

Unit Guide Second Draft

Two Inches Above the Knee: Analyzing the Impact of School Uniforms for the Selfie Generation

Meghan E. Rogers

Introduction

Growing up, I attended a small Catholic school in Marlton, New Jersey. I experienced my first nine years of school at this small community, and am grateful for the time I spent there. However, aside from religion, a significant aspect of Catholic and private schools that set them apart from their public counterparts is a mandatory uniform. When I was young, I resented my navy blue plaid skirt and powder blue polo shirts; it was not until I attended a public high school that I realized what a conundrum selecting an outfit daily would present. In recent years, it has become common for many public schools to also require a uniform or enforce a dress code policy. Many justify this change – through studies and observation- by arguing that uniforms reduce behavioral issues, decrease drop-out rates, and provide a more conducive environment for learning. Opponents argue that requiring specific attire is costly for struggling families and that it oppresses students' individual expression. As a teacher at Skyline Middle School for the past five years – a school with a specific uniform code – I know that my students would certainly side with the latter argument. Aside from their self-righteous sentiment and penchant for self-expression, many of my students lack a basic understanding of the reasoning for uniforms and dress codes. In the era of the ‘selfie’ as self-expression, it is my objective that this unit will further educate my students about both the merits and challenges that a school uniform can present so that they may develop their own, well-supported opinion.

Skyline Middle School (SMS), located within the Red Clay School District, is a comprehensive middle school serving grades six through eight. Located in the Wilmington suburb of Pike Creek, the school is composed of a diverse population. Skyline is one of four traditionally oriented middle schools within the Red Clay School District. The student body consists of approximately forty percent of students who qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch. During the upcoming 2015-16 school year and as a result of shifts in district lines, our student body will increase to approximately nine hundred students. Traditionally, Skyline performs significantly above the state and district average (compared to other similar middle schools) on state/standardized tests (including the Smarter Balanced assessment; these scores were released in September 2015).

For the past two years, I have taught 6th grade English, in both a Special Education capacity (an inclusion setting and resource room), as well as ELA general education and honors courses. I also serve as a case manager for several students with Reading/Writing IEP goals. I feel that working closely with students with learning disabilities has strengthened my ability to differentiate and modify my classroom practices so that all students are successful. Prior to this position, I worked for a nonprofit company, Jobs for Delaware Graduates, for two years at Skyline. As a specialist teacher working in the program, I worked with at-risk ("Red Triangle") 7th and 8th grade students and supported their transition from middle to high school. While employed in this capacity, I developed a genuine understanding of Skyline's school culture and population.

During the 2015-16 school year, I will be instructing 6th grade social studies. The curriculum centers primarily on geography, civics, and government. I am very much looking forward to teaching within the social sciences, as I majored in history and feel most confident with the content. I also feel that my experience instructing ELA for two years will further strengthen my ability to guide students' writing and reading comprehension skills.

I presently teach seventy-seven students in three seventy-eight minute blocks. Of these seventy-seven students, approximately thirty percent are identified as Special Education students with IEPs, thirty percent are African American, and twenty percent are of Hispanic descent. These averages represent an accurate measure of the population of Skyline Middle School.

Rationale

This upcoming school year will be my first teaching 6th grade social studies. Due to my background in History and Social Studies education, I have a firm understanding of the major concepts, and feel that this unit on censorship would fit best in our unit about principles of government. This will be the first year that Social Studies (and Science) at SMS are taught by semester, and so I will have a different group of students after the second marking period ends in January. I feel that this structure will be an opportune way to test-run elements of this unit, and will also allow for reflection before implementing the unit in the spring.

This year, a district-wide goal is to *increase students' use of and exposure to technology*. The objective is to ultimately have all students equipped with 1:1 technology; an iPad or Chromebook for each student. While this implementation may take time, my proposed unit will address this in multiple ways, as students will be asked to analyze the role of censorship in schools, and more specifically the impact of school uniforms. In this proposed unit, students will develop an understanding of the history of censorship in the

United States, as well as its current implications for students in the elementary and secondary setting. Students will be asked to compare the uniform codes at Skyline Middle School with other schools in Red Clay, throughout the state, and in different places (states and countries). This will be done utilizing the new one-to-one technology, which is slated to begin in early 2016. Students will then take a stance on the role of school uniforms, determining whether there is a true benefit to them or whether they serve to censor individual expression. Due to the ever-increasing presence of social media and its impact on young adults, it is essential that students understand basic principles of free speech in the United States, as well analyze and draw conclusions regarding the future of free speech and social media. I feel that this proposed unit will help students gain a stronger understanding of their rights within the framework of a school environment, as its presence is a part of daily life and a cause for much consternation.

