The trend of inappropriate dress in our schools is causing alarm in our parents and educators. This population argues that wearing inappropriate clothes is distracting in the classroom and interferes with the learning environment. They believe that requiring uniforms would provide a reasonable solution to the problem. Although those opposed to uniforms believe that a dress code would hinder the student's freedom of expression, I believe that the advantages far outweigh this potential disadvantage.

When freedom of expression begins to interfere with appropriate and clear education in the classroom, we have a serious dilemma and the issue needs to be addressed. The current lack of a dress code is not working. We are not breaking new ground when we suggest that the fashion that is spewed upon our youth in the mass media is riddled with sexual undertones. Examples can be seen in every teen magazine, youth-oriented

television program, and in the most popular music videos. Further, clothing that advertisers would consider benign, stimulates and raises the hormone levels of every young male, which can be very distracting in the classroom. The only solution to help create an environment where learning takes precedence is to adopt school uniforms. Obviously, a uniform policy would be easier to enforce then a dress code and would bring many advantages to the entire academic population.

First and foremost, uniforms would help students to fight the materialistic world's values. Our society feels that designer labels, such as Gucci, Louis Vuitton, and Hilfinger, create self-worth and that without these, a person is open to cruel comments and non-acceptance. Many students cannot afford to "buy" their self-worth and are required to rise above the standards our society and media feeds them. As a teenager, acceptance is the most crucial aspect of their daily lives, and school uniforms take away the financial burden that our society imposes upon them. Although uniforms must be purchased, this is a minimal financial burden compared to overly high-priced current designer wear that students ask for.

Uniforms could also help curb gang related violence that occurs in many of our nation's schools. Specific colors, logos, and signs have been adopted into the lifestyle of gang members and each carries its own significance. What was once an ordinary red shirt could now be considered an intentional bullet fired in a gang battle. Uniforms decrease the division lines between gangs, as well as protect students who are ignorant to the unwritten laws that govern gangs.

For myself, uniforms would dramatically decrease the amount of time I spend preparing for my day. No longer would I need to delve into the bottom of my closet to find an outfit that I haven't worn this week. I do not need to worry that my best friends might come to school in the same outfit as I, because uniforms ensure that they will! Uniforms give me extra time to finish the homework I haven't done rather than spend time worrying about my wardrobe.

Those who argue that uniforms prevent creative expression are limiting their notion of creativity to fashion. There are many other ways to express creativity. In fact, requiring uniforms may actually encourage freedom of expression. Without the distraction created by questionable clothing, students may be better able to express themselves in art class, through scientific research, and with literary exploits. Uniforms help to ensure a learning environment that is free from distractions and fosters creative expression in areas that are important.

I highly value the worth of uniforms and feel they should be enforced throughout the entire school district. Solving problems in the entire district would help ensure a safer community, save money, encourage better learning, and give students a little extra time in the morning.