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Dress for Success: Can Uniforms Enhance Learning for the Middle School Child?

Steven E. Wymore
University of Northern Iowa

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Dress for Success: Can Uniforms Enhance Learning for the Middle School Child?

Abstract

The hot topic of uniforms in public schools has been of great interest in recent years. Many believe uniforms can help the middle school child learn better. Some would use it to control violence and gang activities in schools. Others would use it to promote pride and academic achievement. Some say it would cut costs for needy families, and cut competition with clothing styles. Those who oppose school uniforms contend there is a lack of firm data to support a "fad" such as this with uniforms. Instead, dress codes should be enforced and maintained. Some people feel uniforms give a false sense of togetherness. Parents and students see uniforms as taking away individuality. Committees of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders need to make the decision about what school uniforms can and cannot do for their schools.

Dress for Success: Can Uniforms Enhance Learning for the Middle School Child?

A Graduate Research Article

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by

Steven E. Wymore

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Date Approved

Donna H. Schumacher

Graduate Faculty Reader

6-8-1998

Date Approved

Marcus Yoder

Graduate Faculty Reader

6-23-98

Date Approved

Robert Muffoletto

**Head, Department of Curriculum
and Instruction**

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Abstract

The hot topic of uniforms in public schools has been of great interest in recent years. Many believe uniforms can help the middle school child learn better. Some would use it to control violence and gang activities in schools. Others would use it to promote pride and academic achievement. Some say it would cut costs for needy families, and cut competition with clothing styles. Those who oppose school uniforms contend there is a lack of firm data to support a “fad” such as this with uniforms. Instead, dress codes should be enforced and maintained. Some people feel uniforms give a false sense of togetherness. Parents and students see uniforms as taking away individuality. Committees of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders need to make the decision about what school uniforms can and cannot do for their schools.

Dress for Success: Can Uniforms Enhance Learning for the Middle School Child?

One of the hottest debates in education today is not over what students are learning but what they are wearing. Mandatory school uniforms, once a requirement exclusive to private and parochial schools, are becoming increasingly popular in public schools across the nation.

Even though school uniforms are not new to public schools, the increased interest related to school uniforms was brought to the country's attention in President Bill Clinton's State of the Union speech on January 23, 1996. President Clinton said, "I challenge all our schools to teach character education: to teach good values and good citizenship. And if it means that teenagers will stop killing each other over designer jackets, then our public schools should be able to require the students to wear school uniforms" (Johnston, 1996, p.18).

This reference to school uniforms was a very popular one among many educators and proponents of school uniform policies. In March 1996, another boost to the movement to require school uniforms came from President Clinton when he ordered Department of Education Secretary, Richard K. Riley, to distribute manuals on the subject to the nation's 15,000 school districts. The six-page document was intended to be a guide for districts interested in adopting uniform dress codes for students by providing details of model programs and spelling out ways for district leaders to develop legal and workable programs (Portner, 1996b).

Uniform Policies

Long Beach

To look for success stories regarding policies to require school uniforms, one may first look at the Long Beach, California, school system. In the fall of 1994, Long Beach became the first public school system to introduce a school-uniform policy. By West Point standards, the policy is moderate and flexible. The 60,000 or so students in Long Beach's 56 elementary and 14 middle schools wear white shirts along with pants, shorts, or skirts that are either black or blue. Parents have the option of not participating, but few have done that (Donohue, 1996).

Statistics for the 1993-1995 school years indicated that assault and battery cases in grades K-8 had dropped 34 percent. Records also indicated that 32 percent fewer suspensions were imposed and vandalism had decreased by 18 percent. Although school officials were pleased with the drop in discipline problems since the introduction of the school uniform policy, they did not view school uniforms as the only reason for all their discipline problems. Along with the school uniform policy, school officials stepped up efforts to improve parental involvement. Conflict resolution classes were also helpful in making a more peaceful climate (Portner, 1996a).

At Will Rogers Middle School, in Long Beach, California, principal Pat Lawrence reported that attendance, school spirit, and test scores improved. Lawrence also reported better attitudes, and students seem calmer and more polite. As students started to dress more alike, tensions among ethnic and racial groups diminished (McDaniel, 1996).

