



Classroom 2007 NSBA School Uniform Survey

July 25, 2007

Summary:

For the third consecutive year, Classroom School Uniforms emailed 6054 National School Board Association members who attended the 67th Annual National School Board Association Conference in San Francisco on April 14-17, 2007, requesting their input on school uniforms and dress code policies. Overall, 3% opened the email and 103 members participated in this year's survey, down from the 294 members who participated in last year's survey.

While the participation rate was lower than expected, Classroom wanted to pass this information to you and your sister boards as we re-evaluate our survey for next year. As an adjunct member of the education community, we believe in the importance of providing the most up to date information on school uniforms, and in helping school boards determine their benefits. Classroom's goal is to provide real time information to schools as they discuss implementing a uniform program.

Along with the key results below, we have attached the data from the actual survey for your review. As we re-evaluate this survey for next year, we will be taking all feedback into consideration.

We thank all who participated for their time!

Key Results:

- Compared to the Classroom 2006 NSBA School Uniform Survey, more schools are reporting school uniforms in their districts than last year. 41% of the respondents stated that they have a uniform or dress code policy, up from 34% last year. 32% stated they are in discussions about implementing such a program.
- Of responding districts with dress code or uniform policies, there continues to be more mandatory uniform policies than voluntary ones, while more districts are implementing district-wide school uniform programs.
- 74% of those surveyed have a mandatory uniform program, 26% reported using a voluntary program. 58% of respondents stated their district's program is campus choice, while 42% stated their program was district wide. 59% of those surveyed felt their program was successful with 20% not knowing.
- 80% of respondents have been National School Board Association members for more than a year, showing an understanding of the community and the issues facing their districts.
- Respondents from Arizona, Indiana, Ohio, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Texas participated in the survey more than other states. This is of particular interest as it shows the uniform programs spreading throughout the nation. In the past, uniform programs were mainly discussed in the South, Midwest and parts of the West Coast.
- 89% of the responding NSBA membership agreed that what a student wears to school is an important issue, compared to 92% last year.
- When schools without uniform programs or in discussions about implementing a program were asked why, 53% stated that parents would object and another 38% stated that their district did not have the problems school uniforms would address. When asked if they would consider a policy if there were parental interest, 92% stated yes.
- 58% of responding NSBA members stated their program was campus choice rather than district-wide. When asked which students were in uniform, 61% had elementary school students in uniforms, 50% had middle school students in uniforms and 21% had high school students in school uniforms.
- 59% of responding school districts in uniforms have been using uniforms for more than five years, 33% have had uniforms for two to five years and 7% of those surveyed had a uniform program for one year or less.
- When responding NSBA members with a uniform or dress code program were asked what problems their school district was experiencing: discipline (74%), parent involvement (67%), bullying (62%), reading at grade level (59%) and inappropriate clothing (56%) were cited as the top five problems.
- When responding NSBA members without a uniform or dress code program were asked what problems their school district was experiencing: inappropriate clothing (76%), bullying (58%), parent involvement (50%), discipline (45%) and economic class division (45%) were cited as the top five problems.
- The reduction of peer pressure (95%), disciplinary issues (92%), gang affiliation (85%) and positive effect in the classroom (77%) are some of the benefits NSBA members cited they are looking for when using school uniforms.
- Many districts are still taking their time to discuss if a uniform program is the right choice for their district and then implement such a program: 22% spent six months

- discussing the issue, while 51% spent between 1 to 2 years working on the topic. 27% spent over three years discussing and implementing their uniform program.
- 49% of respondents stated it took at least six months educating the community on their program. 27% of the respondents stated it took about a year.
 - Responding NSBA members also stated that uniforms have helped improve attendance in their schools (36%), created a positive effect in the classroom (69%) and improved their school's self image (76%). 69% stated they experience a decline in discipline referrals with a school uniform program and 30% experienced a decline in gang activity or affiliation. 43% reported an improvement in their AYP scores by at least 1-10 points since implementing a dress code or uniform policy.
 - 24% of those surveyed saw improved parent participation, while 60% of those surveyed did not know if parent participation improved with uniforms.
 - NSBA members would first contact other schools, the NSBA or look on the Internet for information on ways to investigate and implement a new school uniform program.
 - Uniforms are more cost effective compared to "general" apparel, according to 63% of those surveyed, but schools are still having fundraisers, donations and uniform closets for those in need as 70% of school districts provide uniforms for economically challenged families. When considering a school uniform, price (63%) and local retailer availability (50%) were cited as the most important factors.