Students will learn how to analyze the right of free speech as it applies to school uniforms, and more generally censorship within schools. Through scaffolding, students will be introduced to a brief history of censorship in the United States. Students will analyze images, cartoons, news articles and primary documents that chronicle this First Amendment right. Students will also read articles that support various viewpoints on the merits of school uniforms to help them develop a supported perspective. With planned preparation and personal reflection, students will then form well-supported opinions about the role of uniforms in schools that will be presented, discussed and debated.

Guiding Questions

These are essential questions that direct the course of the unit and serve as queries students should be able to answer by the end of the unit.

1. How do one's first amendment rights impact daily life?
2. What is "free speech"? How is it defined?
3. What is the history of schools censoring student expression?
4. Why are school uniforms adopted?
5. How are school uniforms justified?
6. What is the benefit/detiment of school uniforms?
7. How do other districts/counties/states handle the issue of uniforms in school?
8. How should the issue of school uniforms be addressed in the future? Why?
9. How do uniforms prepare students for a real-world setting, or to be "college and career ready"?

Research

In order to effectively engage students in a productive dialogue about school uniforms, a strong understanding of censorship in schools is necessary. There are several Supreme

Court cases that deal directly with censorship of students' rights in school, and where the definition of students' rights within school is defined by carefully crafted language. The following cases and definitions will be an important foundation for a unit focusing on censorship within secondary education.

History of Student Rights to Self-Expression in School

The Supreme Court case, *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969), is an excellent starting point. In 1965, three high school students – John Tinker, Mary Beth Tinker, and Christopher Eckhardt - wore black armbands to school. Their purpose was to protest the Vietnam War; their armbands represented their opposition. Their decision directly violated the school principal's order that such armbands were banned and the students were suspended. The Tinkers and Eckhardt appealed the school district's decision to a United States district court, where Judge Roy Stephenson ruled in favor of the school board, noting that the school administration had a responsibility to maintain a "scholarly, disciplined atmosphere" in the classroom and had not only the right but also the obligation to prevent disruptions. This decision outlined the fact that the armbands themselves were not offensive, but that they could "incite reactions or disruptions," especially given the political implications of the armbands. This was keeping in line with the Supreme Court's distinction between speech and non-speech, which really emphasized the ability of either to incite citizens to the point of action.¹

The case reached the Supreme Court in 1969, where the Court overturned the local district court's decision in a 7-2 vote. The Court asserted that wearing the armbands was an example of symbolic speech, a right protected by the First Amendment. Judge Abe Fortas stated the majority opinion, writing, "It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gates." The *Tinker v. Des Moines* case represents a peak in the trend of the free expression rights of students in school; since 1969, such rights have been in a gradual decline as more restrictions arise.² This case is also significant because the United States Supreme Court took on students' First Amendment rights in school, and took on a stance that supported students' right to self-expression in a learning environment.

The 1984 case of *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier* represents the Court's ruling on students' right to free speech within the scope of a student newspaper publication. This case represented the first time the Supreme Court addressed the question of whether censorship of student expression in the school newspaper was unconstitutional.³ The case involved a student newspaper that published an interview with a student who had elected to have an abortion and another written by a student about divorce. The school principal, fearful of public sentiment and offending other students, pulled the articles.

