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## What not to wear: a school's dress code limits clothing styles and colors

 *Current Events*, a Weekly Reader publication, March 28, 2011 



[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

Spring is finally here, but don't expect the students of Washington Middle School in Yakima, Wash., to break out their brightly colored T-shirts and tops. A new dress code has recently gone into effect there. Students must don white, gray, or black polo shirts or dress shirts, with no patterns or symbols other than the school's insignia.

Educators say that the policy will protect students from peer pressure and violence. The school is in an area known for gang activity. If students can't wear gang-related colors, it will make the school safer, officials say. Educators also point out that the required colors symbolize professionalism and success.

Some students think the policy is shady, however. They argue that dress codes force students to conform and lose their individuality. They also maintain that clothing alone cannot affect someone's behavior.

Should students be required to follow dress codes? Current Events student reporters Peter Brosnan and Alexis Brindley each try on a side.

### FREE TO BE ME

Learning how to dress appropriately is an important life skill, and students should be allowed to make their own choices.

Schools can provide clothing guidelines, but they should not dictate exactly what students wear. For example, schools can recommend students avoid clothes that show too much skin or contain offensive expressions. Such guidelines would help maintain a respectful school environment while allowing students to express themselves. Students would still be able to show their unique personalities through their clothing styles. MarkVan Selous, a middle school student from Pennington, N.J., agrees. "It's fun to show our interests through what we wear."

In addition, allowing students to make their own clothing choices will help them become good decision makers. "Students are learning to think independently and need to realize that the right to express yourself comes with responsibility and consequences," explains Lucille Lange, a school administrator from Bogota, N.J. Students should learn that lesson on their own rather than be told exactly what to wear.

Finally, allowing students to choose their own clothing will prepare them for their careers, where they'll have to make decisions about how to dress professionally.

### DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Do you like trying to decide what to wear every morning and wondering whether other people will like it? Wouldn't you rather feel confident about your clothes when walking into the classroom? A dress code is the solution.

Many students feel left out if they don't have trendy clothes. Some students are bullied because what they wear is not in style. With a dress code, students will feel happier and safer because everyone wears the same thing. Morgan Glon, a high school student from South Bend, Ind., agrees. "I think it is good that you don't have to wake up in the morning and worry about what to wear."

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Another benefit to having dress codes is that they require students to wear clothes that are more businesslike. That will help students focus more on academics and less on their social lives. It will also help prepare students for careers.

In addition, some people think that you can't express yourself while following a dress code, but you can. Get creative with your hair! A dress code won't make you sacrifice your style, but it will allow for a safer, more academically focused school.

#### Get Talking

Ask: What kind of attire is appropriate for a school setting? How might clothing affect learning? How might it affect a school's social climate?

#### Notes Behind the News

\* Yakima School District is in a high-poverty area known for gang activity.

Before the dress code was enacted at Washington Middle School, many students wore red or blue, which represent rival gangs in that area. Now students must wear white, gray, or black, which are the school's colors and traditionally more businesslike.

"I think [the dress code] develops a source of pride for the school and reduces the outside influences that get in the way of instruction," Principal Dave Chaplin told the Yakima Herald-Republic.

\* Supporters of the dress code say that it decreases the incidences of theft of expensive clothing and levels the socioeconomic playing field.

\* Not everyone is on board with the new policy, however. Some students complain that it takes away their freedom of expression.

\* In addition, some parents are upset that the dress code means they need to spend money on the required clothing. Parents can purchase clothing in the required colors through the school. Polo shirts are available for \$7 each, and hooded sweatshirts are available for \$12 each. Students may also borrow shirts from the school if they arrive unprepared.

\* According to the Education Commission of the States, at least 21 states have authorized some public schools to require uniforms.

#### Doing More

Have students research their school's clothing guidelines. What is permitted and what isn't? Then have students write persuasive essays arguing for a relaxed or a more stringent policy or commending the current policy. Students should provide reasons and examples.

Brosnan, Peter<sup>a</sup>Brindley, Alexis

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## Overview - School Uniforms

# School Uniforms

 *Current Issues, 2010*

In his 1996 State of the Union Address, President Clinton said, "If it means that the school rooms will be more orderly and more disciplined, and that our young people will learn to evaluate themselves by what they are on the inside, instead of what they're wearing on the outside, then our public schools should be able to require their students to wear uniforms." Although originally only popular in private schools, school uniforms have been the topic of much debate in homes, schools, and courts since the first public schools began requiring that students wear uniforms in the 1980s. Since that time more and more schools, public and private, are opting for uniforms. In fact, 15.5 percent of public schools required uniforms in the 2007–2008 school year, according to the Department of Education, reflecting an increase of about 6 percent from a decade earlier.

