

**School Uniforms:  
A 20<sup>th</sup> century response to 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges**

**Why mandatory school uniforms won't improve IPS  
and student voice will**

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To whom it may concern:

The Indianapolis Public Schools are in the process of making an important decision on this question: Are mandatory school uniforms a way of improving the district?

Since there have not been several widely advertised and highly attended public meetings on various evenings where all sides of the issue were openly discussed, this paper provides an alternate view of how to improve IPS. It is based on two global initiatives: The Great Turning and Education for Sustainability.

### **The Great Turning**

David Korten's new book, "The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community," is a name for the essential adventure of our time. Its powerful framework will help educators understanding the critical choices we must make as we undertake the journey:

*The turning from an industrial growth society to a life-sustaining civilization.*

To move forward we must recognize how increasingly interdependent the world has become. In the midst of magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms, we are one human family and one Earth Community with a common destiny. This is a great shift:

- From competition to cooperation
- From domination to democracy
- From growth to sustainability
- From assimilation to self-actualization

### **Education for Sustainability**

As of 2005, and on to 2015, the UN will be sponsoring the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). See Appendix N.

A meeting to open the decade was held in Toyko. The conference, "Sustainable Development and Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: What we can do now for the children of the future--An educational paradigm shift," contained a message of penetrating insight for the educational community:

*Education has been entirely too preoccupied with immediate profit, and has placed greater value on competing rather than on coexisting democratically with others.*

The conference emphasized how we must change our nearsighted views of children and their academic ability we have had in recent years. We have to realize our children and youth can and must be prepared to save our planet. This is what the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development is all about.

Teaching critical thinking and problem solving skills will be needed. But what is new and most important are the "democratic habits of mind" children must know and practice.

**The relationship between Sustainability Education and Democratic Education:** Students must be informed and given the chance to share in classroom and school decisions that directly or indirectly involve the values, practices, and goals of global DESD efforts. See Appendix O.

This would involve students in the process of:

- Deciding what issue, problem, or task they, the class, school, or community want to study, research, solve, or carry out
- Deciding how, where, and when they want to study/research/solve
- Deciding how their DESD efforts will be assessed

### **In light of these 2 initiatives**

Education will soon be the task of enabling the next generation to develop the judgment necessary to function creatively, responsibly, independently, and democratically under new and perhaps historically unprecedented circumstances.

“Anyone who thinks children are the leaders of tomorrow is only procrastinating.”  
Concern for Working Children (CWC), a democratic children’s organization, New Delhi

### **Compulsory school uniforms reflect the dominator not the partnership model**

All societies are patterned on either a dominator model—in which human hierarchies are ultimately backed by force or threat of force—or a partnership model, with variations in between. A partnership with youth, not a one-way coercive top-down mandatory school uniform policy, reflects this enlightened and forward-looking global perspective.

### **Mandatory uniforms: A 20<sup>th</sup> century solution to 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges**

The future belongs to the children. Our schools and curriculum must be based on the principles and spirit of sustainable development. Since it is their future we are preparing for,

*students must be a part of all aspects of the processes involved in creating sustainable schools for a world each will inherit.*

Neither extreme, uniforms nor more of the same, is acceptable. Our IPS cannot maintain business as usual. As well, although mandatory school uniforms appear to make sense, the necessity of fear, coercion, and control required to implement such a policy and the divisiveness it creates in the school community send the wrong message to children and the world. This paper offers an alternate: The middle way of democracy.

“Adults, why do you fear children’s participation?”  
12 year-old rag picker, youth member, CWC

### **The middle way: Democratic education**

“The Great Turning” is an idea that we are about to move to a new global, green, smart, cooperative, open, and democratic world. IPS must join the world DESD initiative to set forth a sustainable global society found on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. *An IPS mandatory public school uniform policy and the manipulation, compliance, and paternalism it reflects are not within the higher-order potential of our human nature and ethos of these two global shifts.*

Cordially,

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## Statement of premise

“An intellectually curious, cognitively autonomous, socially responsible, democratically engaged, productive and globally conscious member of the human family in the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot be educated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century factory model of education. The regimented mastery, internalization, and regurgitation of compartmentalized facts that served the industrial age are anachronisms. The pandemic boredom, among children and youth in European and American schools, stems from the redundancy in much of today’s schooling.”

Marcello M. Suarez-Orozco, “Rethinking Education in the Global Era” November, 2005 *Phi Delta Kappan*.

## Summary

*IPS has a legitimation crisis. Will mandatory uniforms help? No. Why? Nothing supports the concept: Hopes, fears, and anecdotes do, but no scientific proof. Although the courts support school uniforms, there are too many unintended consequences. Also, mandatory uniforms cannot meet the challenges of the ideal speech situation nor pass the test of universal rationality. Besides, school dress is not really the main factor. The sources of urban school problems are found in the political and economic systems, not in the socio-educational system. School uniforms actually redirect our attentions away from many of the real political issues. School democracy could do the same thing as uniforms with equal or better results. A democratic approach fits well with current global initiatives. So, why is IPS pushing uniforms? This and other questions are proposed and answered. Conclusions and recommendations are included. A variety of examples that support the premise make up the appendix.*

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“School uniforms are a cynical and simplistic response from educators and politicians to a post-modern world of social and technological complexities so profound and enormous they produce a stunning sense of suspicion and uneasiness. By convincing ourselves we can control youth culture through school uniforms, we hope to reduce these complexities, finding meaning in a world we are creating to fulfill our dreams--yet one in which we will not be around to experience and be accountable to. That’s why school uniforms are what’s best for adults, not children.”

Former IPS history teacher

“All education is political: It either colonizes or it liberates.”

Paulo Freire

"When educators don't know what else to do, when they feel the most impotent, they seize upon superficial factors like clothing in order to maintain control and cover up the inadequacies of their school system."

IPS employee

“Educators who use school uniforms and school success in the same breath are believing their own hype. In fact, the very idea that many educators would “give their right arm” if excellent schools were this easy proves there is no relationship between school uniforms and school success.”

IPS employee

“Like the abortion debate or the war in Iraq, the school uniform issue is divisive, not communitarian.”

IPS employee

"Don't forget the maverick."

Jonathan Kozol to IPS during a talk at George Washington Community School

"The roots of IPS's problems are in the economic and political system, not in teenage fads."

Local IPS supporter

“Get out of my hallway. Let’s go to class.”

IPS high school teacher to students during 5 minute passing period, spring semester 2006

“It’s easy to order us to wear school uniforms, but what if we don’t obey?”

IPS student

“All individuality will be repressed.”

IPS Superintendent Dr. White at Dress Code Task Force meeting on how school uniforms will work

“To conclude that students in uniforms look nice and so must be nice is wishful thinking.”

David Brunsma

“Making kids wear uniforms is a desperate attempt to force them to listen to mediocre teachers; you don’t have to force students to listen to good teachers.”

IPS employee

## Preface

"...until students are ready to learn."

One scenario to justify mandated public school uniforms for IPS students goes like this: In a materialistic world where parents work 2 jobs to buy their child sneakers, video games, and McDonalds, children and youth are pampered, undisciplined, and lost.

Kids today are given too many choices--what they want to eat, want to wear, want to do after school and on weekends. They don't need choices. They are children. This is why they have parents, adults who will make choices for them.

As well, older folks have dropped the ball. They have loosened the reigns and are not disciplining kids, aren't being parents, aren't being adults, and taking control--giving children only one choice and that is to do what you are told. Many adults are afraid of children, afraid to discipline. Some are afraid they will be reported. Thus, we need to return to the past where adults disciplined and children were obedient.

The present violence, crime, and incarceration rates for minorities and the poor are a product of this lack of parental discipline. The young have too much freedom. They are out of control. Parents are buckling under from pressure and trying please their children and teens with their own room (with TV, DVD player, X-Box, phone, sound system), expensive clothing, electronic gadgets, and fast foods. Also, adults and community members are not doing their job. They allow children and youth too many choices, letting them to do as they wish without consequences.

This scenario is also reflected in the public schools. Students get by with too much. Some teachers are afraid of students. Low expectations and disorder are the norm. Students do not see why school is necessary. There is no sense of urgency to go to class. Many are constantly tardy. The feeling that "you need to learn" just isn't there. The process of learning has lost its allure. Students are disruptive, non-compliant, and undisciplined. Their behavior, clothing, way of dressing, manners, and language do not reflect the seriousness needed for learning to take place. They need to be brought into line, and they will.

Mandatory school uniforms will show students and families how serious IPS is about learning. Students must come to school dressed for success. The way you dress is the way you behave. Part of a student's responsibility is to train for success. Because there is a proper way to come to school, taking pride in the way you look is the first step.

Consequently, it is up to the schools to regain the proper respect by taking on their adult responsibility to direct and correct children. School leaders must show students and their families they mean business and the importance of an education. It is these leaders who must and will bring the needed order and structure children lack in their lives and cry out for. Disrespect, poor behavior, and classroom failure will be unacceptable. Uniforms will bring the proper behavior, respect, and attitude necessary. If students do not comply, they will be disciplined, or sanctioned, and/or parents pressured until students are ready to learn.

## Forward

*The School Uniform Movement and What It Tells Us about American Education: A Symbolic Crusade* by David Brunσμα (2004)\*

This book was written to summarize the literature and to present the author's national study of school uniform and strict dress code data. His review of over 100 articles and research studies appears to be the most recent and comprehensive available.

Brunσμα says the history of school uniforms runs counter to the current uniform movement in America. Uniforms were originally employed to show differences in social status not break down barriers. Similarly, he says the movement to regulating dress appears to be counter to that of the preceding generation. During the 1960s, many schools had to relax rules to cope with student protests over dress and hairstyles. Changes at that time included women winning the right in most schools to wear pants and men to have long hair.

The origin of the current school uniform movement came in the late 1980s and early 1990s with experiments by various local public schools especially in the Baltimore-Washington area. A district-wide uniform policy adopted by the Long Beach schools in 1994 spurred President Clinton in 1996, then seeking reelection, to promote uniforms as one of his educational reforms in the campaign. Uniform makers such as Lands' End provided additional support. Clinton was more successful getting the educational establishment to look at uniform policies than he was with his other major initiative of school choice.

Most of the pro-uniform arguments early on were based on personal accounts and opinions. Articles were written about how uniforms or dress codes would improve schooling without any data-driven studies.

Many early studies were done based on the perception of school uniforms. These surveys of teachers, parents and other interested parties boil down to concluding that students in uniforms look nice and so must be nice.

### **1. Where correlations were attempted, no evidence was found of improvements caused by uniforms to school environments.**

Of the studies that attempted to measure the effectiveness of uniforms in improving schools, many were small-scale and had flawed methodology. A widely cited study of the Long Beach system by Stanley (1996) did show vast improvements in various areas of conduct after the imposition of uniforms, but Stanley herself said her study did not adjust for other factors such as improved security. In contrast, two national studies, Brunσμα and Rockquemore (1998) and Educational Testing Service (2000) came up with different results.

### **2. "These studies have found no evidence that uniforms affect student achievement, behavioral incidents, violent offenses, attendance, or substance use." The ETS study found two factors to "reduce school violence: 1) enforcement of severe punishments**

**for violations, and 2) limiting student movements during the school day through a set of security procedures." [p.49]**

A second study by Brunsmma (2004) is presented in his book. It was "conducted using nationally representative samples of elementary, middle, and high school students as well as the results of several case studies." [p.107]

He concludes about educational outcomes such as academic achievement, truancy, pro-school attitudes, and preparedness:

- 3. "School uniform policies do not significantly affect students' educational outcomes and, in some cases, they may be more harmful than previously thought." [p.154] His negative finding was a small but statistically lower level of tested reading scores.**
- 4. First, on behavioral and social outcomes, his study concluded "uniform policies have no significant impact on measures of self-esteem in middle or high schools.**
- 5. Second, uniform policies have no effect on elementary, middle, or high school students' measures of locus of control and other strategies of psychological coping.**
- 6. Third, switching from schools without policies to schools with policies has no impact on these social-psychological outcomes.**
- 7. Fourth, uniforms do not help us understand behavioral problems at school." [p.176].**

An overall concern he has about uniform policies or very restrictive dress codes is they are often implemented with little parent involvement. Since parent involvement in the schools is a factor he considers important to educational outcomes, he considers any alienation of parents to be risky. Similarly, he says very restrictive policies and enforcement puts in jeopardy pro-school attitudes among students and peers.

\*Reviewed by Lawrence R. Maxted for Amazon.com on 12.08.05.

Brunsmma, D. (2004). *The School Uniform Movement and What It Tells Us about American Education: A Symbolic Crusade*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education.

## **Introduction**

“IPS needs to ‘clothe’ students in democracy, not uniforms.”

IPS employee

Youth violence is on the rise. On school grounds more guns are being carried by students, gang activity is increasing, as is the number of students assaulted because of the type of clothing they wear. In response to the violence and theft occurring around stylish and expensive shoes, jackets, jerseys, and jewelry, or simple gang colors, numerous communities are adopting strict dress codes and/or school uniform policies as part of an over-all program to improve school safety and discipline (Jones, 1999).

### **IPS is in the midst of a legitimization crisis**

Superintendent Dr. Eugene White argues that we need a new IPS. He notes that when a student, say at Park Tutor, brings a gun to school, we say the student needs counseling, but when an IPS student brings one, the student is a criminal and needs to be put in jail.

Indeed, this is true. These negative stereotypes have unfairly labeled IPS and need challenged. However, it could also be argued that the incompetence of past and current board of school commissioners and previous superintendents and their administrations, who have lead IPS over the last 50 years, are the cause of the lack of respect for IPS.

From the segregated Attucks, to the federal lawsuit forcing IPS to integrate its schools over 20 years after *Brown vs. Board of Education*, to the use of high schools (i.e., Shortridge and Harry E. Wood) to create and perpetuate a status quo that paved the way to college for some and left others with inferior schools and mediocre teachers. IPS was not created to educate all students. This is the legacy that hurts IPS, not just the present conditions.

Add to this, IPS’s inability to graduate students, and even worse, to be open about graduation rates are what hurt IPS. Remember, between 1990 and 2000, IPS was the only district in the nation where students had no choice but to go to a dropout factory. According to the Schott Foundation it is one of the nation’s worst for graduating males and over-diagnosing black males as mentally retarded. See pages 6-7.

None of this happened overnight. Regardless of what the superintendent says, IPS was losing respect long before he and the present generation of youth arrived here. The poor quality was hidden for years by passive board members, educational politics, misleading graduation rates—and an ethos of social hierarchy, denial of inadequacies, and IPS “PR” that wanted to help put a good face on the city to attract families and businesses.

### **From dropout factories to schools of conformity**

Currently, in an attempt to improve IPS, the school board and their boss Superintendent Dr. White want to change our "dropout factory" high schools and the K-8 system that feeds them by establishing a calm, orderly, business-like atmosphere at school, in which disruptions and absenteeism would be reduced and academic performance would rise. This would be accomplished by clamping down on students whose behaviors, attitudes, and appearance are

perceive as detrimental. To this end, the superintendent intends to propose to the board a school uniform policy.

Debates about the use of school uniforms in public schools have received much attention in the last few years. Many educational stakeholders believe that uniforms may curb negative behaviors associated with student dress such as teasing, absenteeism, tardiness, gang-related activity, and school violence.

On the other hand, one primary argument espoused by opponents is that uniforms interfere with students' right to choose their dress--a violation of students' First Amendment right to free speech (Mitchell and Knechtle, 2003).

### **Requiring a uniform to attend a public school is setting a dangerous precedent**

Requiring students to wear uniforms in order to receive a public education sends the wrong message to children and youth: The adults do not know what else to do. They have lost their imagination and also feel powerless. The issue of whether the public school system has the legal right to impose a dress code and school uniforms cannot be denied. The courts have supported this. But, this does not mean public school uniforms can be rationally legitimized and universalized. And, what is most important, this does not mean that students will obey and conform to school uniform mandates.

### **The intent of the paper**

This paper intends to persuade those on the task force, school board, the superintendent, and those in the schools (staff and students) and the community that a mandated uniform policy in our public schools is very well intended, but a misguided. Not only is there no conclusive data that can be found to support school uniforms, this paper proposes a better way of doing the same thing.