The student newspaper staff sued the district, alleging that their First Amendment rights had been violated; a lower court sided with the school before it reached the Supreme Court. The Court ruled that it was within the school administration's right to apply prior restraint. The Hazelwood decision noted a difference between personal student expression – citing Tinker – and “expression using a school name and resources, as in a high school newspaper.”⁴ The Court further differentiated public forums (such as sidewalks or street corners) from a student newspaper, published as part of the curriculum and representing a school, “in which the public does not have a reasonable expectation of access.”⁵

In 1986, the Supreme Court case of *Bethel School District v. Fraser* further demonstrated the Court’s increasing involvement and developing perspective on student rights and speech in schools. During a student council nomination, Matthew Fraser, a senior in high school in Pierce County, Washington, gave a nominating speech full of sexual innuendos but not obscenity. Regardless, the school administration was upset with what was considered disruptive and offensive behavior and chose to suspend Fraser. In this instance, however, the Supreme Court supported the school district’s decision to suspend Matthew Fraser for three days, in light of the sexually explicit Student Council nomination speech. The Court’s reasoning was based on the idea that there was a greater worth on the ‘shared values of a civilized social order’ than on Tinker’s protection of expression in schools.⁶

In addition to censorship of students’ rights to expression occurring at the secondary level, students within the arena of higher education are also susceptible to censorship, although it is limited to the realm of social media. First Amendment rights for students at public colleges were becoming increasingly restricted as the twenty-first century began, and implemented punishment for students based on comments or actions occurring outside of the classroom. This has increased in more recent decades, with widespread use of the World Wide Web in the 1990s, and more recently, the advent of social media forums, such as Myspace, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. These social media platforms are viewed by many as a stage for self-expression; hence, the rise of the “Selfie Generation.” Many school districts and universities, including schools in Indiana, Washington State, and New York City, “adopted policies regulating student use of web-based programs such as MySpace and Facebook, even outside of class.”⁷ In one instance, an 8th grader in Georgia was suspended for creating a website called ‘Natasha’s Heckling Page,’ in which she listed multiple ways to disrupt teachers during class and called out an administrator as being an individual that students made an effort to avoid.⁸ In the Clark-Pleasant School District in Indiana, a policy was implemented regarding blogging in October 2006 that “prohibited students from accessing social networks such as MySpace from school,” in addition to “posting harmful or threatening content outside of school.”⁹ Information posted online and through social media continues to be a concern for school

administration, as it becomes increasingly possible for students to share every facet of human life. However, many note this as a “disturbing trend;” Ann Beeson, a nationally known attorney, believes that what a student publishes at home should be the concern of the parents, not the school.¹⁰

Thus, the trend over the last five decades has been a reduction in students’ rights of expression in school; a general censorship of students’ ability to voice their individuality. Many argue that school uniforms and dress codes do just that: inhibit student expression and provide little benefit to the overall school environment.

Support for School Uniforms and Dress Codes

Aside from a judicial perspective of students’ right to free expression, there are several arguments in favor of uniforms and dress codes in school. One specific claim, observed by the US Court of Appeals in Nevada and others, levels that the consistency of attire offered by uniforms helps schools to maintain environments more conducive to learning. Another argument is that uniforms help to eliminate issues that would otherwise be a distraction in the classroom—issues like who is wearing the newest, most expensive clothing and shoes. These claims are supported by school administration and parents alike, all with the goal of creating a school setting with the highest potential for learning. Many school principals and district administrators agree; Doug Crosier, the principal at Franklin High School in Williamson County, Tennessee, requires a dress code because he feels that it “creates a more business-like atmosphere” in schools.¹¹ Another argument supports the concept that with a uniform, those students involved in gang activity outside of school are unable to represent this membership; they are not allowed to demonstrate their ‘colors,’ in form of a bandana, scarf, or other accessories, an identifying feature of gang culture.¹² This perspective has helped to drive the recent trends among public schools to require a uniform or create strict dress codes.

In order to participate in a dialogue about the relationship between students’ right to self-expression and uniforms, it is important to differentiate between a dress code and a uniform policy. A dress code might call for similar shirts – a polo or button-down shirt, but without a specific color choice; like-colored pants or the exclusion of jeans, and may specify aspects such facial hair, but a uniform calls for each student to be in the same exact attire. Whereas dress codes “open the door” to students’ interpretation, uniforms place every student into specific, defined attire.¹³ The practice of adopting a uniform or dress code policy has been slowly increasing since the 1990s; many large public school districts, such as Philadelphia and New York, have all set uniform policies.

