

Approved: 2-9-2000

Date

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE, Room 123-S, Statehouse at 9:00 a.m. on January 11, 2000

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Senator Barbara Lawrence at 9:00 a.m. on January 11, 2000 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Senators Hensley, Kerr and Lee - Excused

Committee staff present: Avis Swartzman - Revisor of Statutes
Ben Barrett - Legislative Research Department
Carolyn Rampey - Legislative Research Department
Jackie Breymeyer - Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Senator Emert
Mark Tallman, KASB
Brilla Scott, USA

Others attending: See attached list

SB 368 **requiring adoption of dress code policies by boards of education**

Chairperson Lawrence called the meeting to order and stated that the committee would entertain bill introductions, if any, the next two days and ongoing until the deadline. She called on Senator Emert, bill sponsor, to speak on his bill.

Senator Emert's testimony (Attachment 1) and a brochure were distributed. He read the first paragraph of the testimony and stated that this was the essence of the bill. He mentioned several positive benefits to be derived from the bill, such as achievement, better attitude and a better working atmosphere for the students. He then quoted from a book authored by William J. Bennett who worked in the cabinets of Presidents Regan and Bush which stated that the trend is growing across the nation for uniforms.

Senator Emert stated that since the bill was introduced, a number of surveys have taken place. The Kansas trend reflects the national view of support for the concept of uniform dress codes. He cited several Kansas schools that have enacted uniform dress codes and referred to the attached newspaper articles attached to the testimony. He also mentioned the study done by a group of graduate nurses and the data driven results it produced.

After several further comments, Senator Emert ended his testimony by stating that this bill sends the signal of what the kids are there for and that is school.

The Chairperson thanked Senator Emert and stated that she has been a supporter of dress codes because of the way the kids are dressing now. She thinks teachers should be included because of the dress of some who claim to be career professionals, but who do not dress appropriately. If schools adopt uniform dress codes, she thinks teachers would want to identify with this also. She asked the Senator if he had considered rather than a mandate, to make it a Resolution.

The Senator responded that he had the Revisor draft an amendment that will still be a mandate for school districts to provide a fair hearing to the issue. The ideal way to do this would be at the local level. He thinks it will be supported at every level.

Several Senators gave their input, citing support for the concept.

Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards appeared next on the bill. He spoke of the uniform that he had worn many years ago, describing it in detail. He also mentioned a dress code situation where a teacher in Dodge City filed a grievance and won. The professional negotiation act would have to be taken into consideration. He stated that although KASB has not adopted a specific policy on school uniforms, it does have problems with the unfunded mandate that would be created by passage of the bill. It would impact districts with a higher proportion of low income students. (Attachment 2)

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE, Room 123-S, Statehouse at 9:00 a.m. on January 11, 2000

Brilla Scott, United School Administrators of Kansas, appeared on the bill, stating that USA is the umbrella association for several organizations across the state and represents approximately 1400 school administrators. (Attachment 3) The membership feels that this policy should be made at the local level and not state mandated.

The Chairperson thanked the committee and adjourned the meeting.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE GUEST LIST

DATE: January 11, 2000

NAME	REPRESENTING
Craig Grant	HNEA
McApt	USA
Mark Goodwin	Hein + Weir
Don M. Reynolds	Kaw Valley USD 324
Brella Scott	USA
Jacque Dakes	SQE
Mark Tallman	KASB
Jim Youally	Shawnee Mission Schools

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Testimony
Senator Tim Emert
Senate Education Committee
January 11, 2000
SB 368

Madame Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to address the committee today on SB 368.

I would like to begin by quoting the first section of the bill which provides an effective, orderly and disciplined school environment free from unnecessary disruptions engendered by the wearing of gang-related or other inappropriate clothing by pupils, and in order to promote greater school pride and better behavior by pupils in and out of the classroom, the board of education of each school district shall adopt a dress code policy that requires all pupils enrolled in the district to wear uniforms at school and at school supervised activities. A dress code policy adopted by a board of education in accordance with the provisions of this section may require district-wide uniforms or may authorize adoption by individual schools within the district of uniforms unique to each such school.

Since this bill was introduced, it has received a great deal of publicity. This is not uncommon and that in each state that such ideas come forth, the interest both pro and con has been voluminous.

I would like to quote from a book recently released authored by William J. Bennett. Mr. Bennett's list of credentials is extensive and a prolific writer of education issues. Dr. Bennett served as President Regan's chairman of the national endowment for the humanities and secretary of education and was President Bush's drug czar. His book is *The Educated Child*. The book was written as a guide to parents on those issues concerning the education of children. He states:

"Across the country there is a trend toward uniforms. Many educators say they help improve discipline, attendance, and achievement. 'Kids get more serious when wearing nice pants, ties, and a sport jacket' says a Washington, D.C., area principal. On days when students get to wear whatever they want, he adds, 'There's a different tone in school—looser.

Senate Education
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 Attachment 1

Their attention span gets shorter. There's more pushing and shoving in the corridors. They're more in a party mentality than a business mentality.' Uniforms encourage students to focus on what school is about rather than how they look. Many parents feel that they simplify all sorts of other things, from morning agonies about what to wear that day to department store tantrums (and spending sprees) when it's time to buy the back-to-school wardrobe."

"Educators say it's tougher to teach when kids are surrounded by t-shirts emblazoned with beer ads, sexual slogans, even gang insignia, or when girls show up for class sporting the "Lolita look." It's high school students who push the clothing envelope the furthest to grab their peers' attention and get a rise out of adults, but the younger kids always want what the older ones wear. The latest teen fashions quickly trickle down the middle schools and even primary grades."

"These displays are distracting to children. They can affect one's sense of self. Sloppy dress promotes sloppy thinking and sloppy behavior. A school uniform is a symbol that young people are expected to behave in an orderly way, be on time, and act with courtesy while they're at school. Dressing for academic success sends a message that school is a serious place, meant for people who are diligent about their studies. It promotes pride in school. Uniforms also encourage kids to express themselves and notice each other's individuality in more significant ways than shoes and shirts."

"In general, we find that schools with uniforms or dress codes—provided they are enforced—are places that are more serious about learning. You may not agree. Certainly, we have seen (and in some cases raised) academically successful children who never went near a uniform. But almost every good school places some limits on clothing, jewelry, hairstyles, and the like. Many good schools have also found that a simple, tidy uniform of some kind is conducive to serious learning."