The goals (reduced violence, suspension/expulsion, increased attendance and academic performance) all leading to increased graduation rates--could be reached by a wiser, more relevant, and forward-looking solution that will last and develop a healthy relationship among IPS, students and their families. As well, it can be rationally legitimized and universalized.

In the past, arguments that school uniforms suppress individuality, development of personality, creativity--the rights of children to express themselves through their clothing did not to sway judges. School safety trumped self-expression. This paper argues that schools do have the authority to make sure schools are safe. This is a public responsibility. Now whether the way a student dresses actually, as is implied, makes a poor school great (and safe) or makes a poor teacher great, or keeps students from learning at a great school or from a great teacher, is still out.

*The paper also argues that the current community process implemented by IPS to take an objective look at school uniforms is in reality a formality and a ploy to make the public think it has influence when the decision in favor of school uniforms has already been made. This begs the question: Why, in light of no solid proof that uniforms are a factor, is the public being manipulated into accepting this policy?*

### **The burden of proof rests with those imposing the coercion**

Since freedom is an intrinsically good thing, the burden of proof rests with those imposing the coercion. In doing so, IPS must prove that students' clothes and fashions are the cause of IPS's poor performance. IPS must also explain who benefits: In whose interests is this kind of coercion being implemented? If a public school uniform policy cannot be rationally legitimized by referring to some universally human good or some general interest it is illegitimate.

### **Unintended consequences**

The paper will propose that the unintended consequences of a mandated school uniform policy will interfere with the intended school improvement. For example, since students cannot be forced into wearing a uniform, what will happen to them? To believe that all current IPS students will wear a uniform is naive. To suggest that these students will be suspended or expelled is not constructive. IPS will plead, "There's nothing else we can we do?" These disciplinary actions will be a black mark on IPS, exposing its underbelly.

Equal educational opportunity is what America promises. It does not guarantee academic success, but it does guarantee an equal opportunity to be successful. How does a mandatory school uniform policy fit into this picture? This idea seems the opposite of equal education opportunity.

Public school uniforms epitomize a one-size-fits-all (curriculum, teaching/learning styles, and assessment styles) of public schooling. This is a modern answer to a post-modern condition, sending the wrong message to the diverse populations now in IPS schools.

Mandating school uniforms implies IPS, as it is, is fine, which it is not. Thus, it is a simplification to suggest that students need to conform, accept the system as it is, going along to get along.

### **Universal human liberation is the goal of education**

This paper also argues that universal human liberation is the goal of education, not prosperity. Yes, a strong economy is necessary. Yes, we have an economic gap between the rich and those in poverty that needs to be closed (Michaels, 2007). Yes, students need to know the particular knowledge, abilities and social skills needed to have a certain job or career. Yes, graduating will particularly help IPS males who will be less likely to end up in prison. Yet to imply the public schools are all about affluence is to support the consumerism, commercialism, and inauthenticity that corrupts the human spirit. IPS will become effective only when it refocuses on meeting the needs of each student rather than the needs of the economy and the broader society.

### **An opportunity of a lifetime: Democratic Education—IPS as national leader**

If IPS looks to mandatory school uniforms to improve our failing schools instead of making our district model a democratic climate and ethos, it will have missed an opportunity to set an historic educational precedent. This paper proposes that IPS must stay in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. School uniforms are a 20<sup>th</sup> century reaction to 21<sup>st</sup> century problems. The paper will show that shared decision-making, a 21<sup>st</sup> century solution, is a better way to improve IPS and our community.

*IPS has a chance to be the national leader in doing what is inevitable for all American public schools: Democratic Education.*

### **But, desperate times mean desperate measures: Impotency revealed**

On the surface, school uniforms appear to be a sound logical response to current IPS schooling problems. However, in reality, they show that school leaders don't know what else to do--a sign that they have begun to lose faith in a child's natural curiosity and motivation to learn about the world and their place in it. Uniforms epitomize a school district's impotency since they must use coercion to keep intact our public schools and the many school jobs they bring.

Desperate school boards and superintendents are forced to stoop to revival-like sensationalism and a "Brave New World" of mandated uniforms for all students in order to gain public support for a policy that has yet to be proven.

To improve, IPS must also study, organize, and lead the effort to understand, confront and affect the negative influences of grinding every-day poverty on students' lives and their innate intellectual potential to do well academically.

Presently, most urban school districts are recording low graduation rates. A variety of local and national programs, actions, and mandates are attempting to make schools work. In their survey of potential solutions, public school policy makers have recognized the success of private voucher and charter schools where students choose to attend and wear uniforms.

Consequently, some have backed the adoption of school uniforms in their public schools as one means of improving schools. **However, the factors of poverty and school culture are more complex than an observable set of traits, like what students wear to school** (American Anthropology Association, 2006).

### **Dr. White must be the superintendent of all IPS students**

Finally, it is asserted that Dr. White must be the superintendent of **all** IPS families and students, not just those who choose to wear uniforms. Uniforms are a solution to 20th century problems, not those of a globalized world culture where diversity, creativity, cooperation, sustainability, and democracy, not assimilation are the themes.

The problems of IPS are broad with deep roots in the past. Surely the world's strongest nation and our outstanding state and city can improve IPS without a desperate coercion and simplistic uniformity that makes children pay for the problems adults created.

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*Each IPS employee, student, and community member quoted throughout this paper will remain anonymous. They gave the comment freely knowing their identity would not be revealed.*

## IPS has a legitimization crisis

"Schools were not a place where teachers and staff feared Black students, not a war zone nor a place of controlled pain and anguish that manifested itself in student indifference and rebellion."

Mari Evans on IPS in the 1950s and IPS today from her book, *Clarity as Concept*

"Perhaps the problems currently faced by IPS have nothing to do with how students dress."

IPS employee

A February 17, 2005 *Indianapolis Star* editorial questioned the legitimacy of Indiana graduation rate numbers. The 72 percent figure from the Manhattan Institute study disputed the 91 percent rate for 2002 claimed by the state. Which rate was legitimate?

A February 27 *Star* 2005 commentary on the state dropout problem by State Senator Luke Messer mentioned that 3 major Indiana cities had a graduation rate of less than 50 percent. He noted one Indianapolis high school had a graduation rate of just over 10 percent. That school was Arlington High School. According to the Indiana State Commission on Higher Education the 2004 graduation rate was 12.5 percent. Arlington reported a 2004 graduation rate of 99 percent. Which rate was legitimate?

According to a 2004 Harvard/Urban Institute study, "Losing Our Future: How Minority Youth Are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis," only 50 percent of all U.S. black students graduated from high school in 2001. The problem was even worse for black males at 43 percent. The 2001 Indiana graduation rate was 72.4 percent. The Indiana African-American rate was 53 percent. The total graduation rate for IPS was 30.6 percent. (IPS reported a 91.1 percent 2001 rate.) Which rate was legitimate?

The above study also concluded that inaccurate and misleading graduation data hide problems from public view. Nationally, half or more of Black, Latino and Native American youth are getting left behind in a "hidden crisis" obscured by U.S. Department of Education regulations that "allow schools, districts, and states to all but eliminate graduation rate accountability for minority subgroups." Is this legitimate?

Indeed, Indiana's rate and those of the Indianapolis Public Schools are worrisome, but what about the rates for black students? The Manhattan Institute study stated the national graduation rate for African-Americans as 56 percent. The Indiana rate was 52 percent. Does having a 52% chance of graduation reflect a legitimate public school system?

This point is iterated in, "Locating the Dropout Crisis." Johns Hopkins researchers flagged 2,000 high schools as "dropout factories." In the study, between 1990 and 2002, other than Stockton, CA with 3 high schools, IPS was the only district in the nation where students had, and continue to have, no choice but to go to a dropout factory--a place where they have an outlandish 70-75 percent chance of not graduating! If all your high schools are dropout factories, does this reflect a legitimate public school system?

The 2005 Schott Foundation research, "Public Education and Black Male Students," noted the 2002 national graduation rate for black males was 41 percent. In Indiana, the rate was 39 percent. The IPS rate was 33 percent, and an astounding 23 percent for white males. A similar 2006 Schott report noted grad rates got worse! IPS leads the nation as having the worst grad rates in the nation for males: 22 % for black and the same 23% for white males.

Does having a 22% chance of graduation reflect a legitimate public school system?

Our media savvy youth have heard adults say, "You have to get an education" for years. Yet, the fact that IPS has such low graduation rates shows that evidently youth (rightly or wrongly) are simply not convinced that a diploma is a legitimate necessity for success in life (Evans, 2006).

### **What is it in our society that is the source of this question of legitimacy?**

Philosophy Professor Michael Surgue (1998), in his lecture, "Habermas' Critical Theory" can help understand why IPS is failing to educate many students. He suggests we see society as being made up of 3 parts that make up an inter-related whole: 1) the state (government), 2) the economic system, and 3) the socio-cultural system. There is a relationship between the state and the economy. The economic system gives revenues to the state and the state tinkers with the economy. The socio-cultural system is the way we legitimize the political (state) system, mainly through the socialization and educating children.

The balance of these systems sometimes breaks down. Tensions emerge and a legitimization crisis develops.

### **An example of a legitimization crisis**

In the 1960s so-called hippies rejected and distanced themselves from the normative structures of society. They decided they would not enter the job market and were going to live in communes, do drugs, grow and eat organic foods, and challenge traditional sexual mores. The normal structures of society, the hopes, anticipations, and aspirations had not been transferred to them. Any mass defection from the norms of society means that there is something wrong in the political and economic systems that manifest in the social-cultural system. The disaffection of these youth was directly tied to civil, voting, women's, gay, and global human rights; the Vietnam War; urban poverty; environmental, housing, and employment issues; and, equal educational opportunity.

### **We don't wanna be like you: This generation's anthem?**

The fact that many IPS students have not internalized and absorbed the normative structures of society (purple or orange hair, dressing in black, body piercing, tattooing, and hip-hop culture) illustrate youth's desire to distance themselves from the norms of today's society. Schools traditionally transfer these norms. Absorbing these norms enable students to be integrated into the political and economic system as they become of age. Like the younger generations of 1920s or 1960s, many of today's youth reject conformity and assimilation into the so-called "normative structures of society" and the school system that tries to pass them on. The alternative genre song, "The Anthem" by Good Charlotte (See Appendix L) illustrates this with "We don't wanna be like you":

1. At my high school  
It felt more to me  
Like a jail cell, or penitentiary  
My time spent there,  
it only made me see

3. I'm gonna get by  
And just do my time  
Out of step while  
They all get in line  
I'm just a minor threat so pay no mind

2. "Go to college,  
A university  
Get a real job"  
That's what they said to me  
But I could never live the way they want

4. That I don't ever wanna be like you  
I don't wanna do the things you do  
I'm never gonna hear the words you say  
And I don't ever wanna,  
I don't ever wanna be you.

Is this rejection of schooling and “normal” social development symptomatic of a problem in the way in which IPS educates and socializes children? Is this how IPS students show their rejection of a system that continues not to educate them in their own self-interests (Finn, 1999)? This begs this simple question:

- **What factors in our political/economic systems help delegitimize public education?**

Could factors be found in:

- a political system that continues to make urban minorities and working-class whites politically powerless?
- an economic system where urban poverty and its manifestations continue to affect education outcomes?
- an economic system where jobs opportunities and wages for urban minorities and the poor are many times discriminatory?
- a political-economic policy that bases school funding on property taxes--which inherently gives more wealthy districts an economic, thus educational advantage?

The social-cultural-education system must consider the fact that an advanced capitalist society distributes wealth unequally. Now the political system can tax progressively, etc., but if it fails to face the reasons why and how it distributes wealth unequally, we may find a great number who call into question the legitimacy of such a political and economic system. Students act out their concerns in a schooling system, that as it stands, many of these youth want no part of.

What are some other factors? Today we have a good economy and have a wealthy country; yet, in any major city we have the homeless and jobless people begging for quarters. If our schools are so good, why do we have such a high rate of illiteracy? This may not be a social-cultural problem, but one that may come from a political unwillingness to provide a living wage or pay for education.

**Does a diploma equal a good job? Some black males don't think so**

Research shows that many black male students know their academic efforts will be less rewarded than the efforts of white peers. As a result, some will reduce their academic motivation and performance while in school (Rothstein, 2006). This manifests in the distrust of our local public schools, delegitimizing this institution and the very diploma IPS promises will lead to meaningful employment.

To add to this distrust, the startling research by Deirdre Royster (2003) shows there is no guarantee a black male, just out of high school, who has the work ethics and other traits needed to get and keep a blue-collar job, will get work. The glass ceiling for women is another example of there is no guarantee having a diploma and practicing good work ethics on the job will be beneficial.

### **What else?**

High stakes testing and the “fad” of high expectations are well meaning and necessary, but are not without unforeseen consequences: The rate of student cheating or suicide or dropping out. Also, are the continued instances of adult cheating, spinning numbers or misrepresenting statistics? The recent inflated graduation rate numbers debacle and mandated change to more realistic grad rate formulas--let alone the constantly fanegled drop out rate numbers--prove that or own public schools run by elected school boards and administrators with doctorates, will do illegitimate things to remain legitimate. This twisted logic is truly a crisis of legitimation for our schools.

### **The IPS Legitimization crisis**

The problem IPS has is: How can the factors causing its schooling crisis be avoided or redirected and reinterpreted so it can offer *a school climate that can be rationally and universally legitimized?*

"To be human is to be rational."

Dr. M. Surgrue

Can IPS look the public in the eye and say that what students are wearing or not wearing is the source or even indirect cause of their legitimation crisis? Will mandatory school uniform actually make IPS less legitimate?

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## A List of Arguments For and Against Public School Uniforms

“Why don’t people understand? School uniforms would make everything so much easier.”  
IPS parent

“See. Examine an argument that supposedly favors school uniforms more closely, and it either doesn’t make sense or it turns into an argument against school uniforms. That’s why schools who seek to introduce uniforms typically prefer to do so without any debate on the issue.”

“Those disgusting school uniforms” *Optionality Magazine*, October, 1998

“It is not a behavior (wearing of uniforms) we (all global citizens) should do because it is asserted that, on some plane or level, this will benefit each of us. This generalization is false. We all know that this would just be a form of oppression. Thus, a majority cannot agree with this assertion.”

SchoolUniforms-not.org

### Arguments for and against school uniforms (Those disgusting school uniforms, 1998)

#### **Discipline: Uniforms have a positive influence on student behavior**

The main argument advocates make is that *putting students in uniforms will affect the behavior of students, especially those more headstrong, aggressive, or non-traditional*. This makes sense on paper: if students give in to wearing a uniform, they will also give in to the behavioral expectations of the school and classroom.

“The authors found no relationship between wearing uniforms and the desirable behavior (reduced absenteeism, reduced drug usage, improved behavior).”

David Brunnsma and Kerry Rockquemore

Schools will simply reject any views that it's disgusting to "discipline" children into wearing uniforms. Assuming uniforms influence behavior begs these questions:

- If there were a need for more discipline, how do school uniforms fit in the picture?
- Are uniforms parts of some kind of training in discipline? Do they turn students into willing and well-behaved robots?
- Are uniforms both a symbol and tool for humiliation? Is humiliation a needed first step in preparing students for a life of discipline and obedience?
- Is student bullying or chronically disrupting class a lack of discipline or symptoms of oppression?
- If what females wear to school is inappropriate, is this due to a lack of morals, or a symptom of oppression?
- Where school uniforms deliberately make children look silly, they symbolize oppression. What is the psychology here? Are school uniforms designed to make children look silly, and make the teacher look superior by comparison, so that the teacher will have less disciplinary problems in class?

### **Training: Uniforms get students ready for the world of work**

The "training" argument says that *when you are employed, you are likely to have to wear a uniform*. Is this true? What are the odds that children will wear a uniform later in life? Typically, the occupations where people have to wear uniforms are the lower paid jobs. Generally, the more educated people are, the less they wear uniforms later in life. (Look at teachers, they don't wear uniforms and according to Dr. White, due to the political power of the Indianapolis Education Association (IEA), teachers cannot be force to do so.)

Well-paid work tends to reject uniformity, and for good reason, the demands of the future include qualities such as assertiveness, creativity, individuality, originality, a spontaneous personality, being a self-starter, taking initiatives, being able to cope with change, etc. Thus, students who are more likely not to wear a uniform later in life are just as unlikely to accept such a silly costume as a school uniform.