Some of the questions, NSBA members felt we should have asked were:

- How can we bring this issue up as a board member?
 - *Many school districts discuss this issue as part of a comprehensive strategy regarding focusing students back on academics or include it in their school safety discussions. Some school districts will form a committee consisting of school board members, parents and administrators. The committee then conducts research and speaks with other school districts about the pros and cons of their program. Classroom has developed an information packet (includes benefits, articles, faq's, examples of other uniform programs) that has been helpful to schools as they begin discussions on a possible uniform or dress code program. If you need contacts at other school districts, we can of course be of assistance there as well.*
- We do have a dress code policy in all schools, but it does not include uniforms. Questions were not worded for us.
 - *Many school districts use the term dress code and school uniforms policy as interchangeable terms and use our products as well. As we evaluate our survey for next year, we will look at dress code policies as a separate entity and ask questions accordingly.*
- Does every district also do surveys to see how your community feels about uniforms? If so, what role does the board play in decision-making?
 - *Most school districts do survey the community in the form of meetings, phone surveys, and paper surveys as a method of learning about other programs and determining the type of policy wanted (voluntary or mandatory), schools involved (specific schools or entire district). A school board decision-making role is to decide if the district should have a policy and if so, what type of policy.*
- When uniforms are used can various colors and styles be available while still having a uniform appearance
 - *Yes, school uniforms can contain more than one color and in fact many schools often an additional color to showcase the school's colors. Additional options in colors and styling do not hurt a school's uniform program.*
- What constitutes a uniform in your district?
 - *Tops and bottoms of a certain color group?*

- Blue bottoms and white tops
- Solid colored clothing items
- Tan pants and a solid color top?
- Plaid skirts and jumpers with solids
- None of the above
- Some combination of the above
- *Great question. We will include this question in our survey next year and as we discuss uniform programs with schools already in uniforms.*
- Would like information on "partial uniform" policies.
 - *Some schools mandate a polo shirt with any bottom that fits the child correctly at the waist, other schools like students to wear a collared shirt and tailored pant. Classroom's information packet may be able to help your district as you discuss full or partial uniform programs. If you need additional information, please feel free to contact us. Our team of school uniform professionals will be able to assist you.*
- I don't believe that uniforms can be mandated in California. Can they?
 - *Yes. In California, school districts may establish a "a reasonable dress code policy that requires pupils to wear a school wide uniform or prohibits pupils from wearing 'gang-related apparel.'" This policy may be adopted by individual schools as part of their school safety plan. Parents must be informed six months before children shall be required to wear uniforms to schools. Includes requirement of parental opt-out policy, as well as provision that no pupil shall undergo sanctions for not participating in school uniform policy. Students who participate in a "nationally recognized youth organization" with its own uniforms must be allowed to wear their groups' uniforms on "days that the organization has a scheduled meeting." (Cal. Educ Code 35183). Should you need additional information, please let us know.*
- Does it seem that school uniforms are targeted more towards urban schools? We do a uniform test have to start with mostly urban schools?
 - *Ten years ago, school uniforms were used in schools located in urban settings. Today, that is not the case. Many schools in both rural and suburban areas are using school uniform programs in their school. As you review the survey mentioned above, you will see more schools board members from rural areas of the country participated in this year's survey.*
- How often is policy revised?
 - *Schools often revisit the school uniform program at the end of the school year to see what can be perfected for the next year. Including more area retailers to carry year round inventory, adding more schools and educating the parents on the uniform program are often some areas schools look at.*
- Would you do the uniform policy over again, with what you know today? Any downsides to uniforms?
 - *Great question. We will include this question in our survey next year and as we discuss uniform programs with schools already in uniforms.*

