



Children in uniform at a North Carolina public school.

Source: "About Our School," *Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools website* (accessed Aug. 22, 2014)

Traditionally favored by private and parochial institutions, school uniforms are being adopted by US public schools in increasing numbers. Almost one in five US public schools required students to wear uniforms during the 2011-2012 school year, up from one in eight in 2003-2004. Mandatory uniform policies in public schools are found more commonly in high-poverty areas. [23] [46]

Proponents say that school uniforms make schools safer for students, create a "level playing field" that reduces socioeconomic disparities, and encourage children to focus on their studies rather than their clothes.

Opponents say school uniforms infringe upon students' right to express their individuality, have no positive effect on behavior and academic achievement, and emphasize the socioeconomic disparities they are intended to disguise.

History of School Uniforms

The first recorded use of standardized dress in education may have been in England in 1222, when the Archbishop of Canterbury mandated that students wear a robe-like outfit called the "*cappa clausa*." The origin of the modern school uniform can be traced to 16th Century England, when the impoverished "charity children" attending the Christ's Hospital boarding school wore blue cloaks reminiscent of the cassocks worn by clergy, along with yellow stockings. As of Sep. 2014, students at Christ's Hospital were [still wearing the same uniform](#), and according to the school it is the oldest school uniform still in use. When Christ's Hospital surveyed its students in 2011, 95% voted to keep the traditional uniforms. [14] [83]

In later centuries, school uniforms became associated with the upper class. At one of England's most prestigious schools, Eton, students were required to wear black top hats and tails on and off campus until 1972, when the dress codes began to be relaxed. [14]

School uniforms in the United States followed the traditional use of uniforms established in England and were generally limited to private and parochial schools. [14] One exception was found in government-run boarding schools for Native American children, first established in the late 1800s, where the children, who had been removed from their families, were dressed in military-style uniforms.[49]

US School Uniform Movement Begins

The first US public schools known to institute uniform policies were in Maryland and Washington, DC, in the fall of 1987, with Cherry Hill Elementary School in Baltimore, MD, gaining the most publicity. These early uniform programs were voluntary, but according to a *New York Times* report from Dec. 1987, most parents supported the idea and "almost all" students wore the uniforms. School officials and other advocates of the new uniform policies noted improvements in students' "frame of mind"



Native American children in uniform at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, circa 1890.

Source: Jon Allen Reyhner, "Indian Boarding Schools," *californiaindianeducation.org* (accessed Aug. 5, 2014)

and stated that uniforms had "sharply reduced discipline problems." They also reported that uniforms had "already reduced the preoccupation of students with expensive designer clothing for school wear and eased the financial burden that placed on the students' families." [48] The origin of the uniform policy in Baltimore has been linked to a 1986 shooting, in which a local public school student was wounded during a fight over a pair of \$95 sunglasses. [14]

By the fall of 1988, 39 public elementary schools and two public junior high schools in Washington, DC, had instituted mandatory uniform policies, and soon the movement spread to other states, including Connecticut and New Jersey, generally in urban schools with mainly low income and minority students. In 1988, Ed Koch, then-Mayor of New York City, expressed support for school uniforms, saying that they encourage "common respect and improve the learning environment," and praising them because of their similarity to outfits worn in private and parochial schools. A pilot uniform program was introduced in New York City in 1989. [14]

The first school district in the United States to require all its K-8 students to wear uniforms was the Long Beach Unified School District, CA, in Jan. 1994. Later the same year, California Governor Pete Wilson signed a bill officially allowing schools to implement mandatory uniform policies. In accordance with the new law, Long Beach parents were given an opt-out provision. [50] [52] The Long Beach Unified School District announced through a spokesman that gang activity in the area had provided an impetus for the policy: "Every large city in the U.S. has been concerned about the gangs. Their clothes really are an unofficial uniform of intimidation." [50]