Since I have introduced this bill, there have been a number of surveys taken in this state by various school districts, radio and TV stations. The trend in Kansas reflects the views of most states in the nation. There is overwhelming support for the concept of uniform dress codes.

I have attached to my testimony a few of the various articles and research documents that have come to my attention.

You will find an article from October 4, 1999, from *Newsweek*, "Uniforms Rule." The many positive things in that article are as follows:

One of the best compared to two middle schools in Charleston County, S.C., one with a uniform policy, the other without. A survey of more than 300 sixth to eighth graders revealed that uniformed students gave their schools higher scores. "Although school uniforms do not represent a panacea for all society's problems," says the lead researcher, Richard K. Murray, a principal in Dorchester, S.C., "research now shows that school uniforms do significantly affect student perceptions of school climate."

Uniforms already exist in Kansas. I have attached an article from *The Wichita Eagle*, show that two attendance centers in the Wichita public schools system have enacted a uniform dress code. These being Jardine Edison Junior Academy and Wichita West High. From this article I would quote, "When uniforms first were proposed at West, there were few middle-of-the-road opinions, said Mark Evans, West's principal for five years. Staff, like the parents, were about 70 percent supportive, but of the 30 percent (who weren't), there was 10 percent who thought I was Genghis Khan," Evans said.

"He doesn't have much sympathy for those who say school uniforms limit individuality and creative spirit. There are limitations wherever you go in life, but that doesn't mean you can't be yourself," Evans said. "When 3:10 rolls around, you go home and wear what you want, and there's the weekend too. And special activities are not included in the dress code. Support, he said, seems to outweigh opposition to the new policy."

I think these issues are best summed up in Wichita by the editorial I have attached from *The Wichita Eagle*, "Uniforms West High School adds another choice element." The core of this editorial is, "Uniforms send the message that school is serious business."

The next attachment is from the *Johnson County Sun*. A statement in that article says, "They bring decorum to a place where respect for others—not distracting them, not showing off, not showing complete disregard for the important task at hand—is one of the basic necessities for education. Kids should put on uniforms and go to schools where they can safely learn the skills they need to contribute to society—and to think for themselves."

Argentine Middle School have officially adopted a mandatory uniform policy. I have attached some of the background and research that was done prior to the implementation of that policy. I would quote from the background from the article as follows:

“Over the past several months, many Argentine Middle School parents and community members have discussed the merits of a mandatory uniform policy as a means of countering the influence of gangs, minimizing disruption and improving the school learning environment. In connection with these discussions, the Argentine Middle School administration has evaluated certain uniform policies throughout the country and found that use of school uniforms enhanced school safety, improved the learning environment, reduce ethnic and racial tensions, bridged socioeconomic differences between children, promoted good behavior, improved children’s self-respect and self-esteem, and produced cost savings for participating families. Schools with greater compliance levels tended to enjoy commensurately better results.

Also attached with the handouts are newspaper articles showing a high degree of compliance with the policy and success and acceptance that it has received.

I was hoping to have the principal of Argentine Middle School here. He is most eager to testify; however, due to the early timing of the hearing, that was not possible.

One last study that I would call to your attention is one that is not in your packet, but was an extensive study done across the United States by a group of graduate nurses. They did a survey of school districts that have such a policy and compared them to those that do not. I would quote only from the summary of that research project:

“As in all new concepts and changes in parameter, there is data which provides contrasting opinions. Based upon our current primary research the following information has been evidenced:

Data Driven Positive Outcomes

1. Increased student attendance
2. Reduced distractions in class
3. Increased self-confidence and self-esteem
4. Increased esprit de corps among students
5. Decreased clothing costs
6. Improved classroom behavior

7. Improved school climate
8. Reduced suspensions
9. Improved discipline
10. Reduced most areas of crime in schools
11. Increased school spirit
12. Created greater school recognition throughout the community
13. Increased academic performance
14. Increased opportunities for student choice and decision-making (site level)
15. Increased parental involvement and support
16. Helped students resist peer pressure
17. Increased safety level in school and communities
18. Increased students' feeling of unity and belonging as a part of a learning team
19. Morning tardiness decreased as students got ready more quickly for school by having a simpler field of decisions on daily apparel to choose from
20. Stress level on students lessened due to worries about how to dress
21. Increase in morale
22. Increased ownership in learning environment
23. Increased empowerment by student with role and membership represented by apparel
24. Increased team cooperativeness
25. Overall increased in productivity
26. Fostered cross-cultural communication
27. Desire to learn increased
28. Increased focus
29. Enhanced extra-curricular activities
30. Students demonstrated greater courtesy towards each other
31. Students demonstrated greater courtesy towards adults
32. Reduced conflicts between and among students over fashion
33. Students tended toward better organizational behavior
34. Students were more punctual when submitting assignments
35. Improved respect in behavior by students to all
36. Parents saw their child as being perceived as a good student by other

Data Driven Concerns

1. Infringement of First Amendment rights (concern rejected by the Supreme Court as not being a constitutional violation)

2. Tools of Administrative power (unjustified because all programs initiated by site level by parents)
3. Social classes among students will remain
4. Data for support of programs not statistically valid or reliable (data primarily anecdotal—the first statistical outcomes have begun to become available and are positive)
5. Inhibit student creativity
6. Students may not be as enthusiastic as parents and districts
7. Survey results are not always wholly representative of entire populations
8. Transfer students may experience adjustment challenges
9. Levels of campus compliance are not always as high as anticipated
10. Availability of items not always there
11. Some families may need assistance in acquiring apparel (always remedied at the site level—has never inhibited programs)”

I thank you for your indulgence on this issue. In summary, I would only close by saying, as mentioned in the *Newsweek* article, this is not the answer to all of our problems but it is definitely a step in the right direction. I have had people stop my in restaurants, convenient stores and other places, to express their enthusiasm for the plan. If you have any doubts about the value of the program, I would challenge you to ask any three teachers whose opinions you respect. I am certain of the answer you would get.

Thank you.

Tim Emert

Approximately 39% of kids in primary school (K-3) are in some form of before- or after-school child care for an average of 14 hours a week.

