

Name:
Title: "A Uniform Change for the Better"
Date:
Specific Purpose: To convince my audience by proposition of policy that school uniforms should be mandatory for grades K-12.
Thesis: Uniforms would make schools better learning environments for our children.
Preview: Today we'll discuss clothing in schools, the harms related to apparel in schools, and a plan of action.
Organization: Monroe's Motivated Sequence

Attention:

- I. Seventh grader Caroline James just finished shopping for her school wardrobe (Richardson 21).
 - A. It wasn't very difficult.
 1. She purchased three new skorts (a shorts-skirt combination) and five shirts (Richardson 21).
 2. The outfits are all the same color (navy and khaki) and style.
 - B. The Morning Middle Schooler is wearing a uniform to school, and the most surprising part is that she's happy about it (Richardson 21).
 - C. Morning Middle School, along with a handful of other schools across the nation, has incorporated a voluntary uniform policy in order to ease a number of social tensions.
 - D. Today we'll discuss clothing in schools, the harms related to apparel in schools, and a plan of action.

Need:

- II. Although we are no longer directly involved in the public school system, many of us have younger siblings in school right now and others of us may be planning to start a family in the future.
 - A. In light of this, uniforms are a very important topic and the decisions that are made about them should concern every one of us.
(Issue 1-A What is the present system?)
 - B. Most children can wear whatever they wish to school.
 - C. Many schools have developed dress codes.
 1. These rules give specifics on what clothing is acceptable and what clothing is not.
 2. The schools constantly have to adjust the codes to keep up with new trends and fads (D'Orio CN 14).
 - D. Other schools leave clothing judgments up to the students and their parents.
(Issue 1-B What are the harms in the present system?)
 - E. This system has many inadequacies.
 1. Wearing the wrong kind of clothing can make a child a target for violence ("Two Cheers . . ." 18).
 2. Clothing makes obvious divisions between the classes and damages children's self esteem (Kennedy A1).
 3. Clothing acts as a distraction in the classroom.
 4. Buying an entire school wardrobe is very expensive.
 5. Improper clothing can dictate improper behavior.
(Issue 1-C How significant are the harms?)
 - F. These inadequacies have significant effects on children and their quality of education.
 1. The type of clothing a child wears can instigate fighting and disruption.
 - a. Gangs are infiltrating our schools, and they're identifying themselves by clothing.
 - i. Fifteen percent of students report gangs present at their schools (Stephens 29).

- ii. One in four elementary school principals cites an increase in gang related incidents (Booth 34).
 - iii. In January, parents of Newtown Middle School received a letter from the principal telling of an incident in which one student had threatened to shoot another (D’Orio CN 1).
 - a.) The argument was centered on a supposed gang member’s torn bandanna (D’Orio CN 1).
 - b.) The principal was forced to develop a dress code which prohibited many items associated with gangs (D’Orio CN 1).
 - iv. Gangs identify themselves by certain colors or symbols.
 - a.) “The colors students wear can make them a target of violence, intentional or not” (Gursky 47).
 - b.) According to former California Governor Pete Wilson, wearing the wrong combination of clothing can get you killed in some districts (California B8).
- b. Youngsters are killing each other over brand names.
- i. “Wearing a certain brand of sneakers can be someone’s twisted justification for violence” (Booth 34).
 - ii. Some principals are forced to enforce increasingly tough dress codes to help avoid muggings over jackets and other items of apparel (Walzer).
2. The way children dress often associates them with a specific economic group and can bring about ridicule from more fortunate students.
- a. Sunny Johnson, a third and fourth grade teacher, said that children who were not able to keep up with the current trends were often laughed at and talked about because they didn’t dress a certain way (Walzer).
 - b. Another teacher observed that children who did not have Nike sneakers or Guess clothing often showed signs of aggravation (Kennedy A1).
 - c. Sherry Nieto, a second grade teacher, said there was a feeling by students who did not have brand name clothes that they were not as good; it really crushed their self esteem (Kennedy A1).
 - d. Children who do not wear the popular styles are often ostracized by their peers, another crushing blow to their feeling of self worth.
3. Children are often more absorbed by each other’s clothing than by their lessons.
- a. Students can’t concentrate on learning when their attentions are focused on Starter jackets and \$125 Nike basketball shoes (Mansfield B1).
 - b. Fifth grade teacher LaSandra Harris said, “I’m trying to teach and they’re busy looking at what jeans he has on or what shoes he has on” (Walzer).
 - c. Kids can’t concentrate when they’re distracted by gang colors and risqué hemlines (Wagner A1).
4. Parents spend a tremendous amount of money on their children’s school clothes.
- a. Clothes are getting increasingly expensive.
 - b. Children are demanding particular, costly brand names in an effort to keep up with the latest styles and fit in.
5. Children’s behavior is influenced by the way they dress.
- a. Violence is a big problem in today’s public schools.
 - i. There are 3 million thefts and violent crimes on or near school grounds every year (Riley 36).
 - a.) That’s 16,000 per day (Riley 36).
 - b.) Broken down even further, it averages one theft or violent crime on or near school grounds every six seconds (Riley 36).
 - ii. Baggy clothing can be used to conceal weapons, a rampant problem.