Bill Clinton's Support of Uniforms

On Jan. 3, 1996, President Bill Clinton told Congress during his State of the Union speech: "[I]f it means that teenagers will stop killing each other over designer jackets, then our public schools should be able to require their students to wear school uniforms." [51] On Feb. 25, 1996, President Clinton repeated his message about uniforms in his weekly radio address and during a series of media appearances. On the same day, he ordered the distribution of a school uniform manual to the country's 16,000 school districts. The manual guided school districts in the legal enforcement of a uniform policy. In July 1998, President Clinton continued his promotion of school uniforms with a speech at the annual convention of the American Federation of Teachers, stating that uniforms help children "feel free" and reduce crime and violence. In response, according



Two boys from the elite English school Eton, dressed in formal school uniforms, are observed by working-class London boys in 1937. Source: Greg Sandow, "Vacation Thoughts — Formal Dress," *artsjournal.com*, Sep. 13, 2008

to the *New York Times*, then-US Senator and former US presidential candidate Phil Gramm "accused the President of a tendency toward intrusive government." [52]

School Uniforms and the Law

In 1969, the US Supreme Court made a decision that would later be used by both uniform proponents and opponents to support their arguments. In *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, the Court ruled 7-2 that schools could not curtail students' freedom of expression as long as the students' choices were "not disruptive, and did not impinge upon the rights of others." The students in question had worn black armbands to protest America's involvement in the Vietnam War, and school uniform opponents use this decision to argue that students' choice of what to wear is protected by the Free Speech Clause in the First Amendment of the US Constitution. Uniform proponents, however, cite a passage in *Tinker's* majority opinion that states, "The problem posed by the present case does not relate to regulation of the length of skirts or the type of clothing..." [28] [18]

Several lower courts have made rulings related to school uniforms, often favoring uniform proponents. In a 1995 case, *Bivens by Green v. Albuquerque Public Schools*, a federal district judge ruled that the desire to wear "sagging pants" prohibited by the school dress code did not constitute freedom of expression because, unlike the wearing of black armbands to protest the Vietnam War, it did not convey a "message," nor did it represent an ethnic identity: "Sagging is not necessarily associated with a single racial or cultural group, and sagging is seen by some merely as a fashion trend followed by many adolescents all over the United States." The plaintiff had contended that his choice of outfit was an element of hip hop style favored by minorities and that it constituted a "group identity," stating that "such intentional identification clearly must involve freedom of expression." [18] [58]

In Mar. 1997, an Arizona state appeals court upheld Phoenix Preparatory Academy's mandatory uniform policy, declaring it to be constitutional. This was the first time a judge had upheld a uniform policy that did not provide an "opt-out" provision. One of the students who brought suit against the school district had broken the school's uniform restrictions by wearing a t-shirt adorned with the US flag and the slogan "I support my country." The other student filing suit had worn a t-shirt portraying Jesus Christ and the Bible, along with the words "True Spirit" and "The School of Higher Learning." The unanimous ruling

(3-0) in *Phoenix Elementary School District No. 1 v. Green* found that by enforcing a uniform policy, the school "regulated the medium of expression, not the message" and found that school was "not a public forum" in which freedom of expression would be more strictly protected. The

court accepted the school district's claim that it adopted the uniform policy to serve several pedagogically "reasonable" purposes, including the promotion of "a more effective climate for learning," "campus safety and security," "school unity and pride," and "modest dress." [53]

In the summer of 1999, controversy erupted in Florida when Polk County Schools Superintendent Glenn Reynolds suggested that parents could be jailed if they failed to comply with the new mandatory uniform policy. Reynolds stated that parents who allow their children to be dressed out of uniform are "contributing to the delinquency of a child," before later retracting his comments. [82]

In Jan. 2000, the American Civil Liberties Union of North Carolina, which opposes school uniforms, represented a nine year-old student who was suspended twice for his refusal to wear a school uniform because it conflicted with his family's religious beliefs. According to court records in *Hicks v. Halifax County Board of Education*, the student's great-grandmother and guardian believed that "wearing a uniform demonstrates an allegiance to the spirit of the anti-Christ, a being that requires uniformity, sameness, enforced conformity, and the absence of diversity." The school agreed to amend its school uniform policy to allow for religious exemptions. [54] [55] [59]

