**PRO CASE**

**My partners and I stand resolved: Schools should require students to wear uniforms.**

**Contention 1 – Uniforms promote equity and help level the playing field.**

* **Students can suffer from self-esteem issues in today’s world.** Students come from different backgrounds and some are more privileged than others. Clothes, being a status symbol, could make children from poor backgrounds vulnerable to bullying from privileged ones. Bullying, especially if based on a student’s social standing, can badly impact their self-esteem and they are likely to feel like they don’t belong.
* **School uniforms support equality. Anne Michaud**, a spokesperson for Success Academy – the largest free public charter school network in New York City – said, “The idea is to support equality. If children are dressed in the same or similar fashion, they aren’t distracted by each other’s’ clothing and judgments about what others are wearing. Uniforms are an equalizer.”

**School uniforms decrease peer pressure**

* **Students can build more meaningful relationships.** Because every student is essentially wearing the same thing, there is a reduced level of peer pressure to wear certain fashion styles or purchase specific clothes brands. This makes it possible for students to build more relationships through genuine social skills instead of through popularity.
* **Student experience reduced peer pressure. Professor Chris Drew** found that peer pressure may occur when students feel the need to dress ‘cool’, be up-to-date with fashion trends, or wear brand name clothing. School uniforms can eliminate each of these potential pressures on students. The **National Association for Elementary School Principals (NAESP)** released a survey of 517 school officials from across the United States. This study presented some very clear statistical data on school uniforms. One of the key findings was that school officials overwhelmingly believe school uniforms reduce peer pressure.

**Impact – Students can experience an increased sense of community and belonging**

* **“Leveling the playing field” leads to belonging and acceptance. Arminta 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.”**
* **Student will care more for each other during times of crisis. An article from TargetStudy shows school uniforms foster the spirit of unity amongst the students. School uniforms are similar and they promote a sense of belongingness. Students of the same school tend to care for each other inadvertently in times of crisis, like a possible abduction, accident or a fight.**

**Contention 2 – Uniforms Decrease bullying.**

* **Students avoid school to avoid being bullied.**  **Professor Attillah N. Brookshire from Walden University** discovered students who feel safe at school and free from bullying attend school more often. In 2008, it was reported that school uniforms were related to improvement in academic achievement and attendance. Students that know they won’t be teased for the type of clothes they wear or what they can’t afford to buy will attend more.

\*Studies show roughly 160,000 children miss school daily due to fear of attack and or intimidation by other students. Because everyone would be dressed the same, students would not be bullied because of their clothing.

\*The **Constitutional Rights Foundation** reports that seven percent of eighth graders stay home at least once a month to avoid being bullied.

**Impact – Decreased bullying would decrease attendance fears and have other benefits**

* **Overall school safety increases as bullying decreases. University of Nevada, Reno College of Education researcher Jafeth Sanchez found various benefits to wearing uniforms were reported, including decreases in discipline, gang involvement and bullying; and increases in safety, ease of going to school, confidence and self-esteem.  Student surveys showed bullying decreased with uniforms. In addition, there were large reductions in school police reports, referrals, and other disciplinary aspects.**
* **School pride increases. Study International says that school uniforms can also help reduce instances of bullying and instill a sense of pride for their school.**
* **Uniforms decrease peer pressure which, in turn, decreases bullying. Decreasing peer pressure is directly related to stopping bullying in schools. Mandating uniforms takes some of the stress off the student and the administration when it comes to violent acts due to bullying. 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.**

**Contention 3 -Uniforms increase school safety.**

* **Schools with uniforms are less violent**. **University of Nevada, Reno College of Education researcher Jafeth Sanchez** discovered discipline referrals were reduced by about 10 percent the first year a uniform policy was implemented. Additionally, school police data showed a 63 percent reduction in police log reports during the first year of implementation. Other decreases were noted in reports of gang-related activities and student fights, along with graffiti, property damage, battery and administrative assists.
* **Schools with uniforms have fewer gun and drug problems.** Also, a peer-reviewed study from **Seunghee Han** in 2010 found that schools with uniform policies had 12% fewer firearm related incidents and 15% fewer drug related incidents than schools without uniforms.
* **Uniforms can increase school safety**. Uniforms allow staff to quickly identify people who do not belong on campus and limit the ways that gangs can identify themselves. In 1994, Long Beach United School District in California began requiring uniforms with the hopes of improving safety. Just five years later, the overall crime rate in the district was down 91 percent. The number of incidents of vandalism had decreased 69 percent.
* **Uniforms allow easy identification of intruders.** **The Central Bulletin** reports in 2021 school uniforms can increase student and staff safety during an intruder event in a school building. Intruders will be easily recognized, and it is thought that the issue will be resolved swiftly without any dangers escalating. 35

