

Module 9: Nonfiction
Topic 4 Content: Should Our High School Implement School Uniforms?

The Student Dispatch

By Linda R.

I was sitting in History class with two of my friends when my teacher asked us to get into groups of four to work on a Civil War project. I always studied and did classwork with these two friends, but there's another girl in my History class who's a real brain and always gets good grades. I told my friends that we should ask her to join us, but they only looked at each other and laughed. "I don't want to work with those knee-highs," one of them commented. "I don't care what her pants looks like. I want to get a good grade on this project," I protested. But they didn't want to have anything to do with someone who wore unfashionable clothes, and now they don't want to talk to me, either.

It's time that our high school embrace a school-wide uniform. A school uniform policy can improve our education by removing distractions to learning. Instead of worrying about what everyone is wearing, if we're all wearing the same outfit, we can focus on what we're supposed to be learning. Some students are mature enough not to make a fuss over people's looks, but let's be real: The vast majority of people in our high school are not at that maturity level yet. Plenty of us have witnessed fellow students being teased or ostracized over something petty like the style or condition of their clothes. And these victims of harassment are usually the students who can least afford nice outfits. Why should our school's poorest students miss out on a quality education just because they can't afford the latest fashion? By putting everyone on an equal playing field, uniforms can put an end to the silly

By Sara W.

Last month, one of my best friends Eric told me he was going to check out a huge sale at the mall. His mom offered me a ride, so we ended up buying a few pieces, including some trendy shorts that all the pop stars are wearing now. The next day in school, all my friends commented on how cool my outfit looked. That made me feel confident and happy. In English class, I was so involved in a small group discussion about Macbeth that I didn't notice a principal stepping into the room. He tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Your shorts are showing too much, Miss. Come with me. We're calling your mom." As I stood up to gather my things, my face was burning red. I never felt so humiliated before.

It would be a huge mistake to force students to wear school uniforms. If anything, our school dress code needs to be less strict. Some people argue that uniforms remove distractions to learning and create an equal playing field for poorer students, but the opposite is true. Uniforms and other dress codes are part of a mentality that scrutinizes the clothing of girls in order to benefit boys. This biased mentality claims that boys get distracted by girls, and so girls who are considered "distracting" must be removed from the classroom so that boys can continue to learn. Of course, this discrimination negatively impacts the education of girls, while boys are never pulled out of school or punished for dress code violations. The unfair treatment of girls regarding clothing isn't even necessary in high school. Perhaps young kids get distracted with who wears what, but we high school students are mature enough to

Module 9: Nonfiction

Topic 4 Content: Should Our High School Implement School Uniforms?

"fashion shows" that play out in our hallways and classrooms.

Students who are opposed to wearing school uniforms claim that they stifle individuality. To all these privileged, elitist students who only care about themselves and their looks, I ask this question: Why do you have to express your individuality through your clothes? Can't you be an individual through the thoughts you express or the work that you do? I think wearing trendy clothes is fun, too. But we can wear our favorite outfits outside of school, like at the mall, movie theater, etc.

Think about it this way: the members of our basketball team all wear the same uniform, right? And yet, the star athletes still manage to stand out through their athletic performance, despite their uniform clothing. Uniforms help bring a feeling of unity and team spirit to the players. Likewise, uniforms can unite the school community just as athletic uniforms do for sports teams. Besides, life is easier without having to worry about your wardrobe in the morning. After all, even Mark Zuckerberg wears the same plain outfit to work every day.

Because school uniforms are such an affordable and effective method for improving education, our local school conducted a survey three years ago that showed near universal support on behalf of both parents and students. There is more than enough evidence in favor of implementing a school uniform policy in order to provide the best possible learning environment for all students at our high school.

Remember that group project from my History class? That was the last time I got a C- grade because now I don't collaborate with

appreciate fashion while still focusing on our school work.

Uniforms stifle expression and individuality. Maybe some people don't mind wearing the same clothes every day, but what about the people who need a creative outlet? It's wrong to suggest that young people must only express their individuality and creativity outside of school. Because we spend most of our time in school Monday through Friday, not having the freedom to choose our own outfits means that our personal wardrobes won't get much use considering that it's not practical to change into a second outfit once the school day is over.

If proponents of school uniforms say that clothes is superficial and doesn't matter, they're disregarding how much influence clothes can have on our mood and self-esteem. If your clothes don't feel right, then you don't feel right. Having the freedom to choose how you look means you can feel good about yourself, and this gives you the motivation to excel in academics. If we are forced to wear uniforms, we'll waste energy focusing on how much we hate our outfit.

You might remember that three years ago, our local school board surveyed both parents and students and found that the majority of people did not support implementing a school uniform since the added cost of expensive uniforms would place an undue burden on local taxpayers. These findings along with all the other reasons pointing to the detriment of school uniforms suggest that any further restriction on student dress does more harm than good.

After I was pulled from English class because of my harmless clothes, I missed participating

Module 9: Nonfiction

Topic 4 Content: Should Our High School Implement School Uniforms?

my old friends anymore. They may still talk about me behind my back, but I've made the choice to focus on what's important: not on how people look but on my education. Until we all have uniforms, students won't make the right choice.

in a valuable class discussion, and my peers were harmed not by my clothing but by the disruption of removing their friend and classmate from the group discussion.