In May 2008, a three-judge panel of the US Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 2-1 in *Jacobs v. Clark County School District* that the mandatory school uniform policy introduced by the Nevada district is constitutional. An 11th grade student and her parents had sued the district for refusing to allow her to wear a shirt displaying a message presenting her religious beliefs. The court ruled that the district's uniform policy was not restricting any one viewpoint in particular, and that therefore the policy was "content neutral" and not an infringement of "pure speech." [77]

In Feb. 2014, a three-judge panel of the US Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals found 3-0 that the uniform policy of Roy Gomm Elementary School in Reno, NV may be unconstitutional, but sent the case back to a lower court for review. The panel ruled that the school's insistence that its uniform shirts bear the motto "Tomorrow's Leaders" may violate First Amendment rights because it "compelled speech." [56] [57]

US states require school uniforms by statute and no states ban uniforms. Massachusetts law states that "School officials shall not abridge the rights of students as to personal dress and appearance," but another section of the law stipulates that this provision applies only to cities and towns which "accept" it. [81] As of 2008, 22 states specifically authorized schools to institute dress codes or uniform policies, according to the Education Commission of the States. [47]

US Uniform Statistics

A According to figures released in 2014 by the National Center for Education Statistics, the total number of public schools nationwide requiring students to wear school uniforms increased from 13% during the 2003-2004 school year to 19% during the 2011-2012 school year. In 2011-2012, 20% of public elementary schools (K-6) enforced a uniform policy, while 12% of secondary schools (7-12) and 30% of combined schools (K-12) required uniforms. A higher proportion of schools located in cities had mandatory uniforms in 2011-2012 than schools in suburban, town, and rural areas. Mandatory uniforms were far more prevalent in "high-poverty" schools (in which 76% of students were eligible for reduced-cost or free lunch programs) than in "low-poverty" schools. [46]

Among the US cities with the highest use of school uniforms in public schools are Philadelphia (100% of schools), New Orleans (95%), Cleveland (85%), Chicago (80%), Boston (65%), and Miami (60%). [1] [22] The number of schools with "strict dress codes" has also increased, from 47% in 2000 to 57% in 2010. [22]



(Click to enlarge image)

Cartoon satirizing the complaint that school uniforms promote conformity.

Source: graham-briggs-school-outfitters.co.uk (accessed Aug. 5, 2014)

Pro & Con Arguments: "Should Students Have to Wear School Uniforms?"

PRO School Uniforms

1. **School uniforms may deter crime and increase student safety.** In Long Beach, CA, after two years of a district-wide K-8 mandatory uniform policy, reports of assault and battery in the district's schools decreased by 34%, assault with a deadly weapon dropped by 50%, fighting incidents went down by 51%, sex offenses were cut by 74%, robbery dropped by 65%, possession of weapons (or weapon "look-alikes") decreased by 52%, possession of drugs went down by 69%, and vandalism was lowered by 18%. [64] A 2012 peer-reviewed study found that one year after Sparks Middle School in Nevada instituted a uniform policy, school police data showed a 63% drop in police log reports, and decreases were also noted in gang activity, student fights, graffiti, property damage, and battery. [25] A 2010 peer-reviewed study found that schools with uniform policies had 12% fewer firearm-related incidents and 15% fewer drug-related incidents than schools without uniforms. [69] A 2007 peer-reviewed study found that, in schools with historically higher rates of sexual violence, sexual attacks were less likely if uniform policies were in place. [26] School uniforms also prevent students from concealing weapons under baggy clothing, [38] make it easier to keep track of students on field trips, and make intruders on campus more visible. Frank Quatrone, superintendent in the Lodi district of New Jersey, stated in Feb. 2011 that "When you have students dressed alike, you make them safer. If someone were to come into a building, the intruder could easily be recognized." [6]
2. **School uniforms keep students focused on their education, not their clothes.** A bulletin published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals stated that "When all students are wearing the same outfit, they are less concerned about how they look and