**Impact – Safer Schools would increase educational quality and decrease mental health problems and stress.**

* **Students have a fundamental right to safe education. Authors of the journal article “Physical, Psychological and Social Impact of School Violence on Children” believe students must feel safe in order to learn. All forms of violence in schools infringe on the fundamental right to education. Unsafe learning environments reduce the quality of education for all learners.**
* **Physical and mental health problems can be avoided with safer schools. School violence can have a physical impact, causing psychological distress, permanent physical disability and long-term physical or mental ill-health. Children who experienced any type of violence at school may develop some physical inactivity, overweight or obesity, diabetes, smoking habits, heavy alcohol use, poor self-rated health, cancer, heart disease, and respiratory disease and other negative outcomes.**

**Answers to: Uniforms promote equity and help level the playing field.**

* **Lower socio-economic status evident even when students wear uniforms**. Even within one school, uniforms cannot conceal the differences between the “haves” and the “have-nots.” **Professor David L. Brunsma**, 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.”
* **Wealthy socio-economic status evident event when students wear uniforms**. Bev Heller, a teacher at Fienberg-Fisher Elementary in Miami-Dade County told **Education World**. "Wealthier students may own every uniform accessory and wear designer bracelets or shoes that light up; others -- if they do own uniforms -- have very basic ones. Adopting uniforms certainly did not blur the socioeconomic lines in our student body."
* **Uniforms don’t actually solve any problems.** **Parenting Science** magazine finds that school uniforms aren’t likely to have much impact on either behavior problems or academic outcomes. If we really want to help students in these areas, we need to do much more than redesign their clothes.
* **Uniforms don’t give students a sense of belonging; the opposite is true. Professor Arya Ansari** discovered that those who had to wear uniforms reported lower levels of school belonging than did those who attended schools with no uniform requirements. “While uniforms are supposed to build a sense of community, they may have the opposite effect,” he said.
* **Cliques will still form.** Students who aren't able to explore their own personalities and express themselves as individuals, which occurs when wearing a uniform, may have their growth inhibited as they enter young adulthood. Despite the best efforts of educators to promote an inclusive environment for all students, cliques comprise many schools.
* **Uniforms don’t reflect reality.** One former uniform-wearing student remarked that student conformity is not the way to promote love and equality. Instead, it would be better to teach students how to recognize and respect individual differences to teach them how to be kind and understanding toward one another. In real life, everyone looks and dresses differently, so uniforms don’t reflect reality.

**Answers to Uniforms Decrease bullying.**

* **Students don’t believe bullying decreases when students wear uniforms.** A **US News & World Report** article from 2021 shows researchers also looked at self-reports from the students when they were in fifth grade. No differences in bullying or social anxiety emerged among them.
* **Many studies show bullying does not decrease when students wear uniforms.** **Tony Volk,** PhD, Associate Professor at Brock University, stated, “Overall, there is no evidence in bullying literature that supports a reduction in violence due to school uniforms.”

\*A peer-reviewed study found that “school uniforms increased the average number of assaults by about 14 [per year] in the most violent schools.”

\*A Texas Southern University study found that school discipline incidents rose by about 12% after the introduction of uniforms.

\*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.

* **Violence increases when students wear uniforms.** Additionally, research shows that uniforms do not reduce bullying. In fact, one study shows that “school uniforms increased the average number of assaults by about 14 [per year] in the most violent schools”.
* **Bullying can’t be prevented.** **Professor Chris Drew** finds It is possible that bullying will happen regardless of uniforms, and that making all children wear uniforms does nothing to actually teach kindness. A bully will be a bully – targeting things other than dress codes if need be – unless the bully is actively taught not to do so.

**Answers to Uniforms increase school safety.**

* **Uniforms don’t affect school safety.** Turns out that school uniforms don’t seem to have any effect on student behavior or attendance, according to a nationwide study of kids in public and private elementary schools. Professor **Arya Ansari** said, “Elementary-aged students in schools with uniforms do not display any consistent differences in engagement, social or behavioral outcomes when compared with students in schools without uniforms,”
* **Uniforms make school bad.** Across the country, The **Constitutional Rights Foundation** reported the adoption of school uniforms is so new that it’s impossible to tell whether it will have a long-term impact on school violence. Some parents, students, and educators find uniforms coercive and demeaning. Some students complain that uniforms turn schools into prisons.
* **Other factors will increase safety, not school uniforms.** Studies and reports from schools have been mixed as to whether uniforms decrease the incidence of violence. In a January 2012 "Family Education" article, child psychologist **Dr. Alan Hilfer** suggested that any reductions in violence have more to do with heightened school awareness and discussion of violence.
* **Dress Codes, Not Uniforms, Could Increase School Safety. Kerry White, a reporter with Education Week,** found school officials in Fayette County, Ga. decided to tighten their schools' dress codes instead of adopting uniforms this school year. **Superintendent John D. DeCotis,** says parents wanted school officials to restore order to schools after several local Columbine-inspired pranks last spring. A task force concluded there were better ways for the district to address school safety.