Suspensions dropped 23 percent and crime fell 36 percent at Will Rogers Middle School. The school ranked 14th of 19 in statewide algebra tests. The year after uniforms

were introduced, they ranked 4th. Additionally, students say they did not spend so much time worrying about what to wear every morning. Judy Jacobs, Will Rogers PTA president, says that uniforms are not a magic cure, but many schools are seeing them payoff (McDaniel, 1996).

Ruffner Middle School

Pamela Hoffler-Riddick, principal at Ruffner Middle School in Norfolk, Virginia, had her school change to uniforms for a variety of reasons. It was an attempt to combat disorder, violence, and academic under-achievement. They banned jeans, sweatshirts, and team jackets in favor of tidier attire. With its mandatory uniform policy, Ruffner has a no opt-out policy. Students who come to school without a uniform are subject to in-school detention. The student population is approximately 980 and uniforms are provided for students who cannot afford them. Riddick has noted improvements in students' behavior. Leaving class without permission is down 47 percent; throwing objects is down 68 percent; and fighting has decreased by 38 percent (Hoffler-Riddick & Lassiter, 1996).

During the first month of school, administrators at Ruffner fielded calls from grandmothers, police officers, educators, business people and others who wanted to congratulate the students for the way they looked and behaved. One student said to a guidance counselor, "If one more person tells me I look nice, I don't know what I will do. I have never had so many people tell me nice things before." Another student thought having uniforms was a great idea because now she does not worry about what to wear, or what other kids will say about her clothes (Hoffler-Riddick & Lassiter, 1996).

According to officials at Ruffner Middle School, as early as the first semester of implementation of school uniforms, significant impact on the school's instructional climate was evident. Students seemed to perceive a greater seriousness of purpose at school now that their clothing was no longer an issue. They were dressed for success and saw themselves as successful. Another positive outcome was that the honor roll was up 16 percent during the first quarter. Student scores on the PSAT were up 44 percent (Hoffler-Riddick & Lassiter, 1996).

Principal Riddick commented that there were not as many distractions during the school day because it was not as easy to distinguish between the haves and have-nots. Wearing school uniforms seemed to put students on a more even playing field. When students saw themselves in an image reflecting success, there could be a better focus on learning (Atkins & Schlosberg, 1996).

Florence B. Price School

Delma Culverson, an eighth grader at the Florence B. Price K-8 school, in Chicago, Illinois, thinks that uniforms should be mandatory in schools because he has seen a tremendous change for the better since his school adopted a uniform policy (Wilson, 1996). "Clothes mean certain things to people. The clothes you wear might symbolize gang colors even if you aren't in a gang, and you might not know it." (Wilson, p.16). Culverson, 13, attended Price School since kindergarten. Since the school began wearing uniforms in 1992, fewer fights have occurred.

Pimlico Middle School

Roy Pope, principal of Pimlico Middle School, Baltimore, Maryland reported that his school was not in the business of wearing fashionable clothing; it was in the business

of educating people. Uniforms started in 1992; at that time 40 percent of the students wore them. Today, 95 percent wear them. The staff and community raised money to buy uniforms for those who could not afford them, even though Pope estimates the cost of one outfit is only \$15.00 (Kelly, 1996).

Phoenix Preparatory Academy

The Phoenix Preparatory Academy of Phoenix, Arizona, contains about 1,174 middle school students. They have had a uniform policy since 1995. If a student does not wish to wear a uniform he or she must attend another middle school in that district. A grant from a local foundation covers \$25 to \$30 of the cost of the uniforms for families that cannot afford to buy them (Atkins & Schlosberg, 1996).

Dick Van Der Laan, a Long Beach School official in Long Beach, California, stated that any district that is serious about reform needs to raise standards for students, not only of dress, but more importantly, standards of conduct and achievement. The real test will be improved student achievement. He is cautiously optimistic that a California State University evaluation will connect student uniforms with more orderly schools and higher achievement (Gursky, 1996).

There was little objection among teachers for students wearing uniforms, said Dade County, Florida, school officials. School officials allowed parents in each school to vote for mandatory uniforms. Over 60 percent of those polled liked the idea of mandatory uniforms, including 67 percent of middle-school teachers. Only 15 percent opposed uniforms, mandatory or voluntary. Since that survey, the fourth largest school district in the country, Dade County, has gained positive support for uniforms. Of the 96 elementary

schools, 84 have them and 12 middle schools have them. There was weak support to have them in the high schools (Gursky, 1996).