There have been several research studies over the last thirty years that attempted to examine the role of uniforms in schools, and ascertain any potential benefits to requiring

uniforms and/or a dress code. In 2012, researchers from the University of Nevada analyzed the opinions of students in three middle schools in the Washoe County School District. They distributed a forty-nine-question survey during the district's first year of uniform implementation. Approximately thirteen hundred students responded, and an overwhelming majority of students –ninety percent – answered that they did not like wearing uniforms. However, students' top-rated statements with answers of "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" were: 'I still have my identity when I wear a uniform (54% of students); 'I think uniforms save money on clothes' (50%); and 'I worry less about how others look (42%). Thus, although the majority of students resented the dress code change, most still felt that uniforms were in some way beneficial to their school climate.¹⁴

Additionally, numerous benefits were reported and observed by the administrations, including decreases in gang involvement, bullying and discipline referrals, and increases in safety, ease of school, confidence and self-esteem. At Sparks Middle School, one of the three in Washoe County analyzed in the study, discipline and school police records were examined. Compared to the previous year, discipline referrals were reduced by about ten percent. School police data showed a sixty-three percent reduction of incidents also during the first year of implementation. The head of the study, Jafeth Sanchez, observed that, "If a simple change in attire can positively influence more than thirty percent, or even twenty-five percent of a school's student population, then perhaps administrators, teachers, students and community members find it worth the effort.¹⁵ Sanchez and her colleagues reported the positive findings of uniform and dress code implementation, indicating the positive impact uniforms had, even in their first year.¹⁶

Another study done in 2010, conducted by University of Houston sociologists Elisabetta Gentile & Scott Imberman, found that "uniforms generate improvement in attendance and test scores. These results were particularly strong for girls in middle and high school. ...uniforms reduce the likelihood that girls leave the district for alternative education options, potentially providing a tool for retaining students in the face of increased school choice options."¹⁷ Their study focused on discipline records, drop-out rates and test scores. In Long Beach, California, where fifty-six elementary schools, fourteen middle schools, and one high school adopted school uniforms, administrators felt that school absences declined, violent incidents dropped and academic performance improved.¹⁸ In fact, in most research study findings, school principals and administration showed overwhelming support for school uniforms.

Regardless of study findings, students' dislike of uniforms and administrator support, it is important that all parties "buy-in" – all those involved should be a part of such a decision, as parental support is integral to successfully carrying out a new policy.¹⁹

Opposition against Mandated Dress Codes and Uniforms

Just as there are many school districts and parents who feel that uniforms enhance a learning environment, there are a growing number of individuals who feel that uniforms do not add to the collective environment, that they inhibit individual expression, and present a costly expense for parents struggling to afford other school supplies. A 1998 study led by the Sociology Department at the University of Notre Dame determined that, “student uniforms have no direct effect on substance use, behavioral problems, or attendance.”²⁰ Additionally, the question arises as to whether or not clothing can be considered symbolic speech, which would thus ensure its protection.²¹ Many opponents argue that a student’s clothing does communicate a message and allows them to express their ideas and individuality; given the perspective of many of my students, I feel that they would agree with this sentiment.

While many building and district administrators praise uniform and dress code implementation, it is often a source of frustration. As Rob Killen describes in his article, “The Achilles’ Heel of Dress Codes: The Definition of Proper Attire in Public Schools,” principals and other building leaders face challenges in defining the dress code or uniforms without violating fundamental constitutional rights of students.²² Many of the dress codes in place are essentially weak, in that they are too vague, too general, and in some cases do not impact the school issues they are fashioned to solve.²³ Additionally, if the dress code is too specific –in that its design was purely aimed at a group or subculture of the school – then the school administration and board may run into issues of litigation.

