

6.310 School Uniforms and Dress Codes

Policy

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I. PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for the wearing of school uniforms.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students in Memphis City Schools.

III. POLICY STATEMENT

Memphis City Schools believes that a positive school learning environment is a major factor in high student achievement. There are many factors that lead to a positive learning environment. Safety, discipline and school unity are three of those factors. Memphis City Schools believes that wearing school uniforms is one way to achieve all three of these goals. School uniforms, which refers to wearing the same style and color of dress, can create a safer environment because they help to identify students who belong on a school campus, thus making it easier to identify nonschool persons who may be on the campus for disruptive purposes. They 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 divisions 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.

III. POLICY

Beginning in Fall 2002 all Memphis City Schools students will be required to wear a school uniform. The specific uniform will be determined by the school district, local schools, parents and students. All uniforms shall be "inexpensive and readily available for all students" (TCA 49-1-302). 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 Memphis community. 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 reasons in writing to the school principal. Students who wear the traditional dress of their religion shall not be required to wear school uniforms. Parents who object to school uniforms because of other strongly-held beliefs must also submit their reasons in writing to the school principal.

Memphis City Schools also encourages the wearing of proper attire at schools. Attire that disrupts the learning environment or creates a potential safety hazard is not permitted. This prohibition includes attire

that is too large or too small, too short, or too revealing. Principals shall have the authority to determine proper attire for their schools, including proper attire when school uniforms are not worn.

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

IV. RESPONSIBILITY

A. The Office of the Deputy Superintendent is responsible for monitoring compliance with the school uniform policy and for evaluating its effectiveness.

B. The Office of the Deputy Superintendent is responsible for administering programs for parents who cannot afford to purchase school uniforms for their children. The Department is also responsible for coordinating these programs with school leadership councils.

C. School leadership councils are responsible for prescribing local school uniform standards that vary from districtwide standards and for establishing school dress codes. The councils are also responsible for establishing uniform banks at their schools for parents who cannot afford to pay the 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. Principals are responsible for enforcing dress codes at their schools.

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

G. Students are responsible for following the school uniform and dress codes policy.

Legal References:

1. TCA 49-1-302 (j)

Cross References:

6.310 School Uniforms and Dress Codes

I. SCHOOL UNIFORMS AND DRESS CODES

1. Basic Uniform

-The basic uniform shall be tan, navy blue or black pants, skirt or jumper and a white long sleeve or short sleeve shirt with a collar (polo style, dress style, or turtleneck). A student can wear any combination of the official colors.

-Pants must be straight-legged or boot cut. Full-length pants, cropped pants, cargo pants and straight-legged capri pants are permitted. Denim jeans, pedal pushers, and bell bottoms are not permitted.

-Walking shorts are permitted for elementary, middle/junior high and high school students. (Walking shorts are straight-legged shorts that are at the knee.)

-Pants must fit at the waist and not be oversized or undersized (e.g., Baggy pants, sagging pants, tights, or pants made of spandex are prohibited.). If belts are worn they must be fitted and put through belt loops.

-Skirts or jumpers must be at or below the knee.

-Shirts must be tucked on the inside unless they are made to be worn over pants or skirts.

-T-shirts may be worn as undergarments. They must be solid white or one of the additional colors approved by the school leadership council.

-Light jackets, vests, shirts, sweaters, sweat shirts, and cardigans are permitted as items that may be worn over the uniform top. They must be white, tan, navy blue, black or one of the additional colors approved by the school leadership council.

- No denim material may be worn as uniform clothing.

-All uniform clothing must be plain without any manufacturer's logos, brand names, pictures, or insignias visible on the clothing.

-Shoes can have heels no higher than one and one-half inches. Athletic shoes, sandals with straps on the heel, and boots are permitted.

-Heavy coats, heavy jackets and raincoats are not covered by these regulations and are not to be worn during the school day unless permitted by the principal for special circumstances.

2. School leadership councils may approve additional styles and colors for the uniform top if the change is school-related and is consistent with district and school dress codes. School leadership councils may also approve of days or events when school uniforms will not be required. Middle/junior high and high school



students must provide input in decisions regarding local changes in school uniforms. A student will not be out of compliance if he/she wears the districtwide uniform rather than the local school's uniform.

3. Students may wear the uniforms of nationally-recognized student organizations at their schools on days specified by the organization (e.g., Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts).
4. The school district and local schools must inform parents of the availability of financial assistance if they cannot afford to purchase school uniforms at competitive prices.
5. Violation of the school uniform policy shall not affect a student's academic or conduct grade.
6. School leadership councils shall establish dress codes consistent with the districtwide policy on dress codes.
7. Parent complaints about the school uniform policy and the school dress code shall be reported to the principal or a designee.
8. The Division of Exceptional Children can decide whether any student(s) should be exempt from the School Uniforms Policy due to a student's exceptionality.
9. The school uniform policy shall be in effect during both the school year and the Summer Program.

II. COMPLIANCE

Schools may use the following behavioral intervention strategies and disciplinary measures for violations of the School Uniforms and Dress Codes policy.

- a. classroom and school-wide intervention strategies (It is expected that the initial intervention will be a call to the parent/guardian.)
- b. confiscation of item and/or loss of privileges
- c. detention/Saturday school
- d. in school suspension
- e. overnight suspension/parent or guardian conference in lieu of suspension

A student will not be out of compliance if failure to wear uniform clothing is due to the student's or parent's severe financial hardship. Parents and students must be informed of the availability of financial assistance if they cannot afford to purchase a school uniform at competitive prices.

III. EXEMPTIONS

A. Request for Exemption and Appeals

A parent who objects to the school uniform because of his or her religion, religious belief or because of a strongly-held belief (i.e., philosophy or moral principle) must obtain a copy of the policy on School Uniforms and Dress Codes, a Request for Exemption form and an Exemption Questionnaire from the school, complete the form and questionnaire, and return them to the school. The principal shall review the form and questionnaire 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 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. 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 Superintendent (or designee) within two days of receiving the principal's denial. The Superintendent's designee shall be the Academic Superintendent in the Office of the Deputy Superintendent. The Academic Superintendent must meet with the parents 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 Academic Superintendent also denies the request, he or she must provide a written basis for the decision.

The parent may make a final appeal to the Board of Commissioners and ask the Board to review the written record of the request for exemption and the denials. This appeal must be made within five school days of the Academic Superintendent's denial of the appeal. The Board may hold a hearing on the exemption request at its discretion. The decision of the Board of Commissioners is final. A student will remain in school in the dress style recommended by the parent until the appeal is final.

- B. 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.
- C. A strongly-held belief is a philosophy or a set of moral principles that guides a person's decision about his/her life or lifestyle.
- D. 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. 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.