What is the logic behind forcing children in uniforms? That children have to get used to wearing a uniform, just in the unfortunate case that they will end up in a low paying job later in life? If we turn around the same "logic", students who are used to wearing uniforms would be insufficiently prepared for plain-clothed work. Similarly, students would not be able to deal with people who didn't wear uniforms.

Some say, "Students will have to wear a uniform when they start working anyway, whether it's a uniform with a paper hat." Or they note, "A suit and tie is a uniform." Which job ones takes is a voluntary decision--the potential employee must decide if the benefits of the job outweigh restrictions on their life, such as arriving on time, or wearing certain clothing. Students have no legal choice about attending school. Look around at major corporations--many have dropped their stringent dress code. What does "the richest man in the world" wear when demonstrating new software products to the world? Do the captains of corporations always wear suits during business briefings? The myth that "the clothes make the man" has had its bluff called, despite billions of advertising dollars.

There is one deeper argument. It goes like this: *students wearing uniforms will be accustomed to taking a servile attitude which will help them find work later in life*. Of course, the very opposite could be argued with more reason. Does success in future demand a servile attitude? Or is it more helpful to be creative, have an spontaneous and open personality, an inquisitive mind, be a self-starter who talks things over, who has an independent mind searching for new ideas to make things work?

### **Equity: Uniforms counter inequality**

The "equity" argument goes like this: *If children wear uniforms, they do not notice differences between children from rich and from poor families*.

This is odd. Schooling creates social differences: **putting students in specific groups is a trademark, if not an invention, of school**. Some will argue that this merely reflects existing differences. Even if all students dressed alike, they are still grouped together in classes according to age and often according to gender and to perceived academic performance.

On the street, their uniform identifies children. “Oh, you come from that poor school, you dummy!” is an example of what children might say when they look at each other's uniform. And even in the classroom, uniforms only accentuate differences in length, hair color and other physical characteristics. Now students and educators judge each other by their physical appearances—and we are right back where we started.

One can argue, (1.) whether it were better if children judged each other by their clothes instead; (2.) this seems like a situation in a society created by adults, thus school officials must confront and promote societal change and not have children avoid it or cope with it—as though it can't be changed.

Adults are not powerless to change and act as examples. Obviously children did not create a society that emphasizes materialism so much that people judge each other by looks, ("lookism"), material possessions, political power, and money. ("Life's a game and money's how you keep score," quips Ted Turner).

*Inequity is a problem adults need to work on first and not try to project their own insecurities, forcing "equity as sameness" on students in an effort to avoid any responsibility for our present society. Why is it the children who must suffer coercion and not the adults who create or perpetuate a society of inequity and superficiality?*

IPS proposes a more generic wardrobe via Target, or K-Mart. But this won't make a difference. If colors or clothing type is standardized, this will not keep more competitive, social climbers, or those who have made it and intend for their children to make it from buying the more expensive khakis, polo shirts, or skirts?

Remember, the problem is in the adults and the world they created and via impotency or lack of moral backbone, allow to continue. It's not in the children; they are simply pawns in the illusion of appearances IPS is trying to sell.

Regardless, tattoos, or flashy jewelry, or hand signals, or one sleeve rolled just so, each testing the limits of uniform enforcement, will bring IPS right back where it started: a mirror of the adult world.

**School uniforms may make all students look alike, but why do the teachers not wear a uniform?** It would seem IPS teachers would take up the argument for uniforms in their own self-interest, promoting a serious professionalism and commitment--modeling order and discipline to students and gaining higher pay and community respect.

In IPS, the teacher's union (IEA) protects teachers from enforced uniforms. Perhaps the union sees teachers in uniforms as silly, unprofessional, and controlling (perhaps the same reason students reject uniforms—but, students have no power).

So, IPS teachers will be allowed to continue to dress casually, as many do. Clearly these educators do not like any confusion as to who is the teacher and who is the student. Uniforms

will emphasize this difference--deliberately magnify the superior/subordinate relationship that is so obviously present at school.

### **Cost: Uniforms save money**

From a financial point of view, this argument does not make sense either. It claims that *families would save money*. In actuality, **uniforms will be an additional expense** to families. Of course, a discussion on the various ways IPS could save families money (better lunches for better health, reasonable textbook fees or “free” textbooks, reducing the numbers of downtown administrators, etc.) is not brought up.

Because of school uniforms, the argument goes, families do not have to buy as many clothes for their children, which saves them time and money. But most children will have “hip” fashionable clothes and shoes regardless. Obviously students will not wear their uniform at other events or after school and on weekends. This effectively means that children will need a double set of clothing—the “cool” clothes and the “school” clothes (uniforms). This does not look like less, but more expense!

Furthermore, school uniforms are typically made of polycotton, because if they were made of pure cotton, they would fade after a few washings and there would be color differences between the uniforms of various pupils, which go against the very idea of uniformity. Therefore, school uniforms are far more expensive than the cheap cotton clothing people normally like to wear. Also, polycotton fabric is very hot in the summer.

The situation is also prone to exploitation by unfair trade practices, unhealthy business schemes, favoritism and cronyism, e.g. deals in which secret bribes are paid for the privilege of exclusively and “locally” producing and selling such school uniform clothing/colors.

On a global scale, IPS will pay a moral price for making it necessary for many families to have to choose the often cheap imports from countries such as China, India, Central America or the Philippines where human labor, both adult and child, is often exploited.

### **Ease: Uniforms help with clothing decisions**

The “ease” argument says that *school uniforms make it easier for students to choose to wear to school*. But is it really a virtue of the school uniform that the “choice” is made so easy? It would be just as “easy” for children to decide what to wear, if they only had, say, jeans and T-shirts in their wardrobe. This kind of “choice” has nothing to do with wearing uniforms. If there are only jeans and T-shirts in the closet, the child will have to wear jeans and T-shirts. The choice is easy, because there is no alternative. The point is that the “choice” is not so much made “easy” by virtue of uniformity, no, the choice is made easy because there is no other choice. If the kid-next-door happens to wear the same clothes, say jeans, that didn't make the choice any easier for either of the children. One only has choice if there is something to choose from.

The real question [is]: Is choice good for children? Taking away children's right to choose what to wear does not make life any easier, it just makes children accustomed to conformity, to following orders and walking in line without thinking, without making a choice. This could

create a huge amount of psychological problems later in life--in some respects it is a form of child abuse to systematically deny children choice.

### **Pride: Uniforms make student take pride in their education**

The "pride" argument states that *an attractive student uniform encourages student to take pride in their studies, and promotes school spirit and school unity.*

Remember, Superintendent Dr. White uses this argument. His logic goes like this: If a student has a gun at Park Tutor, he/she needs counseling. If a student has a gun at IPS, they're a criminal and need locked up. IPS gets a bad rap. It needs to change this perception and a more relevant dress code with mandatory school uniforms must be a part of the policy to make "the new IPS" a district that will be the best or among the best in the nation by 2010.

Yes, IPS gets a bad rap. However, this particular argument for mandated uniforms begs these questions:

- Is how students currently dress the real reason why IPS lacks self-esteem and community respect?
- Has it ever been?
- What are the real problems?
- How long have they existed?
- Are school uniforms a way of avoiding the real problems and/or the responsibility that IPS has had over the last 100 years to educate all students?
- Could the time and energy that is being spent on the schools uniform discussion be used better?

This will be taken up later. See sections, "What are the real problems? Part I & II"

Of course, there is the argument against dirty or otherwise--according to how some adults view popular teen fashions--less attractive clothes. To continue IPS logic, *if students dress lousy, the district as a whole gets a bad name, which diminishes the opportunity for all students to get a good job.*

Now school leaders may argue that school uniforms set a clear standard of what the students are to wear, but school uniforms may just as well get dirty as any other clothes and school uniforms may just as well tear apart after a fight or a fall. Having school uniforms does not necessarily make it easier to see whether the clothes are dirty or ragged.

Uniformity in itself is nothing to be proud about. Note that students are not supposed to wear the uniforms at out-of-school events. If the students were really supposed to be proud about their school, why are they only supposed to wear the uniform at school? Note also that universities rarely demand students to wear uniforms, yet few seem to be worried that this will make the students unemployable.

Since the invention of the teenager, adolescent clothing has irked adults. This won't change a thing. Teens will find ways to use/wear uniforms to irk their elders. This reality is just another

reason why school dress is not the issue, nor even a main factor in why IPS has a bad reputation or how to improve IPS.

Finally, it is also asserted that just as an athletic team's uniforms promote unity and spirit, so can attractive school uniforms. Define attractive! Not all clothing styles are attractive on all people. Forcing students to wear clothing that is uncomfortable or unflattering is hardly going to improve their self-image.

**Safety: Hallways, classrooms, and school grounds will be safer**

The "safety" argument is that *school uniforms help make the campus safer and more secure* by eliminating the wearing of gang clothing, which can also be used to intimidate or conceal contraband. Moreover, outsiders or non-students are easily recognized on campus. Theft will decrease. Uniforms will also eliminate any need to fight over clothing.

However, gangs can choose the allowed colors for their colors. In at least one case, the limited color range mandated in a uniform policy created "ganging," where groups of students decide to wear certain combinations of the allowed colors.

Also, unless the policy mandates skin-tight clothing, how will the concealment of contraband be eliminated? Many people (which include students) express their attitudes, in part, by their clothing. Is not "change in clothing" a warning sign for many problems? If so, how is *preventing* this warning a safety advantage?

But is "safety" the real reason behind compulsory school uniforms? Teachers have substitutes. Guests and visitors often come to schools and classrooms. Students are not surprised to see an unfamiliar plain-clothed grown-up person on the school-grounds. They will not even be surprised if such a person seems lost. If safety really was an important issue, then why are teachers, maintenance staff and visiting parents not required to similarly wear the school uniform?

Many people come and leave the school grounds by car every day. Cars can often be driven right into the middle of the school grounds, while it is virtually impossible to spot whether the occupants are wearing uniforms or not.

School uniforms in fact make it very easy for someone with bad intentions to sneak in, disguised as a legitimate school student. At a school like IPS Arsenal Tech there may be some 100 adults working on an average day on the school grounds, with the same amount of cars parked on the school grounds. This figure may rise at times when people involved in frequent construction and maintenance of buildings, equipment and grounds and the surrounding roads are included.

Another safety argument is that school children could be more easily identified while on excursions. But does this really increase safety? Uniforms make it easier for teachers to check if all children are still there, i.e. by counting the number of kids. But uniforms also make it easier for people with bad intentions to spot and target children who are at risk of losing contact with the group.

Whatever way one looks at it, it seems that the danger is created not so much by the absence of uniforms, but by the way school operates. School puts thirty-odd children together in the care of one teacher. Look at the hundreds of cars circling around the school twice a day, trying to find parking places. Apart from the risk of traffic accidents, this havoc makes it easy for someone with bad intentions to follow a child and drag this child inside a car. Even if bystanders notice screaming, they may think it is a case of a parent disciplining an obstinate child.

What kind of people is school uniforms supposed to protect the students from, rapists, pedophiles, street gangs and other bullies? Why would they go to a place where so many people can spot their face and identify them to police? They are more likely to attack a student who is walking home alone. A uniform makes the student an easily identifiable and predictable target walking down the same street every day at the same time.

Do uniforms really make it safer for students at school? What kinds of people are likely to "infiltrate" school grounds? Students who have been expelled for beating up other students could be regarded as unwelcome visitors. But as such, students would rarely be required to hand over their school clothing. Thus, a uniform policy does not seem to stop students from coming back, it in fact makes it easier for them to return.

Is there any research that concludes that schools without uniforms have a significantly higher incidence of unwelcome visitors? If this really were such an important issue, one would expect a lot of research to be readily available within the education system on this issue. Where are the empirical studies?

### **Modesty: Uniforms will insure appropriate dress**

This reason for uniforms suggests that *such clothing will eliminate the temptation to dress too casually. This will help everyone keep their minds on the teacher and their studies.*

To begin the school year, Superintendent White talked to male and female high school students in separate sessions at each school. He used the time to let students know how bad IPS graduation rates were and that this was unacceptable. Although to most modesty is predominately a female student issue, fairness demands we not ignore evaluating shameless male exuberance and dress. Double standards help no one. It is just that during his talk to the male students, modesty was not mentioned.

The implication that showing a lot of skin makes a female more desirable, but less respectable is one IPS is pushing. Yet, to many young females, starting with singer Brittany Spears and now in vogue in many music videos, showing a bare midriff is a harmless fad and they resent insinuations they are precocious or lack morals.

### **Dr. White and female students: Incident at Northwest**

At least this is what the superintendent experienced this fall at Northwest High School where various female students got loud with him. In his attempt (like a father) to lecture them about the virtue of not giving others the wrong impression with the way they wear their clothes, the females took his comments personally and dissonance occurred.

Perhaps the students' resentment was justified. Dr. White must realize that *what females wear to school may be a symptom of oppression, not a lack of discipline or morals.*

After all, we must realize that in a misogynistic American culture, it's never too late to drill into the minds of girls that what really matters is their appearance and the ability to please men sexually. Manipulation at this deep of a level is true oppression. It must be confronted and stopped.

“Who needs a brain when you have these?”

Message on an Abercrombie & Fitch T-shirt for young women

### **IPS cannot have it both ways**

Dr. White must realize that he cannot have it both ways. He cannot forget that our patriarchal society attempts to limit (directly and indirectly) what females can be and do while at the same time begrudging them the few ways they have historically been forced to act to have any power at all—namely their femininity.

This statement is not made in ignorance of women who, over the ages, have challenged and went far beyond gender stereotypes and social, physical, and intellectual limitations set up by men. The issue was brought up to it simple ask: What upset young women? Did they have a point? If so, what was it? Will mandatory school uniforms erase or clothe and hide our society's deeper gender problems?

Perhaps the superintendent needs to also “lecture” local and state corporations on the glass ceiling; confront the disrespectful, degrading, and contemptuous treatment of women in mainstream media; raise questions about the abuse of woman around the world; and demand equal pay for women instead of “leaning on” 15-18 year old females.

Just for the record, it is possible to wear **any** type of clothing in an immodest manner...

### **Learning as a job: Uniforms bring a climate for learning, creating a serious and orderly atmosphere in school**

Supporters claim *uniforms help students focus on learning*. It sets the tone for “a proper work attitude” in the classroom, reducing behavior problems and improving performance.

This is the basis of the position that it is a child's "job" to come to school and do what teachers want them to do, obediently. Now whose idea is this? On the surface it is surely an idea the Chamber of Commerce would support. Is the idea of those adults who tell students this because they know that school is boring? Do they tell children this because they believe humans are not born curious and motivated to learn? Do they use this metaphor because they also believe students do not like to learn, do not like school and so they portray education as some drudgery-like duty (for society's sake) and so we must use reward or punishments (for the good of the child of course) to make sure students learn?

This view of education as a child's "job" is based on this worldview:

1. Children are no good; they won't learn unless we make them.
2. The world is not good; children must be broken into it.
3. I had to put up with it; why shouldn't they?

Unfortunately, many adults do not realize children love learning and are extremely good at it (Holt, 1967).

The suggestion that learning and schooling is all about being a good worker or one's "job" is shortsighted, biased, manipulative, and patronizing. It is the spiel of educators who themselves have simply lost their imagination and love of learning and can only justify why they do what they do as: "Because it's my job."

Finally, public school education is about discovering who you are: what you care about, what your interests and passions are--what you love. It's not about training to be a good worker so you can get a job. It's not about going along to get along.

### **An after thought: Where's the academic rigor?**

"It is my hope, again, that my research results can direct us away from assumptions, conjecture, and unfounded claims concerning the effectiveness of school uniform policies."

David L. Brunsmas, *The School Uniform Movement*

So where is this research into this supposed positive correlation between safety, behavior, academics, and school uniforms? Why do school boards and their superintendents, who are otherwise so keen to teach students the value of scientific research to back up their ideas, think they can introduce school uniforms with no scientific research as to the impact of these uniforms?

"No. 6. Academic rigor is the norm."

One of 10 IPS Cultural Imperatives

Now if there were some proof, some empirical data that concluded that such a generalizable universal rule or policy would benefit everyone at the local, state, or even national levels (let alone a universal generalizable reason), this could be used to justify the coercion. But, presently and historically, this is not the case. So, the debate is still up in the air.