CON School Uniforms

1. **School uniforms restrict students' freedom of expression.** The First Amendment of the US Constitution guarantees that all individuals have the right to express themselves freely. The US Supreme Court stated in *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (7-2, 1969) that "it can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." [28] [8] In the 1970 case *Richards v. Thurston* (3-0), which revolved around a boy refusing to have his hair cut shorter, the US First Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that "compelled conformity to conventional standards of appearance" does not "seem a justifiable part of the educational process." [39] Clothing choices are "a crucial form of self-expression," according to the American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada, which also stated that "allowing students to choose their clothing is an empowering message from the schools that a student is a maturing person who is entitled to the most basic self-determination." [17] Clothing is also a popular means of expressing support for various social causes and compulsory uniforms largely remove that option. In Oct. 2013, students at Friendly High School in Prince George's County, MD, were not allowed to wear pink shirts to support Breast Cancer Awareness Month. As a result, 75 students received in-school suspensions for breaking the school's uniform restrictions. [11]
2. **School uniforms promote conformity over individuality.** At a time when schools are encouraging an appreciation of diversity, enforcing standardized dress sends a contradictory message. [63] Chicago junior high school student Kyler Sumter wrote in the *Huffington Post*: "They decide to teach us about people like Rosa Parks, Susan B. Anthony and Booker T. Washington... We learn about how these people expressed themselves and conquered and we can't even express ourselves in the hallways." [60] Troy Shuman, a senior in Harford County, MD, said the introduction of a mandatory uniform policy to his school would be "teaching conformity and squelching individual thought. Just think of prisons and gangs. The ultimate socializer to crush rebellion is conformity in appearance. If a school system starts at clothes, where does it end?" [9] Late satirist George Carlin asked, "Don't these schools do enough damage, making all these children think alike? Now they're gonna get them to look alike, too?" [40]

how they fit in with their peers; thus, they can concentrate on their schoolwork." [15] A 2010 University of Houston study found that elementary school girls' language test scores increased by about three percentile points after uniforms were introduced. [1] Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, when she was a 2008 US presidential candidate, advocated school uniforms as a way to help students focus on learning: "Take that [clothing choices] off the table and put the focus on school, not on what you're wearing." [30] Chris Hammons, Principal of Woodland Middle School in Coeur d'Alene, ID, stated that uniforms "provide for less distraction, less drama, and more of a focus on learning." [70]

3. **School uniforms create a level playing field among students, reducing peer pressure and bullying.** When all students are dressed alike, competition between students over clothing choices and the teasing of those who are dressed in less expensive or less fashionable outfits can be eliminated. In a 2013 survey by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and uniform manufacturer Lands' End, 86% of school leaders said uniforms make "a significant, positive impact on peer pressure," and 64% said uniforms reduce bullying. [32] Armintia Jacobson, Founder and Director of the Center for Parent Education at the University of North Texas, stated that uniforms put "all kids on the same playing field in terms of their appearance. I think it probably gives them a sense of belonging and a feeling of being socially accepted." [5] Virginia B. Draa, Assistant Professor of Human Ecology at Youngstown State University, said uniforms can decrease peer pressure and blur class lines between students. [3]
4. **Wearing uniforms enhances school pride, unity, and community spirit.** A 2007 study from Oxford Brookes University in the United Kingdom found that uniforms "often directly contributed to a feeling of school pride." [45] Christopher P. Clouet, Superintendent of the New London, CT school district, stated that "the wearing of uniforms contributes to school pride." [3] A 2002 study of over 1,000 Texas middle school students found that students in uniform "reported significantly more positive perceptions of belonging in their school community than reported by students in the standard dress group." [33] Arnold Goldstein, PhD, head of the Center for Research on Aggression at Syracuse University, stated that uniforms help troubled students feel they have the support of a community: "There is a sense of belonging." [31] A 2007 peer-reviewed study found that after uniforms were introduced, "Teachers perceived an increase in the level of respect, caring, and trust... throughout the school" and said "students are made to feel 'important' and as if they are a part of a team by wearing a uniform." [20]
5. **School uniforms may improve attendance and discipline.** A 2010 study by researchers at the University of Houston found that the average absence rate for girls in middle and high school decreased by 7% after the introduction of uniforms. The study also found that "behavioral problems shift[ed] towards less severe

