

The effects of school uniforms on school climate in elementary schools

---

A Dissertation  
Submitted to  
The Temple University Graduate Board

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirement for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

---

by  
Alexis McGloin  
January 2009

©

Copyright

2009

by

Alexis McGloin

ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTS OF SCHOOL UNIFORMS ON SCHOOL CLIMATE IN  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

By Alexis McGloin

Doctor of Education

Temple University

January 2009

Major Advisor: Vivian Ikpa, Ph.D.

This research sought to explore the link between mandatory school uniforms and a positive school climate. Beginning in the late 1980's public schools implemented mandatory school uniforms policies in urban school districts. The trend gained momentum when President Clinton included school uniforms in his 1996 State of the Union Address. Directly following the speech was a publication by the United States Department of Education on school uniforms that was distributed to all school districts in the country. Often the primary reason for implementing school uniforms was gang violence. Other reason included increased school safety and decreases in violence. Further, proponents believed uniforms would increase academic achievement and improve school climate. Research on the effects of school uniforms is limited and conflicting. Most studies available to date were conducted in urban settings. However, school uniforms have infiltrated rural and suburban schools districts as well.

Two school districts in suburban Eastern Pennsylvania participated in this study. One school district had a mandatory school uniform policy. The other did not. Using a

school climate survey and school uniform questionnaire, students in grades 4-6 and elementary school teachers rated the school climate in their respective schools. School climate was rated on seven subscales on the student school climate survey and 10 subscales on the faculty school climate survey. A t-test was performed on the data set to determine the difference between sample means and a factor analysis was conducted on the student school climate survey. Further, three themes emerged from the short answer questions on the student uniform questionnaire.

The results of the research found that there was not a statistically significant relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and elementary school students' perceptions of school climate. Of the seven subscales, students who wore school uniforms rated their peer relationships higher than students without school uniforms. Additionally, they rated the required rigor higher. Students that did not wear school uniforms rated the teacher-student relationship higher. When responding to the open ended questions, three themes emerged. They were expression, atmosphere and family. In essence, students were not in favor of wearing uniforms and believed uniforms suppressed their freedom of expression. Teachers responded similarly. The results showed no statistically significant relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and teacher perceptions of school climate. Only two subscales showed any significant difference between the two groups of teachers. They were teacher-administrator relationship and student achievement. In both respects, teachers in the district without uniforms responded more positively. The results of this study should be used when reviewing current policy or considering new policy on school uniforms.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I respectfully acknowledge several people without whose contributions I could not have completed this dissertation.

Dr. Vivian Ikpa – As my major advisor and instructor for many courses, she provided invaluable guidance and support throughout my schooling and this phase of the process.

Dr. Joseph DuCette – As a member of my dissertation committee, he assisted me with the framework for my study and played an integral role of the analysis of my data. I am grateful for all of the direction he gave me.

Dr. James Davis – As another member of my dissertation committee, he offered support and guidance throughout my time at Temple University.

Dr. Robert Mesaros – A mentor and colleague offered advice and allowed me the latitude to complete my thesis, especially when I needed the motivation.

Geraldine Mazzarella – As my co-worker and friend, her assistance with this dissertation and recreation of the surveys was invaluable.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Sean, whose affection, guidance and unending support allowed me to succeed. His friendship and love sustained me through it all.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Research Questions.....	5
Limitation.....	5
Assumptions.....	6
Definitions.....	6
Need for Study.....	7
Organization of the Study.....	8
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	
Definition of School Uniforms.....	9
Background on School Uniforms.....	11
Advantages of School Uniforms.....	14
Disadvantages of School Uniforms.....	17
Research Findings.....	18
Policy Issues Related to School Uniforms.....	22
School Climate and School Uniforms.....	26

The Impact of School Climate on Academic Achievement.....	27
The influence of school climate on behavior .....	28
Summary .....	30
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
Background .....	31
Research Questions .....	33
Population and Size.....	34
School District Information .....	35
School Profiles .....	36
Instrumentation and Data Collection .....	37
WINSS Elementary Student School Climate Survey .....	37
WINSS Staff School Climate Survey .....	38
Student and Staff School Uniform Questionnaire .....	39
Data Collection .....	40
Data Analysis .....	40
Summary .....	41
4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	
Sample Data .....	42
Results.....	43
Student Survey Results .....	43
Factor Analysis of Student Climate Survey.....	48
Student-Teacher Relationship.....	49

Peer Relationships.....	49
Rigor .....	50
School Uniform Questionnaire .....	51
Open Ended Question Results .....	52
Expression.....	53
Atmosphere .....	55
Family .....	57
Teacher Survey Results.....	58
Teacher-Administrator Relationship.....	59
Student Achievement .....	60
School Uniform Questionnaire .....	61
Open Ended Questions.....	62
Summary.....	62
 5. DISCUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
Discussion.....	64
Research Question 1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and elementary school students' perceptions of a school climate?.....	65
Research Question 2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and faculty perception of a positive school climate? .....	70

Implications.....	73
Creation of New School Uniforms Policies.....	73
Review of Current School Uniform Policies .....	74
Curricular Implication.....	75
Conclusions and Recommendations .....	75
REFERENCES .....	78
APPENDIX.....	85

## LIST OF TABLES

Table .....	Pages
1 Descriptive Data on School Samples.....	36
2 Descriptive Data on Student Sample .....	42
3 Descriptive Data on Teacher Sample.....	43
4 School Climate Student Survey Results Section 1 .....	44
5 School Climate Student Survey Results Section 2 .....	45
6 School Climate Student Survey Results Section 3 .....	47
7 Factor Analysis of Student Climate Survey.....	48
8 Student School Uniform Questionnaire .....	51
9 Teacher School Climate Subscale Results .....	58
10 Teacher School Uniform Questionnaire .....	62

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The school uniform trend began in the late 1980's when urban school districts began exploring the idea. Schools in Baltimore, Maryland and Washington D.C. experimented with uniforms as early as 1987. The phenomena continued in the 1990's with Long Beach Unified Schools requiring all elementary and middle school students to wear uniforms in 1995. It was the first school district in the country to do so. President Clinton furthered the initiative with his 1996 State of the Union Address. He declared,

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 student to wear uniforms. (White, 2000)

This statement prompted the development of The Manual on School Uniforms (U.S. Department of Education, 1996). The manual was distributed to all school districts in the United States. It contained a users' guide to adopting a school uniform policy. After the release of the manual, it was estimated that as many as twenty-five percent of the nation's public elementary, middle, and junior high schools were expected to implement a dress-related policy during the 1997-1998 school year (Issacson, 1998). Additionally, according to the Educational Commission on the States, 12 states enacted legislation in 1996 regarding uniforms and dress codes. In 1998, the number of states with schools utilizing uniform and dress code language rose to 25. In 2001, the number increased to 30. Since 1996, California has altered its legislation, becoming stricter and including timelines for parent notification. A few states included the requirement of committee

formation, placement on a ballot, or the allowance of student exemption on the dates nationally recognized youth-organizations had scheduled functions. Of the 30 states with schools utilizing school uniform policies, only California, Illinois, and Texas required an opt-out clause to be incorporated into the uniform policy. Forty percent of the states required that districts include a provision to assist economically disadvantaged students in obtaining school uniforms (Education Commission on the States, 2001). By 2004, the number of states speaking to school uniforms or dress codes had not changed. However, Maryland authorized one district in the state to require uniforms (Education Commission on the States, 2004).

Current research in the area of school uniforms resides primarily in the urban middle school setting, although a few studies research high schools and elementary schools. To date the studies examine gang violence, discipline, attendance and socioeconomic effects. However, two studies investigated the relationship of school uniforms and school climate. In 2000, Murray used National Association of Secondary School Administrator's Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments School Climate Survey (CASE) to research the relationship between school climate and school uniforms in urban middle schools. He found that students in schools with school uniforms had a significantly more positive perception of security and maintenance, teacher relationships, parent and community-school relationships. Wade and Stafford (2003) also studied the relationship between school climate and school uniforms as part of a research study. They reproduced the Murray study using the same instrument. The findings conflicted with the findings in the Murray study. Again surveying urban

middle schools students using the NASSP's School Climate Survey, they found that there was no significant difference between the school climate in schools with and without uniforms in the areas of security and maintenance, teacher relationships, parent and community-school relationships.

This study researched the relationship between school climate and school uniforms in elementary schools. School climate affects many areas studied by past researchers. Lindelow, Mazzarella, Scott, Ellis, and Smith (1989) found a significant relationship between school climate and student performance. Wang, Haertel, and Walber (1997), believe that a school's culture and climate are important because they significantly affect and influence student behavior and learning. This study utilized a population that has not been studied in the past, suburban and rural elementary schools, while studying an area— school uniforms— that has limited research findings.

#### Statement of the Problem

Beginning in the late 1980's urban school districts began implementing school uniform policies. Often the primary reason for establishing a school uniform policy was gang violence. Uniforms were looked to as an answer to gang activity associated with dress. The 1999 tragedy in Columbine, as well as similar incidents in other schools, furthered the initiative. Executive director of the National School Safety Center, Ronald D. Stephens said, "In the wake of school shootings, community and schools are much more willing to embrace uniforms as well as a number of other strategies to enhance student safety" (White, 2000). Many other positive reasons were touted for implementing a school uniform policy. School safety and decreases in violence also

spurred the policy implementation. Additionally, there was a belief that academic achievement would increase and school uniforms would promote a positive school climate.

Following President Clinton's 1996 State of the Union Address and The United States Department of Education's The Manual on School Uniforms publication in 1996, the Pennsylvania State Legislature passed a law on April 27, 1998 stating:

The board of directors in any school entity may impose limitations on dress and may require pupils to wear standard dress or uniforms. Dress policies may be applicable throughout the school entity or may be applicable to one or more school buildings within the school entity. (Pennsylvania State Law, Ch 46, §1317.3, 1998)

These events prompted many school districts in Northeastern Pennsylvania, as well as throughout the country, to mandate school uniforms. In the 1999-2000 school year, one urban elementary school in Northeastern Pennsylvania piloted school uniforms. The following school year many schools in the same district enacted the policy. A few outlying school districts similarly followed suit. To date, every district in the suburban areas surrounding the urban district has enacted a uniform policy. The research behind this surge was largely anecdotal. When districts enacted the policies only a few conflicting research studies were available on the topic. It is assumed that the implementation occurred due to the positive reasons touted in many journal articles. These reasons included a decrease in violence, promoting a sense of belonging, and reducing the socioeconomic effects (Holloman & LaPoint, 1993; Mancini, 1997; Portner, 1996). Data are lacking in the area of school uniforms. The research that is available is conflicting.

## Research Questions

Student and faculty views of a mandatory uniform program were analyzed to determine whether a mandatory school uniform policy improves the school climate in elementary schools.

Two basic research questions were answered:

- (a) Is there a statistically significant relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and elementary school students' perceptions of a school climate?
- (b) Is there a statistically significant relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and faculty perception of a positive school climate?

The researcher believed that the faculty would have a stronger belief that a mandatory school uniform policy directly influences school culture than the students. Further, the researcher believed that school uniforms would have a positive influence on school climate.

## Limitations

There were limitations to this study. Due to lack of minorities in the schools surveyed, minority populations were underrepresented in this study. The study was conducted in suburban schools; therefore, data for urban and rural schools were excluded from the study. Additionally, the survey was completed by fourth, fifth and sixth grade students in two schools districts in Eastern Pennsylvania. The age group of the students was a limitation in this study. The research focused on grades 4, 5, and 6 since younger students are difficult to assess with any reliability. The validity and reliability

information on the survey was not available. This factor could have adversely affected the results of the study. Finally, the principal of the uniform school retired shortly after the research was conducted. This fact could have had an adverse effect on the study.

#### Assumptions

It was assumed that any other programs put into place since the inception of school uniforms in the school district with uniforms had no effect on school climate. It was also assumed that students in the district without school uniforms could understand the impact school uniforms would have on their school.

#### Definitions

The following are defined for the purpose of this dissertation:

1. School Uniforms: Joseph (1986) defines school uniforms as clothing that (a) serves as a group emblem, (b) reveals and conceals status position, (c) certifies legitimacy by revealing the group relationship between the wearer and organization, and (d) suppresses individuality.
2. Suburban School: Suburb of a city having 10,000 or more people (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2001)
3. Urban School: City with 10,000 or more people (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2001)
4. Rural School: Rural or small town (less than 10,000 people) that is not a suburb (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2001)
5. Successful School Uniform Policy: A statistically significant relationship between school uniforms and school climate.

6. Unsuccessful School Uniform Policy: A statistically insignificant relationship between school uniforms and school climate.
7. Opt-out Policy: According to the Manual on School Uniforms (U.S. Department of Education, 1996), an opt-out provision allows students the ability to opt out of wearing uniforms normally with parental consent. States such as Illinois require a parent opt-out provision on religious grounds. Texas requires an opt-out provision if the parent or guardian provides a written statement that, as determined by the board of trustees, states a bona fide religious or philosophical objection to the requirement (Education Commission on the States, 1998).
8. School Climate: Although there is no formal definition for school climate, Lindelow et al. (1989) cite two definitions other researchers gave for school climate. Brookover and his colleagues describe school climate as the composite of norms, expectations, and beliefs which characterize the school system as perceived by members of the social system. Halpin and Croft say that school climate is the “personality” of the school. Loukas (2007) defined school climate as the feelings and attitudes that are elicited by a school’s environment.

