environment of equality. Plus, with uniforms, students save time and energy during the morning rush, giving them greater space to focus on

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their studies instead of on fashion.

2. Uniforms promote order within the school hierarchy

Learning is more likely to happen when there is a sense of decorum and respect for authority in school. When school uniforms are mandatory, classrooms may become more disciplined and orderly, as uniforms remind students where they are and how they are supposed to behave. Not to mention, uniforms may enhance classroom management, by removing the potential for sparkly, new or trendy outfits that could distract students, thus making it easier for them to sit and focus on learning. By exhibiting the school's expectation that high standards be met, by instituting uniforms, the hierarchy of student - teacher - administrator is more deeply internalized. Attendance tends to rise, students may behave better, and teachers are therefore more able to do their jobs - teach.

3. Uniforms promote students' safety

When uniformed students are off campus, they can be easily identified as belonging to a particular school. One related benefit is that teachers and strangers can readily spot them in a crowd, ensuring that no student goes missing while on field trips. Strangers also know that the uniformed students are minors and should therefore not be flirted with, served alcohol, or engaged in any adult behavior. What's more, when students are required to wear uniforms, it becomes much easier to identify campus intruders, who stick out like sore thumbs, thereby increasing safety for students as they study.

Three arguments against school uniforms:

1. School uniforms are an added expense

When school uniforms are mandatory, parents incur the added expense of clothing that their children will have no use for outside of school. They still need to buy regular clothes for their children to wear after hours, on the weekends and for casual dress days. For parents who would have sent their children to school in hand-me-downs or hand-crafted garments, as well as for parents banking on free public education, forking out funds for school uniforms can be unaffordable and disconcerting. Not to mention that there are cases where siblings from low-income families have had to share uniforms, which has forced them to attend school on alternate days. While this may be a rare example, less rare is the reality that worn-out and tattered

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hand-me-down uniforms may inspire bullying, which school uniforms are trying to prevent. So, the very concept that is meant to even the playing field can actually divide it.

2. Why not educate towards freedom of expression?

Schools teach students about the U.S. Constitution and its Amendments, so why not educate them to follow it? Everyone has a right to freedom of expression. For example, in *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School* (1969), the court said that a student's freedom of expression in school must be protected unless it would seriously interfere with disciplinary requirements. In a school setting, this can and should be extended to exhibiting individuality through clothing. Forcing all students to wear the same thing infringes on this right. It can also stifle students' self-expression, which is a strong need during adolescence. Uniforms go against teens' natures and may drive them to express themselves through harsher means, such as body piercings, tattoos and rebellious behavior.

3. Uniforms can be impractical and uncomfortable

Uniforms may not be conducive for spending long hours sitting at a classroom desk. They can also stifle the ability to play outdoors during recess. They are often designed to be worn by all body types, flattering none. They can be restrictive and made of polyester or polycottons that may make students sweat in the summer and chill in the winter. Plus, stains are harder to get out of this material and it doesn't hold up as well as cotton, hence, the need (and costs) of replacing them is great. This may be particularly true for girls, who often have to wear rigid skirts, while their male counterparts get to wear pants.

Source: <https://www.theperspective.com/debates/living/perspective-school-uniforms>