SOURCE: NATIONAL CENTER OF EDUCATION STATISTICS

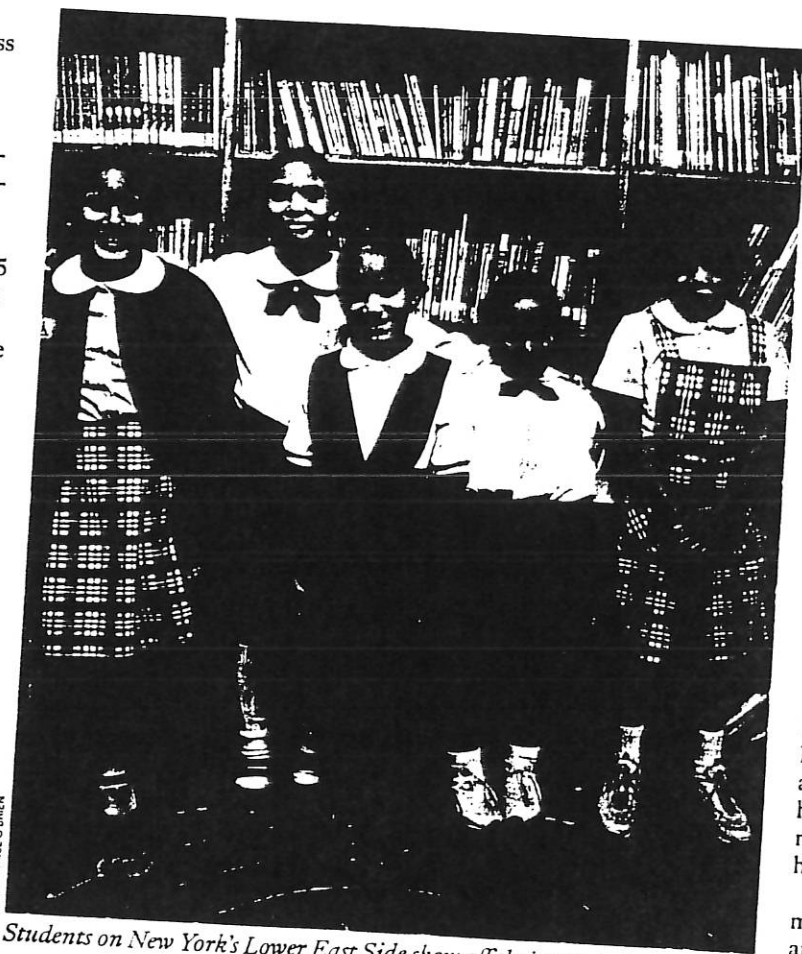
Uniforms Rule

This fall, dress codes are an increasingly popular remedy for all that's wrong with American public schools. Do they deliver? BY PAT WINGERT

KIARA NEW-some's spotless navy jumper and demure white blouse won't win raves on the runways. But to school reformers, the 6-year-old is a real trendsetter. This fall, Kiara and her classmates at P.S. 15 on Manhattan's Lower East Side joined hundreds of thousands of students in the nation's largest school system, and donned uniforms for the first time.

Kiara likes her new duds "cause they're pretty." Her mother, Alelia, is happy because "it's much easier to find the clothes in the morning." Educators in New York and around the country believe uniforms could also solve some of toughest problems facing schools today. In the aftermath of the Littleton, Colo., shootings, many see dress codes as a cheap and simple way to make schools safer. This fall, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, Boston, Houston, Cleveland and Washington, D.C., all have a majority of their students in uniforms. "It's spreading to the suburbs now," says Vince Ferrandino, president of the National Association of Elementary School Principals. "It's become a national phenomenon."

Proponents say clothing rules eliminate the baggy gang-inspired look that makes it easy for students to smuggle in weapons, drugs and other banned items. Dress codes also make it easier to spot intruders. "Last week this boy walked into our cafeteria in



Students on New York's Lower East Side show off their new looks

jeans and we knew right away he wasn't one of ours," says Ramond Rivera, an elementary-school principal in El Paso, Texas, whose students wear uniforms. "We immediately escorted him out."

Researchers say there's very little hard evidence that uniforms improve students' behavior or academic success. They do, however, affect student attitudes. One of the best studies compared two middle schools in Charleston County, S.C., one

with a uniform policy, the other without. A survey of more than 300 sixth to eighth graders revealed that uniformed students gave their schools higher scores. "Although school uniforms do not represent a panacea for all society's problems," says the lead researcher, Richard K. Murray, a principal in Dorchester, S.C., "research now shows that school uniforms do significantly affect student perceptions of school climate."

Keith King of the University of Cincinnati recently published a review of research on the effectiveness of dress codes. He says that overall, students in uniforms "felt more like a team." That's important, King says, because "the No. 1 protective factor against school violence is having a student feel connected to his school and that he fits in."

Uniforms are getting the most attention at middle and high schools, where security and school unity are big issues, along with the ex-

trêmes of current teen fashion: spaghetti-strap tanks, face painting, body piercing. "You'd be amazed at the amount of time administrators have been spending on what kids are wearing to school," says Susan Galletti, a middle-school specialist at the National Association of Secondary School Principals. "With uniforms, all that is eliminated, and they can spend more time on teaching and learning."

While some schools stick to traditional

YOUR FAMILY

plaids and navy blue, others allow polo shirts, chinos and even capri pants. Still, teens in the throes of adolescent rebellion often object and in a few cases, they've even sued for the freedom to choose their own clothes. "The older kids get, the more aware they are of their rights," says Stephen Yurek, general counsel of the NASSP. "If you try to restrict what they can say or wear, you'll start hearing that their rights are being violated." Yurek says the courts have made it clear that students don't have the same rights inside school as they do outside; clothing requirements are not considered a violation of their freedom of expression if there's a valid educational reason for imposing them. To avoid legal hassles, though, most schools will provide uniforms to poor students who can't afford to buy them, and many allow parents to opt out if they have religious objections.

Educators say the best way to get kids to accept uniforms is to start in the early grades. Noelle Ebricht, 16, a student at Wilson High School in Long Beach, Calif., has been wearing a uniform for eight years. "I've slowly adapted to it," she says. This year, she says, "all I have to do is grab some khaki bottoms



NO SNEAKERS ALLOWED

and a white shirt with a collar and I'm out of the house." Still, she admits, "if I had my personal preference, of course I would prefer not to wear one. Any kid would."

Some adults sympathize. Norman Isaacs, principal of Millikan Middle School in Sherman Oaks, Calif., has resisted uniforms. He believes clothing gives teachers insights into what's happening with individual students. "Our counselors and teachers monitor the way kids are dressed," he says. "If we see a big change in the way a student dresses, that sends up a signal and tells us we need to address that person."