Some research data can be found at School Uniforms at Geocities. See [http://www.geocities.com/school\\_uniforms](http://www.geocities.com/school_uniforms)

One organization that has done some research on this issue is WHEN, the World Home Education Network. **WHEN's conclusion was that school as an institution was the cause for a lot of associated violence.** The danger comes from within the system, not from outside!

One argument used in the discussion in the U.S. is the prevention of theft, especially of expensive footwear. But this is a slightly different argument than the safety argument. One might just as well forbid students to wear expensive shoes.

Another interesting argument notes that putting students in uniforms actually nurtures that very gang mentality that parents like to protect their children from. If one wants to prevent gangs from operating at schools, one will have to concentrate on that issue. Dressing students up in uniforms may actually achieve the very opposite result; it gives students the idea that they have to be part of a gang.

Let's stop trying to make sense out of these "arguments," of safety, saving money, or discipline, because the more you think about them, the less sense they make. The conclusion must be that IPS simply doesn't have any arguments! They seek to introduce uniforms without any honest, open, and unlimited discussion with a variety of representatives.

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## **IPS knows the courts will back them: Why the discussion over the pros and cons of a possible IPS school uniform policy is just a formality**

### **Why the courts will back IPS**

There are many strong arguments against school uniforms. As an example, what about the arguments that school uniforms suppress individuality, development of personality, creativity, etc? What about the rights of children to express themselves through their clothing? For young people it's often hard to articulate what they believe in. Just like a picture is worth a thousand words, fashion gives young people opportunities to express themselves where they may lack the literacy and verbosity to do so otherwise.

This article Ben Dowling-Sendor (2002), reviews *Littlefield v. Forney*, a recent case in which parents challenged a school uniform policy adopted by the Forney, TX, school board.

The parents, who had requested exemptions for their children and been denied, filed suit against the district. The federal district court summarily dismissed the suit without a trial. The plaintiffs then appealed to the 5th Circuit Court, where the ruling of the lower court was upheld. In its decision, the 5th Circuit Court indicated that students' free-speech right to select their own clothes is "not absolute," and that this right must be balanced against a school board's stated interests in adopting a dress code or uniform policy.

To decide whether a specific uniform or dress code policy is permissible under the Constitution's free-speech clause, the court used a four-pronged test it had previously applied in another school uniform case, *Canady v. Bossier Parish School Board*.

To be looked upon favorably by the court:

- The school board must have the power to make such a policy.
- The policy must promote a substantial interest of the board.
- The adoption of the policy must not be an attempt to censor student expression.
- The policy's "incidental" restrictions on student expression must not be greater than necessary to promote the board's interest.

In this case, the 5th Circuit found that all four criteria were satisfied and that the district's school uniform policy therefore did not violate students' right to free expression.

The court also ruled that parents' rights to control their children's upbringing, including their education, cannot override school rules that are considered "reasonable" to maintain an appropriate educational environment. In this case, the court concluded that the uniform policy was "rationally related" to the interests of the school board in "promoting education, improving student safety, increasing attendance, decreasing dropout rates, and reducing socioeconomic tensions among students."

The parents' argument that the opt-out procedure violated religious freedom because it gave school officials the authority to judge the sincerity and content of families' religious beliefs was also rejected by the court. The court's decision noted that the policy did not have a religious goal;

did not have the effect of advancing or hindering any particular faith over any other; and did not excessively "entangle" school officials in religious beliefs.

**...and IPS knows this: so all the discussion in simply “going through the motions”**

Innuendoes and comments given by Superintendent Dr. White to students at IPS high schools during his talks to large and separate groups of male and female students, as well as those given during the first dress code meeting and in the November 2, 2006 *Indianapolis Star*, make it, at this point, almost a certainty.

**School uniforms will help get IPS off the hook; that’s why this is a done deal**

Although the argument of this paper asserts that the causes of urban school failure and the solutions for it lie in the economic and political systems, IPS is attempting to use coerced public school uniforms to make students (youth culture) partly responsible for its own failure. Nonetheless, the problems of IPS are not in those students who rationally reject “the normative structures of society”—the same society whose Indianapolis Public Schools currently intend to use uniforms as a stalking horse to suppress their urban youth culture. See: Why despite the evidence is IPS still pushing school uniforms.

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## **The Ideal Speech Situation: Citizens need several large public meetings in the evening on the IPS school uniform initiative: How we can only get to the truth under an ideal speech situation.**

The arguments in favor of school uniforms, including the argument that "school uniforms contributed to safety" seem dreamed up in order to retrospectively justify the introduction of school uniforms. Indeed, school uniforms are typically introduced without a thorough analysis or even debate of the arguments (Those disgusting school uniforms, 1998). This appears to be the case with IPS.

Given the lack of arguments in favor of uniforms, schools typically like to avoid discussing the matter principally. If any debate is allowed, schools like it to be a conversation between appointed "representatives" who already tend to favor the proposed uniforms (Those disgusting school uniforms, 1998).

The one meeting IPS had (Monday, December 11), was not only not specifically announced to the public on TV, radio and newspapers, but the time 3-5 PM automatically cut out those who work or have families to take care of after school. According to the 2006 November 2 *Star*, a so-called public task force has been appointed, but the "why" and "how" they were selected remains cloudy.

A review of this *Star* story ("Pull 'em up, head of IPS says") and comments by the superintendent, "It's going to be a new look in IPS in 2007. I think the parents [on the task force] know what they want to see" imply none of the task force is against school uniforms. This same bias was in the atmosphere at the Monday meeting.

### **Undemocratic means will result in undemocratic outcomes**

IPS must realize that it has to model the fact that a Platonic "just society" comes as a result of a dialectic of reasonable, rational speakers representing all factions and points of view in a timely and open forum. This is how we reach the truth and create justice. This is democracy.

### **The ideal speech situation** (Surgrue, 1998)

Modern philosopher Jurgen Habermas has suggested that there is an ideal speech situation where undistorted communication allows us to relate to others as subjects not objects--overcoming distortions and differences, finding understanding, and reaching consensus.

The ideal speech situation is never actually realized, but can be approximated. A speech situation is inferior or deformed if it is coerced, if in some way we are altering or misshaping or deforming the speech of a group or person because of a fear of an authority (person or group) that keeps them from saying what they really think or expressing their real views on a problem of coercion.

Let's say your boss has on a new tie and he asks you how you like it. And you really think it's gaudy and ugly. What do you say? Everyone laughs and listens, waiting for your response. You have to say something other than what you thought. This is the opposite of the ideal speech situation because a kind of coercion is being imposed on you, which is deforming your speech and preventing you from saying what you really think. You can't say that because you are satisfying some other need--in this case the need to get along with your boss. The power

imbalance has distorted the communication for all concerned. You have to lie and the boss never gets an honest opinion.

Indeed, IPS provided an "Agenda" for the Monday afternoon meeting that had 5 questions which, on the surface, allowed for an open discussion:

1. What is the most positive thing about the student's current school attire?
2. What is the most negative?
3. If the district mandated a uniform attire for students, should it be tops only? or bottoms and tops?
4. What are the pluses of having students dress in a uniform fashion?
5. What are the negatives?

However, with over 50 adults present, some gave answers to question 5, but none was outspoken. The only ones who were honest and direct were some of the students (of the around 10 at the meeting). If there were any strong opinions against uniforms by adults, they were not made. Why? Were they afraid? Was the presence of Dr. White intimidating to those who would have come? As well, no students were present representing non-traditional or alternative life styles, philosophies, gender orientations, or dress. Why?

#### **IPS distorts speech situation: Countering one of its own Cultural Imperatives**

At the December 11 meeting, Dr. White spent some time not being clear, avoiding direct answers to direct questions from students. The meeting was not open. Few knew of the meeting. Most who attended favored uniforms. And, the meeting was untimely, unless you were free of responsibilities after 2:30 and until 5:00.

“No. 7. Communication is clear, open, and timely.”

One of the 10 IPS Cultural Imperatives

Not making sure those at the meeting were inclusive of all IPS students and families, as well as controlling the time, place and length, and number of meetings distorts the ideal speech situation and thus is not the way to model to students and the community the open, democratic discussions and decision-making our nation professes to the world.

Dr. White began the discussion period with a lengthy attempt to establish the rationale for the meeting:

(Dr. White) [*Reacting to our present IPS Dress Code*] We've gotten so far away from this it's a joke. We'll create a whole new movement, a momentum that will transform who we are and what we do in the years to come. We have 2 sets of expectations or perceptions: If a kid has a gun at Park Tutor he/she needs help; if a kid has a gun at IPS, he/she is a hoodlum.

IPS expectations are not high enough. Our expectations are too low. It's not OK to be this way. We need to re-make ourselves and not to just higher test scores, but not be bound to the loud, abusive language. We need to look better, sound better, and be better. It's not OK to walk like a duck [*referring to student whose sagging pants cause them to "waddle"*]. You can't expect to get a job this way; you can't give a poor first impression!

We'll start from kindergarten. We'll be very special one day, in a very forthright manner. We will be what we decide to be. We will also have to hold IPS staff to a higher standard in '07-'08. Now we can't make teachers where a suit and tie due to the union. We are looking to go to uniforms for janitors.

*Two students were very close to the ideal speech situation. No adult backed or stood up to agree with or defend these students at the meeting. Here's a summary of the dialogue:*

(Student 1) What is this [*the meeting*] all about?

(Dr. White) Didn't you hear what I said about the new IPS? Why we are doing this?

Didn't you hear what I said about how IPS is perceived, that we're changing that?

(Student 2) [*The student obviously didn't accept Dr. White's analysis of the problem and asked this question:*] Will we get a chance to speak to the board?

(Dr. White) The board president [*Clark Campbell*] and Dr. Busch are here.

(Student 2) No, I mean will we get a chance to speak to all the board? In front of the board?

(Dr. White) No. Board members are here. This is not between you and the board. This is about me deciding.\* I will look over what was presented here. I will decide and make my recommendation to the board and the board will decide. This is about convincing/affecting me. I make the decisions. I'm the superintendent. You'll decide about colors, or top or bottom, or both. Someone mentioned Friday as dress down day. You could decide things like that.

(Student 1) So we really didn't have to be here?

(Dr. White) Your input was needed. I decide and recommend to the board.

(Student 2) Do you know me? Do you even know who I am? Do you know my name?

(Dr. White) [*Laughing nervously and looking to audience for support.*] We have 40,000 students. I can't know all your names.

(Student 1) Then this is not necessary and just a formality?

(Dr. White) [*To audience*] Kids are into "you," into themselves. [*To student 1*] You need to "Wake up and smell the coffee." You've not seen what reality is. This is bigger than you, than compliance or not. You're young. [*Then to audience*] Adults and students are not alike. Adults have another set of rules. We're standing in as *loco parentis* (*while students are in school, the school is their "parent"*). Some students think that to be here (*at this meeting*) is to be against uniforms. Reacting emotionally [*referring to student 2*] will not help. We need reasoning. You need to tell me something I don't know...to reason with me to show me your point of view.

(Dr. White) [*To student 2*] You have a lot of passion. I used to be like you, but now I see things differently. When you get older you'll see. This is what the world is like. (*Dr. White then cut off the conversations and began closing the meeting*).

\*(Dr. White did not tell the students that although the board does decide the issue from the superintendent's recommendation this does not mean the board is barred from hearing from them or any community members on the issue. Anyone can speak to the board during its committee meetings or at its various public meetings.)

This meeting, part of which is transcribed above, is an example of speech patterns and judgments of legitimacy that would be characteristic of people when speech is deformed. **What appears to be free and open speech was not.**

Although it was implied that this was a meeting to discuss the pros and cons of school uniforms so as to influence a decision, during and after the meeting some of those who attended realized the decision was already made. This insight begs these questions:

- Would the conversations at the meeting be completely different if people's identity were hidden?
- How much did fear deform their speech?
- Is this why no adults spoke out openly against uniforms?

Just think about it:

- How many people meeting did not say what was really on their mind? Why?
- Is this a way to create public (school) policy?
- How many of those who work for IPS and were against school uniforms would have attended the meeting but for the presence of top administrators?

IPS must exemplify the need to liberate us from those external constraints on our speech, thus external constraints on our thoughts, thus allowing a rational critique of its schools--promoting a kind of rationality that allows for rational criticism and discussion in the public realm on an ongoing basis.

If IPS were to give equal access to all staff, parents, students, and all community members to deploy speech acts without being intimidated or unsure of those (persons or groups) who want uniforms, would everyone say, "Yes, school uniforms are a good idea, this is really rational, this serves all of our interests?" No, of course not.

*Unfortunately, our IPS/our community will never know the truth if public school discussions are distorted by a closed policy masquerading as free speech, and when public meetings are a mere political formality and justification for decisions already made. Trying to "pull the wool over our eyes" is an insult to the public's intelligence. It is also hypocritical of education's responsibility to model open rational inquiry to students--and Dr. White and his assertion that the "reasoning" of the better argument, not passion, will influence his thinking.*

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## **If how student dress is not the main problem, what is?**

“An intellectually curious, cognitively autonomous, socially responsible, democratically engaged, productive and globally conscious member of the human family in the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot be educated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century factory model of education. The regimented mastery, internalization, and regurgitation of compartmentalized facts that served the industrial age are anachronisms. The pandemic boredom among children and youth in European and U.S. schools stems from the redundancy in much of today’s schooling.”

Marcello M. Suarez-Orozco

“I often hear teachers complaining about the problems they have with children coming to school from dysfunctional families. I have never heard a teacher talk about the problems families have to deal with from their children coming home from dysfunctional schools.”

John Edwards, Child psychologist

“What are at-risk children at-risk of doing? In plain language, at-risk children are at-risk of turning the poverty and prejudice they experience against society rather than learning how to conform and take their “proper“ place. The children are maladjusting, and it is their teacher’s role to make that maladjustment functional and creative rather than to suppress it.”

Herbert Kohl, *I Won’t Learn from You*

### **Uniforms are the wrong tactic because dress is not the issue, IPS is the issue**

It is a simplification to argue that school uniforms is what IPS needs--this implies IPS is perfect and the way students dress takes away from this perfection.

### **What does the traditional instructional environment in IPS look like?**

Not only are there no clear-cut studies with definitive answers to the question of the value of school uniforms to improve urban schools, how students dress is not a factor when compared to the real problems IPS faces inside its schools.

Even in the small schools, which are planned to create a non-traditional educational environment, the learning climate in most IPS classrooms is still the same as it was 100 years ago. One example is: In almost every classroom there is a computer for the teacher, but there are no computers for students. The computer labs, of course, have them. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a row of a dozen computers is essential in each classroom, especially science and social studies classrooms. Thus, textbook instruction, handouts, and lectures are the main instructional strategies.

### **4 characteristics of the traditional classroom: 1907-2007**

Johnston and Wetherwill (1998) describe the traditional classroom. They point out the 4 observed characteristics of traditional school:

- the vehicle for teaching and learning is the total group in a classroom
- the teacher is the strategic pivotal figure in the group
- the classroom norms governing the group are mainly based on what maintains the teacher’s strategic role
- the teaching tone is ‘emotionally flat’ or bland

Young (1990) reported that the traditional schooling style is not only inadequate, but is turning off a great majority of students. He found:

- students were dissatisfied with teachers and classroom interactions
- students described school as boring and unpleasant
- the sameness and narrowness in classroom instruction resulted in student passiveness and non-engagement
- while the high school did serve the top 25%, the rest were treated as “un-special”

### **Why IPS students drop out: The IPS school experience**

One educator, Roland Barth, (in De La Rosa, 1998, p. 268) pin points the main drawback of the traditional school system quite accurately.

But the major factor in students’ lives that leads to depression, dropping out, drugs, jail, and suicide appears to be the school experience:

- ability grouping
- grade retention
- college pressures
- working alone
- denial of strengths and focus on weaknesses
- learning that is information-rich and experience poor
- an irrelevant curriculum that students must endure and frequently ignore

### **To many blacks, IPS is a source of self-doubt rather than self-development**

In large urban areas around the country, the public schools are failing to fulfill America’s promise to African-American families and youth. Hamovitch (1999) reminds us that **race continues to be “...the most salient factor explaining different patterns of student achievement,”** due to the issue that **“...race acts inside the school to give groups systematically different experiences.”** Although public schools promised and were presented as a source of equal opportunity for blacks, in many instances they found schools to be “...a source of self-doubt rather than self-development” (p. 57).