## Dress Codes Versus Uniforms

Dress codes generally differ from school uniforms in that they set rules about what cannot be worn but do not specify what must be worn. For example, a dress code may require that skirts and shorts be a certain length or may ban printed or potentially offensive T-shirts, certain types of jewelry, large or baggy clothes, clothes with holes, visible undergarments, strapless tops, or other types of clothing that the school administrators deem inappropriate or distracting. Uniform policies are generally more restrictive and require students wear a particular color and style of clothing—sometimes even dictating where the clothing must be purchased. In some schools, however, dress codes entail so many rules that they are nearly as restrictive as uniform policies and may require only solid colors or polo-style shirts. Both dress codes and uniform requirements have been contested in court. Some have even landed in the U.S. Supreme Court.

## Court Cases

Generally, though not always, the courts rule in favor of a student's right to free speech in cases where students have violated dress codes. However, the courts have supported uniform requirements. This makes it easier for administrators to enforce uniform policies than more complicated dress code policies. For example, in a March 2007 case, a school argued that an anti-gay shirt was hateful and inflammatory, but the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the child citing the right to free speech. That following June the Supreme Court upheld a lower court's decision allowing a student to wear an anti-President Bush shirt with images of drugs and alcohol that violated the school's dress code prohibiting images of drugs or alcohol on clothing. In another June 2007 case, however, the Supreme Court clarified its position when it ruled against a student who wore a shirt with the words "Bong Hits 4 Jesus," which the court said advocated drug use.

The courts have not overturned school uniform policies despite numerous student protests. For example, the Clark County School District in Nevada gave individual schools in their district the option to require students to wear khaki pants and solid-color polo shirts. The American Civil Liberties Union challenged the requirement, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco ruled in favor of the schools, stating that uniforms do not violate the First Amendment rights of students.



## Uniforms—Smarter and Safer?

Proponents of uniforms contend that school uniforms make having and enforcing a dress code easier for school administrators. They keep wealthy students from showing off, prevent gang colors from entering the school, contribute to school spirit, and help teachers more quickly identify students on field trips as well as spot outsiders who enter the building. In addition, research also shows that uniforms can improve test scores and reduce behavior problems.

A frequently cited case of academic improvement following a school uniform policy is that of the Long Beach California Unified School District, one of the first districts to require student uniforms in grades K–8 in 1994. Following the new requirement, crime in the K–8 schools dropped by 22 percent, while attendance increased. Further, the district reported higher student test scores in reading and math. Other schools implementing similar policies have had similar results, but critics wonder if the uniforms should really be taking all the credit.

## School Uniforms Ineffective

A study done by David Brunσμα from the University of Missouri and Kerry A. Rockquemore from Notre Dame measured the effects of uniforms on attendance, behavior, substance abuse, and academic achievement and concluded that uniforms did not improve any of these. In their report published in the *The Journal of Education Research* in September/October 1998, the authors contend that uniforms may even have the opposite effect on academic achievement. They state, "Here, contrary to the expected, student uniform use actually decreases, on average, the standardized test score of these tenth graders who wear them due to mandatory school policy." Although these assertions were contested by Ann Bodine in the November/December 2003 issue of *The Journal of Educational Research*, where she argued that the research methods were flawed, their results are often cited by school uniform opponents, and no other formal studies support claims for either side of the debate. Perhaps more importantly, Brunσμα and Rockquemore consider other reasons schools may see a correlation between uniforms and improved test results and other benefits. They state, "What is omitted from the discourse on school uniforms is the possibility that, instead of directly impacting specific outcomes, uniforms work as a catalyst for change and provide a highly visible window of opportunity. It is this window which allows additional programs to be implemented ... Requiring students to wear uniforms is a change which not only effects students, but school faculty and parents. Instituting a mandatory uniform policy is a change which is immediate, highly visible, and shifts the environmental landscape of any particular school." Whether or not school uniforms directly improve attendance, behavior, and grades is still a matter of debate.

