

More school boards implementing uniforms

By Andy Beattie
General Manager, Classroom School Uniforms & Past President, La Canada (CA) Unified School District

A survey of National School Board Association (NSBA) members indicates more school districts around the country are discussing and implementing school uniform programs. According to the "Classroom NSBA School Uniform Survey," school uniform programs are climbing in the United States with a significant focus in both urban and suburban area schools. School Districts from the Midwest are most interested in school uniforms, followed by the Southeast, Northeast and Southwest.

The greatest benefits for school uniforms are still the reduction of peer

pressure, positive effect on behavior in the classroom and creation of a positive school image. Ninety-three percent of those surveyed stated that what a student wears to school matters. Over 20 percent of NSBA members did have uniforms in their districts but all stated that they have a dress code of some sort in their schools and that uniforms are part of a school's larger strategy to improve educational standards. Ninety-one percent of NSBA members stated they would consider school uniforms if there was community interest.

The rise in school uniform programs reflects more schools are focusing on a holistic approach to improving their Average Yearly Performance (AYP) scores. AYP and the demands of NCLB mandated achievement are as significant as

more familiar reasons such as socio-economic leveling and discipline in deciding to require uniforms.

More districts in uniform have mandatory policies rather than voluntary policies. Over 30 percent stated that their district's uniform policies were mandatory, rather than voluntary. This is significantly important as it shows a shift from urban schools looking for and using uniforms to suburban schools, and from voluntary policies moving to mandatory policies.

The success of a school uniform program strongly correlates to the convenience families experience in the year-round shopping experience. Over 85 percent surveyed agreed that school uniforms, do save parents money with parents spending an average of \$100-\$150

per year. Price, fit, and size availability remains vital for a successful program.

Donations, uni-

Schools in both Urban and Suburban areas are looking at school uniform programs.

form closets and fund-raisers are still used to help those who cannot afford. Over 90 percent of NSBA members stated they do not utilize Title One funds to obtain school uniforms for students eligible for state funding, but over half would like to learn more about how they could. This level of interest reinforces that community involvement remains vital to the success of a uniform program.

more info

To obtain a free copy of the survey findings, contact Classroom School Uniforms at www.classroomuniforms.com or at 888-671-8754.



One size does not fit all

By Andy Beattie
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When schools evaluate school uniform programs, two questions are always asked: what sizes are made and will local retailers carry all of these sizes? If uniform manufacturers and retailers can't accommodate every child, these programs won't be able to achieve the results schools are looking for.



During the past 30 years, obesity rates in the United States have more than doubled for preschool children and adolescents, and more than tripled for children ages six to 11. With over nine million obese children in the United States and the number rising, school uniform manufacturers and retailers are taking note and accommodating families experiencing this epidemic first hand.

"Our students are all shapes and sizes," says Jai Norment, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education for Toledo Public Schools "Our biggest concern was ensuring there were uniforms available for students who are both larger and smaller than their peer classmates. Area retailers and manufacturers were a huge help. They were involved in the process when we started discussing uniforms. That helped a lot."

For years Classroom School Uniforms has offered Plus, Husky, Young Men's and Juniors to accommodate our students, but when we evaluated how retailers in large school districts were buying and selling our products, we were amazed. Younger students wear our larger sizes. Years ago, elementary school children needed sizes ranging from four to 12. Now, sizes range from 4-12 to Young Men's.

Children are bigger and we must have uniforms that are comfortable so these programs can be successful for the school districts.

According to the SIZE USA Survey, the first

national sizing survey using scanners as the principal means of capturing body measurements, Americans are bigger and their body types are changing.

"The study provided some telling results. I have shown several manufacturers measurements of women who say they wear size eight to 10, and they are surprised to see how much larger the actual measurements are to their specs," states Jim Lovejoy, Director of the SizeUSA project for (TC)2. "By evaluating the change in adults, and watching multi pronged efforts by communities to halt the ongoing march of childhood obesity, manufacturers are now better equipped to manufacture goods for larger frames."