Dr. Reginald Wilson, senior scholar at the American Council on Education in Washington, D.C., said that uniforms would help discourage violence because students would not have a need to fight over who looks better or want to cause harm in an attempt to take another student's trendy clothes. From surveys he has seen, Dr. Wilson was inclined to believe that wearing uniforms makes quite a bit of difference in how people behave. Violence has gone down in those schools requiring uniforms (Wilson, 1996).

Dr. John German, South Shore Middle School principal in Seattle, Washington, reported in 1996 that the climate in the school had improved 98 percent, truancy and tardies were down, and there had been no reports of theft. Dr. German explained that he implemented the school uniform program because his students were "draggin', sagging, and laggin'." He felt he needed to keep his students academically focused (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

School Safety

Urban schools have turned to uniforms for a more practical reason--school safety. With gang members roaming the streets near school, the colors students wear can make them a target of violence, intentional or not. Uniforms, school officials say, not only eliminate gang related clothing, but many of the gang's chosen attire of pro and college sports-team paraphernalia. It also makes it easier to identify outsiders who don't belong on school grounds (Gursky, 1996).

Another big attraction for the implementation of a uniform policy, especially for parents, is cost. Roni Baudour, a mother in Salinas, California, believes uniforms are considerably less expensive than the name-brand clothes that many children want. She feels that taking the emphasis off clothes helps students focus better on school. Uniforms also make morning preparation less stressful (Atkins & Schlosberg, 1996).

Nick Duran, eighth grader and student body president at Rogers Middle School in Long Beach, California, personally felt that the uniform requirement was a good thing. Nick stated that people should judge others by their inner characteristics rather than what they wear. Plus, for him, it has been easier to choose what he will wear in the morning (Portner, 1996a).

Denis Doyle, founder of Doyle Associates, an Educational Consulting firm in Chevy Chase, Maryland, said the people who are most opposed to uniforms have probably never been in a school that had uniforms. He went on to state that imposing a uniform policy on school children can be remotely equated with banning every form of individual expression. He feels that the reason for introducing uniforms is not to impose conformity, but to inject a sense of purpose, and to devalue, at least for the school day, the idea that our material coverage is what makes the individual in the first place. Elaine Johnson, a parent from Kansas City, Missouri, stated that dress codes are for just about anyone in the working world. Waitresses, nurses, or police officers all wear uniforms. She doesn't see anything wrong with kids learning to dress a certain way at a certain time, and she feels it puts discipline back in the schools (Atkins & Schlosberg, 1996).

A survey from the National Association of Secondary Principals of 5,500 secondary school principals showed that 70 percent believed requiring students to wear

uniforms lowers the incidents of discipline problems and violent behaviors (Paliokas & Rist, 1996).

Arguments Against School Uniforms

The real question then becomes how fast and how extensive do we move forward with a policy that lacks data to support it. This would not be the first time in education that a lack of data stood in the way of accepting a “good thing” for schools and children. In other words, we may be dealing with another “fad” in education (Nygren, 1996).

Not everyone favors the idea of uniforms on public school children. The American Civil Liberties Union insists that a uniform policy creates “a school environment that represses individuality and induces conformity.” The ACLU concludes: “Banish every form of individual expression and what you have left are not students, but soldiers” (Gursky, 1996).

Harold Howe II, former U.S. Commissioner of Education, pointed out that President Clinton did not directly support uniforms. He only said they were a good idea if they reduce violence (Donohue, 1996).

It should be noted that the President’s initiative did not offer any federal aid for purchasing school uniforms. The cost was left to the schools and parents. In addition, the Education Department manual sent to all the nation’s 15,000 school districts only suggested how they could make school uniforms mandatory (Associated Press, 1996).

In Sherman Oaks, California, Millikan Middle School, struggles with compliance to a dress code, not a uniform policy. Millikan runs a clothes closet where volunteer parents take snapshots of students with bare midriffs, short skirts, and saggy-bottomed pants. They send the photographs home with the students after the second infraction of

tacky clothes. The Millikan community has resisted adopting a standard uniform. Faculty members and parents believe that schools should teach students how to handle decisions about appropriate dress, not dictate the same clothing for all. For students who cannot afford new clothing, Millikan offers short-term jobs such as tutoring or cleaning the campus so they can earn money instead of receiving charity (Mancini, 1997).

