

This week's issue:

SCHOOL DRESS CODES: NOT STRICT ENOUGH?



Parents and their teenage children have always fought about the way young people dress. Some schools are taking on the battle by making rules about what students may wear. Many school officials want to reduce skin **exposure** and ban t-shirts with offensive language. They argue that this type of clothing can be distracting to other students. Some schools want to make even greater **adjustments** to their dress codes by requiring school uniforms.

Many parents are in favor of a **transition** to stricter dress code policies. They believe that uniforms contribute to a more structured classroom environment and help students focus on their schoolwork instead of worrying about how they look. These parents think that requiring uniforms reduces the pressure on students to look like their peers. They point out that students who can't afford expensive clothes often feel left out when they can't keep up with the latest trends. Some students who have been teased and criticized for wearing the "wrong thing" agree that stricter dress codes are a good idea.

Many teenagers think it's not the school's business to **monitor** what they wear. They don't want the dress code to be **modified** because they like to express themselves through their clothing choices. For example, some students like to wear shirts that advertise their favorite musicians or sports teams, and others choose distinctive outfits to show their individual fashion sense. Young people sometimes dress in a certain way because it is required by their religion. They argue that schools should not be able to censor their clothing because they have the right to religious freedom.

Some also believe that it is important to be comfortable in order to stay relaxed and focus on learning. Some people say that dress codes tend to target girls by saying that clothes like skinny jeans and leggings are too distracting to boys. They argue that schools should focus on fixing bad behavior instead of treating outfits as the problem.

What's your opinion? Should your school have a stricter dress code? How could a dress code have an impact on a school's culture?



SCHOOL DRESS CODES: NOT STRICT ENOUGH?

adjustment | exposure | modify | monitor | transition

USE THE FOCUS WORDS *and alternate parts of speech

adjustment (*noun*) small change

➡ **Sample Sentence:** I made an **adjustment** to my eating habits by replacing soda with water, and now I have more energy.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** What **adjustments** can you make to have healthier eating habits?

exposure (*noun*) display; attention; experience with something

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Many school officials want to reduce skin **exposure**.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Where can you go to get **exposure** to art from around the world?

modify (*verb*) to make changes to

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Siya decided to **modify** the look of her room with some new paint and a small rug.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** How would you like to **modify** the content of your social studies curriculum?

monitor (*verb*) to check; to keep track of

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Jabari used his phone to **monitor** how long it takes him to walk to school.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Is it important for parents to **monitor** their children's computer use? Why or why not?

transition (*noun*) change process

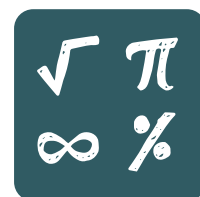
➡ **Sample Sentence:** The **transition** from living with my mother to living with my father has been difficult, but it's getting easier each day.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Was the **transition** from fifth to sixth grade easy or difficult? Share a few details to support your opinion.

***transition** (*verb*) to adjust to; to change or move from one condition to another

➡ **Sample Sentence:** Our school is **transitioning** from textbooks to iPads.

🗣️ **Turn and Talk:** Why do you think it's so hard for soldiers to **transition** from military to civilian life?



SCHOOL DRESS CODES: NOT STRICT ENOUGH?

adjustment | exposure | modify | monitor | transition

DO THE MATH


In the early 1990s, Long Beach Unified School District in California was in trouble. Students in its schools were violent. District-wide test scores were low. School officials thought about different ways to **modify** the schools. They wondered what kinds of **adjustments** would work best to fix their district. In 1994 they began a **transition** to school uniforms. Test scores improved. Violence decreased. Within a few years, school crime had dropped by 80%.

The uniform policy at Long Beach Unified got a lot of media **exposure**. President Bill Clinton praised school uniforms in his 1996 State of the Union Address. Groups that **monitor** education also took notice. The Broad Foundation, for example, awarded the school \$2.14 million in prizes.

Option 1: In Long Beach, school crime fell by 80%. Which of the following means the same thing?

- A. School crime fell by four-fifths.
- B. School crime fell by three-quarters.
- C. School crime fell by two-thirds.
- D. School crime fell by half.

Option 2: Each year, the average American school spends approximately \$10,000 per student. How many students could the Broad Foundation's \$2.14 million in prizes fund for one year? (Hint: To solve this problem quickly, use exponents.)

 **Discussion Question:** The media **exposure** of school uniforms in Long Beach sparked a debate. Some researchers pointed out that requiring uniforms was not the only **adjustment** made by the district. The uniforms were just one part of a larger **transition**. When the district **modified** the dress code, it also began to improve school security and closely **monitor** school attendance, among other changes. Did the uniforms fix the schools? How could we find out?



SCHOOL DRESS CODES: NOT STRICT ENOUGH?

adjustment | exposure | modify | monitor | transition

THINK SCIENTIFICALLY

“I heard that our principal, Ms. Jackson, was meeting with some parents who want us all to **transition** from the current school dress code to wearing school uniforms,” says Sumiko.

“Ew!” says Alyssa. “I hate that idea. We already have a dress code to keep skin **exposure** to a reasonable level—no shorts or skirts higher than our fingertips, no bare midriffs, that kind of thing. And we’re not allowed to have swear words printed on our clothes. I’m okay with that, but we should still have some right to express ourselves in the way we dress.”

“I don’t know,” says Ethan. “Deciding what to wear and trying to figure out what’s in and what’s out is a pain. Having to wear uniforms would take some **adjustment**, but it would make life simpler in the long run.”

“I don’t want my school to **monitor** every aspect of my life,” says Mario. “What I wear should be up to me. I definitely don’t want uniforms. And as for the dress code, there are bound to be cases where it’s unclear whether a certain outfit fits the rules or not. It’s not like a dress code can be as clear and objective as things are supposed to be in science, for example.”

“Hmm. What do you mean?” asks Ms. Kahn. “Why don’t you think a dress code can be objective?”

“Well, the rules are always going to be open to interpretation,” says Mario. “Students might interpret them differently from the way the administrators who wrote the rules meant them.”

“Can you give some examples?” says Ms. Kahn. “The class can think about how to **modify** the rules to be clearer.”

Mario made up some examples of rules and the ways people might misinterpret them (by accident or on purpose). Below are three of his examples.

Existing Rule	Rule Violation	Intended Solution	Unintended Solution	Write a revised rule that makes the intended solution clearer
Dresses must not have spaghetti straps.				
The bottom hem of skirts or shorts must be below the fingertips.				
Each boy must wear a tie.				

If you could **modify** your school’s dress code or uniform, what **adjustments** would you make?





SCHOOL DRESS CODES: NOT STRICT ENOUGH?

adjustment | exposure | modify | monitor | transition

TAKE A STAND



Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

adjustment | exposure | modify | monitor | transition

Lined writing area for student response.