



School Uniforms and Dress Codes: State Policies

By Michael Colasanti

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The role state legislatures play in addressing student dress standards is in authorizing schools or districts to implement dress code and school uniform policies. **Twenty-two states** authorize schools and districts to implement dress code and/or uniform policies. In states where no policy exists, it can be assumed that unless explicitly prohibited, schools and districts can require dress codes and/or uniforms. In fact, court rulings and attorney general opinions in an additional **four states** have upheld the right of districts and schools to set dress requirements.

No state requires students to wear uniforms.

One state, Massachusetts, prohibits the use of dress codes unless there are health or safety issues.

State	Policy		Opt-Out	Assist. to Low SES	Notes and Citation	Date Enacted
	Dress Code	Uniform				
Arizona		X			ARIZ. REV. STAT. § 15-342	1995
Arkansas	X	X	X		Local boards are directed to create advisory committees comprised of parents and students to determine if the district should adopt a uniform policy. If recommended, the issue is presented to the voters. ARK. CODE ANN. § 6-18-102	1995
California	X	X	X	X	Uniforms are to be selected by the principal, staff and parents of each individual school. CAL. EDUC. CODE § 35183	1993
Colorado	X	X			Students are prohibited from wearing apparel that is “deemed disruptive to the classroom or to the maintenance of a safe and orderly school.” COLO. REV. STAT. § 22-32-109.1	2000
Connecticut		X			CONN. GEN. STAT. § 10-221f	1996

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	Dress Code	Uniform				
Delaware	X	X		X	School boards must ensure that the uniforms are available at a reasonable price. DEL. CODE ANN. TIT. 14, § 4120	1995
Florida	X	X			Students may wear hats, sunglasses, and other sun-protective wear while outdoors. FLA. STAT. CH. 1001.43	1998
Illinois	X	X	X	X	Parents seeking to opt-out their children must do so to the school board based on religious objections. ILL. COMP. STAT. § 5/10-22.25b	1990
Indiana	X				IND. CODE § 20-33-8-12	1995
Iowa	X				Districts may adopt a dress code policy if they believe that it is necessary for the "health, safety or positive educational environment." IOWA CODE § 279.58	1995
Kentucky	X				The 6th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in <i>Blau v. Fort Thomas</i> that KY. REV. STAT. ANN. § 160.345 "tasks the Council with setting school policy that 'provides an environment to enhance the students' achievement and helps the school meet [its] goals.' A dress code [adopted by a local middle school] assuredly falls well within this broad authority." <i>Blau v. Fort Thomas Pub. Sch. Dist.</i> , 401 F.3d 381 (2005)	--
Louisiana	X	X			Every school is authorized to select their own uniforms and must display them prior to the beginning of each year. LA. REV. STAT. ANN. § 17:416.7	1992
Massachusetts					School officials are <i>prohibited</i> from establishing a dress code abridging the rights of students as to personal dress and appearance unless it violates "reasonable standards of health, safety and cleanliness." MASS. GEN. LAWS CH. 71 § 83	1995

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	Dress Code	Uniform				
Minnesota		X		X	When adopting a school uniform policy, the district board must promote student, staff, parent and community involvement in the program. MINN. STAT. § 123B.36	1995
Mississippi		X	X		Attorney General Opinion #99-0274 (1999) states that, "pursuant to § 37-7-301, it is within the discretion of a school board to establish a policy mandating uniforms so long as a hardship waiver policy is also in place wherein those children who are unable to purchase the uniform will be provided same by the school district... If the mandatory school uniform rule furthers a substantial, legitimate interest of the school district."	--
Missouri	X	X			Districts that are in a city not within a county may establish dress code and school uniform policies. MO. REV. STAT. § 167.029	1996
Nevada		X			Districts may also require a dress code for teachers and other staff employed by the district. NEV. REV. STAT. § 392.458	1997
New Hampshire	X				Under N.H. REV. STAT. ANN. § 189:15, which allows school boards to adopt measures for discipline of schools, the district court in <i>Bannister v. Paradis</i> stated that "school boards do have power to adopt reasonable restrictions on dress as part of its educational policy and as an educational device," but, "the school board's power must be limited to that required by its function of administering public education." <i>Bannister v. Paradis</i> , 316 F. Supp. 185 (1970)	--
New Jersey	X	X	X	X	Specific uniforms are selected by the principal, staff and parents of each school. N.J. STAT. ANN. §§ 18A:11-8, 9	1996
New York	X				N.Y. EDUC. LAW § 2801	2000

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	Dress Code	Uniform				
North Carolina		X			A district court ruled in <i>Hicks v. Halifax County Bd. of Educ.</i> , 93 F. Supp. 2d 649, that N.C. GEN. STAT. § 115C-16, which provides that “The State Board of Education may authorize up to five local school administrative units to implement pilot programs in which students are required to wear uniforms in public schools... did not limit the authority of the County School Board to adopt a uniform policy for its students, which was implemented pursuant to its ‘general control and supervision’ authority under [§ 115C-36].” <i>Hicks v. Halifax County Bd. of Educ.</i> , 93 F. Supp. 2d 649 (1999)	--
Ohio	X	X		X	Before the adoption of a uniform, the district must offer ample time for principal, staff and parent comments and suggestions. OHIO REV. CODE ANN. § 3313.665	1995
Oklahoma	X	X			OKLA. STAT. ANN. TIT. 70, § 24-100.4	Unknown
Pennsylvania	X	X			24 PA. CONS. STAT. § 13-1317.3	1998
Tennessee		X			The state board must establish guidelines and criteria for local adoption of a uniform including that the clothing must be “simple, appropriate, readily available and inexpensive.” TENN. CODE ANN. § 49-1-302	1996
Texas		X	X	X	District boards in independent school districts may adopt school uniform policies. TEX. EDUC. CODE ANN. §§ 11.158, 11.162	1995
Utah		X	X	X	Apart from an opt-out policy, districts must allow for principals to exempt students due to extenuating circumstances. UTAH CODE ANN. § 53A-15-1102	2006
Virginia		X			No state funds may be used for the	1995

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					purchase of school uniforms. VA. CODE ANN. § 22.1-79.2	

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