#### Need for Study

There is a paucity of research on school uniforms. Most studies available to date were quantitative in nature. One consistent theme occurred throughout the research, all were conducted in urban settings. Although uniforms have also permeated into suburban as well as rural areas, no research was conducted in the latter two settings. The existing studies are conflicting. A study conducted by Stanley (1996) saw a decrease in crime and

improvement in student behavior while a study by Brunnsma and Rockquemore (1998) found uniforms did not effectively deter crime and behavior. Murray (1997) studied school climate, and discovered that students had a more positive view of school climate when they wore school uniforms.

Due to lack of data and conflicting results, one can only postulate the benefits or shortcomings of school uniforms. Research on students' perception in elementary school is absent. Of the few studies available, only two surveyed students. Both studies occurred in a middle school setting. Further, a void of research occurs in rural and suburban settings. None of the research studies examined the effects of uniforms in these domains.

#### Organization of the Study

An explanation of this study is found in the remaining chapters. Chapter 2 details the relevant literature available for this study. It includes the existing research as well as the relevant articles on the topic. Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive view of the methodology for this research paper. The research design, sample, data collection procedures, and statistical analysis procedures are incorporated in this section. Chapter 4 outlines the survey instrument utilized and details the findings of the research. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the investigation and conclusions drawn from the data analysis. Additionally, recommendations for further research are included.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of related research will cover the background on school uniforms including the definition of school uniforms. Further, it will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of school uniforms cited in educational papers. The pros and cons of school uniforms are the premise for all research on the topic. Therefore, after the rationale for school uniforms, research studies will be reviewed. These studies spurred educational policy on school uniforms, which will be the next portion of the review. One of the focus areas in school uniform research is the effects on school climate. Three research studies on this topic will be reviewed. Finally, the connection between school climate, discipline and student achievement will be discussed as they are areas that are studied when reviewing school uniforms as well.

#### Definition of School Uniforms

Joseph (1986) defined school uniforms as clothing that: (a) Serves as a group emblem, (b) reveals and conceals status position, (c) certifies legitimacy by revealing the relationship between the wearer and organization, and (d) suppresses individuality.

Kaiser (1985) further defined the four prerequisites set forth by Joseph. Uniforms are an emblem of an organization since they depict of the organization itself. Districts with uniform policies allow members to identify with each other. Children wear the same uniform and therefore identify with one another. Second, uniforms reveal and conceal status. For this reason, uniforms are thought to eliminate social classes in school.

Theoretically, it would be impossible to differentiate between wealthy and poor children when they are in uniform.

Third, uniforms legitimize one's role in an organization through the certification of group membership. When students are dressed in uniform they represent their school. This is true whether they are in the school building or on the street. People are able to identify where children attend school and can then contact the building with concerns. Lastly, uniforms suppress individuality. Joseph stated that a uniform may lead to a sense of depersonalization as it ensures conformity to organizational ideology. Courts have generally ruled against the individual in favor of the organization. Hence, when people become part of an organization, their personal interests become subordinate to the organizational welfare. School uniform policies are consistent with this definition. Currently, courts consistently have ruled in favor of school districts stating that it is imperative that districts have the ability to stress the improved educational process and safety in their buildings.

School uniform policies in public schools are not recent phenomena. Beginning in the late 1980's urban school districts began implementing school uniform policies. By 2001, thirty states enacted legislation on school uniforms. Gang violence often was the catalyst for establishing a school uniform policy. Uniforms were looked at as an answer to gang activity associated with dress. The 1999 tragedy in Columbine, as well as other districts, furthered the initiative. Ronald D. Stephens, executive director of the National School Safety Center, said, "In the wake of school shootings, community and schools are much more willing to embrace uniforms as well as a number of other strategies to

enhance student safety” (White, 2000). This and many more suggested reasons for school uniforms provoked research on the topic. Empirical data are lacking on the school uniform trend. An extensive literature review only produced a few research studies on the topics. All of the data available were collected in urban locations. Further, the middle level is the source for a majority of the data.

### Background on School Uniforms

School uniforms date back to the nineteenth and early twentieth century in both public and private schools. However, until recently, school uniforms were traditionally attached to boarding schools, private schools and parochial schools. The public school uniform trend began with a grassroots movement in Baltimore, MD. Cherry Hill Elementary School voluntarily donned school uniforms in September of 1987 as part of a community effort to cut clothing costs and curb social pressures in the low-to-middle income area (Million, 1996). School districts in Washington, DC followed suit shortly after. By 1989, 74% of the public schools in Baltimore had implemented policies on school uniforms. In addition, 32 public schools in Washington, DC, 44 schools in Miami, Florida, and 30 schools in Detroit, Michigan had voluntary or mandatory uniforms at the elementary and middle/junior high school level (Harris, 1989).

Similar trends occurred at the secondary school level. Norfolk Public Schools became the first school system in the state of Virginia to mandate school uniforms at the secondary level (Hoffler-Riddick & Lassiter, 1996). During the 1995-1996 school year one middle school was required to wear school uniforms. Probably the most publicized school district in the country mandating school uniforms is the Long Beach Unified

School District (LBUS). In 1994, this school system became the first district in the country to require uniforms in all elementary and middle schools (Cohn, 1996). Lopez (2003) stated that speaking on behalf of the recommendation by the LBUS, board member Edward Eveland wrote:

We, Board Members, believe school uniforms at the elementary and middle school level will simplify proper dress for school business, which is, indeed, very serious business. We know that dress significantly influences behavior. In education, we have seen its influence on dress-up days and color days. We have also seen in the schools that have adopted uniforms a “coming together,” greater school pride, and better behavior in and out of the classroom. Moreover, with the complete elimination of gang attire, all of the students are safer, less intimidated or threatened.

In May of 2000, the Philadelphia School District became the first big-city public school system to require all students to wear uniforms. Schools in Philadelphia were being given until September 2001 before they or their students were punished for failing to comply with the new sartorial mandate (Johnston, 2000).

Initially, the decision to implement school uniforms often was spurred by gang violence in these urban areas. Uniforms were looked at as a solution to gang activity associated with dress. Holloman (1995) further developed this statement by acknowledging that violence today is not limited to gang activity. Students were assaulted and robbed at knife and gunpoint and killed over their clothing. In his 1996 State of the Union Address, President Clinton declared:

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. (White, 2000, p.54)

The president's statement spurred the development of The Manual on School Uniforms (U.S. Department of Education, 1996). The department distributed a manual to all school districts in the United States. It contained a users' guide to adopting a school uniform policy. The guide was provided to assist parents, teachers, and school leaders in determining whether to adopt a school uniform policy. It included an outline of steps and measures districts should consider throughout implementation. The first major phase was to get parents involved from the beginning. In writing the policy, districts also should protect students' religious expression and students' other rights of expression. Further, districts should determine whether to have a voluntary or mandatory school policy. If the policy is mandatory, the district must decide if there is going to be an opt-out clause. The manual stated that schools should not require students to wear a message and should assist families that need financial assistance. Finally, uniforms should be treated as a part of an overall safety program. After the release of the manual, it was estimated that as many as 25% of the nation's public elementary, middle, and junior high schools were expected to implement a dress-related policy during the 1997-1998 school year (Isaacson, 1998).

In 1996, according to the Educational Commission of the States, 12 states enacted legislation on uniforms and dress codes. They included the major states already affected by school uniform policies. California, Louisiana, Washington, and Texas each allowed for a uniform policy with the stipulation that an opt-out policy be included. Minnesota, New Jersey and Utah allowed for the mandatory policy without an opt-out clause (Education Commission on the States, 1996). In 1998, the number of state policies

containing uniform and dress code language rose to 25. California altered its legislation from 1996, becoming stricter and including timelines for parent notification. A few states included the requirement of committee formation, placement on a ballot, or the allowance of student exemption on the days nationally recognized youth-organizations had scheduled functions. In 2001, the number increased to 30. Of the 30 states, only California, Illinois, and Texas required an opt-out clause be incorporated into the uniform policy. Forty percent of the states required that districts included a provision to assist economically disadvantaged students in obtaining school uniforms (Education Commission on the States, 2001).

Pennsylvania State law is fairly lenient and allows districts to enact uniform policies using their own discretion. The law was passed on April 27, 1998. It stated:

The board of directors in any school entity may impose limitations on dress and may require pupils to wear standard dress or uniforms. Dress policies may be applicable throughout the school entity or may be applicable to one or more school buildings within the school entity (Pennsylvania State Law, PL 198-446).

Due to the wording of the law, districts in Pennsylvania may require mandatory school uniforms without an opt-out clause, which allows students to opt-out of wearing uniforms, or a provision for disadvantaged students.

#### Advantages of School Uniforms

Schools with school uniforms tout many positive reasons for implementation of the program. LaPoint and Holloman (1993) believed that grades, attendance, and attention to instruction suffer when dress is overemphasized. Further, they stated

Some youngsters will delay or not purchase books and supplies, instead using their money for clothing, accessories, or hairstyling. Others may

skip school or work long hours after school –or worse, become involved in illegal activities—to finance fashionable wardrobes (p.32).

Uniforms lessen the competition allowing for less peer pressure. Urban school leaders reported it also helps to take the emphasis off the things that are not related to academics (White, 2000).

Others cited a decrease in violence and suspensions at schools with uniform policies. School officials at Rogers Middle School, part of the LBUS, said fights declined by 40% after uniform implementation (Portner, 1996). Carl Cohn (1996), superintendent of LBUS, stated that crime decreased by 36%. Furthermore, 9% fewer suspensions were recorded after the first year of implementation. Lopez (2003) reported that five years after the implementation of a mandatory school uniform policy, the overall crime rate dropped approximately 86%. Additionally, Portner reported that leaders at Rogers Middle School felt the uniforms tend to bolster safety because it makes it easier to spot people who may not belong on campus. Viadero (2005) stated that in Prince George’s County schools educators and parents concur with Portner. One security officer in the district believed the uniform policy made it easier for him to spot outsiders and another resource teacher stated helps her find students who try to ditch class and head home.

Uniforms promote a feeling of belonging and reduce socioeconomic effects (LaPoint & Holloman, 1993; Mancini, 1997). In addition, uniforms decrease clothing costs. Many felt that uniforms allowed students to focus on academics and promote a working environment. “It’s helped to set an atmosphere that school is a place of learning and a place of business” according to Margo Olivares-Seck, superintendent of Dysart

Unified School District (White, 2000, p. 37). Students entered the school ready to learn (Caruso, 1996; Cohn, 1996; Stanley, 1996). Mancini quoted Khrista Kahl, a middle school teacher in the LBUS, as finding the chance to see the potential in every student because of uniforms. Ms. Kahl believed that instead of limiting the individuality of students, uniforms in her school helped them stand out.

Bodine (2003) stated in her ethnographic study that reduction of family stress was one of the most commonly given reasons for supporting school uniforms. On a school questionnaire, 88% of parents agreed to the statement ‘School uniforms make getting ready for school in the morning easier’. Further, 45% of elementary students and 64% of middle school students agreed to the statement. Through her research, she found that parents who opposed uniforms differed from parents who support uniforms by greater affluence, fewer children per family, greater spacing between children, more likely to have a stay-at-home parent or parent who works part-time, and more likely to have household help (p. 56).

Caruso (1996) stated that uniforms increase student attendance. Lopez (2003) reported that four years after requiring school uniforms in every elementary and middle school in LBUS, the percent of actual attendance reached almost 95%. This rate is noted as the highest point in the 18 years that the district has maintained statistics.

One of the primary reasons for implementing a school uniform program at the onset of the uniform trend was to reduce gang violence. The findings to date show mixed results. Chaika (1999) reported a significant drop in gang violence in Chicago school that adopted school uniforms. Wade and Stafford (2003) found that teachers perceive

statistically significant lower levels of gang presence in schools with uniforms than schools without uniforms. However, in the Wade and Stafford study the findings also indicated that perceptions of gang presence did not vary for students across uniform policy.

#### Disadvantages of School Uniforms

Caruso (1996) delineated some negative effects of school uniforms. He stated that school uniforms could be used as a tool of administrative power and might cause economic hardship to needy families. He also posited that uniforms would not deter violence or gang activity. Lumsden (2001, p.4) quoted Stephanie Forest as saying instituting uniforms to stop violence is like putting “a bandage on an enormous wound, instead of attempting to find ways of truly dealing with the bleeding.” Caruso also remarked that social classes among students would remain.

The most compelling arguments against school uniforms have been made by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Their Texas court complaint against the Forney Independent School District uniform policy included many violations of the constitution. The seven-count ACLU complaint argued violation of First Amendment Rights based on the students freedom of expression; Ninth Amendment violation of both students’ and parents’ rights of privacy; and denial of students’ and parents’ religious freedom under the free exercise clause of the First Amendment (ACLU, 2000). When the ACLU unsuccessfully represented a set of students pro bono in Arizona, Vernon Peltz, their attorney, stated, “students everywhere should be concerned about the court’s

holding that their school is not a public forum and that, for something as silly as a uniform, their right to free speech may be infringed” (Zirkel, 1998, p. 550).

Students need to learn to make choices and decisions based on internal values, rather than depending upon arbitrary rules that set limits for them. This was the only way students could learn to think for themselves and develop self-discipline, state Norman Isaacs, principal of Milikan Middle School (Paliokas & Rist, 1996, p.29). He added student dress is considered a barometer of what is happening in a student’s life and dress can signal drug use, sexual abuse, and gang membership.