Other critics say they fear the spread of uniforms will smother student creativity. But experienced educators have learned that kids often dream up truly inspired loopholes. El Paso's Rivera remembers the girl who came to school wearing contact lenses that gave her the appearance of having yellow cat eyes. It wasn't a strict violation; no one had thought to include contacts in the dress code. Still, he says, "We had to put a stop to that ... It was a distraction to every kid in her class." And a real eye-opener for the principal.

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From Page LA

"We've also seen test scores begin to increase, and we have a high degree of satisfaction and participation," he said.

Not everyone is so high on school uniforms. Opponents think they repress individuality and creativity. And some parents think standardized dress will be more expensive than a regular school wardrobe.

When uniforms first were proposed at West, there were few middle-of-the-road opinions, said Mark Evans, West's principal for five years.

"Staff, like the parents, were about 70 percent supportive, but of the 30 percent (who weren't), there was 10 percent who thought I was Genghis Khan," Evans said.

Robert Lang, director at Jardine, also recalls initial resistance to uniforms.

"Some students were upset, but as time went on, even after just the first couple of days, they learned to like it. It took the focus off of what they were wearing," he said.

"And we did notice behavioral changes. When we had a 'dress-down day' the focus changed. It was overnight and there were all kinds of distractions, including more office referrals. We had only one dress-down day," he said.

Students at Jardine wear navy pants, skirts, shorts or skorts and white shirts that must have a collar. At West, students wear khaki pants, shorts, skirts

and jumpers, with solid white or navy shirts, sweaters, vests and blouses.

Administrators aren't the only ones favoring uniforms. President Clinton also has embraced the idea. Last year he instructed the U.S. Department of Education to distribute a booklet to 16,000 school districts outlining how they could legally enforce school uniforms.

At West, Evans is gearing up for the first day of school and what promises to be continuing debate over uniforms.

"I've heard it all," he said. "The amount of community interest is phenomenal. I've never seen anything capture community interest like this issue."

And he's learned "more than I ever wanted to know" about clothing and apparel.

"I never thought that as part of this job I'd be going to Penney's and Dillard's and Wal-Mart and looking in the clothing department," he said.

Clothing stores in Wichita, he said, are helping to make the transition to uniforms a little easier. Some have set up special displays making it easy to find the West High uniform items.

"Wal-Mart is sending over five employees this week, and while students

are enrolling, the Wal-Mart people will have a little clothing store set up in the library. The students can buy merchandise right then," he said.

He doesn't have much sympathy for those who say school uniforms limit individuality and creative spirit.

"There are limitations wherever you go in life, but that doesn't mean you can't be yourself," Evans said. "When 3:10 rolls around, you go home and wear what you want, and there's the weekend, too. And special activities are not included in the dress

"There are limitations wherever you go in life, but that doesn't mean you can't be yourself."

*Mark Evans,
Wichita West High
School principal*

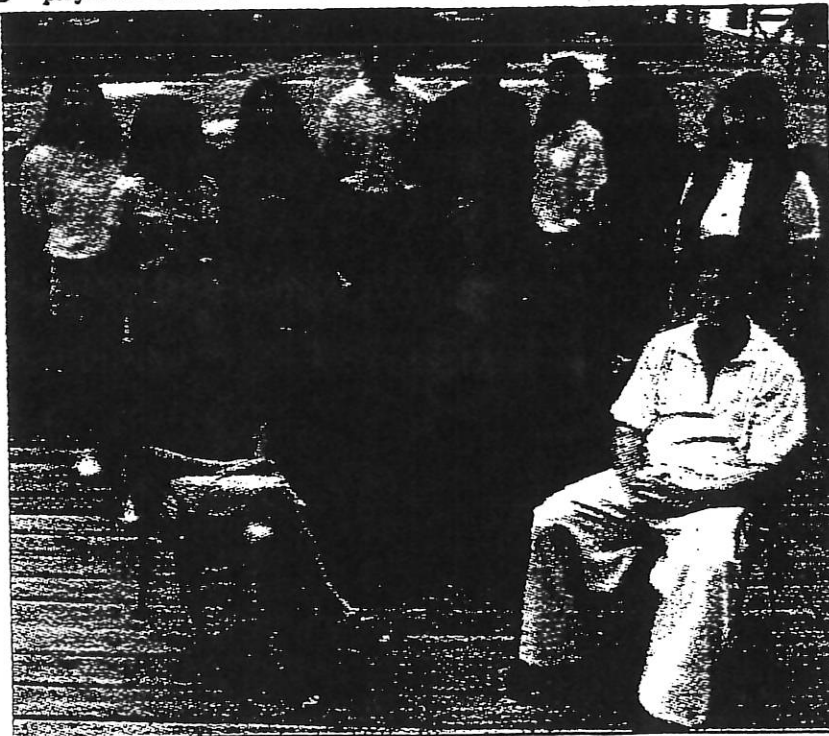
code."

Support, he said, seems to outweigh opposition to the new policy.

"We've had two people request a transfer from West, but we've also had 35 request to transfer in," he said.

Bonnie Bing can be reached at 268-6246 or by e-mail at bbing@wichitaeagle.com

LEGAL PUBLICATION



Mike Hahnback/The Wichita Eagle

West High Principal Mark Evans, fifth from left in back row, is surrounded by West High students modeling the required navy, white and khaki color scheme for this school year.

Common threads

Two Wichita schools are following a national trend of uniforms in public schools

By Bonnie Bing
The Wichita Eagle

When students at Jardine Edson Junior Academy and Wichita West High head back to school next month, they'll have to make sure the clothes they step into each day comply with strict uniform policies at their schools.

They won't be alone. One of every four children in America's public elementary, middle and high schools will be wearing school uniforms this fall, a survey conducted by Market Facts TeleNation shows.

Although private and parochial schools have required uniforms for years, only recently have public schools adopted uniforms, or at least standardized dress.

Evidence of the growing movement can be seen at mail-order clothing companies such as Lands' End, which introduced a special uniforms catalog

this year in response to the demand.

The trend is more widespread than people may realize, said Mike Grafee, director of school uniforms for Lands' End. For example, he said, uniform policies have been adopted at 391 of the 557 public schools in Chicago, at 180 of 300 in Dade County, Fla., and at 81 of 147 elementary schools in Dallas.

Grafee has seen the trend get started in elementary schools, then spread to middle schools and finally high schools.

At Sears, Roebuck and Co., vice president Meg Rist said the Sears uniform program that was launched in 1995 experienced a 70 percent increase in 1996 and is expected to grow dramatically in 1997, with the public sector accounting for the majority of growth.