### **IPS confuses assimilation with education**

Due to its assimilationist tendencies, IPS makes schooling difficult because the youth interpret school success as one-way accommodation and not as education. Thus, they resist it. To minorities, public school education is an “imposition on Black people by White people.” So, public schools are seen as places that compete with and invert black culture, and is not complementary to a black student’s own cultural identity and feelings of self worth (Hamovitch, 1999).

### **Too much school, too little education**

In *Too much schooling, too little education*, Shujaa (1994), notes schooling implies a tie to the social order/nation-state that seeks to assimilate non-dominant groups/classes. Education involves learning that transmits cultural uniqueness of these groups to the next generation.

## **IPS: The 21<sup>st</sup> century Indian Boarding Schools**

Native Americans continue to have these same issues with our public schools that see education as assimilation. Remember government boarding schools where Native children and youth had to cut their hair, dress like Europeans, and could not speak their language or celebrate their culture. Contemporary Natives continue to resist the assimilationism of public schools (Mondale & Patton, 2001 p. 112) through dropping out.

*Is the intent of mandatory school uniforms a way for IPS to suppress urban culture, especially language, so that the schools will be more appealing to middle-class parents and the students more acceptable to businesses as customers and workers?*

IPS desires, like most public school systems, that urban students (African American, Latino, poor white working class) be influenced by school culture, especially its language. Formal/proper speech and writing are what schools teach. The use of slang, Ebonics, and other non-standard forms of are discouraged. Now with uniforms, dress is being brought into the picture. IPS suggests uniforms, not casual urban dress, be mandatory. Do IPS students, like their Native counterparts, resist this preparation for assimilation into middle class white America through dropping out?

### **IPS alternative schools: The solution actually enables the problem.**

As seen in light of the above descriptions of the weaknesses of traditional schooling, IPS alternative schools may be seen as another form of oppression and discrimination: This is why urban compensatory (alternative schools) programs that attempt to force African-Americans to deny their own experiences, culture, and common sense are destined to failure (Hamovitch, p. 75).

What is a “head scratcher” is why IPS does not realize that since its punitive alternatives, by definition, fail to question the “deep structure of (mainstream) schools,” they perpetuate the inadequacies of the traditional learning climate (Kelly, 1993) which make the alternative necessary in the first place. This is co-dependency at its worst.

### **A laundry list of other IPS problems:**

- no plans for a district-wide Education for Sustainability initiative
- due to its allegiances to standardized testing, it is unable to get beyond the narrow definition of what it means to be smart, limiting the possibilities of school success for the diversity of intelligences in their student population
- an emphasis on competition over cooperation
- a top down, authoritarian school climate in middle and high schools that refuses to recognize the responsibility of our public schools to prepare students for citizenship by providing them the opportunity to learn and practice democracy in the school and community
- no Latinos in powerful administrative positions in schools, downtown, or on school board
- no idea how to keep poor white males in school and graduating
- a gaping-wide disconnect between IPS staff/administration and hip-hop/urban youth culture

- a gaping-wide disconnect between IPS staff/administration and Latino culture urban Latino youth culture
- although a state law now requires cultural competency, to many IPS teachers this is simply over their heads: they still do not get it
- many teachers and students are not connecting, even in small schools
- a colonizing/domesticating and non-relevant curriculum and teaching methods
- a one-size-fits-all curriculum
- although the concept of learning styles has been around for over 35 years, IPS still cannot figure out how to follow this teaching motto: If students don't learn the way you teach, then teach them the way they learn."
- no variety of non-traditional assessments to counter and/or complement traditional assessments
- the over-diagnosis of black males as mentally retarded, leading the nation by 5 times the norm according to the spring 2006 Schott Foundation report on black males
- the over-representation of males in special education
- a serious lack of investigations into learning environments, for replication, that successfully educate children with ADHD without resorting to Ritalin or other drugs

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(For problems IPS faces outside of school, see Appendix A: The Social and Economic Realities that Challenge All Schools)

## What are the problems? Part II

**Why IPS can be improved, not by school uniforms, but only when school improvement is complemented by social and economic reform.**

### **Class factors in achievement is a universal reality**

It seems plausible that if *some* children can defy the demographic odds, all can, but that belief reflects a reasoning whose naiveté we reject in other policy areas. In human affairs where multiple causations are typical, causes are not disproved by exceptions.

Class background have been found to influence relative achievement everywhere, the inability of schools to overcome the disadvantage of less-literate homes is not a peculiar American challenge, but a universal reality (Rothstein, 2006).

Yet, despite such understanding, quite sophisticated people often proclaim the success of some poor children proves that social disadvantage does not cause low achievement.

*Partly, our confusion stems from failing to examine the concrete ways that social class actually affects learning. Describing these may help to make their influence more obvious and help explain why IPS can be improved, not by school uniforms, but only when school improvement is complemented by social and economic reform.*

### **Can school uniforms counter the negative effects of every-day urban poverty?**

Many aspects of society contribute to the achievement gap. Very, very little can be attributed to genetics—that is, the inherent intellectual potential for academic success.

This leaves the various factors discussed below and implies for this discussion the variables that must be considered initially, then challenged and changed. This does not imply that the children of the poor cannot learn. As was stated, intellectual potential is not a factor—and if it were one, it is due to health, nurturing, and nutritional factors in the womb and/or during first years after birth.

What it does mean is that school districts like IPS, that are under tremendous pressure to improve, must not simply blame students' culture and attitudes for the failure of its schools. Putting students in uniforms and pressuring them and their families to make IPS work ignores the tremendous tragic impact that an every-day, grinding, and ubiquitous poverty has on students and their innate potential to be success in school.

### **IPS, along with labor, business, religious, and community groups must face poverty**

Perhaps it would be most helpful if, first of all, IPS called out the chambers of commerce, corporations and businesses, the faith community, labor and government organizations, social, community, and neighborhood associations to attack poverty, gradually diminishing its impact.

Confronting and improving child rearing practices; challenging social, class, color, gender age and handicap discrimination; working to improve health, welfare and housing problems; and, shining the light of politics on urban wealth and income—**these are the real problems IPS faces, not the clothing fads of teenager.**

While trying to improve school climate and classroom instruction, educators cannot forget why schools in neighborhoods surrounded by poverty have and continue to under-serve students.

Read Appendix A and consider these factors. This awareness the appendix provides will help educators understand why and the extent to which the children of poverty are behind their middle class peers from the very beginning of formal schooling.

### **Narrowing social and economic gaps to reduce education gaps**

If we properly identify the actual social class characteristics that produce differences in average achievement, we should be able to design policies that narrow the achievement gap. Certainly, improvement of instructional practices is among these, but a focus on school reform alone is bound to be frustrating and ultimately unsuccessful. To work, school improvement must combine with policies that narrow economic (Michaels, 2007) and social differences between children.

Provision of health-care services to lower-class children and their families is also required to narrow the achievement gap. And we have to address the urban housing crisis for low-wage working families if children's lives are to be stable enough to benefit from improved instruction.

The connection between social and economic disadvantage and an academic achievement gap has long been well known. Most educators, however, have avoided the obvious implication: Improving lower-class children's learning requires ameliorating the social and economic conditions of their lives. Calling attention to this link is not to make excuses for poor school performance. It is only to be honest about the social support schools require if they are to fulfill the public's expectation that the achievement gap will disappear (Rothstein, 2006).

### **Division of Poverty Studies: A new role for IPS as anti-poverty broker**

IPS cannot hope to improve if our school district leaders remain unsophisticated about the social, economic, and political contexts in which the education of children from different social classes takes place in an industrial society.

IPS has no choice but to create a Division of Poverty Studies. IPS must broker the various agencies, organizations, and groups, which deal, directly and indirectly, with the “culture of poverty” and its influence on academic achievement such as health, housing, crime, environmental, criminal justice, civil rights, day care, employment, mental health, etc. IPS cannot improve until it leads and coordinates efforts to confront and reduce urban poverty.

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## **Can the IPS mandatory school uniform policy be universalized?**

**Act only on the maxim whereby thou can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.**

According to the courts, school districts have a right to impose a school uniform policy. Arguments concerning individual expression through clothing and/or the right of parents to control their child's upbringing do not override school rules that are considered "reasonable" to maintain an appropriate educational environment. The court concluded that the school uniform policy was "rationally related" to the interests of the school board in "promoting education, improving student safety, increasing attendance, decreasing dropout rates, and reducing socioeconomic tensions among students."

This is all fine and good, but still leaves the discussion open to 2 questions:

1. Can such a court decision and school uniform policy be rationally justified on a global scale and become a universal rule?
2. What if students refuse to wear a school uniform? (This will be discussed throughout the paper. See Uniforms: What will happen to those who do not conform?)

### **Let's see if the school uniform issue can pass a global standard**

Reason can help us determine if any give rule is moral and right.

Every advanced capitalist society has coercion. It has laws and the authority to uphold them. Without restrictions and enforcement, there would be no society, just chaos.

The question is, since we must have coercion, which one is legitimate? Philosopher Immanuel Kant's objective was to create a way to establish the goodness or evil of every action by every free, rational, moral agent under all circumstances and regardless of space and time. His "Categorical Imperative" stated: Act only on the maxim whereby thou can at the same time will that it should become a universal law. This approach helps resist the desire to treat ourselves as exceptions to the very morality and laws we recognize as universally binding. It is the logic of the Golden Rule.

The behaviors or limits rationally justified are ones that serve the general interest as opposed to the interests of some particular segment of society--a universal moral rule that applies to every rational person. This argument is not against laws/rules, it is against those rules that unjustifiably serve the interests of only a small fraction of society.

Let's look at coercive actions that do not meet this universal generalizable standard. Some behaviors serve only the interests of an individual or group, and some behaviors serve society as a whole, the interest of our species. Take, for example, the ozone layer and skin cancer. We have a common human interest in preventing deadly diseases that cause pain and suffering.

Rationality demands that we engage in behaviors that serve all of our interests--there is no rational argument against that. As a species, on a global level, we'll all benefit from doing that which saves the ozone layer.

Who benefits from women being treated unequally? Can coercing women into a subordinate inferior status be reasonably justified. If we can't come up with a reasonable argument that justifies and legitimizes this coercion, it is what we mean is a "bad law."

Some believe the motorcycle helmet laws arbitrarily coerce others for no good reason; yet, around the world, most would say helmets are a good thing and the law and its enforcement, which seem coercive to some, are best for everyone. Nonetheless, having to wear a helmet is not now a world law. Even in places where it is a law, motorcyclists break it nor do police always enforce it. Why? It can't be rationally universalized. This would not be the case with murder or theft.

### **Can we rationally justify that public school uniforms become a universal law?**

So, can we rationally justify that public school uniforms become a universal law--that all students in all public schools, for the general interest, wear uniforms? Or, for arguments sake and extended to its logical conclusion, could we say that all citizens, for the common good, should wear uniforms at work? In fact, do the supporters of public school uniforms imply if all humans wear uniforms or dressed alike, even common pajamas and underwear, would it not be best for us (for our own good of course) economically, for order, for pride in oneself/one's country? No. This, nor public school uniforms (in the US or at global level for all public schools students) can be rationally justified. What universally generalizable goal would it serve--a universal global rationality that applies to everyone under all circumstances?

Uniforms for public school children serve only the interests of certain segments of society and thus have no rational legitimacy. Rational desires are universally beneficial desires. Even the judges that have upheld public school uniforms when called upon to justify this cannot point to a universal common interest for all times and places.

Interestingly, in North Korea, many of its citizens wear official state uniforms. All children in schools must and do wear uniforms. Also, is it just a coincidence that many former colonies, colonized by the Europeans, require school uniforms in their public schools? Are these policies the vestiges of colonialism?

### **Uniforms or curiosity?**

School uniforms are mainly concerns of educators, particularly school administrators. Perhaps those who work and teach in public schools do not know how to maintain the natural curiosity, and the desire to learn, understand themselves and their world, with which children come to school. Thus, they believe that uniforms will help them get students to do what their teachers say.

The results which we ought to achieve by imposing school uniform in public schools, which can easily pass the universally generalizable test, is universal human liberation. School uniforms cannot lead to universal liberation. In fact, the very idea that many educators wish making schools work were only this easy proves there is no direct relationship between uniforms and school success.

Universalizing our rational needs and desires, the needs and desires of IPS are not rational because they cannot be defended by any reference to any universal human policy on uniforms, behavior, or direct good that would benefit everyone. There are still too many unknowns and

arguments against uniforms, as well as no scientific proof to mandate that “we will that public school uniforms should become a universal law.”

Whose narrow interests will be served by mandated school uniforms?

- Uniform companies
- Conformists
- School administrators
- School board members
- Employers
- Politicians
- Assimilationists
- Colonizers

Implying this is one way to improve school climate--coercing students into obedience so that they will do what they are told--benefits those educators with little or no imagination, enthusiasm, creativity, communication skills, and who love power and fear democracy.

Those who will not benefit

- Our public schools which will now be seen as even weaker and more desperate, moving from individual choice and responsibility to paternalism
- Our public schools will now become a public institution that patronizingly judges, sorts, and labels certain clothing styles and thus the students and the life styles their dress represents (by fiat) as anti-school and by inference, detrimental to society
- Parents who do not want the government telling them what their children should wear to their public schools
- Those educator who realize this is a misguided policy alternative
- The democratically inclined
- Those students who chose not to wear uniforms
- Mavericks

Viewed, especially in light of the idea that a mandated public school uniform policy

- cannot be universalized,
- disregards American culture and the tradition of individualism—personal choice and responsibility,
- condescendingly labels students who refuse to wear a uniform
- implies humans beings are not born curious and motivated to learn, and do not naturally seek meaning, and
- has goals which could be accomplished without mandatory school uniforms through less authoritarian globally recognized and respected democratic values and practices,

this policy is a tragic step backward for IPS.

## **Unintended consequences of mandatory IPS school uniforms**

Many policies government organizations form on paper when carried out produce unintended consequences that eventually disrupt, distort, and actually ruin initiatives. Any public school policy that is researched and planned and implemented by school leaders is also susceptible to “things you can’t control.” Over the past few years the introduction of uniforms in our public schools brought out negative reactions never imagined. See Appendix P: List of Organizations Against School Uniforms.

### ***Caution is advised***

IPS is in a very precarious political situation. Due to graduation rates that were national lows, the public has our district under the microscope. IPS must seriously consider **all** aspects of a mandatory school uniform policy.

Listed below are several possible unintended consequences. Attention must be paid. Caution is advised.

### **The association of uniforms with imprisonment and subservience**

Does school safety itself come with more law, order, discipline and school uniforms? Or, does safety come with a more responsible attitude? And what attitude does come with school uniforms? Soldiers dress in uniforms. Uniformed people typically surround dictators. During World War II, the first thing that happened to the unfortunate people who were put into concentration camps was that they were dressed in striped clothes and their hair was shaven off. The German “SS” troops tattooed its members, just like violent gangs tend to require their members to wear specific tattoos, colors and patches. The so-called “pride” with which gang members show their colors is supposed to scare off other gangs that could intrude into their territory (Those disgusting school uniforms, 1998).

### **The uniform is as much a symbol of violence as it is of discipline**

The sheer sight of uniforms can provoke and attract violence. Uniforms are not the answer to concerns about safety, as uniforms can personify violence. Parents who are concerned about safety should tell their children to stay away from uniforms!

Police, security guards and the military may all be very disciplined, but there's no denial that they have a strong focus on violence. Let's face it; school uniforms do not make sense whatever way one looks at it. Most school uniforms seem deliberately designed to make children look “square” and sometimes, just plain silly (Those disgusting school uniforms, 1998).

### **Uniforms are both tools of humiliation and symbols of imprisonment**

Those who promote school uniforms present the idea that students cannot easily walk away from school without being immediately identified by the collaborating general public, apprehended and handed over to their school for punishment. This helps prevent cutting classes and leaving campus or school grounds. Good idea?

Even if the scheme was designed this way, it does not work in practice, as students who want to cut school will take an extra set of plain clothes with them in their backpack. The main intention of school uniforms seems to be make students look stupid, silly and subservient, in order to

humiliate into believing they are captive, owned by the school and should behave accordingly in a servile way (Those disgusting school uniforms, 1998).