Indeed, many of the challenges against dress codes include items that are not basic clothing themselves, but rather head-wraps, tattoos, and other jewelry. These forms of representation are often challenged by individuals and advocates of free symbolic speech, as it is viewed to be singling out one culture or suppressing one’s cultural or religious beliefs. For example, in Mississippi in 1999, student Ryan Green was informed that he was not allowed to wear a Star of David necklace openly because it is considered a gang symbol and would thus violate the dress code.²⁴ The student filed suit against the school board and won; the school board eventually voted to exempt religious symbols from the list of prohibited items, as it violated students’ freedom of expression.²⁵ Another related incident occurred in Alabama when student Kandice Smith wore a cross necklace to school as an expression of her faith; however, it violated the school’s policy banning visible jewelry.²⁶ The board defended their decision on including a ban on jewelry, arguing that the dress code was ‘a way to combat income-based jealousy and competitiveness among students.’ Smith filed suit against the board and won the right to wear her cross.²⁷ In a more extreme case, a student named Brianna Stephenson, an Honor Student at West High School, had a visible cross tattoo on her hand. The school felt that it violated their dress code because it was deemed a ‘gang symbol’ and the student decided to have the tattoo removed– a painful and costly procedure; at this point she was

allowed to return to school. She later filed suit against the school board and won; it was found that the dress code was too vague because students were not provided with a list of prohibited apparel and items.²⁸

Beyond the school day, schools impose dress codes and clothing expectations for extracurricular events – such as dances – and student violations of these guidelines, often females, have been widely covered in the media – thanks to social media platforms -of late. Since the majority of these incidents have involved a female's attire that is deemed inappropriate, some have alleged that these policies are inherently sexist. In January of 2016, Gabi Finlayson, then a sixteen-year old student at Lone Peak High School in Highland, Utah, was told that her dress violated the dress code published by the school.²⁹ Ms. Finlayson was told that her straps specifically violated the “two-inch strap” rule, and as a result Ms. Finlayson, who did not have a shawl with her, decided to wear her winter coat for the duration of the dance. In reaction to the incident, Ms. Finlayson said that it made her feel “embarrassed and ashamed,” and noted that other young ladies at the dance were wearing thinner straps and/or had shorter hemlines.³⁰ Her mother, Kristy Kimball, felt that such dance dress codes unfairly targets young women, stating, “There’s a hyper-emphasis on dressing modestly as a girl because you don’t want to be responsible for what a boy thinks.”³¹ Ms. Kimball’s sentiments are becoming increasingly common, as schools crack down on such outlined dress codes. Another example occurred in Florida in 2014, when 16-year-old Miranda Larkin was told that she violated the school dress code with a too-short-skirt; she was made to wear a bright, neon yellow ‘shame suit’ with the words “dress code violation stamped on them. Her mother, Dianna Larkin, felt that such punishment was unacceptable and echoed Ms. Kimball’s comments, saying that, “dress codes cause girls to be sexualized and demoralized way more often than what guys experience.”³² While this certainly seems to hold true for after-school events in the media, as such stories are often sensationalized, it would be interesting to analyze school-wide data to observe whether males or females are found to have more day-to-day violations.

When looking at a constitutional challenge to a dress-code policy, some courts have applied the Tinker standard: Student expression cannot be censored unless it creates a material interference or substantial disruption in the classroom environment, particularly if a student wears clothing containing a political message.³³ Other courts have taken a different approach when determining whether student clothing constitutes First Amendment protected expression. The courts first consider whether the student clothing constitutes “expressive conduct” worthy of First Amendment protection. Thus, it is difficult to argue that a specific dress code directly violates a students’ freedom of speech.

Background Knowledge Necessary for Student Comprehension

Through informal investigation, I understand that the majority of my students oppose the current uniform at Skyline. They feel that it is too strict, and that because they are unable to wear what they prefer, they are thus prohibited to convey their individualism. Many of their opinions are based solely on personal experience with little or no information to support their reasoning. In order for students to effectively express their opinions, students must develop a well-supported perspective based on the merits and shortcomings of uniform implementation. Thus, they should be exposed to the aforementioned Supreme Court cases involving student censorship and rights in school, as well as the results of multiple surveys in which the benefits of uniforms far outweigh the negatives.

Teaching Strategies

My students are working to develop their argumentative skills, especially supporting their perspective with evidence. With an issue that is sure to inspire strong feelings on both sides, it is important that students are given a forum in which they can express their opinion and explain it in a well-structured and supported manner.

Four Corners Activity

In order to evaluate each student's opinion on the value of uniforms and dress codes, a visually clear activity such as Four Corners or a Chalkboard Continuum may be helpful. For the Four Corners activity, the instructor will have prepared a series of questions, as well as labeling four parts or corners of the room with paper marked as "Agree," "Strongly Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree." The teacher will then read out the questions or statements and instruct students to stand in the corner that matches their feeling/opinion on the topic. The teacher will then facilitate discussion among students about why they feel that way.