Wichita may be responsible for a bit of that growth. This is the second year Jardine has had a school-uniform policy and the first year for West.

Those in favor of school uniforms believe they will help foster school pride,

decrease the visibility of economic and social differences between students, and do away with disruptive fashion statements that distract from learning. Additionally, they say, uniforms help create a more secure campus where visitors are readily identified and gang influences are lessened.

Administrators in the Long Beach, Calif., school district believe it. Theirs was the first public school system in the country to require uniforms for elementary and middle schools, starting in 1994. The district is taking them into ninth grade at one school this year.

"We've had a number of improvements; probably most significant is a 76 percent reduction in school crime and the lowest rate of student absence since 1980," said Richard Van De Laan, a spokesman for the Long Beach school district. During the same period, crime increased 5 percent in high schools, he said.

See **UNIFORMS**, Page 4A

Inside:
West High students show off their individuality while conforming to uniform standards on **Living**, 1B.



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OUR VIEW

Uniforms

West High School adds another choice element

Choices, options, variety. All are education buzzwords these days. They also are good words.

A case in point is the decision last week to mandate inexpensive uniforms for Wichita West High School students. The decision was made by West Principal Mark Evans, with backing from members of the school's parent-teacher organization and its site council. It expands the Wichita school system's unprecedented variety of choices — in the district and in the state — in a modest but welcome way.

Starting with the fall semester in late August, West High will become the first public high school in Wichita to require uniforms. West students will have to wear khaki slacks, shorts or skirts with navy blue or white shirts or sweaters. No logos or writing on the shirts allowed. And no jeans or T-shirts, either.

This may strike some folks as arbitrary or dictatorial, somehow suppressing student rights and individuality. Sorry, but that argument doesn't wash.

The mandating of school uniforms, even at the high school level, has a lot going for it.

Both studies and common sense clearly communicate that how you dress affects how you behave and how others view you and treat you. Inappropriate dress can be one of

the great barriers to getting a good job, or doing well on the job after you have one.

School uniforms send the message that school is serious business, a student's job, not a fashion

show or a way to show gang loyalty.

Uniforms can reduce the pressure to spend big money on school clothes. They can eliminate most of the disruptive fashion "statements" that students feel compelled to make.

Perhaps mandating uniforms at West High will make a tiny dent in students' individuality. But students still will be able to exercise their rights, their free speech, in endless ways in their classes and other school activities.

And those who don't want to be subject to the West dress code will be free to transfer to another Wichita high school.

Uniforms send the message that school is serious business.

LETT

1-11

The Wichita Eagle

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OUR VIEW

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Uniforms send the message that school is serious business.

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Date: Wed 9-22-99

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Point/Counterpoint

JACQUELINE LEHATTO
EDUCATION EDITOR

Uniforms will address all sorts of school issues

Bring on the uniforms. Last week Kansas Senate Majority Leader Tim Emert introduced legislation that would clothe the entire student population of the wheat state in wheat-colored chinos or the like.

It's an idea that addresses — or should I say, *dresses* — all sorts of issues that were not around when you and I went to public school, like baggy clothing that can conceal weapons. Or hyper-awareness of logos and school brands. Or hyper-tight halter tops, too-short shorts and low riser pants. Or social cliques that can produce — and once is too much — the black trench coat mafia members who are accused of killing our most precious natural resource: our kids.

Already some public schools in Wichita and Kansas City, Kan., have made the switch to uniforms with overwhelming parent and staff support.

And school officials say most of the kids seem not to mind the uniforms.

It is not like they are being asked to wear red and black plaid pleated skirts or wool pants and ties. I am talking tan or navy pants or skirts and colored shirts.

The ACLU will probably step in now and say that requiring students to wear uniforms in public schools does not teach them to think for themselves and is a violation of their freedom of expression.

Well, violate away, these kids are used to it. Ever since they were told as toddlers not to dance on coffee tables, and told as kindergartners not to sing out loud while the rest of the class is learning, and told as teen-agers not to use profanities in essays, their freedom of expression has been redirected to acceptable channels.

Private and parochial school officials say students find a way to express themselves even in oxford blue and navy. And believe me, to those whom it matters, it will be easy to distinguish the Abercrombie & Fitch chinos from the Kmart ones.

But after a while most kids won't care.

They will put on the uniform that says they are going to school to learn.

They won't be confused because they are in beachwear.

They won't think maybe they should be playing ball be-

cause they are in basketball shorts or that they are on a fashion show runway or in a rock band.

There's time enough for those outfits. From 7:45 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. they are students.

Uniforms are the great leveler.

They bring decorum to a place where respect for others — not distracting them, not showing off, not showing complete disregard for the important task at hand — is one of the basic necessities for education.

Kids should put on uniforms and go to schools where they can safely learn the skills they need to contribute to society — and to think for themselves.

page 1 of 2

H^c
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ARGENTINE MIDDLE SCHOOL
UNIFORM/DRESS CODE POLICIES and PROCEDURES

A. Background.

Over the past several months, many Argentine Middle School parents and community members have discussed the merits of a mandatory uniform policy as a means of countering the influence of gangs, minimizing disruption and improving the school learning environment. In connection with these discussions, the Argentine Middle School administration has evaluated certain uniform policies throughout the country and found that use of school uniforms enhanced school safety, improved the learning environment, reduce ethnic and racial tensions, bridged socioeconomic differences between children, promoted good behavior, improved children's self-respect and self-esteem, and produced cost savings for participating families. Schools with greater compliance levels tended to enjoy commensurately better results.

B. Survey of Schools implementing School Uniform Policies:

Source: Department of Education Manual on School Uniforms, School Uniforms: Where They are and Why They Work, February 29, 1996.

(1) Long Beach, California

Type: Uniforms are mandatory in all elementary and middle schools. Each school in the district determines the uniform its students will wear.

Opt-out: Yes, with parental consent

Size of program: 58,500 elementary and middle school students

Implementation date: 1994

Results: District official found that in the year following implementation of the school uniform policy, overall school crime decreased 36 percent, fights decreased 51 percent, sex offenses decreased 34 percent, and vandalism decreased 18 percent. Fewer than one percent of the students have elected to opt out of the uniform policy.

Dick Van Der Laan of the Long Beach Unified School District explained, "We can't attribute the improvement exclusively to school uniforms, but we think it's more than coincidental." According to Long Beach police chief William Ellis, "Schools have fewer reasons to call the police. There's less conflict among students. Students concentrate more on education, not on who's wearing \$100 shoes or gang attire."