### **Too Much Respect for Authority**

"Schools must teach children to obey/respect authority! It's for their own good."

School uniforms will set the climate for good citizenship and create students who will respect the law, the police, and proper behavior.

This is the rationale many use to support public school uniforms. This is especially the case for advocates who want urban children in uniforms because they are more likely to have contact with the police, court and prison system, than middle class children and youth. Supporters say the respect for authority uniforms teach, will help keep minorities and the poor out of jail.

### **But, which authority—proper authority or just any authority figure?**

Yes, many young people would be better off if they obeyed authority. But this begs the question: Which authority? If the local government is doing something that the state government doesn't allow, or is in violation of the Constitution, isn't it our duty as citizens to oppose it? Or is that just stuff we teach the students in government class, but don't really expect them to believe? If the authority of an adult says, "Come with me, your mommy wants you," what's a good and obedient child to do?

If safety is such an important issue, then surely there must be concerns that school uniforms constitute a danger to the personal development of our children! How safe is the evolving mind of a child in the hands of a system that puts discipline above development?

Again, if there were a need for more discipline, how do school uniforms benefit this? In the first place, discipline doesn't result from fear or oppression. Discipline comes with choice, not with an absence of choice! And how does wearing plain clothes disturb classroom discipline in the first place? Are some colors perhaps too loud? Should all kids perhaps dye their hair the same color as well?

*Finally, uniforms are part of a mindset that influences children to do what adults say. In some cases, this behavior of obedience does not protect children, but makes them prone to be abused. Predators know children are easily kidnapped or taken or molested since those who are trained to obey authority are more likely to do what adults tell them (Those disgusting school uniforms, 1998).*

### **How mandatory uniforms take away from small schools**

*Small schools are supposed to be autonomous.* If IPS had genuine small schools, each of the current and various small schools would be deciding on whether to have a school uniform policy or not. IPS small schools will lose authenticity, integrity, responsibility, and quality due to micro-management from downtown via mandatory school uniforms.

### **Teachers and Students: Small schools are about relationships.**

Relationships are the foundation of small schools. Unfortunately, hierarchical situations inhibit close relationships. Inherently, communications are distorted. **Uniforms represent hierarchy.** Uniforms, because they discriminate and separate and differentiate, will detract from relationships. Relationships are about equals in the small schools situation. This is not equality

due to age or experiences or degrees, but equals in the community of learners. Uniforms will discourage this relationship building where the adults will be, due to the new balance of power created by this differentiation, those with whom students cannot be honest. Because teachers will be put in the position of authority over proper uniform attire and its regulation, students will be less likely to see teachers as friends. They will be someone of authority they must look out for if they are not meeting uniform standards or if they have a dissenting thought.

“It is an interesting question how far men would retain their relative rank if they were divested of their clothes.”

Henry David Thoreau

Students may rationalize: “I am not going to have a close relationship with you, nor am I going to be honest with you, if I know you have all the power. The fact that I have no choice but to wear this uniform shows I have little importance.”

### **Some other possible ways school uniforms can be viewed**

As was implied, different people see different things differently. Although IPS believes its intentions are good, others may see school uniforms as a poor policy alternative.

#### **The idea of public school uniforms appeal to our weaker natures:**

- the need to fit in/the fear of ostracism
- a way to rationalize and cover up mistakes
- the need/desire to label and stigmatize others
- the need to feel superior to/have power over others
- peer pressure, conformity, and "group think"
- greed
- the feeling of acceptance, recognition, and security that comes with compliance to authority

Of course, many on the planet know that school democracy with its adult/student shared decision-making appeals to our higher nature: cooperation, compromise, mutual respect and individual rights, empathy, and a sense of justice.

#### **School uniform will lead to:**

- teacher/curriculum-centered, not student-centered instruction
- IPS being perceived as “over-reaching” moving into areas outside their authority, i.e. into people home telling parents/guardians how to dress their children
- cameras in hallways, classrooms, lunchrooms, locker rooms, and restrooms
- no recess—there’s too much to learn
- no talking during lunch
- not just students, but teachers being “brought into line”
- students “swiping in” as they enter school; ID’s will be scanned by teachers for class attendance

#### **IPS will lose respect when the community realizes that:**

- the attention given to school uniforms is also a way to keep the heat off IPS and what happens in the classroom. Since one of the reasons kids aren't learning, according to IPS,

is how they dress, all the attentions will be directed towards this issue and not the quality of teaching, supervision of teachers, in-service training, and all over school climate. Consequently, they will reject this policy and the board. Why? They will know instinctively that if the classes are boring, the teachers mediocre, and the curriculum colonizing and domesticating, it does not matter what students are wearing.

- IPS is trying to pull one over on them by using public meetings as a cover for the fact that the decision to have mandated uniforms has already been made. *This hubris will backfire.*
- IPS teachers, who want to keep their jobs, have sold out to the top-down control, symbolized by mandatory uniforms IPS uses to keep everyone (administrators, teachers, and students) in line.

**People will think it's an insult to their intelligence that:**

- they are told school uniforms will help solve the problems of IPS.
- the world's smartest country, with the strongest military and economy, and the best hospitals and universities must resort to school uniforms in order to make our public schools work.

**Public school uniforms and mass society:**

- The family's influence is declining and mass culture and mass communication are the influence.
- This leads to even more loss of individuality...
- This leads to a decline in democracy and less desire for civic engagement.
- If not supported by strong efforts to give students a voice in their own education, school uniforms will only add to the sense of helplessness that the individual, lost in government sponsored conformity, can no longer make a difference.

**This is no approach of a "Horse whisperer"**

Like the rope and tie methods of unenlightened cowboys trying to "tame" horses, mandatory school uniforms intend to "break" students' spirits. IPS school officials will "hold" students down (with threats of/and suspensions, threats of /and expulsions, and/or pressure on parents/guardians) until they are "tamed" and ready to wear the "saddle" (school uniforms) of "domestication" (civilization). Thus, uniforms will remove defiant attitudes or the students who have them, making students compliant and willing to submit to school/societal authority. IPS says making students wear uniforms will show students how serious IPS is: It wants students to come to school "ready to learn" and do "what they are supposed to do."

Practicing this theory is unwise. This policy alternative is ignorant of enlightened research and world-class reports from England, Australia, Japan, India, and America that emphasize more child-centered democratic approaches (Kushal, 2002; Mercogliano, 1998; Mintz, 2003; Okuchi, 2000; Porter, 2000).

**Unintended questions: Implied actions**

The IPS board is not separate from the society and community it represents. The board's efforts to find a **moral ground** on which to justify school uniforms will bring out these and other unintended questions with their implied responsibility to take positions, make policy, and then act:

- Does IPS buy products from and thus support global companies that take advantage of children and workers?
- Why does IPS continue not recycle plastic bottles and thousands of Styrofoam trays daily?
- What is its position on the death penalty?
- What is it doing about poverty?
- What is its stance on gambling?
- Does IPS support a living wage?
- Does it support and practice the UN Rights of the Child?

### **More questions and concerns inadvertently brought up by school uniforms**

- Are mandatory school uniforms the beginning of suppression of dissent in IPS? Due to the pressure from the public to perform, will any criticism of IPS be seen as disloyal and hurtful to students?
- Will reasoning that rationalizes (the scientific use of uniforms) to control students' behaviors, attention, culture, and learning in order to create freedom, happiness, and a higher stage of development actually produce its opposite: outsiders, stupidity, mindless conformity, domination and oppression of those who are different?
- Will mandated uniforms create schools of conformity, and not cooperation?
- Will the rates of student cheating, violence, suicide, or dropping out increase due to some set of disappointed expectations--a set of high goals imposed on them that cannot be rationally justified?
- Will school uniforms perpetuate the negative perceptions of black youth as deviant or criminal? Such stereotyping, through official public policies that increase repression by such tactics as school uniforms in institutions such as public schools, will only alienate more minorities.
- Will mandatory uniforms cut back on individual freedom and democracy resulting in a mediocre society characterized by homogeneity, standardization, and social conformity?
  - Will this result in a decline in individuality and a rise of massification?
  - Will our public schools become an instrument of social control and domination?
- Will the forced conformity (approved and authorized by elected officials) resulting from public school uniforms lead to mass culture and a consumer society? Could this mandated conformity unwittingly be a part of the appeal of mass media and enculturation of a mass society that is now at the heart of social life and social reproduction?

- Are mandatory IPS school uniforms a political attempt to please local middle class whites and make IPS presentable to these middle class families and their children?
- Are mandatory IPS school uniforms a political attempt to make urban youth (especially African-American) acceptable (un-offensive and un-intimidating) to the political power structure and business community?
- Uniforms make all students dress alike and to a great extent look alike. Will this “de-individualization” turn students into a commodity, a statistic, an object used as an instrument of public policy and/or personal political power?
- Will uniforms drive IPS towards a one-size-fits-all curriculum: a singularity of teaching, learning, and testing styles?
- Will IPS be tempted to spin numbers to keep up the facade of their “Brave New World”? IPS is under a lot of pressure to succeed. Also, Dr. White has his whole career on the line. Neither is above being tempted to spin rates, numbers, and scores. Just remember what former US Secretary of Education Ron Paige did in Huston to create the “Huston Miracle.” He was able to create a drop out rate of 1%. Indiana/IPS misled citizens for years and still may be doing it with their supposedly more accurate grad rate formulas. These educator-politicians have to produce and will—one way or the other.
- Does the promise of school uniforms rationalize order, uniformity and stability in the societal, economic, and government systems where each knows their place, the trains run on time, the factories produce, and everyone salutes the flag?
- Will uniforms and zero tolerance produce a group of “uncooperative malingerers”? Will students/families who refuse to obey the uniform mandate be considered problematic and labeled anti-social and so leading to their stigmatization?

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## **McEducation: The Brave New World of IPS**

Obviously, we are all very concerned with the rising dropout rates which influence the ability of IPS students, many of whom are semi-literate and unskilled, to find and hold a job. Influenced by media and the materialism of the successful, today's urban youth must get paid, and they will -one way or the other.

Educators across the county, especially in urban areas where so-called minority male superintendents and administrators, in particular, who are under pressure from their community, are making an all-out effort to confront the crisis that leads to social instability. The lure of the streets, easy money, gangs, at-risk schools, prisons as a right of passage, the heartbreaking homicide rate for urban males 16-24...we all know the facts.

Drastic times call for drastic measures; something has to be done!

In 1932 Aldous Huxley published *Brave New World*. This futuristic utopian society was created and controlled by the "World State" as a reaction to social problems and disorder. Something had to be done!

In *Brave New World*, the power of convention molds each individual into an inter-changeable part in the society, valuable only for the purpose of making the whole run smoothly. In such a world, uniqueness is uselessness and uniformity is bliss, because social stability is everything.

### **The implication mandatory school uniforms in public schools as social engineering**

The novel is being mentioned because of the implication of mandatory school uniforms in our public schools as social engineering. A review of the novel finds similar themes running through the national and local discussion on mandated school uniforms as a means to improve our public school's graduation rates.

Mustapha Mound, The Controller, is one of the 10 men who run the World State. His extraordinary power keeps him from whisperings and gossip about his flaws because those under him are afraid.

One of the other 2 main characters is John the Savage (born of his natural mother and not of a state mandated surrogate). He is the only unique human being in the story. The other, Helmholtz Watson, who has become quite discontented with life in the controlled state society, is starting to question authority.

In the novel, these rebels confront Mound. Mound knows the nature of these malcontents because, he admits, he was once one. This got him in trouble with the state. While confined, he woke up and smelled the coffee. Choosing a position of responsibility in preference to banishment, he explains he consciously took on the duty of saving society through social engineering. Although he challenged authority in his youth, he is now committed to keeping the society stable. He uses his power for other's happiness, not his own.

"Community, Identity, and Stability" is the motto of the futuristic world.

- One Community—all for the whole
- One Identity—difference is anathema
- Stability—limited choices bring predictability which bring happiness and prosperity

Although everyone seems to be happy, Huxley notes that the cheeriness masks a dark reality: Personal identity, perhaps even humanity itself, is strangled by the demands of community and stability.

Stability requires both the elimination of differences and the end of dissatisfaction. Genetic engineering and social conditioning have created humans who are virtually identical--each has the same identity.

The fatal flaw of John and Helmholtz is independent thought and action. The only hope to survive this dystopia lies in the free and active mind, willing and able to make its own judgments. Individual freedom and intelligence can guide the fully human mind into a truly free, truly human world. They claim their right to be an individual. This claim leads to John's banishment and indirectly the death of Helmholtz.

In light of Huxley's novel, The Brave New World of IPS could look like this

Good schools are:

- Serious, strict, and predictable
  - Characterized by discipline and order
- Dissent will be repressed
  - IPS will need supporters, not critics
- No-nonsense principals will make sure students behave
- Failure is unacceptable
- The good is the enemy of the perfect
- Movement will be tightly controlled
  - The campus will be closed
  - No one will leave during school hours without permission
- Cameras in all hallways, classrooms, and lunchrooms
- No recess because there is too much to learn
- Lunches will remain quiet
- School spirit and patriotism will be emphasized.
  - Only during pep rallies students will be allowed to get loud
- Instruction will be direct and teacher centered
- Only certain high schools will have major sports teams
  - Athletes will have to go to that school
  - IPS wants winners, not losers
- Cooperation will be discouraged
  - Competition is the way to excellence
- Student government will emphasize student responsibilities over student rights

- Parents will be required to come to school during the day, possibly having to miss work, to meet with staff if their child gets in trouble
- Rooms will be set aside to hold noncompliant students until they are ready to learn

Good students are:

- Each in uniforms
- Each ready to learn
- Each obedient and duty-oriented
- Each dressed for gym
- Each following classroom and school rules
- Each agreeing that school is their “job”
- Each ready to conform and fit in
- Each uncritical: going along to get along to get a head
- Each walking quietly in lines
- Each using the proper stairway
- Each on time to class
- Each at desks in rows
- Each attentive
- Each following instructions
- Each with hand raised to be called upon
- Each having homework done
- Each regurgitating memorized facts to teacher
- Each performing well on exams
- Each speaking proper English

Principals and teachers, like students, will also conform. Questioning the IPS downtown administration’s decrees and micro-management style will be seen as a detriment to progress. Like students, those in disagreement IPS policies, will be transferred, asked to leave, or fired and replaced.

The IEA, also under pressure, will make concession in attempt to help rid IPS of its worst teachers. If in the process, some good teachers get railroaded or inadvertently discredited by innuendo that will be a small price to pay to improve our IPS.

Stigmatizing alternative schools will be used to “re-educate” students to “wake up and smell the coffee.” Being sent to these options will leave a mark on the record of the student. So that the program can act as a district-wide disciplinary threat, the alternatives will be extremely strict to make students regret they did not come to school ready to learn.

### **MacEducation: School uniforms and IPS as an arm of business?**

To stay out of trouble and be a contributing member of the Indianapolis community, students need an education and a job. In order to appease the business sector, IPS will have to go about creating good workers. And, school uniforms will help!

Consequently, due to the concerns of the community with crime and violence, it will be necessary to educate students in the interests of others, not in their own self-interests (Finn, 1999). This will be rationalized as a necessity in order to keep certain students off the streets, away from prison, and into employment.

Indeed, the Indianapolis business community is concerned with the quality of the workforce, the state for the economy, and the potential of the city to attracting business and new corporations. A quality workforce, to businesses and corporations, is made up of those who dress properly or are comfortable with uniforms, work hard, are dependable, who come to work each day and on time, follow instructions: Many of the same characteristics mentioned above in “Good students are.”

To many this makes sense. Schools uniforms, the symbol of the new IPS--serious, strict, and orderly, where excellence and a diploma will be achieved by everyone--will be seen as the rescuer of contemporary urban students and following generations, keeping them from drowning in the criminal justice system and prisons.

Serious, strict, and orderly schools with mandated uniforms will provide the climate needed to show students why they need to be serious about their education and why the school needs to be strict and orderly. Compliance to the demands concerning what they need to be and what they need to do in order to be successful must be practiced for their own good and the good of society.

Graduates will find jobs or go on to further their education. All will have employment and can thus raise a family, and join the community as contributors to society.

