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Rogerian Argument: School Uniforms Are Essential

Many schools require students to wear school uniforms when they attend school. However, in the United States, some require students to wear school uniforms while some do not. School uniforms have always been an important role in the education system and, for some, is a necessary part of a good school environment. The original idea for school uniforms was to hide social differences between students. However, today's time uniforms can also help with various things such as discipline, equality, and safety. Although school uniforms are worn to help better the education system, uniforms have become a big debate and has caused quite some controversy within the education system. Some people have concluded that school uniforms do not improve school quality and is not necessary for students to receive an education. However, school uniforms positively impact student's academic performance and are needed in the education system. My opposition overlooks that school uniforms benefit the education system and have been persuaded by others' negative opinions that school uniforms are not needed.

Needless to say, I do understand my opposing side's perspective of my standpoint. My opposition may say that school uniforms limit self and personal expression. Undoubtedly, a person's individuality is a characteristic that is significant to every individual. Requiring students to wear school uniforms supposedly restrains them, taking away that aspect. Also, how a student chooses to dress could be a bold statement of one's personal or political views according to Julie Underwood. She continues by saying, that the way individuals choose to dress could convey or

represent a message. The following caused the First Amendment to be involved in determining how far a school district can go in regulating what students can wear (Underwood 74). It's a First Amendment issue because kids and teens use the way they dress to express themselves. To add on, before I graduated high school, students that attended the same school as me would say they were uncomfortable while wearing uniforms. Furthermore, my peers would say their creativity was hindered and restrained because not only were they expected to wear uniforms, but they also held back on expressing their behavioral originality to follow a set code of conduct. Most students who oppose school uniforms argue that they lose self-identity whenever they lose their right to express and show themselves through fashion. Therefore, many believe that wearing uniforms can limit self-expression.

The opposing side may also argue that school uniforms could cause stress for parents who are unable to afford several sets of uniforms. Uniforms are only sold and available from a limited number of suppliers, which could be a reason why school uniforms are sold at a high price. Suppliers may also sell needed items such as blazers and dress shoes at a great price. This could cause some families and parents who struggle financially to not be able to afford them. It is said in an article from *The Guardian* that charities and community groups are trying to lower the costs of school uniforms for low-income families (Ferguson). The article says that applications for help with the cost of school uniforms and shoes have risen by 90 percent over the past year in 2019; furthermore, the charities and volunteers think the problem grew when schools began to use branded school clothes rather than standard uniforms ((Ferguson). Donna Ferguson also states that private school uniforms could be more expensive for children's parents. This article shows that more financially unstable parents are depending on charities and community groups to provide their children with uniforms for school rather than being able to afford them. The

article also shows that uniforms are becoming more expensive due to high demand and limited markets.

Also, some parents may not be financially stable to afford good quality uniforms for their children to wear to school, resulting in them having to wear uniforms that are stiff and unpleasant. Being in stiff and itchy school uniforms for seven or more hours could be frustrating to students because the clothing may restrict their movements. The discomfort of school uniforms could affect students by distracting them from their education during school hours; students could become uncomfortable and not feel determined to learn. The opposing side worry that students may avoid going to school to avoid wearing uncomfortable school uniforms, which, could affect their academic achievements and goals. Thus, students wearing uncomfortable school uniforms could cause students to stop attending school and prevent them from being in good academic standing.

However, the benefits of school uniforms outweigh their problems. First, while it may be true that school uniforms prevent students from expressing themselves through fashion and branded clothing, students still have the option to express their individuality by expressing personality through sports, appearance, and accessories. Students could start by wearing jewelry such as earrings and bracelets. Students could also add more details to their shirts by adding pins to them and dressing up their shirts by adding a stylish jacket to their uniform. Although some schools limit which hair colors are appropriate, students could still try wearing different hairstyles. Furthermore, they could add hair accessories to show character. Another way a student could express their individuality is by wearing unique looking shoes. When I attended school, I expressed myself by wearing a cool, bold backpack to make a statement. Also, being

required to wear school uniforms can encourage students to express themselves in other complex ways such as sports, academics, arts, and other school activities.