(2) Seattle, Washington

Type: Mandatory uniform policy at South Shore Middle School

Opt-out: Yes, with parental consent. Students who opt out must attend another middle school in the district.

Size of program: 900 middle school students

Implementation date: 1995

Results: The principal of South Shore, Dr. John German, reports that "this year the demeanor in the school has improved 98 percent, truancy and tardies are down, and we have not had one reported incident of theft." Dr. German explains that he began the uniform program because his students were "draggin', saggin' and laggin'. I need to keep them on an academic focus. My kids were really into what others were wearing. Only five students have elected to attend another public school."

(3) Richmond, Virginia

Type: Voluntary uniform policy at Maymont Elementary School for the Arts and Humanities

Opt-out: Uniforms are voluntary.

Size of program: 262 elementary school students

Implementation date: 1994

Results: Maymont principal Sylvia Richardson identifies many benefits of the uniform program, including improved behavior, an increase in attendance rates and higher student achievement.

(4) Memphis, Tennessee

Type: Voluntary uniform policy at Douglas Elementary School

Opt-out: Uniforms are voluntary.

Size of program: 532 elementary school students.

Implementation date: 1993

Results: According to Guidance Counselor Sharon Carter, "The tone of the school is different. There's not the competitiveness, especially in grades 4, 5, and 6, about who's wearing what. "Ninety percent of the students have elected to wear uniforms on school uniform days, Monday through Thursday. Fridays are "casual" days during which none of the students wear uniforms.

C. Statement of Policy.

Argentine Middle School requires full compliance with the mandatory uniform policy.

D. Commencement of Uniform Policy.

The mandatory uniform policy shall be effective in August of the 1999-2000 school year.

E. Description of Uniform.

1. Boys: khaki pants fitting snug at the waist with a plain white or black polo shirt tucked in the khaki pants or shorts. Khaki shorts (to the knee) fitting snug at the waist may be worn in the months of August, September, April, May and June only. White or black plain polo shirt may be short or long sleeved. A black or white underwear t-shirt, turtleneck or sweater may be worn by the student. Boys may wear wrist watch and/or finger rings. No other jewelry may be displayed.

"I just wish I'd have thought about this 16 years ago when I started out (as a teacher)."

Argentine Middle School Principal John Rios

Uniformity at Argentine



PEGGY RAB/ Special to The Star

The new dress code at Argentine Middle School has been praised by most students and parents. Some Argentine students wearing acceptable clothes gathered Wednesday before the start of the day's classes.

Middle school's strict dress code draws rave reviews

By ALLISON ARMSTRONG
Special to The Star

The start of class at Argentine Middle School was the same as at other area schools: Kids were anxious, notebooks were new and expectations were high.

But dramatic changes in the dress code have added to the expectations. The school at 2123 Ruby Ave. is the first school in the Kansas City, Kan., School

District to require students to wear uniforms.

Second-year principal John Rios said that while uniforms should not be viewed as the solution to school-related problems, they are a step toward a safe and effective learning environment.

"We would like to see a rebirth in the trust of public education," Rios said Tuesday, the second day of school. "Sagging clothing, gang-related colors

and inappropriate attire all hinder the education process. If we can eliminate the distractions and level the playing field, then we can begin to concentrate on the real issue -- educating the children."

At Argentine, boys and girls are required to wear white or black polo-style shirts. Boys must wear khaki trousers;

See ARGENTINE, Page 8

ARGENTINE: New dress code is getting support

Continued from Page 1

girls must wear either khaki skirts or trousers. Students may wear above-the-knee khaki shorts in warm weather. Pants must fit snugly at the waist and may not be baggy. "Cargo-style" pants with leg pockets are prohibited.

Rios said Tuesday he was delighted with the response to the uniforms and predicted other schools in the district would follow suit. He estimated that 99 percent of Argentine's students were wearing uniforms and predicted that the others soon would fall into line.

"I just wish I'd have thought about this 16 years ago when I started out (as a teacher)," he said...

"I really think students like structure. They don't say the do, but once they've got it, they do."

School uniforms first were discussed at Argentine last October. Parents were surveyed, and Rios said more than 86 percent of those who responded favored some type



SEVENTH GRADERS
Seventh-graders (from left) Jonathan Reed, Aaron Buchanan, Mark Brown and Ceterra Davis lined up for lunch Monday during the first day of class at Argentine Middle School. Principal John Rios said that 99 percent of the students followed the school's new uniform policy.

of uniform. Based on the survey, administrators studied schools nationwide that had implemented school-uniform policies.

"Some of my friends are not crazy about the uniforms. But they will get used to it."

Argentine seventh-grader
Xavier Loya

"Some of my friends are not crazy about the uniforms," Loya said. "But they will get used to it."

Eighth-grader Antonio Smith said that his older siblings thought the uniforms were a good idea.

"My brother told me he would have liked this when he was younger," Smith said. "It makes people feel like they fit in better."

Teachers and administrators are also encouraged — but not required — to wear the uniforms.

"We are a team at this school, and when the students see the staff in a similar outfit, it shows that the staff member values the importance of this change," Rios said.

Rios also said the administration has tried to use the uniform policy as an opportunity to boost the local economy, encouraging families to buy at Wyandotte County stores.

"We have promoted the idea of shopping for the uniforms at Wyandotte County locations, such as Montgomery Ward and Kmart," Rios said.

"Mickey's Surplus called us and said they would like to start carrying the items we need... With the proximity of that store (26th Street and Strong Avenue), I'm sure it has made a difference for a lot of families."

Rios said the Argentine Activities Association, El Centro Inc. and Proctor and Gamble donated more than \$6,000 to give vouchers for uniforms to those needing financial assistance.

"This has turned out to be a community effort, and we are touched by their support," he said.

"One of the things we noticed was that schools that changed to uniforms had never changed back," Rios said. "It seemed that once they chose them, they were overwhelmingly pleased with the results."

The school board approved the dress code last May.

Rios said most parents have been supportive of the uniform policy.

"Once they understand that this fosters a learning environment, they have no problem buying into it," he said. "And, parents have indicated that school safety is a concern, so with uniforms we can automatically spot someone who does not belong at this school."

Assistant Principal Lili Englebrick said that the school is prepared to assist students who have problems with their outfits.

"If a student's pants seem to be too baggy, we provide belts and suspenders so that they can still meet the dress requirements," she said.