## Uniform Costs

Although proponents say that uniforms should make clothing less expensive for parents, that is not always the case. Uniforms prevent parents from shopping at resale shops and sending their children to school in clothing handed down from friends and relatives. Some parents also argue that uniforms should not be mandated in public schools, which are supposed to be free. To address this issue, President Bush instituted tax breaks for school supply purchases. Meanwhile, some states offer additional deductions to cover the costs of school supplies, and a few districts give vouchers for uniforms to low-income families. However, these benefits rarely apply to private schools and are sometimes not sufficient to cover the costs of public school uniforms.

Further, some schools, particularly private schools, require children to wear pricy uniforms that can only be purchased through the school or at specialty shops. A writer at *The Economist* relayed a story on September



26, 2009, from one of his coworkers whose child's school required that students wear a wool suit only available through the school outfitters. The child's father argued with the school throughout the summer saying, "I don't object to his being nicer and more intelligent than I am ... But I draw the line at his being more expensively dressed." The article continues to point out that expensive uniforms not only cost a lot upfront, but some schools change the uniform from year to year, preventing parents from handing clothing down to younger siblings or other students. Also, requiring that the uniforms come from specific suppliers means parents cannot use secondhand or discount stores. Many assume that parents who are paying the high price of tuition can also afford to pay for the expensive uniforms, but that is not always the case. Parents frequently make many financial sacrifices to pay the tuition at a school they feel will better serve their children than their local public schools. These parents cannot afford expensive uniforms in addition to the already high price of tuition.

## Students Arguments Against Uniforms

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Many students simply do not like wearing uniforms. They complain that uniforms take away their individuality, promote conformity, or are unflattering or uncomfortable. Some students have gone as far as staging protests against wearing uniforms. At the Watson Chapel School District in Arkansas, students wore black armbands to protest a uniform policy that began in 2006 for middle and high school students. When the students were disciplined for the armbands, the case went to court. The court ruled in favor of allowing the students to protest with armbands but did not require the school to change its stance on uniforms.

## School Uniforms and Sweatshops

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Requiring students to wear uniforms also does not allow parents to make clothing decisions that they view as more conscientious, such as resale, organic cotton, or locally produced clothing. Some school uniforms have been tied to sweatshop conditions at the factories where the uniforms are made. SweatFree Communities, an anti-sweatshop group in Maine, accused Wal-Mart of buying school uniforms made under sweatshop conditions from the JMS Garments Factory in Bangladesh, which were sold under the Faded Glory brand name.

Annalisa Barbieri complains in a *New Statesman* article, "Today, trying to find a school uniform that contains cotton and wool has got even harder. Whereas in the outside world we covet natural fibers, we can't be trusted with them where children's school dress is concerned. Synthetic school trousers, for example, outsell cottons by 20:1." She continues by saying that the fabrics are particularly bad for children with some skin conditions, such as eczema, and are so thin that they do not keep children warm in the winter.

## Growing Popularity of Uniforms

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While debates continue as to whether or not uniforms make schools safer and students smarter or if they are fair to require of parents and students, one thing remains clear—school uniforms will not likely be going away any time soon. The courts have supported their use, presidents have spoken out in support of school uniforms, and uniform policies are increasing in popularity in schools around the country.

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## The Return of School Uniforms

 School Violence, 2000 

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Excerpted from "Uniforms Get Credit for Decrease in Discipline Problem," by Jessica Portner, *Teacher Magazine*, vol. 15, no. 21, February 14, 1996. Reprinted with permission from *Teacher Magazine*.

In the following selection, Jessica Portner describes the mandatory-uniform policy adopted by the Long Beach, California, school district in 1994. Since the policy went into effect, Portner notes, the number of assaults, fights, and suspensions in the school district has dropped dramatically. Uniforms reduce undesirable behavior because they put students in the right frame of mind to learn, writes Portner. Uniforms also make intruders easier to identify and reduce student violence associated with the wearing of gang colors, she points out. Though some students and parents have complained of the added expense and the monotony of the uniform policy, Portner explains that most have embraced school uniforms as a positive measure to increase school safety. She also reports that other school districts across the United States are implementing or considering similar policies. Portner is an assistant editor for *Teacher Magazine*.

Linda Moore has been feeling especially proud lately.

And she has President Clinton to thank.

In his State of the Union Address in 1996, Mr. Clinton praised student uniforms as a way to promote safety and discipline in public schools. Ms. Moore, the principal of Will Rogers Middle School, felt a particular satisfaction in the endorsement.