As for the affordability issue, uniforms allow parents to save time and money that is spent on school clothes. School uniforms may be pricey; however, they still allow parents to save money by being able to be worn for one or two complete school years. Furthermore, stores tend to have back to school sales whenever school is about to start to help save money on school uniforms. While it may be difficult to find sales for regular clothes when school is about to start, regular new clothes would likely have to be bought every semester anyways. Furthermore, children would want to attend school in expensive brands and styles of clothing. From my own experience, school uniforms could cost about 300 dollars a year; however, regular clothes for school may cost about 600 dollars. In addition, the following prices are both for standard clothing and the prices could rise; name brand clothing could be more expensive than standard. Also, the quality of regular clothing could affect the price. With that in mind, parents may have more than one child who attends school; therefore, that would require parents to buy more regular clothing that could be expensive rather than save money with buying school uniforms. In addition to having to spend more money on expensive brands, parents would also have to buy their children regular clothes more often than they would if their child were required to wear uniforms. School uniforms may cost a great deal; however, parents will have to spend twice as much money for regular branded clothes than uniforms.

In addition, school uniforms have become a broader trend said Greg Portell, who is a partner in the consumer and retailer practice of consulting firm A.T. Kearney in Abha Bhattarai's article. Portell continues to say, "Mainstream retailers are changing their merchandise to meet customer demand," which explains that retailers are making school uniforms in different brands

and quality to help make them affordable and meet customer demands (Bhattarai). In addition, school uniforms can be worn for an entire school year, while students would want to change their style and brands of regular clothes throughout the year. Therefore, parents can save not only money, but also time because school uniforms may be used throughout the entire year and does not have to be constantly replaced.

Furthermore, school uniforms reduce distractions for students, as it influences them to focus more on activities at school rather than popular clothes. Students become less interested in what their peers are wearing when they are all wearing the same outfits. As a result, they can focus on homework, projects, and tests, resulting in higher academic performances. Also, school uniforms allow students to promote school spirit: students can express themselves by joining sports and other school activities such as football, volleyball, theater club, and more. In a published article, it is said that extracurricular activities in school life is important and significant for the development of students. The article also states that students learn to express themselves beneficially in sports by learning time management, organizational skills, and improved self-confidence (Naik). Therefore, students can express themselves through school activities and accessories, rather than regular clothes. When I attended high school, most of my peers were early and on time to class. The reasoning may be because students did not have to waste time choosing what clothes they would wear to school the next day. To add on, my peers also began to support my school by participating in sports and joining tutoring services within the school to better their learning in subjects. Wearing school uniforms allows students to devote more of their time to learning.

To add on, school uniforms may help students better their education by creating a sense of equality rather than being judged for what they choose to wear. School uniforms may help

students feel more comfortable because they are in a learning environment without any prejudice. **Abha Bhattarai** states in his article that school uniforms comfort a one-year old girl who has been wearing uniforms since she was two months. Furthermore, an insurance agent in *The Washington Post* story says the one-year old girl develops a sense of community as soon as she walks into her daycare center (**Bhattarai**). Thus, students feel as they cannot be judged or singled out because they are all wearing the same clothes; making them feel more welcomed and confident.

Because school uniforms benefit students and the education system in various ways the opposing side should not be against wearing them; however, if they are still reluctant to adopt school uniforms, there is a compromise to satisfy both sides of the debate. The education system should allow all students who is in high school in the United States to wear school uniforms on Mondays through Thursdays while they have the freedom of choosing what they want to wear on Fridays. The compromise can be better known as Spirit Day for the students. Therefore, the opposition is satisfied and gets an opportunity to wear what they please for a day; however, those who still prefer to wear school uniforms still have the option to. For example, I personally interviewed my sister on how she felt about our school beginning to let us wear regular clothes on Friday's. She began with saying, "I felt like I was able to express myself for the first time in a while," and continues with saying, "It felt refreshing to finally be able to switch from uniforms and wear stylish clothes to school," (**Hickey**). My sister's statement exemplifies that students around the world would be pleased to have one day to express themselves.

However, I also interviewed another student whom I also attended school with. I asked him what his opinion was on wearing school uniforms to school. Tommy responded with, "I felt comfortable with still wearing uniforms on Friday's," but also states, "Uniforms was my way of

remaining secure and blending in,” (Crenshaw). Tommy’s response is evidence that the compromise to allow students to choose what they would like to wear on Spirit Day or Fridays is effective because, unlike some students, he still prefers to wear school uniforms while other students are able to express themselves at the same time. **Therefore, both sides of the debate are satisfied and can come to an understanding.** Although the clothing students may choose to wear must be appropriate and meet suitable guidelines, students still will be able to express themselves. Spirit Day already has begun in some schools in the United States. Schools that have this compromise in effect has been receiving positive responses within their students and parents. For example, when my school started this compromise, my peers were happy and looked forward to coming to school on Friday. Furthermore, parents will be able to save money buying school uniforms while satisfying their children occasionally, with buying them regular clothes.