The Millikan Middle School community believes an adolescent's choice of clothing provides clues to his or her emotional well-being. Principal Norman Issacs attributed a drop in drug and alcohol use among students due to the staff's ability to identify and address problems through visual signs. Last year, the staff discovered five cases of sexual abuse after counseling girls who started wearing provocative clothing at school. Sometimes the change in one style is strictly a harmless expression of individuality. However, it may be the first sign that a child may be using drugs, interested in a gang, or suffering from economic problems. When a change in a clothing is seen, it is a flag there should be an intervention. A uniform works against that method of identifying at-risk students (Mancini, 1997).

Principal Issacs and Martin Tadlock, faculty member at Utah State University School of Education, both believe that there is a mismatch between mandating uniforms and encouraging schools to respect the differences in adolescents. But other middle school advocates, such as Khrista Kahl, an administrative assistant for the Long Beach, California, school system, sees no philosophical conflict between limiting student's choice of clothing and nurturing them in the classroom. Ms. Kahl claims that contrary to what some believe, middle school reform is not about making kids feel good. It is about equity and high standards of academic achievement. Students must be in an environment that is

sensitive to their developmental needs, where they are treated fairly and with respect, where they receive age appropriate, challenging instruction and where they are held accountable for their dress, behavior and schoolwork. Kahl believes uniforms are one piece of the entire picture when it comes to school reform (Mancini, 1996).

While the implementation process is often smooth, daily enforcement has become a challenge for some administrative teams. In one school, homeroom teachers were responsible for checking uniform compliance each morning. Students would “lose” their ties after homeroom and some students who arrived at school late were not checked at all. In another school, the deans of students for each grade level handled the bulk of the uniform enforcement. Students were assigned detentions, in-school suspensions, Saturday schools, and out-of-school suspensions for failure to comply with the uniform regulation. Each day, 2-5 percent of the students were not in full compliance (Hoffler-Riddick & Lassiter, 1996).

In many schools, when a student shows up out of uniform, teachers, counselors, or secretaries will dig into a supply of spare pants and tops and make the violator change outfits. The bigger sticking point concerns the fine print of uniform rules. Although some teachers regularly send students to the principal’s office for violations as insignificant as leaving their shirts untucked, other educators resent having to use class time for enforcement (Hoffler-Riddick & Lassiter, 1996).

Principal Vondia Jackson, of Fairview Middle School of Dayton, Ohio, has reprimanded faculty members who refuse to enforce the school’s dress code. Jackson stated that teachers like consistency, but they like someone else to do the enforcing rather than make the effort themselves (Mancini, 1997).

Jerold King, President of the Long Beach Federation of Teachers, thinks it teaches students a bad lesson about conformity. When the state's new law on school uniforms incorporated a provision allowing students to opt-out without being punished, that took the sting out of the policy (Gursky, 1996).

Uniforms have made their way into America's public schools with very little discussion about their long-term effectiveness or their connection to important goals such as higher academic achievement. The evidence also suggests that the benefits of uniforms are more perceptual than real (Mancini, 1997).

Dorothy Behling, retired faculty member of Family and Consumer Science Department at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, has verified the mythical impact of uniforms on student behavior. Behling tested people's reactions to photographs of students in various uniforms and casual dress. "Teachers and students believe uniformed students are better behaved and more academically successful than students who do not wear uniforms. A halo-effect may ensue in which everybody treats everybody better" (Mancini, 1997, p. 19).

Not everyone accepts superficial symbols of success. Martin Tadlock, a middle level consultant and faculty member at Utah State University's School of Education, is bothered that schools are adopting uniforms without seeking solid evidence of their effectiveness. "I'm concerned that we continue to create non-democratic sites and policies in our public schools and then expect children to learn what it means to live and function within a democratic society. Uniforms may be just another simplistic, quick-fix attempt to affect behaviors that are highly complex" (Mancini, 1997, p. 19).

A large portion of the Long Beach, California, district's students are not as upbeat as parents and teachers appear to be. In response to Clinton's speech on uniforms, interviews with students at Pimlico Middle School, and uniform-less Harpers Choice Middle School in Columbia, Maryland, show that their views about clothing are not cut from the same cloth as Clinton's (Kelly, 1996). Here is a sample of comments from middle school students. One student felt wearing uniforms was like wearing prison uniforms. Another remarked that if a student wears decent clothes, he or she should not have to wear school uniforms. Another complained that the regimented attire stifled his imagination (Portner, 1996a). Christopher Riley, 13, an eighth-grader at Harpers Choice, felt that either way, before anyone suggests school uniforms, they should ask the students. "We have to wear them" (Kelly, 1996).