"Everybody is looking for answers, and here is a district that is doing something that is working," she said. Since 1994, the 83,000-student Long Beach system has required its elementary and middle school students to dress in uniform fashion. It was the first public school district in the nation to do so.

Mr. Clinton may have had this Southern California school system in mind when, in his speech, he challenged public schools to mandate uniforms "if it meant that teenagers [would] stop killing each other over designer jackets."

Since the mandatory-uniform policy was launched in 56 elementary and 14 middle schools here in fall 1994, violence and discipline problems have decreased dramatically, a survey by the district shows.

From the year before uniforms were required, 1993-94, to 1995, assault and battery cases in grades K-8 have dropped 34 percent. Physical fights between students have dropped by 51 percent, and there were 32 percent fewer suspensions.

Though each school in the district can choose its own uniform, most Long Beach students are required to wear black or blue pants, skirts, or shorts with white shirts. Nearly 60,000 K-8 students are affected by the policy.

Parents have the option of excusing their children from the requirement. But, so far, only 500 parents have filled out petitions to exempt their children, according to Dick Van DerLaan, a spokesman for the district.

In addition to Long Beach, a few other districts in California and across the country are testing the benefits of requiring students to come to school in color-specific, and sometimes style-specific, clothing.

The Oakland, California, schools began a similar uniform policy in September 1995. And a small number of other districts—including Dade County, Florida; Seattle; and Charleston, South Carolina—allow schools to decide for themselves whether to require uniforms.

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But Long Beach appears to be the first school system to have documented measurable success in improving student behavior.

Since students at Rogers Middle School started wearing black bottoms, white tops, and red jackets or sweaters, fights have declined by 40 percent, and academic performance has improved, school officials said.

Uniforms are an effective method of reducing unwanted behavior, she said, because the more formal clothing puts students in the right mind-set to learn.

## Dressing for Success

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"It's about dressing for success," said Ms. Moore, who said she wears the school uniform as a gesture of solidarity with her students. She has a selection of bright red blazers in her home closet.

Not one parent at Rogers Middle School has opted out of the plan in 1996, and a quick look around campus at the unbroken stream of red, white, and black shows that students are largely compliant. But there are some exceptions.

In February 1996, as Ms. Moore darted down the hall between classes, the former basketball coach was scanning the crowds.

"Tuck in that shirt," she called out to one disheveled teenager who was slouching against a locker. She looked disparagingly at another whose sweatshirt was clearly purple, not red.

In addition to choosing uniform colors, each of the district's schools is allowed to choose the fabric and style of dress. One elementary school requires its pupils to wear ties, and a few others prefer plaid, but most stick with blue or black and white.

"This isn't a private, prep school, with a coat-of-arms and saddle shoes look," Mr. Van DerLaan said. "It's a little more California casual."

## Generation Gap

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A catalyst for adopting uniforms in Long Beach was parents' fears over students being attacked for inadvertently wearing a wrong color scarf or hat that might provoke rivalry among local gangs.

The district adopted a dress code more than a decade ago that prohibits gang-related attire, as well as caps, bandanas, baggy pants, and electronic pagers. But many felt the district had to take a more drastic approach.

When Judy Jacobs had two children attending Rogers Middle School, she was among the organizers of the effort to bring uniforms to that school. She now has a child in a district elementary school and has remained enthusiastic about uniforms. "There are so few boundaries for kids these days, with the drug use and violence, so if we can give them some limits, that's good," she said.

The uniformity tends to bolster safety because it makes it easier to spot people who may not belong on campus, school leaders say.

Many who teach in areas where gangs are prevalent argue that students are safer walking to school when dressed in uniform.

"If gang members see one of our students in uniform, they'll leave them alone," as if they belong to a different clique, said Wilma Ferguson, who has been a gym teacher at Franklin Middle School here for 14 years.

But a large portion of the district's students aren't as upbeat as parents and teachers appear to be. And the older they get, the less they seem to like it—which may not bode well for talk in the district of expanding the uniform requirement to high schools.

"It's like we're all in jail," said Hector Gonzalez, a 7th grader at Rogers.

"It's totally bogus," said Gan Luong, an 8th grader at Franklin. "If you wear decent clothes, you shouldn't have to wear uniforms."