This activity may also be done as a chalkboard continuum on the board; the instructor will write a question that requires an opinion response (i.e. Do you think school uniforms help improve learning?) and will draw a line across the board, labeling one side Strongly Agree and the other end Strongly Disagree. Students will be prompted to place their initials along the line to represent their opinion.

Both of these activities provide a powerful visual, especially at the beginning of the unit before a lot of discussion has occurred. It can serve as a baseline for the instructor and also generate a lot of discussion among students. Once the unit is concluded, it is beneficial to repeat this exercise (and compare it to the original continuum) to see if

students have altered their mindset at all; many students may be surprised to compare their original line of thinking to their more well-informed perspective.

Graphic Organizer

Throughout the duration of the unit, students will be encouraged to record facts and other information in a graphic organizer. The graphic organizer will be divided into columns for facts, statistics, and “my opinion.”

Gallery Walk

This is a useful introductory activity for this unit. The instructor will prepare images/quotes/situations and display them around the room, and students will assess the images and answer questions or record data on a graphic organizer. This activity is excellent for visual and kinesthetic learners, as it encourages movement throughout the classroom. The instructor will then review the slides/images and facilitate a discussion through a PowerPoint presentation or Smart Board Notebook activity. Students can also use their central graphic organizer as a reflective practice to record collected facts about uniforms/dress codes.

Video Clips – Uniform Policies around the World

Students will also be asked to view and analyze several video clips, expressing different perspective about the pros and cons of uniforms and dress code. They also differentiate between a school uniform and a dress code. Students will be asked to analyze the video for bias, and will be asked to record any pertinent facts/statistics in their graphic organizer.

Additionally, the issue of uniforms and school dress codes is controversial in other parts of the world as well. Many of the video clips demonstrate this matter in other countries, where the arguments for both sides are very similar. Suggestions for video clips can be found in the Bibliography section.

Two Cents Discussion

One way to create more discussion and strengthen opinions is to encourage student discussion. After students have read one of the articles in a Two-Cents Discussion is a good way to ensure full participation. Students can be placed into small groups or hold the discussion as whole class. Each student will be given two pennies – their “two cents” – which they must use during the discussion in order to get full credit for the activity. Once a student comments, they can turn in one penny to a student mediator or teacher. Students must use both pennies (their “two cents”) in order to earn full credit.

Poll

Throughout this activity and unit, I predict that the majority of my students will oppose the concept and potential benefits of uniforms. To that end, I will give them the

opportunity to survey the school population. Given that most of our school population will agree with my students, I will ask that they also poll staff and/or family members for their perspective. Students should develop questions independently and determine the design of their inquiry (online or paper-based). It is my hope that they appreciate the difficulty that comes with creating a cohesive dress code or uniform (i.e., If jeans/denim are deemed appropriate, can they be ripped? How short may skirts and shorts be worn? Are leggings acceptable?) In groups or individually, students may analyze the data or place it into a graphic organizer or chart as evidence.

Furthermore, since the district will be providing students with Chromebooks as part of their 1:1 initiative, students can conduct their polls using websites or apps such as Survey Monkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/>) which is a free service. Students will be encouraged to create their own questions and decide if they want to form yes/no prompts, multiple choice, or open-ended. Students should be provided some same questions and should be guided about creating questions that do not show their bias.

Debate

The culminating activity for this unit will be a teacher facilitated debate. The instructor will most likely need to assign sides, as students may feel strongly against uniforms and dress codes. This can be done in a classroom setting, with students preparing statements based on their side/perspective, or through the online app Debate Wars (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.discuss.discuss&hl=en>), which could be designed by the teacher and utilized by the class on their Chromebooks.

Classroom Activities

All activities should take approximately two weeks, or at least eight days of 80-minute blocks, to complete.

Activity One: Take a Stand – Do Uniforms Help Students Earn Higher Grades?