A few of the interviewees were not persuaded that more uniforms equal less violence. Nearly every student saw the President's call as either a hoped solution or an example of political naiveté about the true depths of violence in American culture. "How can uniforms put an end to the violence that plagues our schools?" asked one. "Simply put, they cannot. Until drugs stop being dealt in schools, the violence will not end. Until students have constructive outlets to spend their free time, the violence will not end. Until students are taught at a young age alternate solutions to violence, the violence will not end" (McCarthy, 1996, p.4A).

Officials at New York University School of Social Work's Institute Against Violence wrote recently in the New York Times that the research on New York City teenagers, and the surveys of the social scientists, reveal that the primary cause of adolescent violence is a history of victimization. Youths who are victims of violence eventually

become people of violence themselves. What the New York University social scientists found was what many students already know: if a person is going to be violent, a uniform will not stop that. That is the kind of person they are and just because you make them dress like everyone else, the violent streak in their personality will not disappear (McCarthy, 1996).

Some people may find it odd that students rail at the idea of uniforms. When given the chance to choose their own clothes, the last thing they want is to look different, says Susan Vess, president of the National Association of School Psychologists. Vess commented that an unofficial uniform already exists in schools: loose jeans, T-shirts, flannels, cool tennis shoes or some variation on the theme. All the kids look the same, but the way they look the same is by their choice. When talking about uniforms, that reflects to be the choices of the administration and parents (McCarthy, 1996).

At Herbert Hoover Middle School in Sioux City, Iowa, Jon Faulk, a parent who has a child attending this school, commented that choosing one's clothes is part of growing up. He says that a uniform policy robs a person of that lesson, and therefore it takes individuality out of kids growing process and makes clones out of them. Mr. Faulk said that some parents want uniforms to miraculously solve every problem facing schools today (Rowell, 1997).

Summary

Testimonies and high hopes are undoubtedly sincere and based on personal experience in the schools. But what about documented evidence? Research is needed to provide information about relationships between appearance and behavior among youth in public schools. Published empirical studies are virtually nonexistent. Yet, anecdotal reports

indicate positive changes in student achievement and behavior when dress codes and uniforms are used. There is also a need to collect and exchange information about the impact of dress codes and uniforms to establish a basis from which policies can be generated (Alleyne, Hollowman & LaPoint, 1993).

For those parents who struggle with the cost of keeping their children dressed out in the latest trendy clothes, school uniforms could be a godsend. Advocates of uniforms point to private schools that require uniforms and achieve enviable results. One needs to remember, however, despite the controlling appearance of these schools, private schools differ from public schools in a number of ways. One of the more prominent ways is with discipline. When a student gets in trouble in the private school, he or she is gone (Howe, 1996)!

As mentioned earlier, not everyone likes the idea of public school uniforms. Critics include the American Civil Liberties Union, which wants to protect children's civil liberties, though only selectively. While defending the rights of children to express themselves fashionably, the ACLU manages to ignore the civil rights of kids who are assaulted and sometimes killed for their clothing because they inadvertently wore gang-related colors (Parker, 1996).

It is interesting to note that the public school uniform movement is mostly in elementary schools. This means the problems of violence that the uniforms will allegedly solve do not exist to any significant degree. Elementary children are not as concerned with individuality and personal rights as middle and high schoolers are, so they do not view required uniforms as intrusive or objectionable (Evans, 1996).

Some teens will protest the idea of school uniforms. But then anyone with teenagers in the family knows they will generally protest any idea that comes from an adult, especially in the middle school where a young adolescent ranges from about ten to fifteen years of age. Teens are going to question many things that might interrupt their individuality. The children at this age who are critical, self-centered, rebellious, moody, argumentative, appearance conscious, socially minded, and not as interested in school have a tough time coping with so many decisions (NMSA, 1995).

Despite this new awareness of the surrounding world, many students who were interviewed in the literature review for this topic, actually would welcome uniforms as relief from pressure to keep up with expensive styles and the contempt they feel for or from their better-dressed peers (Parker, 1996).