Argentine seventh-grader Xavier Loya said he liked the uniforms because it's easier to get dressed when the options are so limited.

Principal John Rios Pleased With Students And Staff

By Peggy DeSeure

John Rios, Principal of Argentine Middle School was greeted with a nice surprise the first day of school. Not only were the students of the school in uniform, but the majority of faculty and staff showed up for work in uniform as well.

Mr. Rios said, "It is totally optional for teachers to wear the uniforms. I was pleased to see so many of our staff wearing the Khaki's."

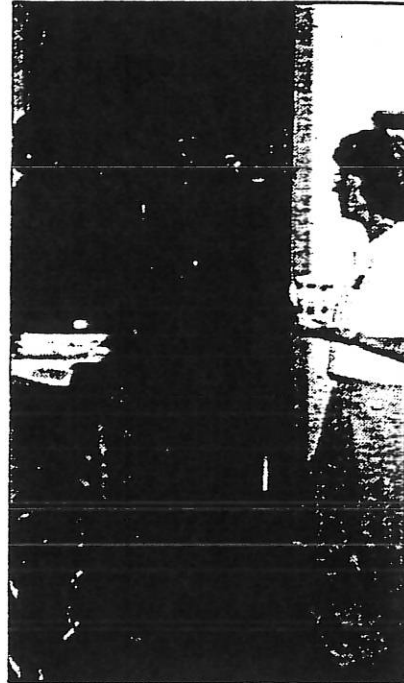
Argentine Middle School definitely displayed a professional atmosphere in the halls and classrooms. The unusual quiet may have been just first day jitters of a typical middle school, but it is likely the student population in uniform also contributed to the working climate one could observe on Monday.

One staff member said, "The rest of the middle schools are going to see this and will want to do the same thing. It is so much easier for all of us."

Mickey's Surplus, located in Argentine, is also on board with the school as they have provided the Khaki pants and white shirts. Mickey's will also honor the vouchers from the school's uniform scholarship program.

Of the total student population about 95% were dressed in uniforms the first day.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Rios...

From page 1

"If the students are not in uniform," said Mr. Rios, "A letter will go home stating the problem. We will then determine what is needed, and figure out a way for that student to obtain a uniform to wear to school."

The students and staff seemed proud as several television stations were on hand to spotlight their student body for boldly breaking uncharted ground in the KCK area.

"This is a great first step to improve the climate of education in Kansas City, Kansas."



Uniforms A Big Hit With Students

By Chelsea House
Argentine Middle School



Argentine Middle School's new uniform policy is now in full action. Boys

School started at 7:50. Kids hurried into the lunch room before being dismissed to their homerooms to begin the day.

and Girls dressed in tan Khaki pants, shorts or skirts with white or black shirts tucked in at the waist, were waiting to go to the first class of the day.

When the signal came to go to class, all of us in tan took off.

During the course of the day, I did notice a few kids did not have uniforms yet. And as the day went by, I heard many different comments about the uniforms.

One student said, "I think the uniforms are a great thing, because

you don't have to decide what to wear the next day."

I heard one boy say he just did not want to tuck in his shirt. But other than that he didn't care.

Most of the comments were positive. I was stunned by how little of the comments were bad. And so that the kids didn't feel the teachers could just wear whatever they wanted, some of the teachers are going to wear the uniforms too.,

The first day with uniforms was good after all!

USD 500 students head back to school, mourn loss of summer

Argentine dress code sees 95 percent compliance

By **JOHN CARRAS**
of the Kansan

How fast summer goes by when you're having fun! Yes, the summer break is over and on Monday it was back-to-school time for the 20,000 students in the Kansas City, Kan., School District.

School buses were out in force making their rounds while many other kids walked to school.

In the school district, about 10,253 elementary students returned to school today, as well as 10,083 middle and high school students. The district has 31 elementary schools, eight middle schools and five high schools as school district officials scurried around to ensure a smooth opening day.

Students in the Turner School District start school on Thursday and students in the Piper School District returned to classes last week.

The atmosphere at Mark Twain Elementary School, 2300 Minnesota Ave., on Monday appeared to be the typical situation on the first day back at school after a summer sojourn. Students were greeted with a big banner on the wall exclaiming, "Best Students, Best Teachers" (See SCHOOL, page 8)



BRAD ZWEERINK / of the Kansan

Students at Argentine Middle School reported to their first day of school Monday wearing new uniforms as part of a pilot project authorized by the Kansas City Kansas Board of Education.

2-21

Tuesday, Aug. 24, 1999

KANSAS CITY KANSAN

LOCAL

School

(Continued from page 1)

er's Best School." Mrs. Karen Lindquist, first grade teacher, looked around at the kids in the hallway and said, "I haven't seen any tears. We have a lot of cheery looking faces. That's encouraging."

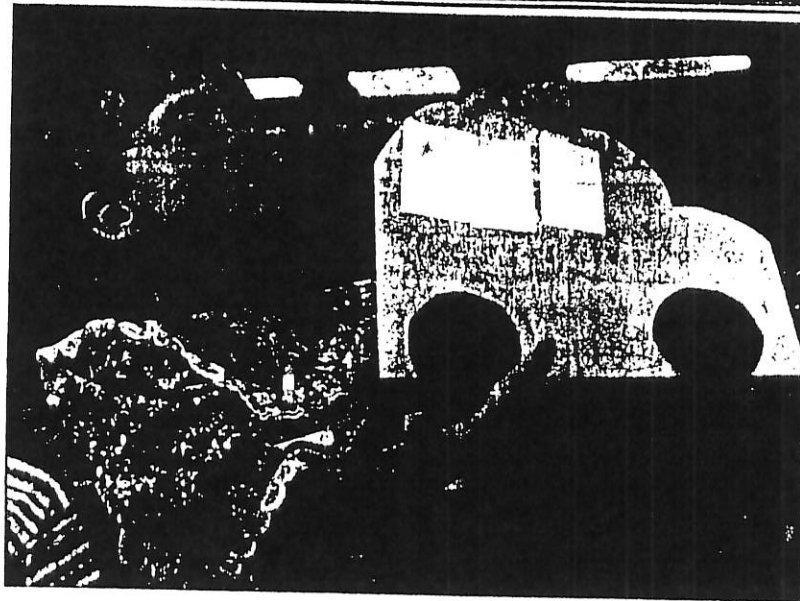
First grade student Brandon Parsons said he was glad to be back at school. "Why?" "So I can learn," he said.