The objective for this lesson include is for students to form and develop their opinion about the validity of school dress codes and uniforms. Students will analyze documents, images, and different opinions from various sources and media. The classroom activities that accompany this lesson include the Chalkboard Continuum and the Four Corners Activity. This lesson should take approximately one ninety-minute block class.

Activity Two: Gallery Walk – The History of School Uniforms

The objective for this lesson is for students to gain a deeper understanding of the reasoning behind uniforms. Students will also analyze documents, images, and different opinions from various sources and media and synthesize this material into a graphic organizer. The activities that work well for this lesson includes the Gallery Walk, and debriefing discussion. This lesson should take one to two block classes.

Activity Three: Video Analysis – Uniforms Around the World

The objective for this lesson is for students to analyze and discuss video clips to deepen their understanding of this issue. Students will take notes in their graphic organizers and should discuss each video. The classroom activities that accompany this lesson include Video Clips, Graphic Organizer and the Two-Cent Discussion.

Activity Four: Article Review: How do dress codes impact extracurricular activities?

The objective for this lesson is for students to read and analyze two separate articles on the pros and cons of uniforms. Students will discuss the clips with their peers. The classroom activities that best suit this activity include the Two-Cent Discussion and a news article for review.

Activity Five: Creating a Poll: Real Reactions to Uniforms and Dress Codes

The objective of this activity is for students to create and distribute a poll about the pros and cons of uniforms and dress codes. This should be accomplished by utilizing the poll website suggestions as well as a discourse on the students' findings.

Activity Six: Mock-Debate – Should schools continue to utilize dress codes and uniforms?

The objective of this activity is for students to synthesize material, facts and information in order to present a cohesive argument, supported by evidence from previous lessons. The classroom activities that accompany this lesson include mock debate, graphic organizer, and poll results.

Bibliography

The following sources are helpful in understanding the historical context of free speech, student expression in schools, and uniforms.

Gentile, Elisabeth, and Scott Imberman. *Dressed for Success? The Effect of School Uniforms on Student Achievement and Behavior*. Houston, TX: University of Houston Press, 2010.

Hudson, David, Jr. *The Silencing of Student Voices*. First Amendment Center, 2003.

Killen, Robert. "The Achilles' Heel of Dress Codes: The Definition of Proper Attire in Public Schools." *Tulsa Law Review*, 2000.

Kim, Eun Kyung. "Teen Asked to Cover up at School Dance: 'It Made Me Feel like I Wasn't Good Enough'" *Today*, January 28, 2015.

Paxton, Mark. *Censorship: Historical Guides to Controversial Issues in America*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008.

Streich, Michael. *Uniforms and Dress Codes in High School*. Suite, 2009.

Wharton, Claudine. "College of Education Researchers Conduct Study on Impacts of School Uniforms." *Nevada Today*, April 23, 2013.

Wilson, Amy Mitchell. *Public School Dress Codes: The Constitutional Debate*. B.Y.U. Education & Law Journal, 1998.

Videos

The following video clips are helpful in demonstrating to students the perspective of uniforms and dress codes from students, administration, and within different cultures. All of the clips are less than ten minutes in length, and all contain material appropriate to the middle school level.

Discovery D-News – Do Uniforms Help Students Learn?
Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMetDWhU0z4>

The Power of a School Dress Code, video by Burlington County Technical Institute
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4tF4i-AmUiI>

Learning World – Do School Uniforms Make a Difference? (South Africa)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBGkoHcwLy4>

Uniforms Around the World –Image Slideshow
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmiiyBJQvDQ>

Websites
Survey Monkey

Appendix A: Curriculum Connections & Standards

Civics Standard One 6-8a: Students will understand that governments have the power to make and enforce laws and regulations, levy taxes, conduct foreign policy, and make war.

CCSS. ELA-Literacy 6-8.1 Support claims with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.

CCSS. ELA-Literacy 6-8.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

CCCS.ELA-Literacy 6-8.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research

CCSS.ELA-Literacy 6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g. charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts).

Appendix B Materials

Sample Poll Questions

Yes/No Responses

1. Do you think that uniforms or dress codes benefit student learning?
2. Do you think that uniforms or dress codes hurt individual expression?
3. Do school uniforms have an impact on the school environment?
4. Do you feel that more learning would occur without the presence of uniforms?
5. Do uniforms distract students from having a positive learning environment?
6. Do you feel that leggings are permissible as pants?