- a.) One out of every five high school students carries a firearm, knife, razor, club, or other weapon on a regular basis – many to school (Riley 36).
- b.) 270,000 guns go to school every day (Gest 31).
- b. “I think most teachers in the classroom will tell you there’s a relationship between dress and behavior,” said Dr. John P. Lorsky, a Supervisor of Curriculum (Mansfield B1).

Satisfaction:

III. I have a plan that will greatly diminish the problems I have mentioned.

A. My plan is as follows:

- 1. All public schools must implement a uniform policy for grades K-12.
- 2. The exact style of the uniform will be decided by each individual district with input from the parents and students of that district.
- 3. The districts must provide uniforms for those who cannot afford them.

(Issue 2 Is this plan workable?)

B. My plan will definitely work.

- 1. The Long Beach, California, school district has implemented this plan for grades K-8 and has achieved fabulous results.
- 2. This plan will make schools safer and more focused learning environments.

(Issue 3 What are the concerns and advantages?)

C. There are some possible concerns about this plan.

- 1. One such concern is that uniforms take away children’s individuality.
 - a. There are many other ways, however, for students to express their individuality; they can do this in the classroom or through extracurricular activities (Mansfield B1).
 - b. The Long Beach District Spokesman said that the biggest constraint on a child’s individuality is being surrounded by students in intimidating gang attire (School Uniforms 8).
- 2. Another question raised about my plan concerns how schools will provide uniforms for children who can not afford them.
 - a. Long Beach families are receiving help from community service groups, businesses, and individuals who are providing thousands of uniforms for free (Muto B 11).
 - b. In Baltimore, where there are a number of low-income students, parents have started their own companies to produce and sell moderately priced uniforms (Gorsky 48).
 - c. Schools could also form a “uniform recycling center” where uniforms could be passed down from older students to younger ones (School Uniforms 8).

D. The advantages of my plan overshadow any concerns that might be raised.

- 1. Children would no longer have to fear being targeted because of the clothes they wear.
 - a. Uniforms protect students from gang violence (Muto B 11).
 - b. Children wouldn’t be physically attacked for the clothing that they wear.
- 2. The division lines of class would be blurred and less fortunate students would be more accepted, helping them to gain self esteem.
 - a. “With uniforms they’re all on the same playing field. There’s no one wearing brand name clothing next to someone wearing cut-rate clothes,” said Beverly Wert, a physical education teacher (Gursky 48).
 - b. A sense of identity and community is created by uniforms (Yorkers B4).
 - c. When students feel good about themselves, they do better in the classroom (Walzer).
- 3. Students can concentrate on learning instead of what their classmates are wearing.
- 4. Parents will spend much less on each child’s school attire.
- 5. When children wear uniforms, they will behave more appropriately, just as is the case when adults wear their business attire (de Vise).

(Issue 4 Is this the best plan?)

- E. I compared my plan to the voluntary uniform policies that some schools have for grades K-8.
 - 1. A mandatory policy like mine is needed to ensure 100% participation, because if some of the students wear the same things that cause the problems in the first place, the problem hasn't been solved (Walzer).
 - 2. The uniform policy must be implemented in high schools because the problems it aims to solve are prevalent there.

Visualization:

- IV. It is time for students to stop being afraid of going to school.
 - A. How can children learn when they have to fear physical and mental abuse because of the clothes they wear?
 - B. Is the ability to choose their own clothes really worth the anxiety?
 - C. I think the best answer comes from Dean Murphy, a seventh grader, who says if you wear uniforms "You don't get shot at" (Kennedy A1).

Action:

- V. Schools are meant to educate children and, in order to do that, they must remove all distractions.
 - A. Instituting a mandatory uniform policy will allow students to attend school in a safe environment.
 - B. They will not be judged by the clothing they wear and will spend less money on their wardrobes.
 - C. Uniforms will instill a sense of order that will allow students to focus on their class work and act appropriately.
 - D. You can write to your local school board and elected officials on the state and national level to encourage them to consider a uniform policy.
 - E. Uniforms don't have to be a loss of individuality; they can make school a much friendlier environment – just ask little Caroline.