

School Uniforms

At an assembly last week, Principal Christine West made an announcement to the middle school students. Beginning next fall, all 6th, 7th and 8th graders will be required to wear uniforms to school.

Students will be required to wear pants that are khaki or black. Girls can wear khaki or black skirts. The skirt must come at least down to their knees. All students will wear shirts with collars. The shirts can have long sleeves or short sleeves. Shirts must be white, black or the school color, royal blue, with no images on them. Black and royal blue shirts and sweatshirts with the school logo on the chest will be for sale at the school office.

Students can buy their uniform clothing at any store as long as it meets the requirements.

Benefits of Uniforms

Principal West believes that the students will benefit in many ways from being required to wear uniforms. "Student clothing is distracting in many ways. The bright colors and designs can be distracting for some students. Students often get caught up in worrying about what to wear each day. Over the years I've heard parents tell me repeatedly that it takes hours for their students to get ready for school in the morning. They say that the students are overly concerned with how they look. They are especially concerned with how they will look compared to everyone else at school. Having uniforms levels the playing field. It takes away the pressure to have expensive brand name outfits or the newest trendy piece of clothing."



Maria Lopez, mother of a 7th grader, agrees. "Uniforms are a great idea. It will make it so much easier for my daughter to get dressed in the morning. The uniforms will probably save us money too. We won't have to buy so many other pieces of clothing."

Recent research suggests that students who attend schools where uniforms are required score higher on average on standardized tests. "Students spend time thinking about what they wear. They get distracted by the clothing the other students are wearing. In uniforms, they are better able to pay attention in class so they learn more," explains Principal West.

Student Reaction

"I don't want to wear a uniform!" exclaims 7th grader Ana Lopez. "This isn't fair! I should be able to wear what I want!"

Most of Ana's friends agreed, including student body president Madison Rodriguez. "It makes me angry," Madison said. "The principal and

teachers didn't ask us what we thought about the uniforms before they made a decision. We're the ones that have to wear them. We should get to have some say in what they look like."

"We need to have some way to express ourselves," 7th grader Ali Jones added. "I don't want to have to look like everyone else."

Principal West also thought that it was important to give the students some opportunity for self-expression. "We're not requiring them to wear a certain color of shoes. So the students are free to wear shoes that will give them some feeling of individuality, as long as the shoes fit within the dress code rules we already have." The current dress code for shoes states that students can wear any shoes that have heels less than two inches high.

Not all of the students are upset about having to wear uniforms. "It's not that bad," said 6th grader Jake Seely. "At least it will be easy to get dressed in the mornings."

Long Term Plans

Principal West said that uniforms should bring positive changes to the school. They should help increase student attention in class and standardized test scores. Uniforms should help students get along better socially. If they do, then the school district may decide to require uniforms at the high school and elementary schools also. "I'm confident," Principal West said, "that requiring uniforms will bring about a lot of good and much needed change."

Recent research has shown that schools requiring students to wear uniforms have less bullying and less violent behavior than other

schools. Schools with uniforms had higher attendance rates. Fewer students dropped out of school.

Uniforms will be required starting the first day of school this coming fall. If a student's parent does not want the student attending the school because of the uniforms, they will have time over the summer to transfer to a different school. "I don't expect many parents to make this choice," Principal West added.

Next year, if a student comes to school dressed in something other than the appropriate clothing, they will be given two choices. The student can be sent home to change, though they will be marked with an unexcused tardy or absence for any class time they miss. "Also, we'll keep some uniform clothing here in the school office," said Principal West. "A student can choose to borrow appropriate clothing or even to buy a uniform directly from us. We want to make this an easy process for everyone."

In the past ten years, there have been several law suits in the United States filed by students who believe that the school's dress codes interfere with their rights. So far, in every case, the schools have won.

Principal West said, "Uniforms are here to stay."