The Positive Perception of School Uniforms

With all the fanfare and discussion in reference to uniforms in the schools, here is a list of positive benefits when it comes to wearing uniforms in the public school systems. This list of perceived benefits is a collection of many ideas that have been generated through discussions over the last few years. Committees of parents, administrators, prominent educators, teachers, business leaders, and students have all given input at help compile these ideas:

- 1) There is a perception that the implementation of uniforms would reduce the cost of clothing for many families.

- 2) A “clothing exchange” program could be established that would utilize clothing left over from one year to the next and provide “free” clothing to needy families and children.
- 3) A sense of “pride” may develop within a school as a result of the uniform policy.
- 4) A sense of “identity” may develop within a school as a result of the uniform policy.
- 5) A sense of “togetherness” may develop within a school as a result of the uniform policy.
- 6) The possibility of better student behavior may be a result.
- 7) There may be a possibility of increased academic achievement.
- 8) The expense of uniforms may be minimized due to competition among competing clothing outlets.
- 9) The occurrence of “gang” clothing may be minimized.
- 10) Improved attendance may result if “pride”, “together” and “identity” actually do improve.
- 11) Uniforms may make the identification of “outsiders” easier.
- 12) Uniforms may lead to improved self-esteem.
- 13) Uniforms may make identification of students easier at school outings.

The Negative Perception of School Uniforms

Here is a list of perceived negative ideas when it comes to wearing uniforms in the public school system. This is a compiled list of statements and ideas as to why uniforms are not an answer to solving the problems that many schools are facing today. Some of

these problems include cutting crime, violence, and competitive clothing wars. The goal is to improve student demeanor in the classroom. This list is a result of statements that have been made by parents, administrators, teachers, prominent educators, business leaders, and students who have expressed their opinions about this topic:

- 1) A perception exists that uniforms may increase clothing costs.
- 2) Uniforms may take away some personal “identity.”
- 3) Some families may transfer to other schools or districts rather than comply with a uniform policy.
- 4) Issues of legality may arise resulting in legal costs at a time of budget restrictions.
- 5) A perception that the elimination of “gang” clothing may be impossible since such dress is constantly changing.
- 6) Students or families may “opt-out” of the uniform policy if an “opt-out” provision is provided and it may curtail success of the policy.
- 7) Due to a lack of empirical research findings, a possibility exists that school uniforms may have no impact upon attendance, conduct, school pride, identity or academic achievement.

Conclusion

It is my conclusion that a school uniform policy can improve the concept of school safety and enhance the overall umbrella of having positive self-esteem, pride, and academic achievement in the school. I believe uniforms can create an element of oneness or togetherness that provide essential skills for the next millennium. If a student’s individuality is in jeopardy by wearing a school uniform, it can still be expressed through

hair styles, jewelry, good citizenship, the fine arts, academic achievement, athletic abilities, and personality.

Problems in one school district are unique and different from other school districts. A community or school district needs to decide if it wants school uniforms to cut the cost of clothing for needy families, or improve attitudes towards learning, discipline, or competition with fashion styles. Perhaps a community would want uniforms to help control intimidation, violence, and gang activities.

The bottom line is that students still need to master subject matter taught in the schools. They still need to demonstrate good hygiene, clean speech, good manners, and the ability to present themselves to others in a global marketplace. One only needs to look around and see where uniforms have become a part of the growing work place. Cashiers, police, fire and other service providers wear uniforms to be recognized to a certain occupation in order to achieve unity.

To a school system or community considering wearing uniforms for whatever reason, here is some advice. Survey and interview parents, students, staff members, and community members. If these surveys seem to indicate further discussion, committees should be formed to include all types of people previously mentioned. One word of caution, be sure to include students. After all, they are the ones who will have to wear uniforms if a policy is created.

Uniforms can help the middle school child enhance his/her learning. It would take off the pressure of wearing stylish clothing at school. It would help alleviate pressures for needy families to buy a variety of clothes. It would help enhance self-esteem by promoting oneness or togetherness, which is so important for middle school kids as a part

of their social life. The school athletic teams wear uniforms for competition. Let the students wear them in the academic classroom. If uniforms can help a school or community do all of these things for a middle school child, then it would be appropriate for all schools.

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Middle School Journal Editorial Policy and Guidelines for Authors

Middle School Journal, a refereed journal, is an official publication of National Middle School Association. The *Journal* publishes articles that promote middle level education and contribute to an understanding of the educational and developmental needs of youth between the ages of 10 and 15.