Alicia Nunez, also an 8th grader at Franklin, complained that the regimented attire stifles her creativity. "You come to school to get your education, not for them to tell you how to dress," the 14-year-old said as she strode across campus wearing a chocolate-brown T-shirt and jeans.

## Legal Challenge

The U.S. Supreme Court hasn't directly addressed the question of whether public schools can impose dress requirements on their students. Lower courts, however, have generally upheld school dress codes.

In the fall of 1995, in one of the first legal tests of a mandatory-uniform policy, an Arizona state judge upheld a Phoenix middle school's policy, even though it does not give students the right to opt out of the requirement.

Most public schools and districts offer a parent or guardian the opportunity to excuse a child from wearing a uniform. And most do not impose harsh penalties on students who are supposed to wear uniforms but don't.

"Schools generally feel they need to exercise latitude when they put their foot down," said Gary Marx, a spokesman for the American Association of School Administrators in Arlington, Virginia.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, on behalf of a group of low-income families, filed a lawsuit in state court in October 1995 against the Long Beach Unified School District, claiming that the district's uniform policy is a financial burden on poor families. The ACLU also claimed that the district has violated state law by neglecting to adequately inform parents about their right to exempt their children from the program.

The law signed in 1994 by California Governor Pete Wilson to allow state public schools to require uniforms also says that parents must have a way to opt out of such requirements.

The ACLU lawyers say many parents can't afford the cost of school uniforms. About 66 percent of the district's elementary and middle school students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. [In a February 1996 settlement, the plaintiffs agreed that the district had the right to require school uniforms, provided there is adequate notice, uniform assistance for disadvantaged pupils, and an exemption procedure.]

Hope Carradine, who dresses three of her five children in uniforms, said she had to ask other family members to help pay for them. "I shop thrift and buy in bulk, and you can't do that with uniforms," she said.

## Other Strategies

But district officials say that parents can buy the essential items—a white shirt and a pair of pants—for \$25 from several area stores. In addition, many schools sell sweatshirts or shorts for \$6 each. Many local charities also provide free uniforms, backpacks, and shoes to needy students.

And if parents find the costs too burdensome, Mr. Van DerLaan, the district spokesman, said, they can always opt out. A flier explaining this right was sent to parents nine months before any uniform policies became effective, he said.

Despite their commitment to the school-uniform policy, Long Beach officials don't view it as a panacea for discipline problems.

Other efforts, such as stepped-up parent involvement and additional conflict-resolution classes also have contributed to the more peaceful climate on campuses, school leaders here say.

The district is continuing to evaluate the benefits of uniforms to determine whether 1995's improved numbers for behavior were more than a blip on the screen.

And while some Long Beach students complain that the regulation dress is monotonous and dampens their personal style, many also see a positive side.

"The good thing is people judge you on your inner characteristics rather than what you wear," said Nick Duran, an 8th grader and the student-body president at Rogers Middle School. Plus, he said, it's easier to choose what to put on in the morning.

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Parents have the option of excusing their children from the requirement. But, so far, only 500 parents have filled out petitions to exempt their children, according to Dick Van DerLaan, a spokesman for the district.

In addition to Long Beach, a few other districts in California and across the country are testing the benefits of requiring students to come to school in color-specific, and sometimes style-specific, clothing.

The Oakland, California, schools began a similar uniform policy in September 1995. And a small number of other districts—including Dade County, Florida; Seattle; and Charleston, South Carolina—allow schools to decide for themselves whether to require uniforms.

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## School Uniforms Do Not Stifle Freedom of Expression

School Policies, 2008



Mike Kelly, "Squabbling Over School Uniforms," *The Record* (Bergen County, NJ), December 10, 2006, p. O01.  
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"Uniforms instill discipline, help students focus on their studies and eliminate pressure on parents to outfit their kids."

According to Mike Kelly in this viewpoint, objections to school uniform policies are unfounded and frivolous. He especially takes issue with lawsuits filed against school districts on the grounds that the students' rights to choose clothing is a First Amendment freedom. One such case, he explains, is that of Mike DePinto, a fifth grader who wore a button depicting the Hitler Youth, a paramilitary group of Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party, to protest his school's uniform policy. In Kelly's view, requiring schoolchildren to don uniforms is a reasonable way to improve learning skills, discipline, and focus. Kelly has been a columnist for *The Record* of Bergen County, New Jersey, for eighteen years.

