

A Comparison and Contrast Essay: School Uniforms versus No School Uniforms

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Some debate has taken place over recent decades concerning whether public schools should incorporate uniforms into their dress code. Many elementary schools do this now, especially in poor inner city districts. Sometimes the adoption of a dress code is seen in middle schools as well. However, the adoption of a dress code at the high school level is much rarer. Possibly for that reason, little empirical evidence is available on the benefits of implementing a uniform in schools (Adams, 2006). When considering whether to adopt a school uniform, several factors need to be taken into consideration.

First, if debating whether to require uniforms in a high school, consider if wearing uniforms will be a new concept for that student body. If these students have had to wear uniforms in elementary and middle school, then requiring first year high school students to continue doing so will not be as controversial as it might if the requirement was completely novel to the students. From there, students would continue to wear school uniforms each year until they graduated (Walmsley, 2011). In contrast, if high school students have not been required to wear uniforms during the earlier years in school, they may strongly protest. The easiest way to begin a program requiring school uniforms is to start in elementary school and let the students continue each year from there.

A second point to consider in comparing or contrasting the use of school uniforms is cost. Often, the thought of dress codes evoke visions of school jackets with emblazoned insignia, button-down Oxford shirts, ties, slacks, and skirts. Parents become concerned about cost. However, a school uniform can simply mean uniformity of dress. For boys, this can mean dark or kaki colored slacks and polo-styled shirts in basic colors

of navy blue and white. For girls, it might also mean polo-styled shirts and slacks or skirts in designated colors. These items can be found in various department stores at various prices (Alleyne, LaPoint, Lee, & Mitchell, 2003; Walmsley, 2011). In contrast, what one thinks of as regular school clothing can be as expensive or as inexpensive as a uniformed style of clothing; any article of clothing can be bought in different levels of quality, at different prices, in different stores.

Some who are proponents of having a school uniform or uniformed style of dress note that school administrators spend considerable energy on discipline each day focused on student violation of dress code (Walmsley, 2011). Requiring boys to wear properly fitted slacks, polo-styled shirts, belts, and standard shoes would address the wearing of inappropriate printed t-shirts and poorly fitted pants, for example. Having girls to wear slacks or skirts, standard shoes, and polo-styled shirts would address most concerns about clothing that reveals too much. Length of skirts could continue being an issue, though.

Another point to compare or contrast in utilizing a school uniform has to do with school safety. Some argue that trespassers on school property can be more easily identified if students are wearing clothing that is uniform in style and color (Alleyne et al., 2003). This may be a valid point. Schools have had intruders to come onto campuses. This is a complex issue, but utilization of a school uniform might help.

Of course, students and parents are sometimes concerned with issues of individuality and self-expression. However, most people conform to expected standards for work, attending court, church, and a number of other activities. Self-expression is not

more limited in school than elsewhere. In all, more research needs to be conducted to determine if having a school dress code has possible benefits for a school.

References

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