

Jackson Public Schools
*Mandatory School
Dress Code Policy*

Elementary
and
Middle Schools

I. Background of Mandatory Uniform Implementation

The board of trustees of the Jackson Public Schools believes that a positive school environment is a major factor in high student achievement. There are many factors that lead to a positive learning environment. Safety, discipline and school unity are three of those factors. The board of trustees believes that wearing and adhering to a school dress is one way to achieve all three of these goals. Mandatory dress codes, which refer to wearing the same style and/or color of dress, can create a safer environment because they help to identify students who belong on a school campus, thus making it easier to identify non-school persons who may be on the campus for disruptive purposes. They promote a more disciplined environment by reducing negative competition and arguments over dress styles, consequently positively affecting drop out rates, and school attendance. Finally, school uniforms promote school unity by eliminating factors that can create economic and social divisions among individuals, such as clothing style and brands, thus allowing students to become more conscious of shared goals. These shared goals are meeting academic standards, developing self-confidence and understanding diversity. The positive learning environment to which wearing school mandatory dress codes contributes helps to create an environment in which student achievement is the highest priority.

Beginning in Fall 2004, the Jackson Public Schools Ad Hoc school uniform committee proposed a one year piloted mandatory uniform policy of any elementary and middle schools that wished to pursue uniforms via site council approval. This pilot was studied by the district to possibly implement school dress codes in school year 2005-06 in all elementary and middle schools. The specific dress code was determined in cooperation with the school district, local schools, parents and students.

All uniforms shall be "inexpensive and readily available for all students." Parents who demonstrate a dire financial need related to the purchase of uniforms will make an appeal to the school's local site council for limited support via the school's local adopter and other community resources. Parents who do not wish for their children to wear uniforms because of their children's religious beliefs and religious dress must submit their reasons in writing to the school principal. These matters will be taken into consideration by school administration and site council of that school.

The board of trustees also encourages the wearing of proper attire at schools. Attire that disrupts the learning environment or creates a potential safety hazard is not permitted. This prohibition includes attire that is too large or too small, too short, or too revealing. Principals shall have the authority to determine proper attire for their schools, including proper attire when school dress codes are not worn. Principals are responsible for ensuring that the school uniform and dress code policy is adequately enforced and implemented at the school level.

II. Jackson Public School Dress Code Ad Hoc Committee Summary

Parents, teachers, and administrators in schools and districts that have successfully implemented school dress code policies believe that *mandatory dress codes can play an important role in improving school culture, making schools safer, more positive learning environment, and improving student outcomes, including attendance, grades, and test scores.*

Although not difficult or costly, successfully implementing a mandatory school dress code policy requires planning, communication, and consistency. Therefore, the JPS Ad Hoc School uniform committee submitted a summary of lessons learned and recommendations for the Jackson Public School board in its consideration of adopting a mandatory school dress code policy.

- Schools and districts that have successfully implemented a mandatory school

policy believe that dress codes improve school safety and classroom behavior, are less expensive than everyday clothing, reduce unhealthy competition among students, lower rates of truancy and raise rates of attendance, and, ultimately, have a positive impact on student outcomes.

- Schools and districts interested in implementing a school uniform policy emphasize to families these expected benefits and take every opportunity to demonstrate impact.
- Schools and districts emphasize the extremely high rates of satisfaction among key constituencies in schools and districts that have already implemented school uniforms.
- Generally, if parents, teachers, and school administrators communicate regularly and share a mutual vision for the use of uniforms, they can be adopted and implemented quickly, inexpensively, and with little disruption to the school.
- The success of a mandatory school uniform policy relies heavily on parental support and involvement. From the outset, parents need to be consulted and included in all aspects of decision making in relation to uniforms.
- Once parental support is established, it becomes the role of the school administrators to implement school uniforms successfully. Working with parents and teachers, administrators must demonstrate leadership when enacting a mandatory policy. While mandatory policies appear to have higher rates of compliance than voluntary policies, communicating a clear policy that is enforced fairly and consistently appear to be most critical to success.
- In order to generate support for school uniforms, administrators must consider affordability of uniforms and some form of assistance for low-income families. Although uniforms are often less expensive than everyday clothing, it is critical that schools create a system of financial support in order to assist needy families. Creating a uniform policy that addresses this need from the outset is critical in enlisting the support of all parents.
- Some resistance to uniforms—from those believing they infringe on students' civil rights or take away from student expression, and from parents simply too distracted to ensure that their children wear their uniforms—should be expected in the early stages of implementation. Each school needs to address this resistance in its own ways. Most often, positive incentives are used to encourage compliance.
- Finally, keeping uniforms simple and offering students some choice appears to help compliance and keep satisfaction levels high. Although uniforms are no panacea, experience has proven them to be an important reform tool.

III. Mandatory Dress Code Disciplinary Procedures

A clear and consistent policy mindful of student rights must be established and maintained in order for mandatory dress code policies to be successful.

The administration will use positive incentives to encourage students to comply with mandatory school dress code policies. Schools will refrain from, as much as possible, punishing students for failing to wear their dress code, because punishment is thought to be counterproductive to the goal of raising academic performance. Previous research confirms that almost all schools that have instituted either voluntary or mandatory dress code policies have worked towards full student compliance through the use of positive reinforcements.

Schools will utilize a variety of strategies for rewarding compliance with their dress code policies consistent with those used in schools across the country. For example, schools in successful

mandatory dress code districts offer “rewards” to classrooms when all students wear their mandatory dress code every day for a week, or to students who wear their mandatory dress code every day for an extended period of time (e.g., a quarter or semester). Incentives will be developed by teachers and administrators and will vary from school to school. Schools might develop “spirit days,” which is usually held once a month, at which time students wear school colors, but may dress however they want.