**CON CASE**

**My partners and I stand resolved: Schools should require students to wear uniforms.**

**Contention 1 – Uniforms hurt freedom of expression.**

* **School uniforms violate the right to freedom.** **Attillah N. Brookshire of Walden University** found dictating what students wear to school violates their constitutional right to freedom. They insist that school uniforms infringe on their right of self-expression and do not address school’s real problems
* **Uniforms remove individuality and sense of belonging**. A **US News & World Report** article from 2021 found when asked about their sense of school belonging and spirit, fifth graders who had to wear uniforms reported lower levels than their peers in schools with no uniform requirements. “Fashion is one way that students express themselves, and that may be an important part of the school experience,” Ansari said. “When students can’t show their individuality, they may not feel like they belong as much.”
* **Uniforms disallow advocacy for social causes**. Uniforms take away clothing as a means of expressing support for social causes. The **Washington Post** reported in 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. Later, 75 students received suspensions for breaking the school’s uniform restrictions.

**Impact – Disallowing freedom of expression causes harm.**

* **Denying freedom of expression causes emotional harm. Being able to express yourself is a right that every parent wants their children to learn from an early age. If students are not permitted to demonstrate their individuality and originality through dressing, they may develop feelings of oppression and discouragement, which can damage their personality.**
* **School uniforms hinder individual development. Sociologists believe uniforms attempt to force every student into one mold. They inhibit creativity and individual development. Not all students are alike. When individuality is suppressed, it is passing a false belief that it is normal to conform to standards, even if you do not agree with them.**

**Contention 2 – School Uniforms Do Not Benefit Students Academically.**

* **Uniforms part of “hidden curriculum,” not academics.** Several studies have found no changes in academic achievement between groups of students who wear uniforms and those who do not. If there is no clear academic benefit of a uniform, it can be argued that uniforms are pointless. The true benefit of wearing a uniform is in the hidden curriculum of discipline and conformity.

**Impact – Uniformed students perform worse academically, not better.**

* **Studies show uniforms do not increase academic achievement. Supporters of school uniforms often cite increased academic achievement as a main reason to adopt such a policy. While there is some anecdotal evidence to support this claim, overall, studies are inconclusive. A study by Ryan Yeung in Educational Policy analyzed student data collected from 1988 to 2004. His research found that although some test scores were higher for schools that required uniforms, in others, scores were lower.**
* **Academic benefits of uniforms not proven at any grade level. A 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 negative.”**
* **Schools with no uniforms outperform schools with uniforms. GreatScholars.org reports there are plenty of instances where students from 'No Uniform School' have outdone their uniformed counterparts.**
* **Uniforms show negative effects on academic achievements. Professor David L. Brunsma, co-authored a study that analyzed a national sample of 10th graders…. (he) also found a “negative effect of uniforms on academic achievement,” and later found that uniforms were equally ineffective on elementary students and eighth graders.**
* **Uniformed students score lower on standardized achievement tests. Brunsma told Education World that the tenth-grade students who were required to wear uniforms scored slightly lower on standardized achievement tests than a comparable group not required to wear them.**

**Contention 3 – Uniforms promote intolerance.**

* **Uniforms do not consider marginalized populations.** Most uniforms are not designed according to the cultural dress of a population or they represent only one culture. Also, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender students may become confused if they should wear a uniform that represents their inner sexual orientation or their external gender.

\*The **Public Health Review** finds girls, ethnic and religious minorities, gender-diverse students and poorer students suffer greater harm from poorly designed uniform policies and garments that do not suit their physical and social needs.C

* **Uniforms hide diversity.** If we want a multi-cultural world, isn’t school the perfect place to start talking about our diversity and how it’s a good thing? But making all children wear uniforms, we’re hiding diversity. We are preventing conversations about it and celebration of it. Thus, uniforms are outdated in a world where diversity should be visible, celebrated, and discussed – especially in schools.
* **Uniforms are problematic for gender diverse students.** A National Library of Medicine article finds for gender diverse students, non-inclusive uniform policies are particularly problematic and affect them disproportionately   31

**Impact – Uniforms harm marginalized populations and violate personal liberty.**

* **Uniforms promote systemic prejudice. Professor Chris Drew finds said if all students dress the same, then there should be less chance of prejudice by students *and*teachers. But if all children dress the same, then the teacher is less likely to be prejudiced toward that child. The obvious flaw in this argument is that it does not reduce prejudice. It is potentially prejudicial to tell some children they’re *not allowed to dress*in ways that reflect their culture or religion.**