#### Research Findings

Empirical data are lacking on the effects of school uniforms on schooling. Of the few studies that exist, urban settings are typically used. Only one study was conducted at the elementary level. The results to date are mixed. On issues such as crime and student behavior, Stanley (1996) saw a decrease in crime and improved students’ behaviors while Brunσμα and Rockquemore (1998) found uniforms were not effective in deterring crime and behavior. Pate (1999) researched disciplinary infractions in urban and rural elementary and middle school districts. The study found no decrease in truancy and in-school suspensions for elementary school students. Similarly, there was not a significant decrease in discipline infractions for middle school students. Elder (1999) found that the discipline referrals decreased from 1139 to 850 and 1565 to 405 between 1997-1998 and 1998-1999 in two middle schools in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Stanley (1996) presented a longitudinal study of school uniforms compiled by Long Beach Unified Schools (LBUS). A survey assessed perceptions of students,

teachers, administrators, and parents. Perceptions of adults, particularly administrators, were very positive. They perceived the school environment to be improved. Students' perceptions were not as positive. Brunσμα and Rockquemore (1998) hypothesized that school uniforms would have a positive effect on student behavior, attendance, substance abuse, and academic achievement. Based on the evidence, the authors believed that implementing uniform policies in the high school would not create the desired outcomes.

When Stanley (1996) compared figures from the 1993-1994 school year to the 1994-1995 at LBUS, she found a 28% reduction in suspensions. The decrease in crimes was also very encouraging. For example, assault/battery decreased by 34%; assault with a deadly weapon decreased by 50%; fighting decreased by 51%; and possession of chemical substances decreased by 69%. While these findings opposed the Brunσμα and Rockquemore (1998) findings, Stanley concluded her study by stating that the trend of school violence may have been at its peak and ready to decline. Therefore, the decrease in violence may not be due to the implementation of uniforms. Stanley believed the results might represent the "Hawthorne effect", with changes resulting from short-term visibility. Brunσμα and Rockquemore determined, due to their findings, that the nature and magnitude of the support behind the mandatory uniform policies of districts such as LBUS seem to illustrate the quick fix nature of school reform policies of the 1990's. Contrary discussion on their part suggested the possibility of uniforms indirectly affecting specific outcomes by acting as a catalyst for change and providing highly visible opportunities for additional programs.

In 1997, Murray took a different approach to studying school uniforms. He researched the impact of school uniforms on school climate. This added a new twist to school uniform research but still encompassed the same factors. The study included middle school students in two similar middle schools with contrasting views on school uniforms. Students in the school with uniforms rated their school climate as more positive on nine of ten subscales on the National Association of Secondary School Administrator's Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments (CASE) School Climate Survey. These students had a significantly more positive perception of security and maintenance, teacher relationships, parent and community-school relationships. Wade and Stafford (2003) disputed the perceived positive effects on school climate reported by Murray in 1997. Using the same survey instrument, CASE, Wade and Stafford found no statistically significant difference in student responses to teacher-student relationship, security and maintenance, student behavioral values and instructional management. Both Murray and Wade and Stafford found no differences in the student-peer relationship subscale.

Murray (1997) concluded that all practitioners who wish for an effective school should consider school uniforms as an opportunity to improve their school climate. Although the Stanley (1996) and Murray studies measured different variables, they had similar positive findings about school uniforms. The Brunσμα and Rockquemore (1998) and Wade and Stafford (2003) findings disputed both of these studies.

Two studies investigated the effects of school uniforms on gang violence. The findings to date show mixed results. Chaika (1999) reported a significant drop in gang

violence in Chicago schools that adopted school uniforms. Wade and Stafford (2003) found that teachers perceive statistically significant lower levels of gang presence in schools with uniforms than schools without uniforms. However, in the Wade and Stafford study the findings also indicated that perceptions of gang presence did not vary for students across uniform policy.

The majority of research to date focused on student, administrator, and teacher perspectives. Only one study focused on attitudes of parents about school uniforms. West, Tidwell, Bomba, and Elmore (1999) surveyed parents of fourth grade students at all local schools in Lafayette County, Mississippi. None of the schools were uniform buildings. Fifty-six percent of the parents favored or strongly favored school uniforms, while 26% either opposed or strongly opposed the uniforms. Most parents strongly agreed with the idea that uniforms eliminate visible differences in family economic and social background. There was a positive correlation between total family income and the statement “Uniforms cost less than other types of clothing” (p.95). More parents in the survey disagreed with the idea that uniforms enhance a child’s self-concept than agreed, but the opposite occurred when asked about positive effects of uniforms on school climate. The implications of the study, according to the authors, clearly showed strong comments from parents that should be considered by school boards and administrators in the decision-making process.

Wade and Stafford (2003) focused part of their study on the self-perception of urban middle school students who wear school uniforms. They found that students in schools without uniforms had a higher self-perception than students in schools with

uniforms. They explained their findings by stating that adolescence is an age at which appearance and perceptions of others become increasingly important ( p. 412).

DeMitchell, Fossy and Cobb (2000) studied urban, suburban and rural principal perceptions of dress codes and uniform policies. Principals from urban schools had the greatest support for school uniforms followed by suburban and rural. Although high school principals strongly supported a dress code policy, they did not support a school uniform policy. Elementary school principals showed the strongest support for a school uniform policy.

The National Association of Elementary Principals (NAESP) conducted a survey with the support from Lands' End Incorporated in 1998. The survey queried a regionally diverse sample of 958 principals who were chosen to represent the breadth and impact of the trend in their state and region (NAESP Principal Online, 1998). Even though most participants ran a school where a uniform policy was neither in effect nor being considered, the participants generally perceived significant benefits for schools with a uniform policy. The strongest positive responses occurred in peer pressure, image in the community, classroom discipline, and school spirit. The NAESP study concurs with the West et al. (1999), the Murray (1997), and the Stanley (1996) studies.

#### Policy Issues Related to School Uniforms

Typically there are three types of school uniform policies. The first is a voluntary uniform policy. Schools that adopt a voluntary uniform policy allow families to choose whether or not they would like to dress their child/children in school uniforms. The second type of policy is a mandatory uniform policy that has an opt-out clause. This

clause allows parents to opt out of having their children wear uniforms for a variety of reasons. These reasons may include religious exemptions, philosophical differences, economic difficulties, etc. The final type of uniform policy is a mandatory policy without an opt-out clause. All students in districts with mandatory policies must wear a prescribed uniform. There are no exceptions.

According to the Educational Commission of the States (ECS), 30 states enacted legislation on uniforms and dress codes. The first release by ECS occurred in 1996. At that time 12 states possessed legislation on school uniforms. California was one of those states. By 1998, the legislation in California changed. This was due to a settled court case between the Legal Aid foundation, the American Civil Liberties Union and two other groups and the LBUS.

One of the greatest criticisms of school uniforms is that they violate the First Amendment rights of students. Hence, most cases brought before the legal system cite a violation of the First Amendment on the issue of school uniforms. The Tinker decision is used to justify a breach of a school uniform policy. In December 1965, Mary Beth Tinker, John Tinker, and Chris Eckhardt, three teenagers from Des Moines, Iowa were suspended for going to school wearing black arm bands to protest the Vietnam War (All Dressed, 1999). The ACLU represented the students in the landmark case Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District. According to Zirkel (1998), the Tinker standard allowed schools to censure student speech only upon proof of a compelling justification in the forum of an actual or imminent substantial disruption of school operations. The ACLU presumes this standard allows students to violate a uniform

policy. In March of 1997 the intermediate, appellate court of Arizona, the highest court to hear a uniform case to date, found that the Tinker standard does not apply to these circumstances. The findings stated, “the...District’s content-neutral dress code constitutionally regulates the Student’s First Amendment speech rights in the nonpublic forum of school” (Zirkel, p. 550). In Phoenix Elementary School District No. 1 v. Green, two students wore shirts that violated the mandatory uniform policy; one wore a picture of Jesus Christ and the other a picture of the American Flag. In upholding the policy, the court further rejected the application of Tinker because the policy was not content based but rather “regulated the medium of expression, not the message” (Starr, 2000, p.114). The court noted that the students had alternative methods of expression themselves such as buttons and jewelry.

The ACLU successfully settled at least two court cases on the issue of school uniforms. In 1996, a settlement was reached between the Legal Aid Foundation, The American Civil Liberties Union and two other groups and the LBUS. The attorneys accused the district of failing to inform some low-income families that they could get financial help in acquiring school uniforms, and other cases not providing adequate help (CA School, 1996). The terms of the settlement included that the district officials must notify all families that help in obtaining uniforms is available in cases of economic hardship and the district must establish a telephone message line to inform parents of free and inexpensive uniforms.

The ACLU reached a settlement with McIver Elementary School in Halifax, North Carolina in January of 2000. A student who was twice suspended for failure to

wear a school uniform would be allowed a religious exemption from wearing the uniform for the remainder of his public school education. Halifax County amended its school uniform policy to allow religious exemptions (Student Prevails, 2000).

In northwest Louisiana a group of 40 parents filed a lawsuit challenging a uniform policy. The Bossier Parish District mandated a school uniform policy with no opt out clause. The parents believed it violated their children's First Amendment right of free speech. A three-judge panel of the 5<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of appeals in New Orleans unanimously upheld the policy. The court said that students' choice of clothing could involve "sufficient communicative content" to merit protection under the First Amendment. However, it added that the district's uniform policy was "content neutral" and is justified by its "substantive government interest" in improving the educational process (Walsh, 2001).

The above court cases exhibit the trend in litigation on uniforms throughout the country. The issue has yet to arrive at the U.S. Supreme Court. As a whole, school districts are winning court cases on this topic as long as they provide subsidy for low-income families and do not violate religious freedom. Lumsden (2001) cited a few requirements to successfully defend mandatory uniform policies against constitutional challenges. She stated that the policy must be directly related to the school pedagogical purpose. Additionally, districts must allow students alternative ways to express themselves. Finally, the uniform policy must be a content neutral regulation of student expression.

## School Climate and School Uniforms

A few studies researched the effects of school uniforms on school climate.

Murray (1997) studied the impact school uniforms have on school climate in urban middle schools. Wade and Stafford (2003) reproduced the Murray study. Both studies researched the effects school uniforms have on the school climate of urban middle schools. Like the Murray study, the Wade and Stafford study used the National Association of Secondary School Administrator's Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments School Climate Survey. However, the findings of the two studies opposed each other. The study Murray conducted showed that students in the school with uniforms rated their school climate as more positive on nine of ten subscales on the National Association of Secondary School Administrator's Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments School Climate Survey. These students had a significantly more positive perception of security and maintenance, teacher relationships, parent and community-school relationships. However, Wade and Stafford found no statistically significant difference in student responses to teacher-student relationship, security and maintenance, student behavioral values and instructional management. Both Murray and Wade and Stafford found no differences in the student-peer relationship subscale.

Brunsma (2006) summarized the effects uniform policies have on outcomes such as school climate, achievement and attendance. He conducted longitudinal analyses of school uniform effectiveness over an eight year period of time looking at Kindergarten, Kindergarten to 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 10<sup>th</sup> grade. In the area of school climate, Brunsma reviewed safety climate, educational climate and parent involvement. He found

that school uniforms have no effect on school climate with the exception of a slightly negative effect on 8<sup>th</sup> grade principals' perceptions of the safety climate.

The literature shows conflicting views on the idea of school uniforms improving school climate as well. When Kohn (2004) wrote about rebuilding school climate to make schools safer, he considered the implementation of a uniform policy a superficial response to improving school climate. Kohn likened the implantation of a uniform policy as borrowing an idea from the military. Instead, Kohn believed that we need to dig deep into the problem to understand the reasons, value and motives behind the behavior we are trying to change. Brennan (2005) opposed Kohn's beliefs stating that a uniform dress code allows the staff the opportunity to address the problems of teaching and learning. Brennan worked in an urban school that was riddled with gang activity and academic deficiency until a uniform policy was adopted. In his experience, the policy spurred a functioning school where there was once a school building. Brennan believed that the climate of his school improved due to the implementation of a school uniform policy.

#### The Impact of School Climate on Academic Achievement

School climate affects many facets of education. The research shows that school climate has an impact on academic achievement. A positive school climate fosters student achievement. Gruenert (2005) found that at all levels, elementary, middle and high school, collaborative schools tend to have higher student achievement. He used a school culture survey and CASE Climate Survey to sample students at all grade levels. On each scale, collaboration had the highest values and directly linked to student achievement.

Research on student achievement and school culture in urban settings is common. Fenzel and O'Brennan (2007) found a direct link to academic achievement and positive relationships with teachers in urban middle schools. Further, they found that it was extremely important to establish an environment where students are treated fairly and respectfully. Stewart (2008) revealed that school cohesion is significantly related to academic achievement in high schools. She also found that students who attended schools with supportive and inviting environments have significantly higher student achievement. Eilers and Camacho (2007) used survey measures of school culture change to study an urban elementary school over a two year period. At the start of the study the school was at the beginning stage of readiness. Over a two year period the building showed larger growth than district averages. At the same time, the achievement scores significantly improved. Eilers and Camacho showed that a change in school culture linked to changes in teacher professionalism, school collaboration and use of evidence linked to classroom work. They believed all of these factors contributed to the change in student performance.

The Eilers and Camacho, Stewart and Fenzel and O'Brennan research are recent studies on varied levels of schooling. They all verify the Gruenert research. He stated that positive school culture at all levels tend to have higher student achievement.