IV. Mandatory Dress Code Guidelines

The following guidelines will be uniformly applied to dress and grooming regulations by each principal or designee:

A. Elementary Schools

1. Mandatory dress codes are required at the elementary school levels that are grades Pre- K K-5. The following is the disciplinary procedure for students in noncompliance with the mandatory dress code policy:

First offense: letter of reminder (warning) sent to the parent/guardian from the principal with the requirement that it is signed and returned the following day.

Second offense: telephone call by the principal to the parent/guardian.

Third offense: parent/guardian will be required to attend a conference with the principal.

Fourth Offense: One-day suspension in in-school suspension (ISS). Students in non-compliance will be placed in the in-school suspension room until an appropriate dress code is obtained from home. If students are unable to obtain a dress code from home, they will remain in ISS for the remainder of the day.

Fifth offense: One or two days at home or ISS with the requirement that the parent/guardian return to school with the student and participate in a conference with the principal prior to the student’s return to class.

2. **Subsequent Offenses.** Any student who refuses to participate in the mandatory dress code policy beyond the fourth offense will be subject to out of school suspension assignments as deemed appropriate by the JPS student code of conduct. Administrators will work diligently to refrain from suspending students from school because of non-compliance of the dress code policy. Suspension will be exercised ONLY when all other options have been exhausted.

B. Middle Schools

1. Dress codes are mandatory at the middle school levels that are grades 6 -8. The following is the disciplinary procedure for students in non-compliance with the mandatory dress code policy:

- **First offense:** Parent notified by telephone and notice sent home by student.
- **Second offense:** Parent again notified by telephone.
- **Third offense:** Parent/guardian will be required to attend a conference with the principal.
- **Fourth offense:** Saturday or extended after-school detention with parent/guardian contact.
- **Fifth offense:** One or two days of out of school suspension and/or In-School Suspension (ISS) and the parent required to return to school with the student.

2. Students in non-compliance will be placed in ISS room until an appropriate dress code is obtained from home. If students are unable to obtain a dress code from home, they will remain in ISS (In School Suspension) for the remainder of the day. The school administration will work diligently to refrain from suspending, either ISS or in out-of-school suspension (OSS), students from classes and/or school because of non-compliance of the uniform policy. Suspension will be exercised ONLY when all other options have been exhausted.

3. Any student who refuses to participate in the mandatory dress code policy beyond the fourth offense will be subject to out of school suspension assignments as deemed appropriate by the Jackson Public Schools student code of conduct.

V. Recommended Dress Code Guidelines for Elementary and Middle School Students

A. Elementary and Middle Schools Dress Codes

1. Tops, shirts, blouses must be navy blue or white.
 - Acceptable styles include golf-style shirts, Oxford or button-down dress shirts, turtle necks, white blouses with Peter Pan collars, and crew neck shirts.
 - Long sleeves and short sleeves are both acceptable.
 - Sleeveless tops are not acceptable.
 - T-Shirt undergarments are unacceptable as a dress code top.
 - Shirts and blouses will be tucked in.

2. Bottoms, pants, walking shorts, skirts, knee length skorts, and jumpers must be tan or navy blue.
 - Acceptable pants styles include full-length dress pants, boot cut or straight-legged pants, cargo pants, straight-legged capri pants, cropped pants and knee-length walking shorts.
 - Skirts, skorts, or jumpers must also be knee-length or longer.
 - Denim jeans, tight-fitting or baggy pants are NOT acceptable.

Belts must be worn and fitted at the waist on pants with belt loops.

Mandatory school dress codes will be worn Monday – Friday of each week. School site councils may allow exceptions for dress code dress on Friday. This exception will include appropriate dress code attire that all students will wear on Friday. Examples would include a school/PTSA "spirit" t-shirt or polo that is adopted by the school's site council. This exception will not deviate from the Jackson Public School District dress code.

3. **Assistance for Mandatory Dress Code.** Local schools must establish a support system to assist needy families. Local schools are encouraged to work with their school adopters and other community supporters to establish a uniform closet. Schools must establish this mechanism before instituting uniforms on their campus.

4. **Objection Due to Religious Beliefs.** Parents who do not wish for their children to wear mandatory dress codes because their religious beliefs require traditional dress of their religion must submit their reasons in writing to the school principal for review.

5. **Additional school mandatory dress code recommendations to consider:**

- School site councils can approve additional dress code colors beyond the standard
- Shoes should not have heels higher than an inch and a half.
- All closed-toe shoes/athletic or tennis shoes, as well as boots, are acceptable.
- Shoes worn with laces and straps should be worn in a manner that does not create a hazardous situation.
- If sandals are worn, they must be fastened appropriately. Mule sandals are acceptable.
- Flip-flops or house shoes are unacceptable.
- Vests, shirts, sweaters, sweatshirts, cardigans, and lightweight jackets are permitted as items that may be worn over the uniform top. They should be white, tan, navy blue, or one of the additional colors approved by a school site councils.
- No denim material may be worn as uniform clothing.
- All uniform clothing must be plain without any manufacturer's logos, brand names, pictures, or insignias visible on the clothing.
- Heavy coats, heavy jackets and raincoats are not covered by these regulations and are not to be worn during the school day unless permitted by the principal for special circumstances.
- Club uniforms such as Scouts and 4-H, may be worn on meeting days as permitted by school administration.