3. **There is evidence that school uniforms may increase violent attacks and lower academic achievement, while there is little evidence that uniforms provide any benefits at all.** A 2007 peer-reviewed study found that "school uniforms increased the average number of assaults by about 14 [per year] in the most violent schools." [26] A 1999 Texas Southern University study found that school discipline incidents rose by about 12% after the introduction of uniforms. [14] According to the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Office of Education Evaluation and Management, fights in middle schools nearly doubled within one year of introducing mandatory uniforms. [72] [73] David L. Brunσμα, PhD, Professor of Sociology at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), co-authored a study that analyzed a national sample of 10th graders and found "no effects of uniforms on absenteeism, behavioral problems (fights, suspensions, etc.), or substance use on campus" and "no effects" on "pro-school attitudes, academic preparedness, and peer attitudes toward school." [14] [66] Brunσμα also found a "negative effect of uniforms on academic achievement," and later found that uniforms were equally ineffective on elementary students and eighth graders. [14] A 2009 peer-reviewed study found "no significant effects of school uniforms on performance on second grade reading and mathematics examinations, as well as on 10th-grade reading, mathematics, science, and history examinations... [I]n many of the specifications, the results are actually negative." [2]
4. **The key findings used to tout the benefits of uniforms are questionable.** The oft-quoted improvements to school safety and student behavior in the Long Beach (CA) Unified School District from 1993-1995 may not have resulted from the introduction of school uniforms. The study in which the findings were published cautioned that "it is not clear that these results are entirely attributable to the uniform policy" and suggests that the introduction of new school security measures made at the same time may have been partly responsible. [64] Other reform efforts implemented alongside the uniform policy included a \$1 million project to develop alternative teaching strategies. [66]
5. **School uniforms emphasize the socioeconomic divisions they are supposed to eliminate.** Most public schools with uniform policies are in poor neighborhoods, emphasizing the class distinctions that uniforms were supposed to eliminate. In 2013, while 47% of high-poverty public schools required school uniforms, only 6% of low-poverty public schools required them, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. [23] Even school uniform proponent Angela Walmsley, Associate Dean for Graduate Education and Research in the College of Education and Public Service at Saint Louis University, concedes that "we're creating a culture where parents think that a public school where children wear uniforms is an unsafe place to send their child. In other words, school uniforms in public schools are becoming associated with schools facing violence problems." [41] Even within one school, uniforms cannot conceal the differences between the "haves" and the "have-nots." David L. Brunσμα, PhD, stated that "more affluent families buy more uniforms per child. The less affluent... they have one... It's more likely to be tattered, torn and faded. It only takes two months for socioeconomic differences to show up again." [9] Uniforms also emphasize racial divisions. Schools with a minority student population of 50% or more are four times as likely to require uniforms than schools with a minority population of 20-49%, and 24 times more likely than schools with minority populations of 5%-19%. [78]
6. **Students oppose school uniforms.** A 2012 peer-reviewed study by researchers at the University of Nevada at Reno found that 90% of seventh and eighth grade public school students did not like wearing uniforms. [25] A 2007 survey of Harford County, MD public school students found that 87.9% of the students were opposed to uniforms. [9] In the year following the introduction of mandatory school uniforms to the Long Beach (CA) Unified School District, 81% of middle school students said uniforms did not reduce fights, 76% said

infractions." [1] A 2006 Youngstown State University study of secondary schools in Ohio's eight largest school districts found that school uniform policies improve rates of attendance, graduation, and suspension. [27] During the first semester of a mandatory uniform program at John Adams Middle School in Albuquerque, NM, discipline referrals dropped from 1,565 during the first semester of the year prior to 405. [68]