#### The Influence of School Climate on Behavior

In 2004, Noonan wrote about school climate and safe schools. He believed there were seven contributing factors that contribute to a healthy school climate. They are models, consistency, depth, democracy, community, engagement and leadership. He

believed that by paying attention to the contributing factors when creating a positive school climate, a school can develop relationships that will contribute more to a healthy and safe environment than metal detectors ever will. Further, in 1999, the National Association of the Attorneys General concluded in a publication that research indicates that a supportive school climate is the most important step in ensuring that schools provide a safe and welcoming environment for all students.

Duper and Meyer-Adams (2002) studied low-level violence and school climate. Specifically, they researched the effect school climate had on bullying, peer sexual harassment, victimization due to sexual orientation and psychological maltreatment of students. They found that one way of reducing low-level violence is to build a positive school climate. Brookmeyer, Fanti and Henrich (2006) also studied violent behavior and school climate. They found that students who feel connected to their school demonstrate a reduction in negative behavior over time. The findings suggest school climate serves as a protective factor for student violent behavior. Specifically, student who attended a school with a positive school climate engaged in fewer types of violence over time.

Rickert (2005) reviewed discipline in the school where she was an administrator. The building saw an 85% decrease in discipline referrals over a two year span. Due to a school-wide discipline plan, the results were significant. One of the other improvements that occurred was an improved school climate. Rickert stated that the school went from a tense and edgy climate to a safe and welcoming climate. Again, Rickert showed a link between positive school climate and improved school behavior.

## Summary

There are conflicting data on the benefits of school uniforms. Studies were primarily conducted in urban middle school settings. This study analyzed the effects school uniforms have on school climate. This focus was selected due to school climate having a direct impact on student achievement and behavior. The study looked at two areas that have limited research: elementary schools and suburban settings. This focus was important since school uniforms are primarily implemented in elementary schools, although the trend is toward secondary schools. The next chapter provides a comprehensive view of the methodology for this research paper. The research design, sample, data collection procedures, and statistical analysis procedures are incorporated in this section. Chapter 4 outlines the survey instrument utilized and details the findings of the research. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the investigation and conclusions drawn from the data analysis. Additionally, recommendations for further research are included.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study evaluated the effects school uniforms have on school climate through the use of a school climate survey and uniform questionnaire. This chapter contains the research methodology that was used to study the impact mandatory school uniforms have on school climate. The sample will be discussed in detail and will include a summary of the research design. Further, the instrument used for data collection and method used for data analysis will be explained.

#### Background

In the late 1980's school districts in the United States began to implement school uniform policies. Often, the premise for implementing the policy was gang violence. Uniforms were looked at as an answer to gang activity associated with dress. Violent episodes in schools, such as the 1999 tragedy in Columbine, furthered the trend toward school uniforms. There were many positive reasons districts asserted when implementing a school uniform policy. Improved academic achievement as well as safer schools and decreases in violence were cited. Further, an improved school climate was often used as a catalyst for implementation.

In 1996, President Clinton specifically spoke about the benefits of school uniforms. Directly after, the United States Department of Education created The Manual on School Uniforms. After the release of the manual, it was estimated that as many as 25 percent of the nation's public school district were expected to implement a dress-related policy during the 1997-1998 school year (Issacson, 2000). From 1996 to 2001, the

Educational Commission on the States reported that the number of states enacting legislation rose from 12 to 30. A few states included the requirement of committee formation, placement on a ballot, or the allowance of student exemption on the dates nationally recognized youth-organizations had scheduled functions. Only three of the 30 states, California, Illinois, and Texas required an opt-out clause be an option in the uniform policy. During the last reporting period, 2004, the number of states with legislation on school uniforms had not changed.

Pennsylvania legislature passed a law in 1998 that allowed districts to require students to wear school uniforms. There was no specification that required an opt-out provision. Many school districts in Northeastern Pennsylvania implemented school uniform policies after the law passed. The first district to implement such a policy was an urban school district. Currently, almost all suburban school districts surrounding the urban district have implemented a school uniform policy.

Current research in the area of school uniforms resides primarily in the urban middle school setting, although a few studies research high schools and elementary schools. To date the studies center around gang violence, discipline, attendance and socioeconomic effects. However, two studies investigated the relationship of school uniforms and school climate. In 2000, Murray used National Association of Secondary School Administrator's Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments School Climate Survey to research the relationship between school climate and school uniforms in urban middle schools. He found that students in schools with school uniforms had a significantly more positive perception of security and maintenance, teacher relationships,

parent and community-school relationships. Wade and Stafford (2003) also studied the relationship between school climate and school uniforms as part of a research study. She reproduced the Murray study using the same instrument. Her findings conflicted with the findings in the Murray study. Again surveying urban middle schools students using the NASSP's School Climate Survey, she found that there was no significant difference between the school climate in schools with and without uniforms in the areas of security and maintenance, teacher relationships, parent and community-school relationships.

This study looked at the relationship between school climate and school uniforms in suburban elementary schools in Eastern Pennsylvania. This focus was chosen because school climate affects areas such as academic achievement and discipline. This study was limited to a population that was not studied in the past; suburban elementary schools, while studying an area; school uniforms, that has limited research findings.

#### Research Questions

The research study focused on whether a school uniforms policy affects school climate. Students and faculty in elementary schools participated in the study.

Two basic research questions were answered: (a) Is there a statistically significant relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and elementary school students' perceptions of a positive school climate? and (b) Is there a statistically significant relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and faculty perception of a positive school climate?

## Population and Size

The sample came from two school districts in Eastern Pennsylvania. School District A is comprised of one township located on the urban fringe of a mid-size city. The community had an estimated population of 13,937 in 2006 according to datacity.com. There has been a 0.6% decrease in population since 2000. Eighty-three and a half percent of the population is high school graduates and 23.5% are college graduates. The ethnic composition is 97.9% Caucasian and 0.9% Hispanic. The percentage of people with income below the poverty level is 10.5%.

School District B is comprised of 3 townships. One community had an estimated population of 2267 in 2006. This statistic fell by 2.8% since 2000. Eighty-six and two-tenths percent of the community is high school graduates and 14.5% are college graduates. The ethnic composition is 94.5% Caucasian and 2.4% Black and 1.8% Hispanic. The percentage of people with income below the poverty level is 5.6% according to datacity.com.

The second community had an estimated population of 16,203 in 2000. Eighty-eight and eight-tenths percent of the population is high school graduates and 25.6% are college graduates. The ethnic composition is 96.6% Caucasian, 1.48% African American and 0.78% Asian. The percentage of people with income below the poverty level is 4.7%.

The final community had an estimated population of 7,985 in 2000. The ethnic composition is 95.6% Caucasian, 2.0% African American and 1.13% Latino. The percentage of people below the poverty level is 3.6%.

District A and B are suburban school districts. Both are located in the eastern part of Pennsylvania. District A is in Northeastern Pennsylvania and District B is located in Southeastern Pennsylvania. The racial composition as well as free and reduced lunch of the population are almost identical.

#### School District Information

The sample was taken from two school districts outside of an urban center. School District A is a suburban school district on an urban fringe of a mid-sized city. It has one elementary school, K-6, one middle school, 7-8 and one high school, 9-12. The district total enrollment is approximately 1692 students. Over a 5 year period, the district enrollment has remained stable with no significant growth or reduction. The elementary school enrollment, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, is approximately 832 students. The ethnicity percentages are 92.7% white, 2.6% Hispanic, 2.6% African American and 2% Asian/Pacific Islander. The free and reduced lunch population is 27%. The student-to-teacher ratio is on average 18:1.

School District B is a suburban district on the urban fringe of a large city. It has four elementary schools with a grade span of K-5, one middle school, 6-8, and one high school, 9-12. The total district enrollment is approximately 3400 students. Over a five year period, the district enrollment has remained stable with no significant growth or reduction. The elementary school enrollment is 1405 according to the Pennsylvania State Department of Education. The ethnicity percentages for the elementary schools, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, are 92.6% Caucasian, 3.4% African American, 1.3% Hispanic, 2.6% Asian/Pacific Islander and 0.14% American

Indian. The free and reduced lunch population is 11.6%. The student- to-teacher ratio is 16:1, on average.

### School Profiles

School District A requires students to wear school uniforms. It adopted a school K-12 uniform policy in the 2004-2005 academic year. There is no opt-out provision in the policy. School District A is comprised of one elementary school, K-6, one middle school, 7-8 attached to one high school, 9-12. The elementary population for the elementary school, A1, is 832 students. School A1 has made Adequate Yearly Progress, AYP, since the inception of the federal No Child Left Behind Legislation. All students

Table 1. Descriptive Data on School Samples

Data Detail	School A	School B1	School B2
Grade Span	K-6	K-5	K-5
Student Population	832	440	260
Poverty Level	27%	26.7%	26.7%
Caucasian	92.7%	92.1%	81%
African American	2.6%	3.5%	8.3%
Hispanic	2.6%	1.4%	8.3%
Asian	2%	3%	4.9%

in grades 4, 5 and 6 were eligible to participate in the study. The total sample surveyed was 363 students, with 124 students in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 118 students in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and 121 students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade according to the Pennsylvania Department of Education,

[www.able.state.pa.us/k12statistics](http://www.able.state.pa.us/k12statistics). Table 1 illustrates the descriptive data of each of the school samples.

School District B does not require students to wear school uniforms. It is comprised of four elementary schools, two of which were used in this study. The elementary schools have similar characteristics. As seen in Table 1 the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch is identical in both schools and the ethnicity percentages for the two schools mirror each other. School B1 and School B2 have made AYP consistently since the federal No Child Left Behind legislation was enacted.

Neither school B1 or B2 follow a uniform dress code policy. The current dress code policy states what dress is unacceptable. It also includes policy on hair and piercings. All students in grade 4 and 5 were eligible to participate in the study. The total sample surveyed in School District B was 237 students with 122 in grade 4 and 115 in grade 5 according to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, [www.able.state.pa.us/k12statistics](http://www.able.state.pa.us/k12statistics).

#### Instrumentation and Data Collection

Students in grade 4, 5 and 6 participated in this study by completing a school climate survey and a researcher-created uniform questionnaire. Faculty participated in the study through the completion of a school climate survey and researcher-created questionnaire. Different subsets of similar questions were used for students and teachers in schools with and without mandatory school uniform policies.

### *WINSS Elementary Student School Climate Survey*

An elementary student school climate survey created for the Wisconsin's Information Network for Successful Schools, WINSS, was used in this study. It was created by Learning Point for WINSS and is based on the book Data Analysis for Comprehensive Schoolwide Improvement by Victoria Bernhardt in 2004.

The survey was designed for students in third grade and above. It has been administered throughout the state of Wisconsin to public and private school students. The survey includes 31 statements and three open ended questions. Responses were recorded using a Likert scale format with the following five responses: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. Examples of survey statements are as follows: "My teacher listens to my ideas." and "I am safe." Although electronic data analysis is available to all districts in the state of Wisconsin, the survey was distributed in a paper and pencil version.

There was no information available on the validity and reliability of the instrument according to WINSS; however, the instrument has been used throughout the state and was piloted to 300 staff and parents across Wisconsin.

### *WINSS Staff School Climate Survey*

A staff school climate survey created for the Wisconsin's Information Network for Successful Schools, WINSS, was used in this study. It was created by Learning Point through Education for the Future Initiative, 1997, for WINSS. The survey has been administered throughout the state of Wisconsin to faculty and staff at public and private schools.

The survey includes 63 statements. Responses were recorded using a Likert scale format with the following five responses: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. Examples of survey statements are as follows: “I believe every student can learn.” and “My administrator treats me with respect.” Although electronic data analysis is available to all districts in the state of Wisconsin, the researcher analyzed a paper and pencil version of the survey. The instrument contained 10 sections on topics such as school, administration and student achievement. These sections were not identified. Therefore, the researcher labeled each section based on the questions. The headers used were Teacher Behavioral Values, Peer Relationships, Teacher-Administrator Relationship, Teacher Opportunity, Teacher Satisfaction, Teacher-Student Relationship, Student Achievement, Morale, School Atmosphere and Classroom Atmosphere.

There was no information available on the validity and reliability of the instrument according to WINSS; however, the instrument has been used throughout the state and was piloted to 300 staff and parents across Wisconsin.

#### *Student and Staff School Uniform Questionnaire*

A researcher created questionnaire included in Appendix A, on perceptions of school uniforms was also administered to all students and teachers participating in the study. The questionnaire was piloted on a sample in a suburban school district similar to the one used in the study. One question on the form was open-ended. The other questions were yes or no answers. Examples of the questions for students included: “Do you think uniforms make you concentrate more in school” and “Do you think that

because students wear school uniforms, the adults treat all children more fairly?”

Examples of the staff uniform questionnaire included: “What changes would you anticipate occurring if a school uniform policy was implemented?” and “Do you think student behavior would improve if they wore school uniforms?”

The questionnaire was piloted on a sample in a suburban school district without a uniform dress code policy. Based on the responses of the pilot groups, questions were reworded for better understand by the students and staff prior to the administration to the entire sample used for the major study.

#### Data Collection

The researcher administered the school climate survey and uniform questionnaire to all students in grades 4, 5, and 6 in school district A. Grade level teachers also completed the school climate survey and uniform questionnaire and returned it to the researcher. All data were kept confidential by the elimination of identifying indicators. Student subjects were asked to provide only their grade and gender. Adult subjects were asked to provide only their gender. The school and district were coded in the data for group identification.