My opposition overlooks the advantages of school uniforms and have been convinced by the public’s popular opinions that school uniforms are purposeless and ineffective. Their claims to put a stop to school uniforms for public schools fail to notice that school uniforms are essential to the education system. The number of schools that requires their students to wear school uniforms continues to be decently effective by improving their student’s attendance and academic performance. In addition, school uniforms will continue to encourage students to express themselves in more creative ways. Therefore, school uniforms will continue to exist in schools regardless of recent or future decisions to debar this misunderstood rule.

Annotated Works Cited

Bhattarai Abha. “School Uniforms Are on the Rise - Even for Toddlers – and It’s Changing Back-to-School shopping.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 22 Aug. 2019,

www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/08/22/school-uniforms-are-rise-even-toddlers-its-changing-back-to-school-shopping/.

Summarize: The purpose of this web article is to show that not only teenagers find wearing school uniforms comforting, but also toddlers. This source includes information about why public schools and preschools in the U.S. are now required to wear uniforms.

Assess: This source was written by Abha Bhattarai who is a credible national retail reporter for Washington Post. She has attended Northwestern University and Medill School of Journalism.

Reflect: This web page supported my argument that school uniforms welcomes students and shows equality that students need to feel and become united. It also includes my topic that mainstream retailers are changing their merchandise to help meet customer demand.

Crenshaw, Tommy. Personal interview. 2 May 2020.

Summarize: I interviewed this person in my essay to get his opinion on school uniforms because when I used to attend high school with him, he would always choose to wear his school uniforms on spirit day. His interview included that although some people wanted to wear regular clothes on spirit day, he chose to continue wearing school uniforms because they made him feel safe.

Assess: This interview included a person who I used to attend Skyline high school with and who is my peer. His name is Tommy Crenshaw.

Reflect: This interview supported my compromise by showing that my proposal for the education system to allow all schools to wear school uniforms on Monday through Thursdays, while students have the option to wear regular clothes on Fridays, could work and be effective to both sides of the debate.

Ferguson, Donna. “School’s Back-but Some Parents Can’t Keep up with Cost of Branded Uniforms.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 31 Aug. 2019, www.theguardian.com/education/2019/aug/31/schools-back-parents-cant-keep-up-with-cost-of-branded-uniforms.

Summarize: This web page focuses on how school uniforms are becoming very pricey and unaffordable to some parents because of school uniform’s high demand. This web page includes information about charities and community groups who aim to lower the cost of school uniforms.

Assess: The source was written by Donna Ferguson who is a credible journalist that has won many awards for her articles.

Reflect: This web page supported my opposition’s claims and showed that parents who are financially struggling recently have been having a hard time affording school uniforms, which then led them to depend on community groups. Furthermore, this source showed how stressful it is for low income parents to provide uniforms for their children to attend school.

Hickey, Dominique. Personal interview. 2 May 2020.

Summarize: The purpose of me conducting this interview with this interviewee is to get another person’s perspective on how they felt about spirit day. This interview is about the interviewee feeling happy that she was able to express herself through fashion on Fridays.

Assess: The interviewee that I used in my essay is my sister who I also attended the same school with every day.

Reflect: The interviewee helped support my compromise by being a voice for my opposition who may agree to my proposal of Spirit day.

Naik, Nirbhay. "Importance of Extracurricular Activities in School Life." *YourStory.com*, Yourstory, 27 Aug. 2018, yourstory.com/mystory/d48a322b39-importance-of-extracur.

Summarize: This article focuses on how extra activities pertaining to school are important for the overall development of students.

Assess: This article was written by Nirbhay Naik who wrote this story on the 27th of August in 2018.

Reflect: This article supported one of my claims that students expressing themselves in more creative ways may benefit the development of students. It also describes how students may learn how to manage time and learn new useful skills.

Underwood, Julie. "School Uniforms, Dress Codes, and Free Expression: What's the balance?" *Phi Delta Kappan*, vol. 99, no. 6, Mar. 2018, pp. 74-75. *EBSCOhost*,

doi:10.1177/0031721718762429.

Summarize: This source was added in my essay to show and support my opposition's claim on how regular clothes are a form of self-expression. The source thoroughly explains how students prefer and think regular clothes are an important factor when showing self-expression. It also shows how far school policy laws can go to not violate the First Amendment.

Assess: The source was written by Julie Underwood who is a professor of Education Law, Policy, and practice at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This source was possibly written for a project.

Reflect: This source supported my opposition's claim that regular clothes play an important role in teenagers and students' lives to express themselves.

Opposition's viewpoint

My (Monique's) viewpoint