Yet, there is something odd, even silly, about local public schools rationalizing the policy of providing businesses with “good” workers in the name of stability and security.

But no, perhaps it is not so odd as “MacEducation” blurs the line between local public schools and private business.

### **MacEducation Vs. Self-actualization: The needs of society vs. those of the individual**

“The right of all children to learn and become productive citizens compels each employee of IPS to contribute to an environment conducive to learning and instruction through the appropriate methodologies so that all children will develop life skills and become self-actualized individuals.”

IPS Instructional Mission

#### **Self-actualization: IPS Instructional Mission**

What IPS schools could also do (and are not doing now) to reach the same goals MacEducation intends while emphasizing choice, individuality, and democracy (which “MacEd” does not) is through student-centered education—enabling student self-actualization. MacEducation (society and employer-centered education) wants to prepare students to fit in. Self-actualization (democratic and student-centered education) wants to prepare students to be who they are.

“The purpose of a citizen in a free country is not to fit into society, but to make society.”

John Holt, educator

### **Schools as crucibles for self-actualization--as a means to clarity**

One thing is certain; identity development must begin in finding out who one is and expressing the knowledge first to “self” and then to the world. Public schools as crucibles provide fine models for doing so. Our urban public schools/educators must go about the important business of examining the proper/best part they can play in this process of self-actualization as a means to personal clarity—clarifying and being authentic (Evans, 2006).

“Self- Actualization as the intrinsic growth of what is already in the person, or more accurately, of what the person is.”

Abraham Maslow

### **The MET: The school of self-actualization**

The ideas and designs of education expressed in the “MacEducation” world are diametrically opposed to those reflected in the American high school concept know as “The MET.”

Founded by the Big Picture Company, the first MET opened in Providence, Rhode Island, in the fall of 1996. There are now over 30 MET schools in America.

“The final aim is not to know, but to be. There never was a more risky motto than: Know thyself. Yes, you've got to know yourself as far as possible, yet not simply for the sake of knowing. Consequently, you've got to know yourself so that you can at least be yourself. *‘Be yourself’ is the last motto.*”

D. H. Lawrence

The MET philosophy is grounded in educating “one student at a time.” The schools promote and personalize education programs that are unique for each student. They believe that true education occurs when each student is an active participant in his/her education, when his/her course of study is personalized by teachers, parents, and mentors who know him/her well. School-based learning is blended with outside experiences, and learning from mentors in real-world situations. This relevance automatically heightens the student’s interest in learning.

### **The MET’s goal: Good people, not good workers**

Each student has a learning plan that grows out of her or his unique needs, interests, and passions. MET ensures that students and families are active participants in the design and authentic assessment of each child’s learning. The schools have a democratic climate and are small (+/- 100 students) to encourage the development of a community of learners, and to allow for each child to be known well by at least one adult. This provides an opportunity for the right measure of challenge and support to promote growth for each student.

Characteristics of the MET that stand out against “MacEducation” are:

- No dress code
- No tests
- No grades
- Democratic climate

- Bells, being late to class, desks in rows are not the point at MET. Here education is self-discovery, the self-discipline of finding one's passion and doing what one loves--each through the process of self-actualization.

Everything that makes up the student's learning experience--the curriculum; the learning environment; the use of time during the school day; the choice of workshops or college classes; the focus and depth of investigation through the Big Picture learning goals--is developed based on the student's individual interests, talents, and needs.

Students must also take responsibility over their learning and pursue their interests and passions in depth in the real world and at school. Students are encouraged to pursue their interests in depth in order to grow both personally and academically (The Met, 2006).

“A democratic culture is one that guards the equal right of every individual for self-actualization.”

Yaacov Hecht, Institute for Democratic Education

### **Unfortunately and Fortunately**

Unfortunately, many Indianapolis citizens will be bamboozled by the simplicity and perfection of the public school uniform idea. The desperate situation IPS is in will tempt many to go along with a school uniform policy. In the “Brave new world” of IPS, the loss of a few non-conformist or defiant students, and the freedom and individuality they represent, will be a small price to pay for stability.

Fortunately, in time, the American ideal of democratic self-government will necessitate self-actualized citizens and the democratic schools that enable them.

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## **“Go along to get ahead” vs. education in your own self-interest**

“We have to give respect to get it. Don’t disrespect your teachers because you think they don’t respect you. You don’t run the place. So go along and get along.”

Superintendent Dr. Eugene White to Manual High School students,  
Indianapolis Public Schools, September, 2006

“If we don’t like the (school) system, so what...? Kids need to go along to get ahead.”

Local minister at “Save the Streets Rally,” Attucks High School, August 26, 2006

It is not as simple as the one-way assimilation and accommodation of ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious minorities learning the codes of the majority society in order to get along and get ahead.”

M. Suarez-Orozco on the influence of our global village to provide such a variety of options that assimilation is not longer necessary to be accepted and successful.

### **Conforming to get a head: Are school uniforms the way IPS intends to make students “go along to get along”?**

The above quote from Superintendent White’s lecture at Manual this fall illustrates his attempt to reason with students (for their own good of course) to accept that all they need to do to be successful in high school is to go along to get along and get a head. Perhaps this is what he did or saw others do. Perhaps this is what students should do until they are out of college and have “made it.” Then, they can finally stop trying to fit in and can be themselves.

*In its caring attempt to keep the urban poor out of prison, is IPS putting students in another type of confinement, a psycho-social “prison”: Acquiesce and don’t critique: Go along to get along and get ahead?*

Over the ages, this has made sense to a lot of people. Those who conform are highly rewarded. In the U. S., assimilation into the “melting pot” has been the way many immigrants could be accepted. To others, assimilation was either impossible, due to skin color, and/or psychological suicide. The white Anglo-Saxon Protestant male was the colonizing standard used to judge acceptance.

### **Framing Dr. White’s “advice” from a global perspective**

Currently, evidently few urban students in IPS and the nation see the value in this type of advice from their elders (Evans, 2006). They do not stay in school and graduate. They assert:

Go along to get along for what,  
for whom,  
for what social order?

“Can we call the preparation to produce the cultural hegemony of European-elites education?”

Mwalimu J. Shujaa, American educator

These students choose to follow beliefs, attitudes, or life styles not favored by the status quo. American educators must see that resistance to the “Go along to get a along and get ahead” schooling style by certain groups is not a quirk or isolated phenomenon, but a global reaction by

youth to public education (Sewell, 1997) and school authority (Willis, 1977) that seeks to educate them not in their own self-interests, but in the interests of the dominate culture.

"I failed your class 'cause I ain't with your reasoning. You tryin' to make me you..."

Boogie Down Productions, 1989

This is why in 2003 various educators at the global level, concerned with increasing school dropout rates in all countries, published the first of its kind: *The International Journal of School Disaffection*.

To understand the current failure of IPS (Holzman, 2006) to educate all students, it has been necessary to frame this in terms of widespread global school disaffection and growing awareness of the history of the global use of public schools not to educate, but as a political tool to assimilate, acculturate, and acclimate minorities and the working-class for the benefit of the mainstream culture. In order to affect change American urban educators must be shown that the rejection of the assimilationist definition of public education by their so-called urban minority and working-class students is not an isolated phenomenon. In fact, this is a psychologically healthy response to urban public schools that attempt to persuade urban youth to deny their own experiences and common sense (Hamovitch, 1990).

The entire issue of *Phi Delta Kappan* concerned, "A New World View: Education In a Global Era." In it, educator Dr. Suarez-Orozco (2005) writes from a post-colonial, post-modern global viewpoint that is not tainted by the politics of 20<sup>th</sup> century American schools. His ideas are a welcomed world perspective of the purpose of education, and so of American public schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Children growing up today are more likely than in any other generation to face a life of working, networking, loving, and living with others from different national, linguistic, religious, and racial backgrounds. The Tensta classroom (a model school in Sweden that has a multi-class/multi-national student body) is a microcosm of the classrooms of tomorrow. Students are challenged to engage and work through competing and contrasting cultural models and social practices, adjusting to and accommodating differences in such areas as kinship, gender, language, and the complicated interrelationship of race, ethnicity, and inequality. Trans-cultural communication, understanding, and empathy and collaboration are no longer ideals. **It is not as simple as the one-way assimilation and accommodation of ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious minorities learning the codes of the majority society in order to get along and get ahead** (emphasis mine) (p. 211).

Americans know the drawbacks, as well as the advantages of assimilation; this is the "melting pot" scenario they grew up with. What is interesting is the many minorities who are assimilated and so have been rewarded with power, who either from pressure to say so, or because they actually believe assimilation and accommodation into the mainstream is necessary to be successful, continue to push this outdated paradigm on urban minorities and working-class families and their children.

Yet, many students know there is no pay off for them in this one-way conformity and they reject this paradigm and its politics. Instead, they want to be educated in their own self-interest, “educated” to be who they are. They want a personalized, customized education, not a one-size-fits-all model.

### **Assimilation as passé: The world is just too big and complicated!**

IPS must realize that it is a very big world now with many, many subcultures; many, many possible identities; many, many possible lifestyles; with many, many ways to be intelligent; and, many, many ways to succeed. Students in the US are no longer limited to the past’s narrow definition of acceptance, and thus success, as determined by the status quo. This may have been what Dr. White had to do to become a part of the mainstream, but with globalization it is no longer a requirement. The world is just too big for “one way” to live.

### **Education in one’s own self-interest: Political motives for literacy**

#### **Uniforms or not, regular or small, magnet or charter schools: Which is better?**

Although these discussions are necessary, they miss one point: Regardless of what students wear, regardless of the type of urban public school choice they have--regular, small, magnet, charter--if they are not educated in their own self-interests, it doesn't matter. If the education is colonizing or domesticating, and not liberatory or transforming, then where/how/what kind of school they attend or what they wear does not matter. Urban students, even in local and state magnets and charters, are currently given domesticating education: a climate of obedience and/or conformity that discourages students as critical thinkers.

#### **Political motives for acquiring literacy, numeracy, and a diploma**

All the Marion County charters (maybe except the MET) with their uniforms, traditional curriculum and orientation towards discipline and proper school behavior (“Sit still, be quiet, and listen!”) consider assimilation into the mainstream as the goal of education. Very few educators want these students to have political motives for acquiring literacy, numeracy, and a diploma.

There is no liberating curriculum that encourages and enables urban minorities and the working class to express their own ideas and concerns, and helps them to view their education as a means to further their own agenda by challenging the status quo and creating a truly democratic society.

#### **IPS does not want to create critical thinkers, students who will then criticize IPS**

Education is creating critical thinkers. It is teaching students how to maneuver in a democracy and organize to practice it at school and in their community. Evidently they don’t want students to take control of their lives and actually change the factors of poverty that affect school success by developing an authentic curriculum grounded in the everyday lives of the students. When youth are critical thinkers and have more freedom and control of their lives, they realize they can do something about their circumstances—going through the various political processes of actually affecting policy at the local, state, and federal level.

Our IPS needs schools that liberate students, enabling them to question the *status quo*, including IPS, and speak truth to power. Let’s stop wasting energy squabbling over uniforms and make

sure more of the choices educate urban minorities and the poor in the own self-interests, not in the interests of school districts, employers, or the state.

**Marion County has 2 types of education: One for the powerful, one for the poor**

1. **Empowering and Liberating Education**--Leads to *powerful literacy*, the kind that leads to power and authority. This enables one to know how to think for oneself. It helps to understand how the system works, how to critique and change it, and how to acquire power and authority in it.

2. **Domesticating and Colonizing Education**—Leads to *functional literacy*, the kind that makes a person productive and dependable, but not troublesome. One learns to be a “good worker” (See “Good students are” in MacEducation: IPS Brave New World): wear the company uniform properly, be to work on time, to follow directions, and work hard to maintain the profits.

Literacy with an Attitude: Educating the working class in their own self-interest  
When the children of the rich get powerful literacy nothing changes. But when the children of the poor get powerful literacy, *you get literacy with an attitude—making students (politically) dangerous.*

Powerful literacy when acquired by the working class uses reading and writing as a means to help them in their struggle to secure justice as they try to get a better deal. This implies that there may be those who would rather see the poor not have this powerful literacy because it would be troublesome.

**Below are examples (Finn, 1999):**

DE Domesticating Education: What We Have and Don't Want  
LE *Liberating Education: What We Need and Don't Have*

DE Knowledge is presented as facts isolated from wider bodies of knowledge.  
LE *Knowledge is rarely presented as facts isolated from wider bodies of knowledge.*

DE Knowledge taught is not related to the lives and experiences of the students.  
LE *Knowledge taught is always related to the lives and experiences of the students.*

DE Teachers do not make a practice of explaining how assignments are related to one another.  
LE *Teachers make a practice of explaining how assignments are related to one another.*

DE Work is easy.  
LE *Work is challenging.*

DE Knowledge from textbooks is valued more highly than knowledge gained from experience.  
LE *Textbook knowledge is validated or challenged in terms of knowledge gained from experience.*

DE Knowing the answers and knowing where to find the answers are valued over creativity, expression, and analysis.

*LE Creativity, expression, and analysis are essential beyond knowing the answers or knowing where to find the answers.*

DE Discussion of challenges to the status quo, past and present, rarely occurs.

*LE Discussion of challenges to the status quo, past and present, frequently occurs.*

DE History of labor unions, civil rights, women's suffrage, and other victories for justice and equity are taught as the accomplishments of "heroes" and "heroines" not as the result of grass roots struggles.

*LE History of labor unions, civil rights, women's suffrage, and other victories for justice and equity are taught as collective action taken by common people.*

DE Instruction is typically copying notes and writing answers to factual questions.

*LE Instruction is rarely copying notes and writing answers to factual questions.*

DE Work is evaluated in terms of following steps. A satisfactory answer does not suffice. "Do it my way or it's wrong."

*LE "Work" is sometimes presented as following steps in procedures, but students are given choices and rewarded for original solutions.*

DE "Writing" consists of filling in blanks or lines on teacher-constructed handouts workbook pages.

*LE "Writing" is taught in a workshop format*

DE Both teachers and students focus on good grades and a diploma as the objective of schooling.

*LE Neither teachers nor students focus on good grades and a diploma as the objective of schooling.*

DE Students' access to materials is tightly controlled.

*LE Students have access to materials.*

DE Movement of students is tightly controlled.

*LE Students have considerable freedom of movement.*

DE Students are rewarded for passivity and obedience, not for initiative and inquisitiveness.

*LE Students are rewarded for initiative and inquisitiveness, not passivity and obedience.*

DE Students are rarely given an opportunity to express their own ideas.

*LE Students are frequently given an opportunity to express their own ideas.*

DE Teachers are gatekeepers. They focus on correctness before expression.

*LE Teachers focus on expression before correctness.*

DE Teachers make derogatory remarks to and about students.

*LE Teachers never make derogatory remarks to or about students.*

### **School uniforms: Domesticating education for “MacEducation” schools**

A serious review of this section will enable one to make a more enlightened decision about school uniforms. This paper argues that school uniforms are a means to promoting a domesticating and colonizing education. To too many in the world, uniforms symbolize oppression, obedience, and conformity.

Again the argument of this paper is:

- Learning is natural: We are all born “ready to learn.” Uniforms are moot.
  - IPS must confront and change environmental factors that belie this nature.
- The issue is not education, but what kind: colonizing or transformative?

### **School democracy is a better way to improve IPS.**

Are uniforms a stalking horse for oppression and a domesticating and colonizing MacEducation? Do uniforms prepare students to be good workers who continue to “go along to get along” and fit in business and corporation world as they were “made” to fit in schools under mandated school uniforms?

Ideas from Finn’s *Literacy with an Attitude* and those from educator Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) on the power of Culturally Relevant Teaching vs. Assimilationist approaches appear to be better oriented to what’s best for urban students.

### **School uniforms for a liberating and democratic education**

But nothing from IPS, so far, makes this author think that the mandating of school uniforms is nothing more than a misguided and unenlightened effort to “make” students ready to learn.

One could view uniforms as liberating if they are used to bring order to schools so that students may be enabled to acquire:

- Powerful literacy so they can critique and change their society and IPS
- The democratic habits of mind and go about practicing classroom and school democracy—helping run their school and solving problems in the community. (See *School Democracy*, p. 77)

If creating powerfully critical thinkers and a powerful school democracy were the main reasons for mandating school uniforms in IPS, the policy could be justified, but sadly they are not the reasons.