A school principal in school district B administered the school climate surveys and questionnaires to all students and faculty in the two buildings included in this study. He is not the principal of either building. To avoid possible bias, the researcher, who is employed by district B, did not collect the data. Therefore, a principal administered the same instruments prepared for this research study and gave the researcher a copy of the

information. All identifiers except school, grade and gender were removed prior to releasing the information to the researcher.

### Data Analysis

The data from this study were used to test two research questions. As discussed at the beginning of Chapter 3, the first research question was related to elementary students' perception of school climate and the second research question was related to the staff perception of school climate. After the survey instruments were completed, they were checked for accuracy and completion. Survey data were calculated using the SPSS Version 16.0 statistical software package. A t-test was used to test the research questions. The open-ended questions were analyzed for emergent themes.

### Summary

Two school districts in Eastern Pennsylvania were utilized in this study. District A is a suburban district in Northeastern Pennsylvania with one elementary, middle and high school. It has a mandatory uniform policy. All students in grades 4, 5 and 6 who volunteered to participate were included in the study. Also included was grade level faculty members. District B is a suburban school district in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Although the district has a dress code policy, it does not include mandatory uniforms. Two of the four elementary schools were included in the data collection. Students in grades 4 and 5 were included as well all grade level faculty members.

The WINNS school climate survey for elementary students and faculty was administered. Additionally, students and faculty completed a researcher-created school

uniform questionnaire. The data were collected and entered into a computer program for data analysis.

## Chapter 4

### FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter begins with descriptive data on the sample of students and teachers that participated in the study. A review of the data analysis and an explanation of how the statistics were computed will follow for the students. The factor analysis results for the students sample are then presented in conjunction with an interpretation of the results. Finally, a review of the teacher data will be presented.

#### Sample Data

Students and teachers in three elementary schools completed a school climate survey and a brief school uniform questionnaire. In School District A, students in grades 4, 5 and 6 participated. In School District B, students in grades 4 and 5 participated. Data on the total student sample are listed in Table 2. There were 363 students eligible

Table 2. Descriptive Data on Student Sample

Gender	Uniform	Non Uniform	Total
Male	114	40	154
Female	134	56	190
Total	248	96	344
Grade			
4	95	36	131
5	69	60	129
6	84	0	84
Total	248	96	344

to participate in School District A, the school district with a uniform dress code. Of the eligible students, 248 chose to be a part of the study. In the same school, there were 35 teachers eligible to participate. Of those, 32 participated. Table 3 depicts the sample teacher data. The student participation rate in School District A was 68% and the teacher participation rate was 91%. School District B was the non uniform district. Of the 237 students that were eligible to participate in grades 4 and 5, 96 completed the survey. Of the 28 teachers eligible to participate, 24 completed the survey. The participation rate for students in School District B was 41% and the teacher participation rate was 86%.

Table 3. Descriptive Data on Teacher Sample

Gender	Uniform	Non Uniform	Total
Male	4	6	10
Female	28	18	46
Total	32	24	56

### Results

A t-test was performed on all data sets presented using the SPSS Version 16.0 statistical software package to determine the difference between sample means. The alpha level used for all statistics was .05, two tailed.

#### Student Survey Results

The first research question explored the relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and elementary school students' perceptions of school climate. Through a comparison of the results between uniform schools and non uniform schools, statistically significant differences occurred. The student climate survey was segmented into three

sections. Each section began with the same header: “When I am at school, I feel.” Although there were significant differences between School District A and School District B found on specific individual items in each section, the overall mean for the total of each section did not differ between the two groups. Table 4 summarizes the results of the first section. A significant difference between the groups occurred when the students responded to the statements, “I like this school” and “I have choices in what

Table 4. School Climate Student Survey Results Section 1

Section 1	Mean		Sig. (2-tailed)
	Uniform	Non Uniform	
I belong	4.16	4.04	.234
I am safe	4.37	4.28	.341
I have fun learning	3.63	3.69	.662
<b>I like this school</b>	<b>4.46</b>	<b>4.24</b>	<b>.031</b>
This school is good	4.42	4.35	.448
I have freedom	3.36	3.47	.416
<b>I have choices in what I learn</b>	<b>3.12</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>.042</b>
<b>My teacher treats me with respect</b>	<b>4.31</b>	<b>4.69</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>My teacher cares about me</b>	<b>4.31</b>	<b>4.71</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>My teacher thinks I will be successful</b>	<b>4.33</b>	<b>4.69</b>	<b>.000</b>
Total mean of section	40.47	41.00	.448

I learn.” On both of these statements, the students wearing uniforms responded more favorably. In contrast, students in the non uniform district responded significantly higher on the following items: “My teacher treats me with respect” and “My teacher cares about me.” However, there was no statistically significant difference in the section between uniform and non uniform schools.

Table 5. School Climate Student Survey Results Section 2

Section 2	Mean		Sig. (2-tailed)
	Uniform	Non Uniform	
<b>My teacher listens to my ideas</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>4.35</b>	<b>.000</b>
My principal cares about me	4.36	4.43	.470
<b>My teacher is a good teacher</b>	<b>4.46</b>	<b>4.78</b>	<b>.001</b>
<b>My teacher believes I can learn</b>	<b>4.57</b>	<b>4.78</b>	<b>.004</b>
I am recognized for good work	3.92	4.04	.265
<b>I am challenged by the work my teachers ask me to do</b>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>2.94</b>	<b>.002</b>
<b>The work I do in class makes me think</b>	<b>4.18</b>	<b>3.89</b>	<b>.008</b>
I know what I am supposed to be learning in my classes	4.30	4.38	.442
I am a good student	4.41	4.46	.604
I can be a better student	3.97	3.94	.826
Total mean for section	41.37	41.98	.268

In section 2, again, there were statistical differences in specific items housed within the section. Table 5 shows all items included in the section and the total mean of the section. When responding to the statements, “My teacher listens to my ideas”, “My teacher is a good teacher”, and “My teacher believes I can learn”, the students in the schools district without uniforms responded significantly higher than the students in school with uniforms. Conversely, students in the uniform district responded significantly higher to the statements, “ I am challenged by the work my teachers ask me to do” and “The work I do in class makes me think.” Again, although there are some statistical differences in the responses from the students, the difference between the means for the section was not significant, with an alpha level of .268.

The same can be said for the final section of the student school climate survey. The alpha level for the section was .289 which is not statistically significant. However, within the section, as seen in Table 6, a small number of items were statistically different in the responses between uniform and non uniform school districts. When asked to respond to the phrase, “Students are treated fairly by the people on yard duty” and “I have lots of friends”, students in the uniform school responded significantly higher than students in the non uniform schools.

Although a variety of items within the survey instrument were found to have a statistically significant difference between the responses of students in uniform schools and non uniform schools, the overall results by section did not show a significant difference.

Table 6. School Climate Student Survey Results Section 3

Section 3	Mean		Sig. (2-tailed)
	Uniform	Non Uniform	
Very good work is expected of me at my school	4.20	4.13	.484
I behave well at school	4.28	4.31	.711
Students are treated fairly by teachers	3.96	4.19	.056
Students are treated fairly by the principal	4.40	4.43	.784
<b>Students are treated fairly by the people on yard duty</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>3.56</b>	<b>.000</b>
Students at my school treat me with respect	3.80	3.77	.800
Students at my school are friendly	3.92	3.77	.203
<b>I have lots of friends</b>	<b>4.50</b>	<b>4.27</b>	<b>.024</b>
I have support for learning at home	4.38	4.34	.688
My family believes I can do well at school	4.81	4.81	.911
My family wants me to do well at school	4.86	4.85	.989
Total mean for this section	47.09	46.45	.266

*Factor Analysis of Student Climate Survey*

Due to the questionable design of the instrument used in the study, it was difficult to glean any substantial conclusions from the survey. Therefore, a factor analysis was performed on the data collected from the student sample. This analysis resulted in seven factors with eigenvalues greater than one. For interpretation, the factor scores were converted to t-scores. As shown in table 7, the factors were student-teacher relationship, school atmosphere, peer relationships, student behavioral values, parent-school relationship, student-administration relationship and rigor. As evidenced in Table 6, the uniform school had higher means in two of the seven subscales and the non-uniform schools had a higher mean in one of the seven subscales.

Table 7. Factor Analysis of Student Climate Survey

Factor	Mean		Sig. (2-tailed)
	Uniform	Non Uniform	
<b>Student-Teacher Relationship</b>	<b>48.08</b>	<b>54.95</b>	<b>.000</b>
School Atmosphere	50.55	48.58	.102
<b>Peer Relationships</b>	<b>50.71</b>	<b>48.17</b>	<b>.035</b>
Student Behavioral Values	50.33	49.14	.322
Parent-School Relationship	50.20	49.49	.553
Student-Administration Relationship	49.93	50.17	.844
<b>Rigor</b>	<b>51.46</b>	<b>46.24</b>	<b>.000</b>

### *Student-Teacher Relationship*

Again, a t-test was used to determine if there was a significant difference between how the students in the uniform school and non uniforms schools responded to the area of student teacher relationships.

Six items were included in this section. They were as follows:

1. My teacher cares about me.
2. My teacher is a good teacher.
3. My teacher believes I can learn.
4. My teacher treats me with respect.
5. My teacher thinks I will be successful.
6. My teacher listens to my ideas.

The analysis yielded a significant result, ( $p=.000$ ), when comparing the mean of the uniform and non uniform school districts. The mean of the non uniform school was significantly higher at 54.95 than that of the uniform school district, 48.08. Based on this analysis, the result demonstrated that students in the non uniform schools possess a more positive perception of their relationship with teachers than students in the uniform school.

### *Peer Relationships*

Factor 3 was comprised of questions that spoke to the relationship between students while in school. There were four questions that were included this category.

They were as follows:

1. I have lots of friends.
2. Students at my school are friendly.

3. Students at my school treat me with respect.
4. I belong.

When comparing the mean of the uniform and non uniform school districts a statistically significant difference was found. The uniform school district, District A, had a mean of 50.71 and the non uniform school district, District B, had a mean of 48.17. The alpha level of .035 indicated that the students in the uniform school district had a more positive view of their relationship with peers.

### *Rigor*

The last factor found in the analysis surrounded the area of rigor in schools. It was comprised of two statements. They were as follows:

1. I am challenged by the work my teacher asks me to do.
2. The work I do in class makes me think.

Again, this subscale showed a connection between schools with uniforms and school climate. In the area of rigor, the mean score for School District A was 51.46 and for School District B the mean score was 46.24 yielding an alpha level of .000. Therefore, the students in the uniform school had a more positive view of the required rigor than students in the non uniform schools. Again, in this subscale of the school climate survey, there was a significant relationship between school uniforms and school climate.

### *School Uniform Questionnaire*

In addition to the school climate survey, all students who participated in the study completed a school uniform questionnaire. The section was comprised of 7 questions

that required a yes or no response. As seen in Table 8, there is no statistical difference between the uniform school district and the non uniform school district for any of the questions. All indicators show that students in both districts are not in favor of wearing school uniforms with just 26.0% of the students in the uniform school and 34.0% of the students in the non uniform schools believing that school uniforms are a good idea. Overall, students in both the uniform and non uniform schools do not believe that school uniforms have any effect on school climate. The strongest response of any question occurred when the students were asked if the students would fit in better if they wore

Table 8. Student School Uniform Questionnaire

Section 4	% yes		Sig. (2-tailed)
	Uniform	Non Uniform	
School Uniforms and school commitment	31.4	34.0	.638
Uniforms improve behavior	18.1	25.5	.132
Uniforms help concentration	21.5	25.5	.433
Students fit in better	40.9	44.7	.534
Student treat each other more fairly	32.9	40.4	.197
Adults respect you more	32.0	22.3	.306
Uniforms are a good idea	26.0	34.0	.144

school uniforms. Students in the uniform school responded yes 40.9% of the time. Students in the non uniform schools had an even more favorable response with 44.7% of them believing that students would fit in better. Based on the results shown in Table 8,

the results do not show a statistically significant difference between students' perceptions of a mandatory school uniform policy in uniform and non uniform schools.

#### *Open Ended Question Results*

Students that participated in the survey responded to four open ended questions.

They were:

1. What do you like about this school?
2. What do you wish was different at this school?
3. What do you wish I would have asked you about this school?
4. If this school decided to wear school uniforms, would that be a good idea? Why or why not? Or Do you like wearing school uniforms? Why or why not?

Many of the students in School District A, the uniform school district, indicated they wished the researcher asked them if they like school uniforms. This occurrence happened because the questions about school uniforms were located on the next page of the survey. Another reoccurring theme for that school was that students indicated they wished they were asked about bullying. They responded with answers such as "I wish you would ask if I was bullied" or "I wish you would ask if there are bullies in this school."

The emergent themes on school uniforms came from the final open ended question, "If this school decided to wear school uniforms, would that be a good idea? Why or why not? Or Do you like wearing school uniforms? Why or why not?" Three themes evolved from the responses the students wrote. These themes were consistent for students that were for or against school uniforms and across schools. The first theme was

*expression* which emerged from the feelings of students about freedom of expression due to a mandatory school uniform policy. The second theme was *atmosphere*. This theme emerged from the responses of student about how mandatory school uniforms affected the policies and procedures on the school as well as how they affected the treatment of students. The final theme was *family*. This theme emerged through the responses of students with regards to how student viewed the effects of a mandatory school uniform policy on their family life.

### *Expression*

When students were asked why or why not they liked wearing uniforms or why or why not they thought uniforms would be a good idea, a theme emerged around student expression. This theme had the greatest response rate. Students strongly believed that wearing uniforms suppressed their individuality and took away their freedom of expression. Student in School District A, the uniform district, responded with phrases such as:

District A: Stop from expressing individuality

District A: People need to be different...stand out

District A: Student should have the freedom to wear what they want.

District A: Even though you want to be different, sometime you can't

Students in School District B, the non uniform district, responded with similar sentiments.

District B: Can't express themselves

District B: Should have the right to wear what you want

District B: We are all different

Many students expressed their unhappiness with the way uniforms felt and looked. Over 30 students answered that uniforms were uncomfortable. Numerous others spoke about the look of school uniforms. Both groups of students surveyed had the same responses.

They answered:

District A: Students annoyed by them

District A: Easier to dress when not in uniform

District A: Uniforms look tacky

District B: Everyone likes their own style

District B: It's fun to look different than other kids

District B: Don't look nice

Of all the responses within this theme, only two responses were positive towards school uniforms. Both responses were from students who currently wore uniforms. The responses were:

District A: Everything the same

District A: Most of the time, uniforms look the same

The answers in this theme were very consistent. Students believe that wearing school uniforms is an infringement on their freedom.

### *Atmosphere*

The second theme that emerged from the questions was atmosphere. Although the preponderance of the responses were by students opposed to school uniforms, many more positive responses occurred in this theme than in the first. When asked about why

or why not students should wear school uniforms, the reply given often surrounded policies, procedures and sense of community at the school. Student answers against school uniforms included:

District A: Because you dress differently, doesn't mean you act differently

District A: If you wore what you want you would be better behaved and improved in school.

District A: Doesn't change the way we learn

District A: Half aren't wearing anyway

District B: Students would be non-compliant

District B: Would not affect the way you act

District B: Won't change how much you concentrate

Students that were in favor of school uniforms also responded about the effect of uniforms on policies, procedures and school community. Their answers included:

District A: Show how to follow the rules

District A: Help be better students

District A: Part of community/school

District A: Way to support your school

District B: Build quality

District B: Show a united school

District B: More school spirit

Other responses often given in this theme surrounded how students treated each other and adults at school. Students spoke about how school uniforms affected the way

students behave toward other people. Students who were against school uniforms answered:

District A: Kids don't treat me as well when I wear school uniforms

District A: Kids only make fun of each other when we have uniforms on--not when we dress down.

District A: Uniforms cause more bullying

District A: It doesn't matter what you wear, it's what's on the inside that counts

District B: Wouldn't change how you respect someone

District B: Nobody makes fun of clothes

A few students that were in favor of school uniforms responded about student treatment as well. They answered:

District A: If kids didn't wear them they would fight about "cooler" clothes.

District A: Nobody picks on another kid's clothes

District A: In uniforms, kids don't get made fun of anymore

District A: Less fights over clothes

District B: Wouldn't judge each other

District B: Kids would be treated better

District B: No bullying because of clothes

Although it is clear through the data that students were overall opposed to school uniforms, in this theme there were opposite views on the topic of how school uniforms affect the atmosphere of a school. As seen above, answers such as "uniforms cause more bullying" directly counter the statement "no bullying because of clothes". This trend

occurred often throughout the theme showing that different students have different perspectives on school uniforms as they relate to atmosphere. Overall, therefore, there is no consensus in the area.

### *Family*

The third theme that emerged dealt with the relationship between school uniforms and their effect on parents and students outside of school. Students spoke about the inconvenience and cost of wearing school uniforms. They answered with responses such as:

District A: Parents wouldn't have to wash every night (if they didn't have uniforms)

District A: Cost a lot of money

District A: Parents have to go to special stores

District A: Hard to find the right size

District B: Would have to spend extra money

District B: Can't wear the clothes you own

Students that liked school uniforms responded with an opposing view. They stated:

District A: You don't have to worry about what to wear to school

District B: Easier

District B: Parent don't have to buy that much clothes

District B: Wouldn't be late for school because you don't know what to wear

It was evident in this theme that students who actually wore school uniforms believe they were costly and inconvenient for their families. Only one student in that school responded

positively in this theme. All of the other students had a negative view of how school uniforms affected their home life.

### Teacher Survey Results

The second research question explored the relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and elementary school teachers' perceptions of school climate.

Table 9. Teacher School Climate Subscale Results

Subscale	Mean		Sig. (2-tailed)
	Uniform	Non Uniform	
Teacher Behavioral Values	20.16	21.04	.289
Peer Relationships	8.44	7.92	.208
<b>Teacher-Administrator Relationship</b>	<b>27.56</b>	<b>33.04</b>	<b>.000</b>
Teacher Opportunity	7.93	8.38	.273
Teacher Satisfaction	9.00	8.91	.771
Teacher-Student Relationship	20.17	20.75	.460
<b>Student achievement</b>	<b>64.16</b>	<b>69.33</b>	<b>.005</b>
Morale	13.26	13.38	.889
School Atmosphere	56.59	57.46	.630
Classroom Atmosphere	20.67	21.55	.194

The staff climate survey was segmented into 10 sections. Out of all of the subscales, only two sections had a significant difference in the mean between the uniform and non uniform schools. Table 9 shows the mean values for each subscale as well as the result of

the t-test for equality of means. Both of the significant differences were in favor of the non uniform school district. In the non uniform school district, teachers answered more favorably on Teacher-Administrator relationship and Student Achievement than the teachers in the district with school uniforms.

#### *Teacher-Administrator Relationship*

Subscale 3 asked a variety of questions about the relationship between the teachers and the principal. The questions responding to the header “My Administrator” are as follows:

1. Treats me with respect
2. Is an effective instructional leader
3. Facilitates communications effectively
4. Supports me in my work with students
5. Supports shared decision making
6. Allows me to be an effective instructional leader
7. Is effective in helping us reach our vision

When asked about administrator-teacher relationship, teachers in the non uniform schools responded significantly higher than teachers in the uniform school with a mean value of 33.04 for the non uniform school and 27.56 for the uniform school. The alpha level of .000 indicated that the teachers in the non uniform district had a more positive relationship with their principals. Further, the results indicate that there is negative effect of school uniforms on teachers’ perceptions of school climate in this subscale.

### *Student Achievement*

Teachers' perceptions on how to improve student achievement was assessed in subsection 7. Participants responded to 16 statements after the header "I believe student achievement can increase through..." They were as follows:

1. Hands on learning
2. Effective professional development related to our vision
3. Integrating instruction across the curriculum
4. Thematic instruction
5. Cooperative learning
6. Multi-age Classrooms
7. Student self-assessment
8. Authentic assessment
9. The use of computers
10. The use of varied technologies
11. Providing a threat-free environment
12. Close personal relationships between students and teachers
13. Addressing student learning styles
14. Effective parent involvement
15. Partnerships with business
16. Teacher use of student achievement data

The mean for this subscale was significantly higher for the teachers in non uniform schools than it was for teachers in the uniform school. In the uniform school district the

mean was 64.16 and in the non uniform school it was 69.33 yielding an alpha level of .005. Therefore, the teachers in the non uniform school had a more positive view of how to improve student achievement than the teachers in the uniform schools.

#### *School Uniform Questionnaire*

In addition to the school climate survey, all teachers who participated in the study completed a school uniform questionnaire. The section was comprised of 6 questions that required a yes or no response. As seen in Table 10, there was a statistical significant difference between the uniform school district and the non uniform school district for two of the questions.

The first question has no bearing on the research evaluated through this instrument. The question, "Have you taught in a school with uniforms" simply indicated whether or not the teacher worked in a building with school uniform. The second question with statistically significant results asked if students were more accepted if they wore school uniforms. The alpha level was .030 for this item. Teachers in the school district with school uniforms had a more positive view of student acceptance. However, the answer to the research question-- whether there was a statistically significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of school climate and a mandatory school uniform policy-- was no. This is true because only one of the five relevant questions had a statistically significant result.

#### *Open Ended Question*

Only a few of the teachers that completed the teacher survey answered the open ended question. Therefore, no data analysis could be conducted.

Table 10. Teacher School Uniform Questionnaire

Section 11	% yes		Sig. (2-tailed)
	Uniform	Non Uniform	
<b>Have you taught in a school with uniforms?</b>	<b>73.3</b>	<b>30.4</b>	<b>.001</b>
Student more committed with uniforms?	36.7	39.1	.858
Student behavior improved	43.3	47.8	.750
Students concentrate more	43.5	39.1	.764
<b>Students more accepted</b>	<b>76.7</b>	<b>47.8</b>	<b>.030</b>
Treat each other more fairly	53.5	50.0	.817

#### Summary

A statistical analysis of the data was presented and explained in this chapter. The analysis included results for student and teacher school climate surveys as well as uniform questionnaires for both groups. Themes emerged from student short answers while a lack of data eliminated analysis of this area for teachers. In the last chapter, a discussion of the results as they relate to the two research questions will be presented and conclusions will be drawn.

## Chapter 5

### DISCUSSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the start of this chapter, a discussion of how the study answered the research questions will be presented. Implications for policy and educational curricula will be presented and conclusions will be drawn based on the research. Finally, recommendations for future studies will be suggested.

#### Discussion

School uniforms remain a topic of discussion in the educational setting. Although documented evidence of the benefits or detriments of uniforms is sparse, school districts around the country continue to implement school uniform policies. School uniforms are considered to be a solution to gang activity, the problems associated with behavior, a way to improve academics and a method to improve school climate; however, the research substantiating these assertions is limited.

The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether there were any differences in students' and staff perceptions of school climate in a school district with a uniform policy and a school district without a uniform policy. Since previous data were lacking in the elementary setting, the study was conducted at that level. Further, most studies that exist focus on urban settings; therefore, the study occurred in suburban schools. Two school districts were chosen to participate. They both were located in Eastern Pennsylvania. A total of three schools with similar characteristics participated. One K-6 school in School District A, the school district with a uniform policy, was included. Two K-5 schools in School District B, the district without a uniform policy, were included. The WINSS

school climate survey was administered to 344 students and 56 staff members selected for the survey. In addition, all participants completed a researcher-created school uniform questionnaire.

*Research Question 1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and elementary school students' perceptions of school climate?*

The WINSS school climate instrument for students used in this study was broken into three sections. Using a t-test, no statistical difference between the district with a uniform policy and the district without a uniform policy was found in any of the 3 subsections. However, the statements “I like this school”, “I have choices in what I learn”, “The work I do in class makes me think”, “I am challenged by the work my teachers ask me to do”, “Students are treated fairly by the people on yard duty”, and “I have lots of friends” all had statistically significant differences between the uniform and non uniform schools. For each of these choices, the students in the school district with a uniform policy possessed a more positive perception of those factors on the school climate survey. In opposition, students in School District B responded more positively to the statements, “My teacher treats me with respect”, “My teacher cares about me”, “My teacher thinks I will be successful”, “My teacher listens to my ideas”, “My teacher is a good teacher”, and “My teacher believes I can learn.” For each of these responses there appeared to be a theme around the teacher-student relationship, although all of these items were not in the same section of the survey. Therefore, a factor analysis was conducted on the student school climate survey. Once the analysis was complete, themes

emerged that showed statistically significant variances between School District A and School District B. Of the seven factors that emerged from the analysis, School District A had a higher mean in two of the factors.

The first factor that emerged with a statistically higher mean in the school district with uniforms was *peer relationships*. Elementary school students in School District A rated their school climate significantly higher when responding to statements such as: “I have lots of friends”; “Students at my school are friendly”; “Students at my school treat me with respect”; “I belong.” The responses indicate that students in the school district with school uniforms have a stronger relationship with their peers.

Rigor was the second factor that emerged with a statistically higher mean in the district with a school uniform policy. This factor included the statements: “I am challenged by the work my teacher asks me to do”; “The work I do in class makes me think.” Students in School District A rated their school climate significantly higher when asked about teacher expectations.

When responding to the peer relationship subcategory in the student school climate survey, students in this study concurred with LaPoint and Holloman (1993) and Mancini (1997) when they stated uniforms were believed to promote a feeling of belonging. The students in School District A responded more favorably to this subcategory which included the statement, “I belong.” Although when Murray (1997) and Wade and Stafford (2003) conducted school climate surveys on middle school students with and without school uniforms they found no relationship between school

climate and student-peer relationship, this researcher did. For at least this aspect of school climate, there was a positive link between school climate and school uniforms.

LaPoint and Holloman stated that grade and attention to instruction suffer when dress is overemphasized. Further, they believed school uniforms allow students to focus on academics. Researchers also believe that students enter the school ready to learn when they wear school uniforms (Caruso, 1996; Cohn 1996; Stanley 1996). This study agrees with the supporters of school uniforms in this area as well. Students in School District A believed they were pushed academically. The students believed the teachers challenged them more in the district with school uniforms.

One factor emerged with a statistically higher mean in School District B. It was *teacher-student relationship*. When responding to the statements: “My teacher cares about me”; “My teacher is a good teacher”; “My teacher believes I can learn”; “My teacher treats me with respect”; “My teacher thinks I will be successful”; “My teacher listens to my ideas,” students in the district without school uniforms rated their school climate higher. The responses denote that students in the district without school uniforms have a stronger relationship with their teachers. This study had different results than both the study conducted by Murray (1997) and the study conducted by Wade and Stafford (2003). When researching the relationship of school uniforms to school climate in the area of teacher-student relationship, Murray found a positive correlation between school uniforms and teacher-student relationships. Wade and Stafford found no difference in the teacher-student relationship subscale. However, this researcher found a negative relationship between school uniforms and school climate.

Students who participated in this study also responded to a school uniform questionnaire. There was no statistical difference between the uniform school district and non uniform school district for any of the responses. In agreement, the conjecture of this researcher is that all indications show that students in both districts were not in favor of wearing school uniforms. Just 26.0% of the student in School District A and 34.0% of the students in School District B responded that school uniforms were a good idea. One of the richest pieces of data that were collected came from the open ended responses. Students were asked a variety of questions; however, the question with the largest response was “If this school decided to wear school uniforms, would that be a good idea? Why or why not?” or “Do you like wearing school uniforms? Why or why not?” Three themes emerged from the responses. These themes were consistent regardless of whether students were for or against school uniforms.

The first theme was expression. Students strongly believed that wearing uniforms suppressed their individuality. It took away their freedom of expression. Interestingly, one of the greatest criticisms of school uniforms is that they violate the First Amendment rights of students. Therefore, most of the court cases brought before the courts with regards to school uniforms cite the First Amendment. Although the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) lost several cases, it successfully settled many as well (American Civil Liberties Union News, 1996, 2000b). Students in this study who responded in this theme overwhelmingly felt the lack of freedom was a disincentive to wearing school uniforms. Students replied: “Stop from expressing individuality”; “Students should have the freedom to wear what they want”; “Should have the right to

wear what you want.” Only two of the responses in this theme were in favor of school uniforms.

The second theme that emerged was Atmosphere. Again, in this area the majority of the responses were by students who were not in favor of school uniforms: There were, however, many more positive responses within this theme. The reactions in this section revolved around policies, procedures and sense of community at the school. Students that responded in opposition to school uniforms believe that students were not compliant and that uniforms did not change student behavior. These replies directly rebut the research conducted by Portner (1996) and Cohn (1996) which showed a decrease in inappropriate behavior at both sites they researched. However, the responses by the students in this study are anecdotal and not substantiated by any empirical data.

Prevalent throughout this theme, as well as throughout the short answers, was that students in School District A believed that bullying was an issue. They stated they wished they were asked if there were bullies in their school and responded to this theme with “Uniforms cause more bullying.” In contrast to the bullying statements made by students in School District A, students in School District B responded with: “Nobody picks on another kid’s clothes”; “In uniforms, kids don’t get made fun of anymore.” Further, students that were in favor of school uniforms responded to this theme by speaking to the school community. They made statements such as: “Part of community/school”; “Show a united school”; “Help be better students.” LaPoint and Holloman (1993) and Mancini (1997) concurred with the students’ beliefs by stating that uniforms promote a feeling of belonging.

The final theme that emerged was Family. This theme dealt with the effects of school uniforms on parents and students outside of school. Students who already wore school uniforms responded negatively to the effects uniforms had on their families with statements such as: “Cost a lot of money”; “Parents have to go to special stores”; “Hard to find the right size.” In this case, the students’ perceptions of school uniforms directly refuted the findings of Bodine (2003). In her ethnographic study, she found that a reduction of family stress was one of the most common reasons for supporting school uniforms. Students in this survey did not believe it reduced family stress. Of interest as well, students who presently did not wear uniforms thought it would reduce family stress. They made statements such as: “Easier”; “Parents don’t have to buy that much clothes.”

Overall, contrary to the supposition of this researcher, there was not a statistically significant relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and elementary school students’ perceptions of school climate. Only two of the seven subcategories on the student school climate survey showed a significant relationship between school uniforms and school climate. Further, one of the seven subcategories found a statistically significant relationship between non uniforms and school climate. Of significant importance, as well, is the fact that students are overwhelming not in favor of school uniforms and feel that they suppress individuality.

*Research Question 2: Is there a statistically significant relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and faculty perception of a positive school climate?*

The WINSS Staff School Climate Survey was responded to by 56 teachers in School District A and School District B. Of the 10 categories that were assessed, only

two categories had a statistically significant difference in the mean of the uniform and non uniform schools. In both categories, School District B had a higher mean than School District A. When responding to statements about teacher-administrator relationships, the teachers in School District B responded more favorably than in School District A. This subscale asked teachers to respond to the statements: “Treats me with respect”; “Is an effective instructional leader”; “Facilitates communication effectively”; “Supports me in my work with students”; “Supports shared decision making”; “Allows me to be an effective instructional leader”; “Is effective in helping us reach our vision”. In 2004, Noonan stated he believed there were seven contributing factors to a healthy school climate. One of the factors was leadership. Through the results of this study it appears that the teachers’ perceptions of school climate in School District A and School District B rest at least partially on the leadership of their school. However, it is important to note that the principal of the school in School District A retired a few weeks after the survey was conducted. That factor might have played a role in the responses by the teachers in School District A.

The second subscale with a significant difference in the mean of the uniform and non uniform schools was student achievement. Teachers responded more favorably in the non uniform schools when responding to the following statements after the header “I believe student achievement can increase through...”: Hands on learning; Effective professional development related to our vision; Integrating instruction across the curriculum; Thematic Instruction; Cooperative Learning; Multi-Age Classrooms; Student self-assessment; Authentic assessment; The use of computers; The use of varied

technologies; Providing a threat-free environment; Close personal relationships between students and teachers; Addressing student learning styles; Effective parent involvement; Partnership with business; Teacher use of student achievement data. Research shows that a positive school climate fosters student achievement. Additionally, Grunert (2005) found that at all levels; elementary, middle and high school, collaborative schools tend to have higher student achievement. The results of this study show that teachers in the non uniform school district believe they collaborate with their administrators around student achievement.

On the staff school uniform questionnaire, there was a statistical difference in the mean between teacher responses in uniform and non uniforms schools for one question. Teachers in School District A responded significantly higher when asked if students were more accepted. The faculty and student responses on peer relationships were consistent with one another. Further, the results again correspond with LaPoint and Holloman's (1993) and Mancini's (1997) assertion that uniforms promoted a feeling of belonging.

None of the teachers responded to the open ended question in the school uniform questionnaire. That question therefore did not play a role in answering the second research question. However, through a review of the remainder of the data, it is apparent that there is not a statistically significant relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and faculty perception of a positive school climate. Although the data might suggest a negative relationship between a mandatory school uniform policy and faculty perception of positive school climate, one of the significant factors may have been skewed by the retirement of an administrator. Only one other subscale showed any

significant difference on the staff climate survey. Further, although one question on the school uniform questionnaire showed a significant difference between the mean of School District A and School District B, it is only one factor and cannot substantiate the conclusion that school uniforms affect teachers' perspectives of a positive school climate. These findings are against what this researcher believed the outcome of this study would be. This researcher thought that school uniforms would have a positive effect on school climate and that faculty would be more positive about school uniforms. Although they were more often in favor, the majority of teachers were not in favor of a school uniform policy.

### Implications

As is the case with previous research (Brunsma, 2006; Wade & Stafford, 2003), this study showed that although there are some positive effects on school climate, overall, a school uniform policy does not have an effect on the climate of a school. Given this, what this study revealed about the impact of school uniforms on school climate can be of use when school districts are creating new school uniform policies or reviewing current policy on school uniforms. The information gained about student's beliefs of the school atmosphere in the uniform school district could influence curricular needs that a school uniform policy cannot directly address.

#### *Creation of New School Uniform Policies*

When school districts consider the creation of a school uniform policy, parent and student surveys must be an integral part of the decision. The district must address its reasoning for implementing the policy. Often, schools cite decrease in negative behavior

and an increase in academic achievement. Districts typically state that students fit in and have a sense of belonging. School uniforms improve school climate. Whatever the reasoning, a school district must include the faculty, students and parents in the decision-making. For any initiative to be successful, the support of the educational community is imperative. As this study showed, the faculty and students in all schools were not in favor of school uniforms. The implications of this study also showed that school uniforms do not impact school climate in suburban schools. Therefore, it is suggested that if the reasoning for creating a school uniform policy includes improved school climate, other options should be researched.

#### *Review of Current School Uniform Policies*

Once policy is implemented, continuous review is essential. Therefore, once a school uniform policy has been enacted, it is the responsibility of the district to be certain that the policy is fulfilling all of the expectations set forth upon the inception. Further, the district must ascertain if there are negative residual effects due to the implementation of a school uniform policy. As stated above, often the impetus for implementing a school uniform policy is to improve school climate, whether directly or indirectly through improved academic achievement, improved behavior or improved relationships. As seen in the results of this study, school uniforms do not have an effect on school climate. It is suggested that after a uniform policy is implemented, a school climate survey be completed. The survey would allow the district to assess school climate as a whole as well as many subcategories such as student behavior and relationships. If the results indicate no improvement or a negative outcome, the policy should be altered.

### *Curricular Implications*

School Uniform policies are often implemented as a solution to the problems school districts are facing throughout the country. Often, uniforms are viewed as a method to improve behavior, student achievement, and school climate. To the extent that school districts use school uniforms as a solution to the issues surrounding education, an understanding of the implications of this study could affect curricular initiatives. Specifically, in this study, the students continually mentioned bullying as an issue in the school district with uniforms. Therefore, one can assume that school uniforms did not have an impact on the bullying in that school. After a review of the impact of a school uniform policy in this school, one would suggest that a bullying program with a strong anti-bullying curriculum be introduced. Based on the results of this research, in addition to improved policy districts should review how their curriculum addresses issues such as student achievement, student behavior and school climate. Strong educational practice in tandem with effective policy ultimately causes the largest impact.

### *Conclusions and Recommendations*

It can be concluded, based on the results of this study, that school uniforms do not have an influence on students' and faculty perceptions of school climate. Although a few factors that influence school climate were affected by school uniforms, only one area proved that faculty and students agreed that there was a positive result regarding school uniforms: peer relationships. Contrary to that assertion, however, is the reality that students in the school district with uniforms consistently stated bullying was an issue. In any respect, both teachers and students felt there was a sense of belonging in the district

with school uniforms. Further, the faculty perception at times showed a negative reaction to the effects of school uniforms on school climate as seen through the school climate survey. Teachers in School District B responded more favorably to teacher-principal relationships and academic achievement than their peers in School District A. Although, the principal in School District A was retiring soon after the study was conducted.

Several recommendations for further research surfaced from this study. Extending this study to include other suburban elementary schools would be advantageous in that it would add to the generalizability of the findings from this study. It would be advisable to first include other suburban school districts in Pennsylvania in the study as that group is similar in size and structure. This would give a more definitive understanding of how school uniform policies affect school climate. Preferably, a study conducted across the county would provide the best opportunity to generalize the results.

It is also recommended that a different instrument for measuring school climate be considered. Due to the inability to find a correlation between the items in each of the three sections of the student school climate survey, a factor analysis was conducted. An instrument that provides a clear definition of the correlations between items in each section should be used. Further, the faculty school climate survey needed to be labeled by the researcher. A clear definition of each factor must exist. Finally, there should be a direct link between the student and faculty school climate surveys and the two instruments should have most of the same factors measured.

Finally, a mixed methodology research project should be explored. The open-ended questions provided rich information for this study. Thought should be given to

using the results from the quantitative part of the study and open-ended questions to frame a qualitative part of the study. Such a study would provide a well-rounded method of studying the effects of school uniforms on school climate.

## REFERENCES

- ACLU and 18 Texas Families Sue to Stop 'Prove Your Religion' School Uniform Policy. (2000, March 16). *American Civil Liberties Union News*. [Electronic Version]
- All Dressed Up and Nowhere to Go: Students and Their Parents Fight School Uniform Policies. (1999, November 4). *American Civil Liberties Union News*. [Electronic Version]
- Bodine, A. (2003). School Uniforms and Discourses on Childhood. *Childhood, 10* (43), 43-63.
- Brennan, T. (2005). Do uniforms make our schools better? I've seen them boost school climate. *American Teacher, 89* (5), 4.
- Brookmeyer, K. A., Fanti, K. A., & Henrich, C.C. (2006). Schools, Parents, and Youth Violence: A Multilevel, Ecological Analysis. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 35* (4), 504-514.
- Brunsma, D. L. (2006). School Uniform Policies in Public Schools. *Principal, 85* (3), 50-53.
- Brunsma, D., & Rockquemore, K. (1998). Effects of student uniform on attendance, behavior problems, substance use, and academic achievement. *Journal of Educational Research, 92* (1), 53-62.
- CA School District Finalizes Settlement Over Uniforms for Poor Students. (1996, October 22). *American Civil Liberties Union News*. [Electronic Version]
- Caruso, P. (1996). Individuality vs. Conformity: The Issue Behind School Uniforms. *NASSP Bulletin, 80* (581), 83-88.

- Chaika, G. (1999). School Uniforms: Panacea or Band-Aid? *Education World*. Retrieved November 9, 2007, from [http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_issues/issues060.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_issues/issues060.shtml)
- Cohn, C.A. (1996). Mandatory school uniforms: Long Beach's pioneering experience finds safety and economic benefits. *The School Administrator*, 53 (2), 22-25.
- DeMitchell, T. A., Fossy, R., & Cobb, C. (2000). Dress Codes in the Public Schools: Principals, Policies, and Precepts. *Journal of Law & Education*, 29 (1), 31-48.
- Duper, D. R. & Meyers-Adams, N. (2002). Low Level Violence: A Neglected Aspect of School Culture. *Urban Education*, 37 (3), 350-364.
- Education Commission on the States (1996). School Uniforms and Dress Codes: 1996 State Policies. Retrieved November 14, 1997, from <http://ecs.org/clearinghouse/14/77/1477.doc>
- Education Commission on the States (1998). School Uniforms and Dress Codes: 1998 State Policies. Retrieved September 12, 2000, from <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/13/39/1339.doc>
- Education Commission on the States (2001). School Uniforms and Dress Codes: State Policies. Retrieved April 17, 2002, from <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/27/09/2709.htm>
- Education Commission on the States (2004). *School Uniforms and Dress Codes: State Policies*. Retrieved October 13, 2007, from <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/54/45/5445.htm>

Eilers, A.M., & Camacho, A. (2007). School Culture Change in the Making: Leadership Factors That Matter. *Urban Education, 42* (6), 616-637.