Additional Comments from NSBA members:

- As a board member, I personally seem to feel more benefits than the rest of my team.
- I have been trying to convince people that uniforms would help solve a few of our problems with inappropriate clothing, fighting, etc. but I can't seem to get the point across. How can I promote positively promote the concept.
 - *From our experiences working with schools, we suggest speaking with school board members from other areas on their experiences. If you are looking for other school board members to speak with, please let us know. We can connect you.*
- I feel personally it is an excellent idea to make school uniforms mandatory. It cuts down on peer pressure and children poking fun at other children who do not have the latest styles and designer clothes. It saves on time in the morning when children are getting

prepared for school. The children look very studious and in one accord when they all wear their uniforms. It gives off a sense of school pride and uniformity.

- I would really like to learn more--especially how to get the public to think it is a good idea.
- I wore a uniform in Catholic School and in HS, HATED it.
- Your preaching to the choir on school uniforms.
- Our District is a K - 8 District. We had some problems getting our Middle school to conform, but finally took a stand at the administrative level, and found that parents who once balked at their kids having to wear a uniform suddenly began to comply and the kids seemed to be more cooperative as well. We do have several choices of colors and styles of uniforms and we are very happy with the results.
- Tried implementing schools uniforms on a trial basis in one of our middle schools ten years ago with no success.
- Our district has used Standardized shirts as our uniform of choice at middle school and high school. We have found this to be extremely helpful with equalizing the classroom economic division and discipline. We feel that it has work very well for our schools.
- I think it is the worst plan. I have received threats over the phone, on the computer and letters in the mail; telling me if I don't vote for uniforms they plan to have me removed.
- School uniform policies are constantly revised in order to satisfy parents and students. In such cases, policy is irrelevant.
- The Board just voted to put the high school students in uniform for next year. There will be a meeting at each high school this week. We are not planning to deviate too far from the existing dress code for the high school
- I believe they are not a true deterrent to anything and all the stats are made up or inflated by companies selling uniforms. I am not convinced they solve any issues. I do believe they can cause economic hardships. Kids are still going to want to have regular clothes; the uniforms will just be in excess of those.
- Having children wear school uniforms is the best thing any school districts can have.
- Decisions should be evidence based when possible. There is some evidence for uniforms in challenged school systems. I don't know of any evidence supporting uniforms in affluent suburban districts such as ours.
- We are looking into having it in all schools
- A uniform policy would require an in-depth study with input from all segments of the district. At this time there is little problem with dress policy in our district- but that could change.
- Currently only have uniforms in one school that is a choice school. Another school is in the process of adopting a school uniform policy. Most of the schools in our district have dress codes but not uniforms.
- It's been good for us in St. Paul, and we let schools take the lead if they wish to do so. A number of them have. We haven't yet done it in high school, but are open to it.
- It was a struggle for some parents to accept at first but in the long run it is the best thing to happen. Keep a consistent policy!!!
- In our district only one program has a uniform, the Logos Christian Program, it is the parents' choice, the school board left the decision up to the parents.
- The primary need for uniforms is in high school, not elementary - but political pressure will not permit its implementation at the high school level.
- Are we at the point where we decide what the uniforms are or do the kids decide (as they are now doing)? So far they are doing a reasonably good job.
- Whether they help in some ways or not, I could NEVER support uniforms because for me that involves an issue of personal freedom. As long as dress is decent, I do not believe that the government has any business-telling parents how to dress their own

children. Your personal behavior might also be improved in certain habits; but I have no business telling you to change unless it DIRECTLY impacts my life. Uniforms are not critical enough to sacrifice individual freedom.

About this Survey:

Classroom School Uniforms conducted this survey. If you would like additional information about this survey or Classroom School Uniforms, please feel free to contact Andy Beattie (818) 671-2143 or at abeattie@strategicpartners.net.