

TAKE
A SIDE

Debate

Directions: Read the article. Study the facts. Decide what you think. Go to www.scholastic.com/storyworks for more debates!



School Uniforms

Should your school be telling you what to wear?

Samantha Gebicki was nervous about starting a new school in fourth grade. She was leaving behind her close friends. She'd heard that the work was harder. But what upset her most?

"When I first saw the uniform," says Sam, who is now 12, "I couldn't believe it." Every day, no matter what, Sam would have to wear the same white shirt, plaid jumper, and (gulp) necktie. There would be no more jeans. No more Gap T-shirts or leggings or Crocs. "I wanted to cry," she says.

Happier Students?

But is wearing a school uniform something to shed tears about? In fact, many experts insist that school uniforms improve learning, keep schools safer, and (gasp) even make students happier. It's no wonder the number of schools requiring uniforms is growing. Today, 18 percent of students in the U.S. wear them. In the past, it was mostly private schools that required uniforms. But more and more public schools are bringing on the jumpers and blue blazers. In New Orleans and Chicago, the majority of students now wear uniforms.

Principals in many high-crime areas say that uniforms can transform a school, making students and teachers safer. Troublemakers can't hide dangerous objects under their clothes. Fights don't break out over expensive clothing. Kids in gangs cannot wear gang colors or symbols to school.

Even in quiet towns, uniforms are catching on. When all students wear the same thing, kids don't have to stress about having the latest brands. Why beg your parents for a pair of \$150 Uggs if you can't wear them to school?

Should I wear the blue pants or the blue pants?



Cost and Comfort

Still, some experts believe uniforms have drawbacks. Many are expensive. Some kids feel uncomfortable and self-conscious wearing uniforms rather than clothes they choose for style and fit. There's also the issue of how clothing can help us all—kids especially—express who we are: a Mets fan or a Taylor Swift fanatic, one of the crowd or someone who dares to be different.

Finally, learning to choose clothes for school is important practice for later in life. As a teenager, picking the right clothes for a job interview or college visit can mean the difference between success and failure.

Overall, though, education experts are united in their support for school uniforms. And after four years of wearing her uniform, Sam Gebicki would agree.

"I do miss being able to express myself through my clothes and seeing what my friends were wearing every day," she says. "But it's nice to just get up and get dressed without worrying." ■

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What Do You Think?

Are school uniforms a good idea? Go back to the article and find information to support each side. Write the information on the lines below.

YES Uniforms are the way to go!

- 1 _____

- 2 _____

- 3 _____

NO Keep uniforms out of school!

- 1 _____

- 2 _____

- 3 _____

Study the points on both sides of the argument—and think about your own opinion. Then decide what you think about this issue. State your opinion in one sentence below. This can become the thesis statement for an essay on this topic.

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