6. **Uniform policies save valuable class time because they are easier to enforce than a standard dress code.** Doris Jo Murphy, EdD, former Director of Field Experiences at the University of North Texas College of Education, stated: "As an elementary assistant principal in two suburban districts, I can tell you that the dress code took up a great deal of my time in the area of discipline... I wished many times that we had uniforms because the issue of skirts or shorts being too short, and baggy jeans and pants on the boys not being pulled up as they needed to be, would have been a non-issue." [5] Lyndhurst, NJ school district superintendent Tracey Marinelli had a similar experience before a uniform policy was introduced: "Kids were spending time in the office because they were not fulfilling the dress code... That was time away from class." [6]
7. **School uniforms prevent the display of gang colors and insignia.** The US Department of Education's *Manual on School Uniforms* stated that uniform policies can "prevent gang members from wearing gang colors and insignia at school" in order to "encourage a safe environment." [35] According to a 2013 US Department of Justice report, almost 50% of high school students say there are gang members at their schools. [36] Educators in the Long Beach Unified School District have speculated that the sharp reduction in crime following the introduction of school uniforms was a result of gang conflicts being curbed. [67] Osceola County, FL School Board member Jay Wheeler reported that the county's schools had a 46% drop in gang activity after their first full school year with a mandatory K-12 uniform policy (2008-2009). Wheeler stated that "clothing is integral to gang culture... Imagine a U.S. Armed Forces recruiter out of uniform trying to recruit new soldiers; the success rate goes down. The same applies to gang recruitment." [37]
8. **School uniforms make getting ready for school easier, which can improve punctuality.** When uniforms are mandatory, parents and students do not spend time choosing appropriate outfits for the school day. According to a national 2013 survey, over 90% of US school leaders believe school uniform or formal dress code policies "eliminate wardrobe battles with kids," make it "easier to get kids ready in the morning," and create a "time saving in the morning." [32] Tracey Marinelli, Superintendent of the Lyndhurst School District in New Jersey, credited the district's uniform policy for reducing the number of students running late. Lyndhurst student Mike Morreale agreed, stating that "it's so much easier to dress than having to search for clothes and find out that something doesn't match." [6] [7]

they did not help them fit in at school, 69% said they did not make them feel more connected with the school community, and 71% said they felt no safer traveling to and from school. [64]

7. **Uniforms may have a detrimental effect on students' self-image.** When students have to wear the same outfits, rather than being allowed to select clothes that suit their body types, they can suffer embarrassment at school. Child and teen development specialist Robyn Silverman told NBC News' *Today* that students, especially girls, tend to compare how each other looks in their uniforms: "As a body image expert, I hear from students all the time that they feel it allows for a lot of comparison... So if you have a body that's a plus-size body, a curvier body, a very tall body, a very short body, those girls often feel that they don't look their best." [21] A 2003 study by researchers at Arizona State University found that "students from schools without uniforms reported higher self-perception scores than students from schools with uniform policies." [24] Some students also find uniforms less comfortable than their regular clothes, which may not be conducive to learning. [75]
8. **Focusing on uniforms takes attention away from finding genuine solutions to problems in education.** Spending time and effort implementing uniform policies may detract from more effective efforts to reduce crime in schools and boost student performance. More substantive improvements to public education could be achieved with smaller class sizes, tightened security, increased parental involvement, improved facilities, and other measures. [12] [14] Tom Houlihan, former Superintendent of Schools in Oxford, NC, stated that school uniforms "are a distraction from focusing on systematic and fundamental transformation to improve our schools." [42]
9. **The push for school uniforms is driven by commercial interests rather than educational ones.** Americans spend around \$1 billion on school uniforms every year. [43] [74] Retailer J.C. Penney Co. says school uniforms are "a huge, important business for us." [44] In 2003 alone, uniform company Lands' End spent \$3 million on marketing efforts directed at public schools and districts. [14] Multiple studies used to promote the effectiveness of uniforms were partly funded by Lands' End, and at least one of those studies is "so wholly flawed as to render itself useless," according to David L. Brunsmas, PhD. [14] [32] In Aug. 2013, Reuters reported that retailers were "sensing their opportunity... stepping up competition in the uniform aisles and online. Walmart has set up 'uniform shops' or temporary boutiques within some stores." [74]
10. **Parents should be free to choose their children's clothes without government interference.** One of the founders of the Wilson County (LA) Parents Coalition, Richard Dashkovitz, stated: "It's time we let the government know that we are fed up with this. Quit dictating to us what my child should wear... [T]he government is intruding into our private lives, roles as parents and the lives of our children." [16] According to another parents' rights group, Asserting Parental Rights — It's Our Duty, mandatory uniform "policies trample parents' right to raise children without government interference." [10]
11. **School uniforms in public schools undermine the promise of a free education by imposing an extra expense on families.** Parents already pay taxes, and they still need to buy regular clothes for their children to wear when they're out of school and for dress-down days. The parent of a third grader told *Education World*: "My son's an unusual size, so it's hard to find him clothes anyway. Limiting what I buy to certain colors makes shopping for him... more expensive." [13] Anderson, IN parents Laura and Scott Bell, who sued over a school's uniform policy because it broke the guarantee of a free public education (and because it violated their children's right to freedom of expression) said they were required to pay \$641 for their children's uniforms in Aug. 2007. [10] In York County, PA, a local NBC affiliate reported in Sep.