Articles submitted should specifically relate to the theory and practice of middle level education and should speak directly to practitioners in the field. The *Journal* seeks reports of successful programs, descriptions of effective techniques, thought-provoking essays, and application of research. The editor especially welcomes articles that focus on middle level schooling in urban settings and in rural or small schools.

The *Journal* publishes both thematic and general interest issues. *Middle School Journal* invites articles that have not been previously published and are not under review by any other publication. Manuscripts that do not meet the submission requirements will be returned to the author.

Submission Requirements

- Length* Manuscripts, including bibliography and references, should be in the range of 10 to 20 double-spaced pages. Tables, charts, and figures should be kept to a minimum, and if included should be placed at the end of the text.
- Format and Style* All text, including title, headings, quotations, bibliography, and references should be double-spaced with wide margins. The editor strongly encourages the use of sideheads which increase readability. For matters of style, authors should follow the guidelines of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (Fourth Edition).

Submission Process

- Copies* Submit five clear copies, one with a cover page giving author(s) names, professional affiliation, home and work addresses and telephone. The names of the authors should appear only on the cover page.
- Submit to* *Middle School Journal*, Attn: Jodi Bungarner, National Middle School Association, 2600 Corporate Exchange Drive, Suite 370, Columbus, OH 43231. Faxed or electronic submissions are not accepted.
- Acknowledgment* *Middle School Journal* acknowledges receipt of manuscripts by postcard. Manuscripts that meet submission requirements will be logged and sent to referees. Authors will be notified by letter of this action.
- Review Process* Three members of a manuscript review board read and evaluate independently each manuscript. A decision regarding publication will be reached within four months of the date that the manuscript is sent out for review. This decision will be communicated to the lead author. Articles will not be published until a copyright assignment form is received. Assignment forms will be sent with the letter of acceptance.
- Editing* *Middle School Journal* reserves the right to edit manuscripts to improve clarity, to conform to style, and to fit available space.

Middle School Journal

Information for Contributors

Middle School Journal has a circulation of over 27,000 and is published five times during the school year—September, November, January, March, and May. *Middle School Journal* encourages manuscript submissions on all phases of middle school education. Manuscripts are initially reviewed by the editor. Each individual manuscript is given a careful reading. Manuscripts that meet the *Journal's* guidelines are forwarded to a panel of reviewers who are practicing professionals in all phases of middle school education. Author identities are kept confidential.

Manuscripts that do not meet the guidelines or are not ready for the complete review process are returned to authors with specific commentary. Often, authors are encouraged to resubmit the manuscript in a revised format or to an affiliate journal.

Contributors should be aware of additional points that influence a positive review at each level. Authors should avoid the following:

- generalities
- excessive adjectives
- personal asides
- passive verbs & constructions
- academic jargon
- references to "this author"

Manuscript references must be in correct APA style. Please consult the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. (Fourth Edition).

The *Journal* will not consider manuscripts that are undergoing review by another publication or have been previously published. If accepted, authors must sign a statement that transfers copyright to National Middle School Association.

Based upon reviewer comments, the following is a partial list of reasons for the rejection of manuscripts:

- The manuscript relates a personal, not a professional experience.
- The subject is so overly specialized it would appeal only to a small segment of readers.
- The material in the manuscript is neither timely nor new in its insights.
- The manuscript is largely in list format.
- The manuscript is a research report rather than an interpretation or application of research.
- The manuscript promotes a person or commercially available product.



LEWIS CENTRAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

1600 East South Omaha Bridge Road
Council Bluffs, Iowa 51503
(712) 366-8202

Appendix B
Letter of Submission

Jodi Bumgarner
NMSA
2600 Corporate Exchange Drive
Suite 370
Columbus, Ohio 43231

Dear Ms. Bumgarner,

My name is Steve Wymore. I am a middle school teacher with twenty-eight years of experience. I am just completing a three-year masters program from the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa. My degree will be a Masters of Art in Education with emphasis in middle school/junior high. My option of taking the non-thesis route to graduate also included submitting my research paper to a nationally known journal specializing in topics of interest to the young adolescent and educators who work with them. I have chosen the highly respected Middle School Journal.

I am submitting my paper titled, Dress for Success: Can Uniforms Enhance Learning for the Middle School Child?

I truly believe this is a topic that needs to be watched and studied in future years. Emperical studies need to be made so that school systems who may be considering this idea have quality data to help them with their decision making.

Respectfully,

Steven E. Wymore