

School Uniform Policy

I. PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for the wearing of school uniforms.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students in the Cleveland Municipal School District.

III. DEFINITIONS:

- A. Mandatory School Uniforms: Requires all students in grades K-8 to wear an adopted school uniform that is consistent with the system-wide Student Uniform Policy.
- B. District Uniform Committee: A district committee composed of representatives of the community, including parents, teachers, administration, and students.
- C. School leadership councils: A local school council composed of the building SPO, including parents, teachers, administrators, students and representatives from the school community.

IV. POLICY STATEMENT

Cleveland Municipal Schools believes that a positive school learning environment is an important factor in attaining student achievement. There are many factors that lead to a positive learning environment. Safety, discipline and school unity are three of those factors.

Cleveland Municipal Schools believes that wearing school uniforms is one way to achieve all three goals. A school uniform, which refers to wearing the same style and color of dress, can create a safer environment because it helps to identify students who belong on a school campus, thus making it easier to identify non-school persons who may be on the campus for disruptive purposes. Moreover, school uniforms create a more disciplined environment by reducing negative competition and arguments over dress styles, by reducing drop-out rates, and by increasing school attendance.

Finally, school uniforms promote school unity by eliminating factors that can create economic and social division among individuals, such as clothing style and brands, thus allowing students to become more conscious of such shared goals as meeting academic standards, developing self confidence and understanding diversity. The positive learning

environment to which wearing school uniforms contributes helps to create an environment in which student achievement is the highest priority.

Beginning in the fall of 2009 all Cleveland Municipal Schools students (grades K-12) will be required to wear a school uniform. The specific uniform will be determined by the school district and the school uniform committee. All uniforms shall be “inexpensive and readily available for all students.” Parents who cannot afford to pay full price for their children’s uniforms shall be given the opportunity to purchase uniforms at an affordable price or receive donations of uniforms from the Cleveland community or from funding that has been granted to the Cleveland Municipal School District. This policy does not prevent students from exercising First Amendment rights to freedom of expression, such as wearing political buttons.

Parents who do not wish for their children to wear uniforms because of their or their children’s religious beliefs or religious dress must submit their reason in writing to the school principal. Students who wear the traditional dress of their religion shall not be required to wear school uniforms.

Attire that disrupts the learning environment, creates a potential safety hazard, or is not in compliance with the adopted district-wide student uniform policy is prohibited. Principals shall have the authority to determine proper attire for the schools, including proper attire when school uniforms are not worn.

Principals are responsible for ensuring that the school uniform policy is adequately enforced and implemented at the school level.

V. RESPONSIBILITY

- A. The Office of the Chief of Staff is responsible for monitoring compliance with the school uniform policy and for evaluating its effectiveness.
- B. The Office of the Chief of Staff is responsible for administering programs for parents who cannot afford to purchase school uniforms for their children.
- C. The school leadership councils are responsible for prescribing local school uniform colors that are consistent with the adopted CMSD School Uniform Policy. The councils are also responsible for establishing uniform banks at their schools for parents who cannot afford to pay regular cost for uniforms and for students who may be out of compliance on a particular day.
- D. Principals are responsible for enforcing the school uniform policy at their schools

E. Parents are responsible for ensuring that students are dressed properly for school.

F. Students are responsible for following the school uniform policy.

VI. SCHOOL UNIFORMS

A. Basic Uniform

1. District-wide CMSD K-8 Student Uniform Policy

- Tops
 1. No hooded jackets
 2. All shirts should be tucked in
 3. Females – any solid color blouses with collars, polos with collars, oxford tops with collars or turtlenecks
 4. Males – any solid color dress shirts with collars, polo shirts with collars, oxford button-down shirts with collars or turtlenecks
 5. No striped tops or clothing for females or males
 6. Colors
 - a. Blue or white (exclusively)
 - b. No insignia or logos
 - c. Approved solid colors

- Bottoms
 1. No jeans or sweat suits for either males or females
 2. Females- skirts, jumpers, slacks, knee length shorts, capris – all items knee length or longer
 3. Males – pants, knee length shorts
 4. Colors
 - a. Dark blue/navy, black or khaki/tan
 - b. All solid colors
 5. Material – uniform, dress or corduroy
- Sweaters
 1. Female/male – cardigans, pullovers or vests
 2. Colors – black, navy or white
- Headgear – no headgear for either males or females including but not limited to scarves, hats, rags, wraps or any other items identified as being unauthorized by the Uniform Leadership Council
- Belts
 1. Female/male – belts required for all slacks, skirts, shorts, skorts with belt loops
 2. Colors
 - a. Black, navy, light or dark brown
 - b. No other colors, insignias, or logos on belts

- B. School leadership councils may approve additional styles for the uniform top if the change is school related and is consistent with the adopted district uniform policy. School leadership councils may also approve of days or events when school uniforms will not be required.
- C. Students may wear the uniforms of nationally-recognized youth organizations at their school on days specified by the organization (e.g., Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts).
- D. The school district and the local schools must inform parents of the availability of financial assistance if they cannot afford to purchase school uniforms at competitive prices.
- E. Violation of the school uniform policy shall not affect a student's academic or conduct grade.
- F. Parent complaints about the school uniform policy shall be reported to the principal or a designee.
- G. The Division of Exceptional Children (Special Education) can decide whether any student(s) should be exempt from the District Uniform Policy due to the student's exceptionality.
- H. The school uniform policy shall be in effect during both the school year and any summer programming.

VII. COMPLIANCE

A joint committee between the Cleveland Municipal School District and the Cleveland Teachers Union will be formed to design behavioral intervention strategies and disciplinary measures for violations of the School Uniforms Policy.

VIII. EXEMPTIONS

Request for Exemptions and Appeals

A parent who objects to the school uniform policy because of his or her religious belief must obtain a copy of the policy on School Uniforms, a Request for Exemption Form, complete the form and return it to the school. The principal shall review the form and accept or deny the request for exemption. If the principal is considering denying the request, he or she must first send a letter to the parent requesting a meeting to discuss and clarify the reason for the exemption request. The parent/legal guardian must meet with the principal within three school days of receiving the letter. The principal must accept or deny the request within two school days of meeting with the parent/legal guardian. If

the principal denies the request, he or she must give the parent a written basis for the decision.

The parent can appeal a principal's denial of the request for exemption to the CEO (or designee) within two days of receiving the principal's denial. The CEO's designee shall be the Manager in the Office of Student Hearings and Appeals. The designee must meet with the parent within five school days of receipt of the request for appeal, and must render a decision within five school days of meeting with the parents. If the CEO's Designee also denies the request, he or she must provide a written basis for the decision.

- A. A religious exemption can be based on the religion of the parent or the religion of the child, but the parent must apply for the exemption in either case.
- B. A strongly-held belief such as a philosophy or set of moral principles that guides a person's decision about his or her life or lifestyle is not necessarily grounds for an exemption.
- C. Example of an Exemption Request

Mr. Ali requests an exemption for his daughter. He states that he is a member of the Islamic faith, and his religion requires women to cover their heads and all parts of their bodies except their face, hands, and feet when in public. Furthermore, Mr. Ali believes that wearing the traditional Islamic dress will allow his child to fulfill these requirements. He believes that the school uniform is not sufficient to meet the requirements set forth by the Islamic faith because parts of young women's bodies that Islam requires to be covered will not be covered.

In this example, the parent identified his religion and one of its beliefs or tenets and indicated how he believed wearing the school uniform conflicts with one of his religion's beliefs.

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Legal Refs.: ORC 3313.665

Cross Refs.: Student Code of Conduct