As you read, consider the following questions:

1. According to the author, how does DePinto's story get "weirder"?
2. What are Kelly's two main objections to Laura DePinto's statement, released by her son's lawyers?
3. In the author's view, what will DePinto's lawyers argue at trial?

Mike DePinto, an 11-year-old fifth-grader from Bayonne [New Jersey], has a problem.

Just what kind of problem? This week [December 2006], a federal judge in Newark will try to find an answer.

We cherish our judicial system. For many, especially people on the downside of life, courts are often a refuge of last resort after stodgy bureaucracies and cowardly, narrow legislators refuse to act.

But sometimes, we waste judges' time with frivolous lawsuits.

Mike DePinto is wasting time.

At issue in this boy's life is a policy, invoked last September [2006] by the Bayonne public school system, that required students to wear uniforms to school.

DePinto is not necessarily claiming the school uniforms are ugly, distasteful or even too costly. If anything, the uniforms of khaki pants and blue shirts with a school emblem are probably too bland.

### Style Issue

DePinto's dilemma is that he simply wants to pick his own clothes. Or as he put it to a Bayonne newspaper last week: "I'm opposed to somebody telling me what to wear and forcing me to wear an emblem against my will."

Against his will? An emblem?

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We're not talking about DePinto being forced to put on a political or religious symbol. The school district merely wants him to wear a pair of khakis and a shirt with a school emblem on it.

What will DePinto say if he earns a spot on a high school athletic team in a few years? Would he tell his coach he wants to design his own uniform?

Incredibly, this story gets weirder.

What got DePinto in trouble with school authorities—and prompted his federal lawsuit—was not his objection to wearing a Bayonne uniform as much as how he accessorized it. He added a button with a photograph of Hitler Youth members in their trademark Nazi uniforms. DePinto claims his button, which has a red circle and a slash across the Hitler Youth photo and the slogan "No School Uniforms," is his personal form of protest.

The school district told DePinto and another student who later joined the button protest to get rid of the button or get suspended. Images of the Hitler Youth "are considered objectionable and are offensive to many Bayonne citizens and do not constitute free speech," the school district said.

DePinto, with the help of his mother and two Hackensack attorneys, filed a federal lawsuit along with the other protesting student, claiming that his freedom of expression was "stifled" because he had to remove his button. DePinto's attorneys tried to bolster their argument by claiming the Hitler Youth photo is "historically accurate" and "not very different from pictures found in history books used by American schools to teach social studies."

What's the legal logic here—that if Bayonne students can gaze at pictures of creepy Nazi kids in a history book they ought to be able to design a creepy button to wear on their school uniforms?

DePinto's mother, Laura, added to the ridiculousness with her own statement, released by her son's lawyers: "That image showed no swastikas, no weapons, and [Adolf] Hitler himself wasn't depicted. The picture makes a profound statement about what can happen when we turn children into 'uniform' followers."

## Profound Statement?

Memo to mom: Bayonne's students are not going to turn into the Hitler Youth because they are wearing khakis and blue shirts. Your statement is silly. So is the idea of using the name of Hitler as a vehicle to promote free expression.

There is a lively argument among some educators today about whether uniforms can be a useful tool in improving children's learning skills. Parochial and private schools have long followed a formula that uniforms instill discipline, help students focus on their studies and eliminate pressure on parents to outfit their kids to look like such paragons of scholarship as [pop stars] Justin Timberlake and Paris Hilton.

Now, public schools, from Secaucus to Hackensack, Fort Lee and Paterson, are considering various policies that would require students to wear some form of a uniform. But critics counter that uniforms don't really improve academics or student behavior and instead infringe on students' First Amendment rights of free expression.

Mike DePinto thinks he has a First Amendment case. On Monday, his attorneys are scheduled to present their arguments to U.S. District Court Judge Joseph A. Greenaway in Newark.

If only the judge would tell DePinto to button up and get back to school. But the judge probably won't do that.

He will likely allow lawyers to say that DePinto suffers deep sartorial pain each school day as he opens his closet and faces the cruel reality that he can't choose his own clothes and instead is forced to wear khaki pants and a blue shirt emblazoned with his school emblem. And then, we will hear the legal coup de gras: how he has a constitutional right to invoke the name of Adolf Hitler—and Hitler's memory of racism, anti-Semitism and mass murder—as a way of demonstrating all the pain he feels about the clothes on his back.

In uniform, can we all shout: Give us all a break? Go back to school.

If only the judge would do that.



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