



**LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
POLICY BULLETIN**

**TITLE:** Student Dress Codes/Uniforms

**NUMBER:** BUL-6494.1

**ISSUER:** Earl R. Perkins, Assistant Superintendent  
School Operations

Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana, Ph.D.  
Chief Executive Officer  
Office of Educational Services

**DATE:** June 22, 2015

**ROUTING**

ESC Instructional Superintendents  
ESC Administrators of Operations  
ESC Operations Coordinators  
ESC Instructional Directors  
Site Administrators

**MAJOR CHANGES:** This Bulletin replaces BUL-6494.0, dated April 29, 2015, issued by the Office of Educational Services.

**BACKGROUND:** The Los Angeles Unified School District believes that appropriate student dress contributes to a productive learning environment. This Bulletin addresses student dress codes/uniforms and provides schools with guidelines and requirements for the development of local site policy.

Courts have generally interpreted a student’s choice of attire as a form of expression protected by the First Amendment. State law provides that a school district governing board may adopt a reasonable dress code policy, and/or permit school-wide uniform policies if the policy is necessary for the health and safety of the school environment. All dress codes must be gender-neutral. Students may not be disciplined or restricted from wearing attire that may be traditionally associated with the other sex. In general, the only restrictions that may be placed on attire involve cases where there is a disruption to the educational program or is necessitated for the health and safety of the school environment.

**GUIDELINES:** To maintain an effective learning environment, schools, with input from the administration, faculty, staff, parents/guardians, and students (secondary schools), are authorized to implement a student dress code and/or establish a student uniform policy. The following guidelines apply to all schools, including magnet programs and magnet schools:

**I. STUDENT DRESS CODES**

Prior to implementing a student dress code, the school must obtain the approval of the Educational Service Center (ESC) Operations Coordinator. Restrictions on student attire may be imposed under the following guidelines, per State law and District policy:



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- A. The student dress code components must be necessary for the health and safety of the school environment.
- B. The student dress code may restrict wearing “gang-related apparel” with the following conditions:
  - 1. The school has identified the necessity for the restrictions(s); and
  - 2. The school provides a reasonable description of the restricted apparel.
- C. All students shall be required to show proper attention to personal cleanliness, health, neatness, safety, appearance and suitability of clothing for school activities. In every case, the dress and grooming of the student shall not:
  - 1. cause a distraction from or disturbance in any school activity or interfere with the participation of a student in any school activity; or
  - 2. create a hazard to the health or safety of the student or others.
- D. Clothing, jewelry, and personal items, such as backpacks and book bags, with language or images that are vulgar, sexually suggestive, discriminatory, obscene, libelous, contain threats, or that promote illegal or violent content such as the unlawful use of weapons, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or drug paraphernalia, are prohibited.
- E. Consistent with these guidelines, hair, sideburns, mustaches, and beards may be worn at any length or style, and clothing may be of any fashion, style or design, as determined by the student and his/her parents/guardians.
- F. Each school shall allow students to wear sun-protective clothing, including but not limited to hats, for outdoor use during the school day. However, consistent with the student dress code, schools may determine the type and style of approved sun-protective clothing for outdoor use.

### II. PARENT NOTIFICATION OF STUDENT DRESS CODE

The Parent/Student Handbook shall be provided to each student at the beginning of the school year and to any student upon enrollment at any point after the beginning of the school year.

- A. The school may separately notify parents/guardians of the school’s student dress code (Attachment B). This notification should include the following:
  - 1. A copy of the student dress code;
  - 2. Designated contacts should the parent/guardian need economic assistance to comply;



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3. Any consequences for failure to follow the student dress code; and
  4. The complaint procedure and contact person(s) at the school.
- B. Students may not be disciplined or removed from class as a consequence for wearing “inappropriate” attire. However, a student may briefly leave the classroom to change clothes. The school should notify parents/guardians of the school’s response to student violations of the student dress code. Typical consequences would include a parent contact or conference and the directive to cover the non-complying clothing or change clothes. If the student is wearing clothing that is a safety hazard and not otherwise exempted, the school may direct the student to remove or replace that article of clothing.

### III. SCHOOL UNIFORM POLICIES

- A. A school uniform policy sets forth requirements for student attire. However, school uniform policies are voluntary. If a student’s parent or guardian exercises the right to opt out of the school uniform policy, the student must adhere to the student dress code. Students who participate in a nationally recognized youth organization shall not be precluded from wearing the organization’s uniform on days that the organization has a scheduled meeting. Adequate notice of the school uniform policy must be provided to all parents/guardians, students, and school staff. At minimum, a copy of the school uniform policy shall be given to each entering student at the time of enrollment and to all students at the beginning of each school year.
- B. Schools may establish a school uniform policy, consistent with the following criteria:
1. The specific uniform selected shall be determined by the principal, certificated and classified employees, parents/guardians, and students (secondary schools). The school governance council may fulfill this function. The school uniform policy must specify:
    - a. types and colors of uniform;
    - b. requirements for jackets/outer garments;
    - c. optional articles of attire, if any;
    - d. clearly stated, appropriate consequences for failure to comply with the school uniform policy;
    - e. procedures to provide uniforms to economically disadvantaged students at no cost;
    - f. methods to facilitate recycling of uniforms within the school community;
    - g. provision for allowing students to wear sun-protective clothing, including but not limited to hats, for outdoor use during the school



