

An A- (90%) was received on this paper.

The dress code in public schooling has been a controversial issue lately, both in Massachusetts and nation-wide. I feel some type of dress code would cut down some of the everyday problems that schools have today. A dress code in public schooling would be a good idea because it would reduce violence, eliminate the problem of wearing hats or jackets in school, and make school more of an academic atmosphere, and less of a social one. In this paper, I will discuss why a dress code would be a good thing for public schools to have.

A dress code would eliminate many problems including violence that occurs everyday in school. For example, if a simple shirt and tie with dress pants were worn by boys, and some type of skirt or dress for girls, baggy clothing would be eliminated which could hide weapons such as guns or knives. Fights also break out in schools because of the way students dress. Negative comments are often made at school by students about their classmates' clothing which provokes fighting. Obviously, some type of dress code would stop this.

Studies show that a dress code reduces violence and makes students behave better because it makes everyone equal, bringing all of the students to the same level: "A dress code brings us together, like an athletic team. We're unified, we stand for the same things," said Bob Sanders, 57, a teacher at Antioch Christian Academy in Oklahoma City (David 2). Principal of Minneapolis' West Central Academy believes that uniforms help the school meet five goals: foster greater school pride, enhance self-esteem, improve school attendance, reduce suspensions and improve school climate (Washington 1).

The number of suspensions in Long Beach, California, which now requires uniforms for students, dropped 32 percent. Every category of infraction - from assaults to drug use to sex offenses- has fallen. Teachers and administrators in the Long Beach also believe most students perform better academically because of the uniforms, making school more of an academic atmosphere (Pertman 2).

Officials in Long Beach believe that uniforms reduce escalating violence and gang activity in schools, because students no longer get hassled by gang members because of clothes with rival colors or insignias. They also help create a work-like atmosphere because students spend less time discussing wardrobes (Pertman 1). The same applies to Chicago public schools. Farragut High School in Chicago went from fifteen large gang fights a

week to an occasional fist fight when they adopted a school dress code: "It seems like we have more togetherness because there are no gang colors," Farragut disciplinarian, Walter Brown said (Rossi 1).

A dress code would allow students to make friends on their personal qualities, rather than appearance. Too often students classify other students by the way they dress.

Many students avoid some of their classmates because of the way they dress, rather than trying to be friends with them. Dave Bouronich, 13, a student at a school in the Long Beach District said, "If you dress the way you want, people compete and say you look like

a nerd and stuff" (Pertman 1). Students would make friends with people that have common interests with themselves, rather than people that dress like themselves.

President Bill Clinton is also for the dress code. Commenting on the public schools adopting school uniforms during his 1996 campaign he said, "The dress code is one thing that has served to lower crime, violence, and increase attendance and increase learning at a lot of schools. And I think a dress code is itself an important statement, because we want our young children, whether they're poor or rich or middle class, when they're in school to define themselves primarily in terms of what's going on on the inside, not what they're wearing on the outside. And I think it's a very, very good thing" (U.S. Newswire 1).

Although many students say they are against a dress code in public schooling because it eliminates self-expression, most of them wouldn't mind it after they experienced it for a couple of weeks. For example, many students at the few public schools which have a dress code are actually for it. Second grader at Prairie View Elementary in North Central Florida Tre Danzy initially worried about the uniforms which he would be required to wear. After a few weeks of wearing the uniforms Tre said, " It's OK now. You don't have to waste time finding clothes" (Shedden 2). They feel, as I do, a dress code eliminates the hassle of deciding which clothes to wear or buy for school.

Although most people are for the dress code, some oppose it. Civil Liberties Union states that the uniforms punish low-income families by forcing them to buy special outfits when their children might otherwise have worn hand-me-downs or clothes from discount stores (Pertman 2).