Open-Ended Questions

7. What is considered appropriate attire for school?
8. Given the opportunity, how would you outline a school dress code?
9. What kind of guidelines would you offer students on attire?
10. What is an acceptable length for skirts and shorts?
11. What kind of dress code would you envision for a formal school dance?
12. Why do you think that dress codes and uniforms were first implemented?

Sample Question with bias wording

1. Since school uniforms are ugly, should we get to wear whatever we want?
2. Do you enjoy wearing jeans and leggings?
3. Are you more comfortable wearing your own attire, as opposed to uniforms?

End Notes

- ¹ Paxton, Mark. "Censorship: Historical Guides to Controversial Issues in America." Westport, Connecticut. Greenwood Press, 2008, 116.
- ² Paxton, 117.
- ³ Paxton, 117.
- ⁴ Paxton, 117.
- ⁵ Paxton, 117.
- ⁶ Paxton, 118.
- ⁷ Paxton, 126.
- ⁸ Hudson, Jr. David L. "The Silencing of Student Voices." The First Amendment Center, 2003, 55.
- ⁹ Hudson, 54.
- ¹⁰ Hudson, 55.
- ¹¹ Hudson, 55.
- ¹² Wilson, Amy Mitchell. "Public School Dress Codes: The Constitutional Debate." B.Y.U. Education and Law Journal. 1998., 150.
- ¹³ Streich, Michael. "Uniforms and Dress Codes in High School." Suite. January 19, 2009.
- ¹⁴ Wharton, Claudine. "College of Education Researchers Conduct Study on Impacts of School Uniforms." Nevada Today. April 23, 2013.
- ¹⁵ Wharton.
- ¹⁶ Wharton.
- ¹⁷ Gentile, Elisabeth and Imberman, Scott. Dressed for Success? The Effect of School Uniforms on Student Achievement and Behavior. University of Houston Press. January 15, 2010.
- ¹⁸ Streich.
- ¹⁹ Streich
- ²⁰ Streich
- ²¹ Wilson, 169.
- ²² Killen, Rob. "The Achilles' Heel of Dress Codes: The Definition of Proper Attire in Public Schools." Tulsa Law Review, 2000.
- ²³ Killen, 6.
- ²⁴ Killen, 20.
- ²⁵ Killen, 20.
- ²⁶ Killen, 21.
- ²⁷ Killen, 22.
- ²⁸ Killen, 22.

²⁹ Kim, Eun Kyung. "Teen asked to cover up at school dance: 'It made me feel like I wasn't good enough.'" TODAY. January 28th, 2015.

³⁰ Kim, 2015.

³¹ Kim, 2015.

³² Kim, 2015.

³³ Streich

Curriculum Unit
Title

Two Inches Above the Knee: Analyzing the Impact of School Uniforms for the Selfie Generation

Author

Meghan E. Rogers

KEY LEARNING, ENDURING UNDERSTANDING, ETC.

There is a historical precedent for schools to monitor student expression in the form of dress codes and rules about appearance.
There are strong arguments on both sides of the issue of uniforms.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) for the UNIT

1. Why are school uniforms adopted, and how are school uniforms justified?
2. What is the difference between a dress code and a uniform?
3. What are students' rights of expression in school?

CONCEPT A

A History of School Uniforms

CONCEPT B

Arguments For and Against Uniforms

CONCEPT C

The Difference between School Uniforms and Dress Codes

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A

How do one's first amendment rights impact daily life?
What is "free speech"? How is it defined?
What is the history of schools censoring student expression?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B

Why are school uniforms adopted?
How are school uniforms justified?
What is the benefit/detriment of school uniforms?
How do other districts/counties/states handle the issue of uniforms in school?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C

What is the difference between a uniform and address code?
How should the issue of school uniforms be addressed in the future? Why?
How do uniforms prepare students for a real-world setting, or to be "college and career ready"?

VOCABULARY A

Uniform
First Amendment Rights
Freedom of Speech
Freedom of expression

VOCABULARY A

Expressive speech
Symbolic speech
Freedom of expression in school

VOCABULARY A

Dress Code
Work uniform

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES