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Subject DRESS CODES AND SCHOOL UNIFORMS IN VICTORIAN
SCHOOLS.doc

comments from a parent

DRESS CODES AND SCHOOL UNIFORMS IN VICTORIAN SCHOOLS

COMMENTS FROM A PARENT:

I was schooled in Melbourne, at a primary school from 1980 to 1986, where there was a dress code based on occupational health & safety guidelines and thus, a uniform was not required.

The "No Uniform" Policy was inseparable from the culture or "approach" of the school; classes were composite age groups and teachers were addressed by their first names. The school promoted an authentic respect for others through these practices. The school community was unified, dynamic and considered progressive.

My son, in prep, attends North Melbourne primary school, where we are lucky to be a part of a very similar school community. I have discovered that there has been years of general debate as to whether uniforms should be compulsory or not.

CURRENT EXPERIENCE:

My observations over Term 1:

Children in the early school years are more likely to use the uniform than later grades.

Children of all ages are able to make appropriate choices regarding safety, climate suitability and for comfort while they work and play. The Sunsmart campaign and the "NO hat NO play" rule has been such a success.

COST-EFFICIENCY

At North Melbourne primary school, the uniforms are more expensive than the equivalent coloured clothing from big Generic Retailers.

ENFORCEMENT AND SANCTIONS

I attended a selective high school where Uniform was compulsory and the punishment for not adhering to the uniform policy was punitive. Teachers hid in bushes and waited at Tram stops to catch us. A trial of Student Uniform Monitors was terribly divisive and really damaged the collegiality of the students.

BENEFITS OF NON-COMPULSORY UNIFORM

The Parents who are pushing for a compulsory uniform want it for ease of care/ time constraints or because of they wore a uniform when they were at school i.e. nostalgic reasons

or thoughts on propriety. There has been very minimal discussion “in the yard” about what it means in terms of impacting on the school’s values of tolerance and respect for others.

Some parents have argued that clothing is used as status weaponry. Once in uniform, the individual becomes invisible and “branding” of a different kind comes to the fore. It is a truism that children do not stop excluding others when everyone is in the same uniform. This highlights the need for school values based on sound, healthy interpersonal relationships. The focus on uniforms is rather overblown, but much easier to contend with than tricky relationship skills.

Thank you for allowing widespread in-put,

Kate Renzenbrink,

West Melbourne VIC