Elder, D.L. (1999). Evaluation of School Uniform Policy at John Adams and Truman Middle Schools for Albuquerque Public Schools (Report No. RDA-DE-0299). Albuquerque, NM: Albuquerque Public Schools, Planning, Research and Accountability. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED453580)

Fenzel, L.M., & O'Brennan, L.M. (2007, April). *Educating At-Risk Urban African American Children: The Effects of School Climate on Motivation and Academic Achievement*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Gruenert, S. (2005). Correlations of Collaborative School Cultures with Student Achievement. *NASSP Bulletin, 89*, 43-55.

Harris, R. (1989, November 12). Following Suit. *Los Angeles Times* [Orange County Edition], pp. E1, E12.

Hoffler-Riddick, P.Y., & Lassiter, K.J. (1996). No More "Sag Baggin": School Uniforms Bring the Focus Back to Instruction. *Schools-in-the-Middle, 5* (4), 27-28.

Holloman, L.O. (1995). Violence and Other Antisocial Behaviors in Public Schools: Can Dress Codes Help Solve the Problem? *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences, 82* (4), 33-38.

Isaacson, L. (1998). *Student Dress Policies*. Eugene, OR: Eric Digest, 117. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 415570)

Johnston, R.C. (2000, May17). Philadelphia to Require Students to Wear Uniforms. *Education Week on the Web*, 19. Retrieved on April 20, 2001 from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=36philly.h19>

Joseph, N. (1986). *Uniforms and Nonuniforms Communication Through Clothing*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Kaiser, S.B. (1985). *The Social Psychology of Clothing and Personal Adornment*. New York: Macmillan.

Kohn, A. (2004). Rebuilding School Culture to Make Schools Safer. *The Education Digest*, 70 (3), 23-30.

LaPoint, V., & Holloman, L.O. (1993). Dress codes and uniforms in urban schools. *Education Digest*, 58 (7), 32-35.

Learning Point (1997). WINSS School Climate Survey. Retrieved November 24, 2008 from [www.dpi.state.wi.us/sig/improvement/process.html](http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/sig/improvement/process.html).

Lindelow, J., Mazzarella, J., Scott, J.J., Ellis, T.I., & Smith, S. C. (1989) *School Climate* (Contract No. OERI-R-86-0003). Washington, D.C.: Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 309512)

Lopez, R.A. (2003). The Long Beach Unified School District Uniform Initiative: A Prevention-Intervention Strategy for Urban Schools. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 72 (4), 396-405.

Loukas, A. (2007). What is School Climate? *NAESP Leadership Compass*, 5 (1), 1-4.

Lumsden, L. (2001). Uniform Dress Code Policies (Report No. EDO-EA-01-05). Washington, D.C.: Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED454568)

Mancini, G.H. (1997). Dressing for success or conformity? *Education Digest*, 63 (4), 62-65.

Million, J. (1996, April). Do Clothes Make the Student? *NAESP Principal Online PR Primer*. Retrieved April 20, 2001, from <http://www.naesp.org/comm/pr0496.htm>

Murray, R.K. (1997). The Impact of School Uniforms on School Climate. *NASSP Bulletin*, 81 (593), 106-112.

Noonan, J. (2004). School Climate and the Safe School: Seven Contributing Factors. *Educational Horizons*, 83 (1), 61-65

Paliokas, K.L., & Rist, R.C. (1996). School Uniforms: Do they reduce violence or just make us feel better? *Education Week on the Web*, 15 (28), 1-4.

Pate, S.S. (1999, December). The Influence of a Mandatory School Uniform Policy. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Career and Technical Education, Orlando, FL.

Pennsylvania State Laws Ch. 46§1317.3. An act relating to the public school system. 1949 Penn. Acts 30. 27 April 1998.

Portner, J. (1998, January 21). California District Points to Uniforms for Plunging Crime Rate. *Education Week on the Web*, 2. Retrieved April 20, 2001, from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/vol-17/19long.h1>

- Rickert, C.S. (2005). A Blueprint for Safe and Civil Schools. *Principal Leadership*, 6 (1), 44-49.
- Stewart, E.B. (2008). School Structural Characteristics, Student Effort, Peer Associations, and Parental Involvement: The Influence of School and Individual-Level Factors on Academic Achievement. *Education and Urban Society*, 40, 179-204.
- Stanley, S.M. (1996). School Uniforms and Safety. *Education & Urban Society*, 28 (4), 424-435.
- Starr, J. (2000). School Violence and Its Effect on the Constitutionality of Public School Uniform Policies. *Journal of Law and Education*, 29 (1), 113-118.
- Students Prevail in NC School Uniform Dispute. (2000, January 11). *American Civil Liberties Union News*. [Electronic Version]
- U.S. Department of Education. (1996). *Manual on School Uniforms*. Washington, D.C.
- Viadero, D. (2005). Uniform Effects? Schools Cite Benefits of Student Uniforms, but Researchers See Little Evidence of Effectiveness. *Education Week*, 24 (18), 27-29.
- Wade, K.K., & Stafford, M.E. (2003). Public School Uniforms: Effect on Perceptions of Gang Presence, School Climate, and Student Self-Perceptions. *Education and Urban Society*, 35, 399-420.
- Walsh, M. (2001, January 31). Federal Appeals Court Upholds Uniform Policy. *Education Week on the Web*, 20. Retrieved April 20, 2001 from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=20briefs.h20>

Wang, M.C., Haertel, G.D., & Walberg, H. J. (1997). Learning influences. In H.M. Walberg & G.D. Hartel (Eds.), *Psychology and educational practice* (pp. 199-211). Berkley, CA; McCuthan.

West, C.K., Tidwell, D.K., Bomba, A.K., &Elmore, P.A. (1999). Attitudes of Parents about School Uniforms. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences*, 91 (2), 92-96.

White, K.A. (2000). Do School Uniforms Fit? *The School Administrator*, 57, 36-41.

Zirkel, P.A. (1998). A Uniform Policy. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 79 (7), 550-551.

APPENDIX A  
STUDENT AND STAFF  
SCHOOL UNIFORM QUESTIONNAIRE

School Uniform Questions for Students:

<b>Students Currently Wearing Uniforms</b>	<b>Students Currently Not Wearing Uniforms</b>
Do you like wearing school uniforms? Why or Why not?	If this school decided to wear school uniforms, would that be a good idea? Why or Why not?
Do you think wearing school uniforms make you feel committed to your school?	If you wore school uniforms, do you think they would make you feel more committed to your school?
Do you think wearing school uniforms improves the way students behave in this school?	Do you think that if students wore school uniforms it would improve the way students behave in this school?
Do you think school uniforms make you concentrate more in school?	Do you think that if students wore school uniforms in this school they would be able to concentrate more in school?
Do you think school uniforms help students fit in better at school?	Do you think that if students wore school uniforms they would fit in better at school?
Do you think that because students wear school uniforms they treat each other more fairly?	Do you think that if students wore school uniforms they would treat each other more fairly?
Do you think that because students wear school uniforms, the adult respect you more?	Do you think that if students wore school uniforms the adults would respect you more?

School Uniform Questions for Staff:

<b>School with uniforms</b>	<b>School without uniforms</b>
Did you teach in this school prior to the implementation of school uniforms or did you teach in a school district other than this one without school uniforms?	Have you ever taught in a school with school uniforms?
What changes have occurred since the implementation of school uniforms?	What changes would you anticipate occurring if a school uniform policy was implemented?
Do you think the wearing of school uniforms has made the students more committed to this school?	Do you think students would be more committed to this school if they wore school uniforms?
Do you think student behavior has improved because of school uniforms?	Do you think student behavior would improve if they wore school uniforms?
Do you think student concentration has improved because of school uniforms?	Do you think students would concentrate more if they wore school uniforms?

APPENDIX B  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
APPROVAL LETTERS



**Office for Human Subjects Protections**

Institutional Review Board  
Medical Intervention  
Committees A1 & A2  
Social and Behavioral  
Committee B

3400 North Broad Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19140  
Phone:215.707.3390  
Fax:215.707.8387  
e-mail:  
[richard.throm@temple.edu](mailto:richard.throm@temple.edu)

Research Review Committee B

Certification of Approval for a Project Involving Human Subjects

Protocol Number: 11714

**PI: IKPA, VIVIAN**

Approved On: 05-May-2008

Review Date: 02-Jun-2008

Committee: B BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Department: ED'L LEAD/POLICY STD (1903)

Project Title: The Effects of School Uniforms on School Climate in Elementary Schools

In accordance with the policy of the Department of Health and Human Services on protection of human subjects in research, it is hereby certified that protocol number 11714, having received preliminary review and approval by the department of ED'L LEAD/POLICY STD (1903) was subsequently reviewed by the Institutional Review Board in its present form and approved on 05-May-2008 with respect to the rights and welfare of the subjects involved; appropriateness and adequacy of the methods used to obtain informed consent; and risks to the individual and potential benefits of the project.

In conforming with the criteria set forth in the DHHS regulations for the protection of human research subjects, and in exercise of the power granted to the Committee, and subject to execution of the consent form(s), if required, and such other requirements as the Committee may have ordered, such orders, if any, being stated hereon or appended hereto.

**It is understood that it is the investigator's responsibility to notify the Committee immediately of any untoward results of this study to permit review of the matter. In such case, the investigator should call Richard Throm at 707-8757.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zebulon V. Kendrick', written over a horizontal line.

ZEBULON  
KENDRICK, Ph.D.  
CHAIRMAN, IRB

**Office for Human Subjects Protections**

Institutional Review  
Board  
Medical Intervention  
Committees A1 & A2  
Social and Behavioral  
Committee B

3400 North Broad Street Philadelphia,  
Pennsylvania 19140  
Phone:215.707.3390 Fax:215.707.838  
e-mail: [richard.throm@temple.edu](mailto:richard.throm@temple.edu)

MEMORANDUM

**To: IKPA, VIVIAN**  
ED/L LEAD/POLICY STD (1903)

From: Richard C. Throm

Institutional Review Board

Date: 02-Jun-2008

Re: Expedited Request Status for IRB Protocol:  
**11714: The Effects of School Uniforms on School Climate in Elementary Schools**

**This addendum is to be affixed to the IRB Approval Certificate**

45 CFR 46 Protection of Human Subjects.

Expedited review is a type of review that can be conducted by the IRB Chair, other IRB members designated by the Chair, or a subcommittee of the IRB. A major criterion for research that can initially (initial review) reviewed through expedited process is that it must involve no more than minimal risk. The DHHS regulations and PDA regulations define minimal risk to mean that "the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in the daily life or during performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests."

This research protocol was reviewed under the following Expedited Review Category:

**Expedited Category #7:** Research on group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.



**Office for Human Subjects  
Protections**  
Institutional Review Board  
Medical Intervention  
Committees A1 & A2  
Social and Behavioral  
Committee B

3400 North Broad Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
19140  
Phone:215.707.3390  
Fax:215.707.8387  
e-mail:  
[richard.throm@temple.edu](mailto:richard.throm@temple.edu)

MEMORANDUM

To: **IKPA, VIVIAN**  
ED/L LEAD/POLICY STD (1903)

From: Richard C. Throm  
Institutional Review Board

Date: 02-Jun-2008

Re: Subpart D Status for IRB Protocol:  
**11714: The Effects of School Uniforms on School Climate in Elementary Schools**

**Addendum to the IRB Approval Certificate - append to certificate**  
CFR Subpart D: Additional Protections for Children Involved as Subjects in Research

Federal regulations classify permissible research involving minors into four categories, based on degree of risk and type of prospective benefit. These categories are described in relation to "minimal risk".

**Minimal risk** is defined as "the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the **research** are not greater in and of themselves from those ordinarily encountered in daily life of during the performance of routine physical or psychological examination or tests.

**Greater than minimal risk** is a term used in defining Category 2 [45 CFR 46.405] and Category 3 [35 CFR 46.406]. The regulations do not provide any further definition or clarification of this term except for specifying "a minor increase over minimal risk" in regards to Category 3 only. Therefore, the protocol application should clearly describe the study risks so the IRB, in consultation with the investigator's assessment, make an appropriate determination for category of approval.

Operative Definitions.

(a) Children are persons who have not attained the legal age for consent to treatments or procedures involved in the research, under the applicable law of the jurisdiction in which the research will be conducted.

(b) Assent means a child's affirmative agreement to participate in research. Mere failure to object should not, absent affirmative agreement, be construed as assent.

(c) Permission means the agreement of parent(s) or guardian to the participation of their child or ward in research.

(d) Parent means a child's biological or adoptive parent.

(e) Guardian means an individual who is authorized under applicable State or local law to consent on behalf of a child to general medical care.

This protocol was reviewed and approved under category:

**Research Category 1:** Not greater than minimal risk Requires:

1. Permission from ONE parent/legal guardian
2. Assent of minor (if child is 7 years of age or older (18))