For more information on school uniform programs, please contact Classroom School Uniforms at abeattie@strategicpartners.net or at 888-671-8754.

Kids are tough on clothes. Apparently, it's part of the job description.



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5 simple steps to school uniform success

By **Andy Beattie**
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With more schools starting or expanding their school uniform programs, school uniform manufacturers and retailers are inundating parents and educators with offers to help. Whether you are a PTA parent or school board member, these simple steps will ensure that you are on the right track and working with the right uniform partners.

Have a Strategy

A well-defined strategy is the key to success. If you know what your school is looking for, you will be able to know what questions to ask. What will be considered a uniform? Is it color separates or specific items from specific manufacturers? When will the program commence? Where will the uniforms be purchased? Will uniforms be purchased from a local retailer, on the Internet or both? Will the school need a school uniform resource for students who are eligible for government funded assistance or grants?

By understanding your school's uniform goals from the start, you will be able to identify the providers that will work most efficiently with your school.

Understand the different types uniform policies

It is important to understand the type of program the community is looking for and the definition of a school uniform. Consider whether the program

will be voluntary or mandatory, whether it will be a standardized dress policy or a uniform policy, and whether it will originate at a school or district level.

Voluntary uniform policies often originate at individual schools. These policies let parents choose whether and in what circumstances their children will wear school uniforms. Students are usually not reprimanded for not wearing uniforms.

Mandatory uniform policies are adopted by the school district and usually require all students at participating schools to wear specific clothes and colors at all times. In most public schools, these policies have provisions for students (with parental consent) to opt out.

Unlike uniform policies, standardized dress code

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Log onto www.seenmagazine.us and tell us what you think about school uniforms and standardized dress code programs. Whether you are in uniforms or not, your thoughts are important to us.

policies

call only for general clothing types. For example a standardized dress code might require khaki slacks (with or without pleats), a specific color polo shirt and closed toe shoes (could be sneakers, loafers, lace ups).

Most public schools in the United States define their school uniforms as part of their standardized dress program. They define what students

should wear (i.e.; specific colors without logos that fit correctly) but don't mandate specific stores or brands for purchase.

Understanding the type of program your school wants will make the search easier.

Find the right school uniform manufacturer/retailer for YOUR program.

What type of products and selection is your school looking for? Does the school require specific colors, brands or items? Where will parents obtain the uniforms? Does the school need help supplying uniforms paid for with grants or other state supplied funds?

Be sure the manufacturer/retailer can and will service the entire school, not just the majority of students. Product selection, garment quality, and availability are just a few things to look for. Price is an issue, as some uniform manufacturers cater to private schools and others mostly to public schools. See if the manufacturer uses treated fabrics such as StainSmart by Milliken™ or Teflon

processes, known to prolong the life of a garment. By understanding each

manufacturer/retailer's specific strengths, you will not be asking them to provide unfamiliar products and services.

When choosing a school uniform manufacturer/retailer, be sure to ask if they will stock school uniforms year round. This is important as children can outgrow their uniforms throughout the year, and new students will need uniforms when they start at the school. If a local retailer does not plan

to stock school uniforms throughout the year, look for suppliers to supplement your program online.

Classroom School Uniforms is known for a vast style selection, nationwide availability, wide range of sizes, its StainSmart and stretch merchandise, its affordable pricing and its ability to fit within most school uniform programs.

Customer Service is as important as the uniforms.

Promises made by retailers and manufacturers need to be kept. Check with parent groups, teachers and administrators from other schools about stores and manufacturers they have used for uniforms to learn what the experience has been. If this is a new product for a retailer, be sure to see how the retailer services its existing customers.

Create Successful Partnerships

Be sure to have the school administration and PTA leaders in your community know who the uniform manufacturers and retailers are. By forming a partnership from the start, you will be able to set realistic expectations for all involved.

Some schools allow retailers to set up in-school uniform showcases and school uniform days where uniforms are sold on the premises. Other schools have provided special discount or promotional flyers to students in school.

After school starts, its a good idea to evaluate the program for improvements. Listen to what parents were happy with and what they are still looking for.

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