First grader Ariel Young was asked what's the best thing about school? "When it's time to play," she said. That caused first grade teacher Diane Keeney to remark, "We play and learn both, but, yes, we do get some playtime in."

Tony Moore, a fifth grader at Mark Twain, was asked what is the best thing about being back at school? "I can see my friends again," said Tony. But he added that the summer break was "too long." Tony's favorite subject is mathematics.

Carroll Macke, school district public information officer, said it appeared to be a pretty normal first day of school Monday. "I think we got off to a good start," said Macke, who visited two schools on opening day -- Frank Rushton Elementary and Coronado Middle School.

There are some new security measures instituted for this school year. For instance, all high school students must wear ID badges at school. All teachers district wide



BRAD ZWEERINK / of the Kansasian

Samantha Noland, 5, a kindergartner at Mark Twain Elementary School, shows off the work she has done on her first school project during the first day of school Monday morning.

and all school district employees will wear badges while at work.

Also, the school district is now divided into three zones. And there is one campus police officer assigned to patrol each zone. The school district and the district attorney's office has a cooperative program to decrease truancy. Macke said the zone system should allow for better coordination if there are problems at a school.

There are two campus police officers assigned to each high

school and one officer assigned to each middle school.

Despite recent sensational school massacres, "nationwide, schools are the safest place to be," said Macke. However, as a precaution, the school district has ordered

metal detectors. The detectors are expected to be installed at the high schools and middle schools sometime this fall.

A new twist this year is that students at Argentine Middle School are wearing uniforms to school. It is a pilot project authorized by the school board. Most parents of students in the school were for requiring uniforms and thus the experiment was instituted. On Monday Argentine Middle School principal John Rios said he liked what he saw. "When I see all these young people in these uniforms it makes a difference in the atmosphere, even on the first day," said Rios. The uniforms could be akin to business suits, he said, as the students come to school for a serious purpose -- to learn. "Even on the first day the uniforms have had a positive effect on the students and the school," said Rios.

About 15 students who attended parochial schools last year enrolled at Argentine because of the uniform requirement, Rios said. "So, already, the uniforms have become a recruiting tool," he said.

On the uniforms, Sarah Vestal, a sixth grader at Argentine, said, "I like them because they look OK but I'd rather wear my regular clothes." Sarah said the students had all summer to get used to the

idea that they would be wearing uniforms to school, so it's no big deal to most kids, she said. Families had to buy the uniforms on their own. The uniforms consist of tan khaki pants or shorts for boys and girls. Or the girls can wear a tan khaki skirt if they want. The boys and girls can wear a black or white polo style shirt. The vast majority of Argentine kids were wearing the white shirts on Monday. There is no requirement on shoes.

About 95 percent of the students showed up in their uniforms on Monday at Argentine. Rios said the parents of kids not in uniform will be reminded of the new requirement. By end's week he expects all the students to be in uniform.

About 30 lower income families received financial assistance in buying uniforms. The money came from the Argentine Activities Association, Procter & Gamble and El Centro. Depending on what store the uniforms are purchased at, the shirts cost from \$8 to \$10 apiece, and the pants and skirts run about \$10 to 20 apiece.

If the uniform experiment is deemed successful at Argentine, it may spread to other schools. As Macke put it, "I wouldn't be surprised to see other schools require uniforms too."

JOHN RIOS,
Argentine Middle principal:
"When I see all these young people in these uniforms, it makes a difference in the atmosphere, even on the first day."

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KANSAS
ASSOCIATION



OF
SCHOOL
BOARDS

1420 SW Arrowhead Road • Topeka, Kansas 66604-4024
785-273-3600

TO: Senate Committee on Education
FROM: Mark Tallman, Assistant Executive Director for Advocacy
DATE: January 11, 2000

RE: **Testimony on S.B. 368 – Required adoption of dress code policies**

Madam Chairman, Members of the Committee:

Happy New Year, welcome back and thank you for the opportunity to appear today and offer comments on S.B. 368.

KASB has not adopted a specific position on school uniforms; therefore, our position is based on general policies adopted by our Delegate Assembly. We would oppose S.B. 368 in its current form for two reasons. First, we believe that student dress codes are the kind of policy that should be determined by local school boards based on community values and interests, not by the State Legislature. Second, not only would this bill represent a new mandate; subsection (d) on page 2 would recreate a significant new *unfunded* mandate by requiring school boards to provide school uniforms to pupils who are economically disadvantaged. Furthermore, the impact of this mandate would fall disproportionately on those districts that have a higher proportion of students in poverty.

I would note, however, that there is growing interest on the part of school districts in looking at uniform and dress policies for the reasons stated in section 1 (a) of the bill. KASB would support assistance from the legislature in helping boards implement such policies if they choose. This could be done by (1) making the language in S.B. 368 permissive and (2) providing financial assistance for districts that provide uniforms to low income students.

Thank you for your consideration.

Senate Education
1-11-2000
Attachment 2

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UNITED SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Kansas Association of
Elementary
School Principals
(KAESP)

Kansas Association of
Middle School
Administrators
(KAMSA)

Kansas Association of
School Administrators
(KASA)

Kansas Association of
School Business
Officials
(KASBO)

Kansas Association for
Supervision and
Curriculum Development
(KASCD)

Kansas Association of
Special Education
Administrators
(KASEA)

Kansas Association of
Secondary School
Principals
(KASSP)

Kansas Council of
Vocational
Administrators
(KCVA)

Kansas School
Public Relations
Association
(KanSPRA)

SB 368: Adoption of Dress Code Policies by Boards of Education

Testimony presented before the Senate Education Committee

by
Brilla Highfill Scott, Executive Director
United School Administrators of Kansas

January 11, 2000

Madam Chair and Members of the Senate Education
Committee:

United School Administrators (USA) of Kansas is the “umbrella” association for nine member administrator organizations across the state. Our association represents approximately 1400 school administrators.

USA is supportive of an effective, orderly and disciplined school building environment. However, our membership feels that a dress code policy requiring all pupils enrolled in the district to wear uniforms is a local district decision and should not be a state mandate.

There are some Kansas school districts that have successfully implemented a school uniform requirement. These pilot programs have been effective, largely due to the planning that was done by administrators and teachers and, most importantly, the involvement of parents.

We must have schools in Kansas that are safe. Local boards of education, administrators, teachers and parents should determine what safety precautions are necessary in their communities.

Senate Education
1-11-2000
Attachment 3