* **Uniforms can violate religious liberty. This is one of the most serious problems with school uniforms. There are religions that have extremely strict dress code rules. These include having to wear certain colors, hair coverings, and even ceremonial knives (for some Sikhs). By enforcing a strict uniform policy, you may be violating religious liberty.**
* **Uniforms deny students to practice their own culture. Forcing children to wear the clothes of a culture that is not their own is most visible (and, perhaps, offensive) when it comes to religious objections. Forcing children to wear uniforms can be seen as a form of cultural assimilation. It denies people their chance to practice their culture in the public sphere.**
* **Uniform policies hurt groups they should help the most. The National Library of Medicine shows that much school uniform garment design and use policy negatively affects the poor, girls, religious and ethnic minorities, and gender-diverse students. These are the very groups who could benefit most from the equitable access to education that uniform is supposed to facilitate.3131**

One of the downsides of encouraging oneness among the student body is that individuality is restricted. Thus, students may be more likely to conform to a mob

**Answers to Con Contention 1 – School Uniforms hurt freedom of expression.**

* **Students still believe they possess their personal identity.** A specific question in a recent study asked students to respond in agreement or disagreement: "I still have my identity when I wear a uniform." Most students agreed and strongly agreed with this statement. Most students reported that they still had their identity, which is a clear link to their freedom of expression.
* **Some uniforms have options which enhance freedom of expression.** Some schools have uniforms where students are allowed to mix and match a combination of coordinated prep-wear such as “skirts or pants, paired with piqué polo shirts, all in “goldenrod yellow,” navy, or white, topped off by a fleece zip-up (on which the school crest is optional).
* **Clothes are a shallow means of self-expression.** Mary Yarber from the **LA Times** said disagrees with critics of uniforms in public schools. Critics say that students’ freedom of expression and individualism would suffer. Relying solely on clothes as a means of expression is sadly superficial. Individuality should be shown through one’s ideas, behavior, and personality.
* **Courts find in favor of uniforms over self-expression.** The **FirstAmendmentCenter.org.** said 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. The court stated 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.”
* **Students feel better when wearing school uniforms.** One study interviewed 604 middle school students and found that the students reported increased confidence and self-esteem while wearing uniforms. The primary reason for this growth in confidence is that students did not feel so self-aware about the way they dressed
* **Clothing is not the only means of self-expression.** The **National Library of Medicine** argues that it is nonsensical to say that uniforms crush self-expression when there are many other creative outlets

**Answers to Con Contention 2 – School Uniforms Do Not Benefit Students Academically.**

* **Uniforms can increase graduation rates.** Researcher **Virginia Draa** found that implementing a uniform policy in schools did not have any impact on academic performance, but it did play a role in other areas. Draa found that graduation rates rose an average almost 11% in schools that implemented uniforms as opposed to schools without uniforms that saw a drop of around 4.6% in graduation rates.
* **Uniforms provide extra time for sleep and study.** Aside from dressing more quickly for school, uniforms potentially provide extra time for sleeping or studying. According to **Kyle Alspach’s** piece in the Boston Globe, seniors claimed “for some people it takes hours to get dressed. If we had a uniform, it would take three minutes.”
* **Uniforms promote academic achievement.** Studies from the United States in the early 2000’s notes a positive correlation between uniform wearing and academic achievement. Later, in 2012 additional studies found a positive effect on grades and retention
* **Uniforms provide a better academic experience. Social psychologist Susan Kaiser** provided several benefits of school uniforms. She wrote about how uniforms improve discipline, increase respect for the teacher, promote group spirit, maintain academic standards through uniformity, ease the strain on family budgets, de-emphasize socioeconomic differences and eliminate the relationship between dress and school status.

**Answers to Con Contention 3 – Uniforms promote intolerance.**

* **Marginalized students find benefits to wearing uniforms.** Studies revealed that Hispanic/Latino students believed they attained more benefits from uniforms than White/Caucasian students. In reference to gender, more than expected females than males indicated specific benefits with wearing school uniforms.
* **Uniforms break down barriers, not build them.** Wearing a school uniform breaks down social class barriers. If all children are dressed in an identical way it eliminates the opportunity to make fun of someone's dress or fashion sense.
* **Right to religion not without restrictions. T**he Convention on the Rights of the Child (Art 14) protects freedom of religion, Nonetheless, this right is not limitless and can be limited if others’ rights are impinged, and its application depends on how individual countries legislate to support human rights.
* **Some courts allow for religious exemptions to uniform rules.** Australian courts have found that exceptions to uniform rules can be made to avoid injury to religious beliefs, or principles. In England (which has a longstanding uniform tradition), the case of Begum sought to balance religious freedom to wear Sharia-appropriate clothes against the right to education, school uniform policy and women’s rights. The court found that social cohesion, protecting minority rights, and ensuring religious freedom must be balanced. This shows how tricky it is to reconcile all human rights in themselves, let alone apply them within the context of uniform policies.