



Advanced | Exemplar Essay

Letter to Your Principal: School Uniforms

Grades Before Beauty



Claim and Focus

A clear, arguable, and specific claim is presented in the introduction ("School uniforms should be mandatory at public schools because...") that thoroughly addresses the demands of the prompt. A strong focus is maintained on developing this claim throughout the whole essay.



Support and Evidence

Sufficient, relevant evidence is cited from multiple source texts and logical, clear reasoning fully explains how each point supports the central claim. A full understanding of the topic and texts is demonstrated.



Organization

Strategic organization is implemented with effective paragraphs for the introduction, conclusion, and each point of the claim. Clear transitions develop the connections between and among ideas ("Another way school uniforms benefit," "In addition," "School uniforms would have a benefit outside of school," "Clearly").



Language and Style

A definitive voice is maintained throughout the essay as is a formal style. Vivid, precise word choice ("clashed," "attire," "enforced," "convenient") and varied sentence structure attend to the reader's interests.



Using Exemplars in Your Lessons

Exemplar essays are tools to take abstract descriptions and make them more concrete for students. One way to use them is to print the clean copies of the essays and allow students to use the rubric to make notes or even find examples of important elements of an essay - thesis statements, introductions, evidence, conclusions, transitions, etc. Teachers can also use exemplars to illustrate what each score point within a trait 'looks like' in an authentic student essay. For additional ideas, please see "25 Ways to Use Exemplar Essays" by visiting the Curriculum Resources page in Help.

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To Whom It May Concern:

For the past decade, schools, parents, and students have clashed over the issue regarding student attire. Some argue that uniforms restrict self expression, while others believe they promote a school culture focused on academics where all students feel safe and can succeed. School uniforms should be mandatory at public schools because they allow students to concentrate on the work they need to do, reduce peer pressure and violence, and help families with financial needs.

The students, wearing a uniform, will be able to successfully complete schoolwork and assignments without being concerned with what they and the students around them are wearing. With school uniforms, students don't have to worry too much about what to wear, but rather focus on their grades and what they are learning. School uniforms are also a quick and easy way to get ready in the morning, because students do not have to spend extended amounts of time figuring out what to wear or arguing with parents about their outfit. With uniforms, neither parents nor kids feel stressed to have better or more fashionable clothes than other kids or families. School uniforms are also easier on educators because uniforms are stricter than dress codes and easier to enforce, greatly minimizing the constant clothing battle between students and staff. All of these aspects show that uniforms aid in the focus and well-being of students, parents and educators.

Another way school uniforms benefit school culture is they help prevent school violence. Marian Wilde, author of "Do Uniforms Make Schools Better?" describes that a school uniform policy enforced in three Nevada middle schools resulted in

"63 percent fewer police log reports, and graffiti, fights, and gang-related activity were all down" (Source 1). School uniforms have a significant impact on school violence because students were no longer competing to be the most "popular" or "richest" in the crowd, thus creating a safer environment for students. In order to protect students, schools should use uniforms to make learning at school safer, healthier, and happier. In addition, Sherry Bowen's article, "Should Kids Wear School Uniforms?" states that former President Clinton said, "School uniforms are one step that may help break the cycle of violence, truancy and disorder by helping young students understand what really counts is what kind of people they are" (Source 2). Even Clinton agrees that school uniforms will help students consider their actions, thus preventing violence and disorder in schools. If uniforms were required in schools, they would help to make a safer learning environment for students.

School uniforms would have a benefit outside of school as well, especially for families with financial needs. Wilde says, "50 percent [of the students surveyed] agreed that uniforms saved their families money" (Source 1). The research shows that a fair amount of students think that uniforms are helpful to their families because they spend less money on clothes for school. Instead of seeing it as uniforms being one more thing parents have to buy, they actually help families save money: "Many parents report that three uniforms cost about the same as one pair of designer jeans" (Bowen Source 2). Uniforms are therefore very convenient for families, saving them a significant amount of money.

Clearly, school uniforms are helping parents, students and educators across the nation. Uniforms help students focus on academics, rather than ready to show off their new outfit. They decrease peer pressure and violence, creating a sense of unity and belonging. They also assist parents by reducing the overall cost of clothes for the children, rather than becoming an additional financial burden. School uniforms are a smart way empower students, helping them to embrace their time in school and experience all of the benefits that their education has to offer.