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day. However, consistent with the school dress code policy, schools may determine the type and style of approved sun-protective clothing;

- h. procedures to allow for immediate enrollment of students, including students who are homeless or in the foster care system, even if the student does not have a school uniform at the time of enrollment; and
- i. provision for opting out of the school uniform policy, including notification to all parents/guardians of this option, at least annually.

#### IV. OPT OUT PROCEDURES

- A. At the parent's/guardian's request, the school shall provide the parent/guardian with an opt-out form (Attachment E). The opt-out is effective immediately upon receipt by the school.
- B. Upon receipt of the completed opt-out form, the school should provide the student with an identification card (Attachment F).
- C. The school shall inform the student that the identification card should be carried, along with the student identification card, to school and to school activities and events. In case of loss of the opt-out card, the school must establish a procedure for immediate replacement.
- D. The school should maintain a list of students who have opted out of the school uniform policy to ensure these students enjoy the same rights and privileges as all other students (Attachment G). The school must notify appropriate staff of students who have opted out of the school uniform policy.
- E. If the student's parents/guardians choose not to have the student comply with the school uniform policy, the student shall not be penalized academically, subject to any disciplinary action or disparaging treatment or denied attendance to school or participation in school activities.

#### V. INITIAL ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNIFORM POLICY

- A. The school governance council, in consultation with the School Safety Committee, must approve the school uniform policy. The draft policy must first be shared with school staff, parents/ guardians, and students (secondary schools) for input.
- B. The uniform policy shall not be initially implemented without at least six months prior notice to parents/guardians and prior approval from the



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corresponding operations coordinator.

- C. The school must identify financial resources for students who are not able to comply with the school uniform policy due to financial hardship. The school must:
1. develop a procedure and criteria to identify families in need of financial assistance;
  2. designate a specific staff member or school volunteer to assist those families in need of assistance;
  3. prepare a flyer describing the uniform in detail. The flyer shall state that in cases of financial hardship, parents may contact their child's school by phone, mail or in person to request assistance. The flyer should also contain the name and contact information of the school's designee who handles requests for assistance; and
  4. work with staff, the community and business partners to identify resources to assist families.
- D. The school uniform policy must make clear that no student shall be considered non-compliant with the policy in the following instances:
1. When non-compliance derives from financial hardship.
  2. When a student wears a button, armband, or other accouterment to exercise the right to freedom of expression as provided by Education Code 48907, unless the button, armband or other accouterment falls outside speech protected by the First Amendment, or signifies or is related to gangs, gang membership or gang activity as provided by Education Code 35183.
  3. When a student wears the uniform of a nationally recognized youth organization on regular meeting days.
  4. When wearing a school uniform violates a student's sincerely held religious belief.
  5. When a student's parent or guardian has opted out of the school uniform policy.
- E. Notice of the school's uniform policy may also be included in school newsletters, parent meetings including advisory councils and PTA meetings, newsletters, telephonic notification, posters displayed at the school, and enrollment materials.

## VI. PHYSICAL EDUCATION UNIFORMS

If a school chooses to adopt a uniform policy for physical education classes,



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the school must follow all provisions for school uniform policies noted above with regard to:

- A. Notice to parents/guardians and students of the physical education uniform;
- B. Provision of the physical education uniform at no cost if failure to have or wear appropriate apparel arises from circumstances beyond the control of the student;
- C. Notice to parents/guardians and students that no grade of a pupil participating in a physical education class may be adversely affected due to the fact that the pupil does not wear standardized physical education apparel where the failure to wear such apparel arises from circumstances beyond the student's control;
- D. Notice to parents/guardians of the options for purchasing a physical education uniform, specifically noting that physical education uniforms need not be purchased through the school.

**ATTACHMENTS:** Attachment A - Checklist for Implementing the Student Dress Code  
Attachment B - Sample Letter to Parents/Guardians Regarding the Student Dress Code  
Attachment C - Checklist for Establishing a School Uniform Policy  
Attachment D - Sample Letter to Parents/Guardians Regarding the School Uniform Policy  
Attachment E - Sample Parent/Guardian Opt Out Form for School Uniforms  
Attachment F - Sample Opt Out Student Identification Cards  
Attachment G - Sample Opt Out Roster

**AUTHORITY:** This is a policy of Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Part C, Section 722; California Education Code sections 35183, 35183.5, 48853.5, and 49066

**RELATED RESOURCES:** Board Rule 2251

**ASSISTANCE:** For assistance contact your Operations Coordinator. For further information, contact the Office of School Operations at (213) 241-5337.