9. **School uniforms can save parents money.** Parents can reduce their financial burden when their children are limited to wearing one simple outfit every day. [13] A national 2013 survey of 517 US school leaders found that 94% of those surveyed believe "one of the main benefits to parents is that school uniforms are more cost-effective than regular apparel," and 77% estimated the average annual cost of school uniforms per child to be \$150 or less. [32] Uniform company French Toast states on their website that the average cost one of their complete school uniforms is \$45 and that most children will only require two sets. [19] Without school uniform policies, parents may feel pressure to compete with other families by purchasing fashionable clothes for their children. [71]

10. **Most parents and educators support mandatory school uniforms.** A 2013 survey by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and uniform manufacturer Lands' End found that a majority of school leaders believe their school uniform or formal dress code policies have had a positive impact on classroom discipline (85%), the school's image in the community (83%), student safety (79%), school pride (77%), and student achievement (64%). [32] A poll administered by the Harford County, MD school system in 2007 found that "teachers and administrators were overwhelmingly in favor" of introducing school uniforms. The poll also found that 58% of parents wanted a mandatory uniform policy instated. [9]

11. **Students' legal right to free expression remains intact even with mandatory school uniforms.** The US Supreme Court case *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (7-2, 1969), which concerned the wearing of black armbands to protest the Vietnam War, confirmed that students' constitutional right to free speech "does not relate to regulation of the length of skirts or the type of clothing." Wearing one's own choice of shirt or pants is not the "pure speech" protected by the Constitution. [18] [28] In *Canady v. Bossier Parish School Board* (3-0, 2001), the US Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a school board's right to implement a mandatory uniform policy, stating that requiring uniforms for the purpose of increasing test scores and improving discipline "is in no way related to the suppression of student speech. [Students] remain free to wear what they want after school hours. Students may still express their views through other mediums during the school day." [18] [29] In 1995, Judge Michael D. Jones of Maricopa County Superior Court (AZ) ruled that mandatory uniform policies do not violate students' free speech rights even when there is no opt-out provision in the school's uniform policy. [34]

12. **Students dressed in uniform are better perceived by teachers and peers.** A 1994 peer-reviewed study found that students in uniform were perceived by teachers and fellow students as being more academically proficient than students in regular clothes. The study also found that students in uniform were perceived by peers and teachers as having higher academic potential, and perceived by peers as being better behaved. [4]

13. **Students can express their individuality in school**

2014 that some children were missing class because their families couldn't afford to purchase the required uniforms. [84]

12. **School uniforms may delay the transition into adulthood.** Adults make their own clothing choices and have the freedom to express themselves through their appearance. Denying children and teenagers the opportunity to make those choices may make them ill-prepared for the adult world. [76] [75] Adolescents see clothing choices as a means of identification, and seeking an identity is one of the critical stages of adolescence, according to the late developmental psychologist Erik Erikson. [80] [79]

uniforms by introducing variations and adding accessories. Junior high school student Amelia Jimenez wrote in her op-ed for the Pennsylvania *Patriot-News* website that "contrary to popular belief, uniforms do not stop students from being themselves. Uniforms do not silence voices. Students can wear a variety of expressive items, such as buttons or jewelry."

The *Seventeen* and *TeenVogue* websites list numerous suggestions for students on how to add their personal style to school uniforms, including hairstyle options, the use of nail polish, and the addition of colorful accessories such as satchels, scarfs, and socks. [61]

[62]*TeenVogue* stated that "there are tons of ways to amp up your standard issue getup." [62] A 2012 peer-reviewed study found that 54% of eighth-graders said they could still express their individuality while wearing school uniforms. [65]