In its continuing attempt to make the 20<sup>th</sup> century work, IPS is not only misjudging a whole generation of young people, but is failing to recognize the direction and destiny of America as world leader in the use of public schools as education for social-economic justice and a democratic way of life.

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## **The 11<sup>th</sup> Commandment: *Thou shalt not sag***

“We want to stop students from sagging. It makes them late for class.”  
Academic Dean, IPS small high school

“Pull ‘em up, head of IPS says.”  
Title of article, *Indianapolis Star*, November 2, 2006

“It is always the badly dressed people that are the most interesting.”  
Jean Paul Gaultier

Currently it is against the IPS dress code to sag. Is this a good idea? Is it really rational? Does preventing sagging serve all our interests? Who benefits from this policy? It is certainly not particular students. Why do students sag? What is sagging saying? Is the cause of IPS failure the way students wear their clothes?

Even though there is a veneer of a concern for the status and health of students painted on the school uniform initiative, is this in fact an attempt to coerce students into an inferior and subordinate position? Can this position of subordination be reasonably justified and rationally redeemed?

Some may say they do not want to see someone’s underwear or that youth “...look like clowns,” or as Dr. White says, “...walk like ducks.” Some IPS teachers say sagging causes students to be late for class. What? Does “sagging” cause disruptions in the education process? How? Is sagging a moral issue? No. Is it a health issue? No. Is there a criminal issue here? No. Is this an issue of perspective, opinion, generation gaps, or style? Yes. Can school coerce students based on opinion? No. Some students sag without showing underwear. Their long T-shirts hang to their knees covering their behinds. How is exposed underwear an issue here? It’s not.

Sagging, per se, in or out of schools hurts no one. Showing one's underwear is in and of itself not criminal or immoral. Like a radio show you think is offensive, just turn the station. This is freedom in America. If you don't like to see underwear, don't look. If sagging is offensive to you, perhaps the fact that you don't sag is offensive to someone else.

Initially, sagging that exposed underwear, may have caused a classroom disturbance, but now it is unlikely. Also, students have found ways to be late to class long before sagging was in vogue.

### **Then there is the, “What does it mean to be black?” issue**

Educator Dr. Shawn Ginwright (2004) suggests urban African American teachers validate black youth identity. This is because some educators who are black are critical of students who see being black as braided hair, urban slang, skewed hats, and sagging pants. Adults say that blackness is knowing black history and appreciating African values, not dressing like a gangster. Right or wrong, this disconnects hip-hop from such a school culture.

### **Sagging goes to court**

In the fall of 1993, student Richard Bivens was a 9<sup>th</sup> grader at Del Norte High School in Albuquerque, NM. He was told he could not sag and that this was a school dress code response to a gang problem.

In 1995, *Bevins vs. Albuquerque Public School (APS)*, judge Compos ruled that the plaintiff Bivens failed to meet the burden of demonstrating that sagging pants is constitutionally protected speech. There was no showing that the boy's intentional expression was understood. Though he was not a member of a gang and said he wore his pants low because of his respect for hip-hop culture and a statement of his black urban identity, the courts noted that the manner of stress could be seen as merely a fashion statement.

With legitimate and competing views on what, if any expression sagging pants conveys, it was difficult for Bevins to demonstrate that there was a particularized message in the sagging pants that deserved protection under his First Amendment right to free speech, expression, and association (Brunsma, 2004).

Regardless of the court's view in *Bevins vs. APS*, like the wearing of hats in the classroom, is sagging an issue of adult authority and student obedience for the sake of order? Yes, it appears so. Are there less coercive means to maintain this same need for order? Yes? (See: Democratic Education and Demanding Greatness Not Obedience)

### **What would MLK do? Let the individual student decide**

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., as well as Gandhi, equated truth and liberty. King believed there were natural laws, laws that are true and true for all times. He believed we must obey natural laws, but not unjust laws. Unjust laws are not in accord with the law of nature. Just laws are universal, a global rationality that applies to everyone under all circumstances. This is why there is a global outcry when anti-AIDS, removing land mines, or saving the whale efforts are ignored.

“How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?” The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust.

Martin Luther King Jr. 1963

### **Ought “No sagging” be a universal law?**

So, how do we determine which rule or law is natural, is rationally justified? The one that can be rationally justified is the one that serves the general interest--and is true for all people at all times--as opposed to the interests of some particular segment of society.

When looking at sagging in schools, there is no rational global reason to prevent it and especially to prevent it by coercion: threats and/or punishment. Preventing sagging in school serves no generalizable global interest or survival of our species.

### **Wearing hats in class**

That's why some public school districts, especially in large urban schools, allow students to wear hats. Some large districts have a rule, but do not or cannot enforce it. Since the wearing of hats has nothing to do with anything, except to adults who must create and use an arbitrary rule (the removal of hats) as a way of maintaining control of male students in schools (in order to keep their jobs as teachers/ administrators), **there is no global outcry to stop students from wearing hats.**

Dr. King equates truth and liberty. To him human freedom is an intrinsically good thing. Thus, he would have a duty to resist any coercive rules concerning sagging (or hats) in school. The goal of such rules must be universal human liberation. The gradual extension of freedom is what progress is.

**What? Dr. King and Dr. White possibly at odds!**

Thus, Dr. King, (knowing sagging or wear a hat injures no one) would leave it up to the individual conscience of the student to wear their pants “normally” or keep on or take off their hat. He would know instinctively when we let youth have the freedom (when they know only they are choosing and thus are accountable) they act responsibility regardless of the action.

This is also why there is no global outcry for or against “sagging” in our public schools. This is why there is no global outcry for or against uniforms in our public schools. Both are red herrings in the debate about what public schools are for and how to make them work for each family/student. Both are stalking-horse for conformity and subordination.

If Dr. White claims the school uniform discussion must be rational, then he and Dr. King are at odds.

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## IPS is "sagging" too

“The economy’s sagging. Local graduation and voter turnout rates are sagging. IndyGo’s ridership is down. Hey, the only things not sagging are the gas prices!”

IPS employee

The issue of male students wearing their pants below their waist, sometimes exposing their underwear, has been discussed previously. Since our public schools do not live in a vacuum, it is important that school boards--and the administrations they picked to carry out their policies--realize they are a part of the local and world community. Thus, whether they want to realize this and take on the responsibility, they must take positions and follow-up on them with respect to political, social and economic issues.

For example, taking positions on and carrying-out policies on:

- sustainable environmental practices,
- police brutality,
- supporting a living wage,
- universal health care,
- women’s and children’s rights,
- or attacking the causes of poverty

are some actions school boards/district administrators must do and model for students.

*It is no coincidence and rather ironic that "sagging" can be used as a metaphor to critique current IPS values, policies, and actions/inaction:*

- IPS is sagging on the responsibility to ask and answer this question: How can we live together justly, in ways that are mutually satisfying, and which leave our differences, both individual and group, intact and our multiple identities recognized? A one-size-fits-all school uniform policy is not the answer to this very American question.
- IPS is sagging in its responsibility to have Latinos represented on the school board, and school and downtown administrative positions.
- IPS is showing its underwear by not attempting to bridge the disconnect between many IPS personnel and board members and urban hip-hop culture, particularly black males.
- IPS is sagging in its responsibility to have an education policy to deal with the outrageous graduation rates of so-called white working class males.
- IPS is sagging in its responsibility to publicly critique why it leads the nation, according to the 2006 Schott Foundation’s “Public Education and Black Male Students” report, in the over-diagnosis of black males as mentally retarded.
- IPS is sagging in its responsibility as a public school system to respect and promote school and classroom democracy at all grade levels.

- IPS is showing its underwear because of an emphasis on discipline over cooperation and sustainability. IPS has its Six-Step Discipline Process. Where are its Six-Step Cooperation Process or Six-Step Sustainability Process policies?
- IPS is showing its underwear, sagging in its responsibility to our environment. Thousands of Styrofoam food trays, hundreds of plastic bottles, and pounds of paper are discarded daily and not recycled.
- IPS is sagging in its responsibility to be clear about student graduation rates. Who is to say the recently announced IPS calculated rates are correct? For years IPS said its rates, using state guidelines, were valid, but they were not. Why trust them again? How can nationally calculated, state calculated, and IPS calculated grad rates differ so much? Which are correct?
- IPS is sagging in its responsibility to discipline elementary teachers who scream and yell at students on a daily basis.
- IPS is sagging in its responsibility to tell the truth about student attendance rates? Why does IPS want to hide behind inconsistent state policies and report an attendance rate of 95% even if 50% of its students record more than 10 days of unexcused absences intimated in the January 13 *Star* editorial? What kind of message does inflating attendance rates send to children?
- IPS is sagging in its responsibility to confront business, corporations, and global entertainment conglomerates that market to and manipulate our children and youth.
- IPS's own underwear is showing because it does not publicly critique the forces of American commercialism and materialism that negatively influence students. Blaming hip-hop or rap videos misses the point: IPS must organize to confront these decadent values of profit at all cost and mindless consumption.
- IPS is sagging in its responsibility to have a public policy that makes sure products they buy are not made by child labor and/or by misused and poorly paid adult or prison labor.
- IPS is sagging in its responsibility to educate all students, even those who will not wear uniforms. Requiring the wearing a school uniform as a stipulation to be provided equal educational opportunity in the United State of America sends the wrong message to children and the world.

### **Mandated public school uniforms: Global perspectives on America**

Most around the globe know what school uniforms are all about. If the rich have them, it is to make them distinctive. If the urban poor have them, although it is said uniforms counter societal inequalities, most know it is for compliance and control. *Do the majority of Americans want others around the world to think of our urban public school systems as so biased, boring, bogus, and backward that we have to mandate students wear uniforms in an attempt to make our children want to learn and make our schools work?*

## Need “prosperity” be the goal of good public schools?

“Our schools will become effective only when they refocus on meeting the needs of students rather than the needs of the economy and the broader society.”

Ron Miller, Educator

“Prosperity and stability are the enemies of freedom.”

Prof. J. Rufus Fears

### **What are schools for?**

Most articles published in the *Star* over the last year about the low graduation rates of IPS were influenced by businesspeople concerned with workers not having the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to be good workers and make their businesses prosperous.

- These businesspersons assume that the economy is the central institution of modern life, and hence that outfitting students for employment is the most dominant purpose of education.
- They assume the community, or the state, has the right, indeed the obligation, to discipline children’s minds and abilities into occupations deemed useful to society and which they control.
- The purpose of schools then is to transmit a body of knowledge, and a certain set of values to students to meet the demands of the economy and consequently their business practices.
- It is also assumed that prosperity for everyone will result.

Dan Clark of the ISTA at the December 14, 2006 Legislative Conference: "The future of public education" stated, "We have to keep our eye on the ball. That means we have to continue to figure out strategies to grow the economy of this state. Education is a key strategy to do that. So we have to continue to find ways to connect education to economic development and job creation. Indiana graduation rate is at 70%. This means that a potential 30% of the work force is unprepared. We can't afford to do that."

This puts a lot of pressure on IPS to train and graduate “good workers.” Most citizens and families are worried that high school dropouts, who have not acquired literary and job skills, are more likely to not find legitimate work and so are more likely to do illegal activities and end up in jail.

The current IPS board and administration are concerned with improving the graduation rate to improve the chances students will be successful. Keeping urban youth out of prison is a respectful goal especially if the youth are black. Although black males make up just a little more than 6% of our nation, they make up over half of the prison population. And, most have no high school diploma or literacy skills. This is shameful and an embarrassment to our nation and its public schools.

Do not get this paper wrong, good paying jobs and a strong economy are necessary to support IPS students after graduation, keeping them from the lure of fast money in the “underground economy” where they will “get paid”...one way or the other.

It is important to provide the skills, both academic and social, students need for jobs, work that can keep them out of jail. *This is well meant, but limited in the long run.* Why? Meeting the needs of students, not the economy, is what schools are for. When affluence is used as the goal, when the purpose of our Indianapolis Public Schools is “growing the economy” and having a prosperous community, we must beware. Why?

“Prosperity is not the end of American freedom; the pursuit of happiness is the end of freedom. Thus, universal human liberation is the goal of education, not affluence.”

Prof. J. Rufus Fears

There can be a great danger in simply accepting an IPS school leadership style and school uniforms because it will grow the economy and make our city and state prosperous.

We enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century convinced that we are opening a new era of prosperity and peace. Europeans entered the 20<sup>th</sup> century with similar beliefs. Dr. Fears (2001) points out that Hitler brought the order and discipline that promised peace and prosperity for German reconstruction after WW I. Most Germans were willing to overlook the great wrongs because he brought discipline and order needed for prosperity.

To rationalize that putting IPS students in uniforms will make schools a better and more legitimate system and that the goal of education is “growing the economy” is a spiritually devastating form of social engineering that is hostile to human values and democratic ideals (Miller, 1997).

The goal of schooling cannot be better workers for businesses and corporations. Students must be educated in their own self-interests and not in the interests of another person or a group.

The purposes of schools are about the quality of life and the inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness--these are the goals. A quality education consists of self-discovery, self-actualizing self-directed learning, citizenship, and acquiring the ability/skills to hold a job, or own the means of production, distribution, and exchange which are means to the goals, not ends in themselves.

IPS argues that school uniforms will bring the order and discipline needed to prepare student for success in life. Yet for those who do not equate morality, decency, or freedom with simple order, success, and prosperity, they may see school uniforms as a symbol for a suppressive and coercive education that colonizes students in the self-interest of others.

Above all, IPS must prepare students for college, vocational training, employee or employer opportunities meant to sustain themselves/family (and stay out of prison) after graduation. Meeting the needs of students, not school uniforms, will help keep students educated, self-directed and actualizing, civic-minded, and un-institutionalized, enabling life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

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## **Why, despite the evidence, is IPS pushing school uniforms? The untold story: Using school uniforms to counter the influence of hip-hop culture**

“Mandatory IPS school uniforms are nothing more than a political attempt to please local middle class whites and make IPS acceptable to these middle class families and their children. Also, the goal is to please the white Indianapolis establishment by making urban youth (especially African-American) presentable (un-offensive and un-intimidating) to the political power structure and business community.”

IPS employee and local education activist

“Dr. White thinks he’s bringing a light to IPS. He’s not; the light is already here.”

IPS employee

As was mentioned, IPS is in very bad shape. As well, many of the so-called minorities and the urban poor who fill our prisons can't read or write and have no high school diploma. The adverse circumstance that many IPS students face with respect to discrimination, poverty, health, housing, etc. (See Appendix A) are so glaring, our community is demanding something be done. The IPS board and their boss, the superintendent, have come forth with the idea of school uniforms as a means to correct and improve IPS. By mandating uniforms, IPS will show they want students to come to school “ready to learn.”

Yet, school uniforms

1. have no scientific basis of support;
2. won't pass the scrutiny of generalized rational and universal criteria;
3. as well, student dress is not one of the major IPS problems; and,
4. such a policy will create many unintended negative consequences.

So, why is IPS so intent on putting IPS students in uniforms?

### **The untold story**

Could the answer be found in the some of the speeches given at August 27, 2006 "Save the Streets Rally" at Attacks High School Auditorium?

That summer, due to an unusual and horrible increase in violent deaths in our city, several organizations came together to talk about the situation. Mainly black male church members were in attendance. There were a few females.

**Mr. Byron Alston**, a former gang member, spoke about how boys are not being shown how to be a man...how to dress properly, tie a tie, pick out a suit, be “sharp,” or how to find and hold a job.

He challenged the churches and the men in the churches to come out in the streets to help youth. They need to ask youth how we can break the cycle of violence. He noted prison just teaches hate. “Today,” he said, “in the neighborhood, the young men are angry.”

**Sheriff Anderson** spoke next. He advised the audience to "Be a gardener; keep weeds away from children." He said he got into law to make a difference and explained how he uses patience to help him in his work.

He said children copy what they see. As of today, Marion County has 250 females in jail. The women have a total of 446 children under 18. The fact that their mother is in jail will influence on these children. He gave many suggestions on how to correct this situation.

**Dr. White** began his presentation by noting that each of the 7 males who were killed days earlier had no H.S. diploma and had a record; that's why the *Star* was able to have their photos, in color, in the paper—each had had trouble with law and in school.

He then noted:

- We need to get rid of ignorance and get ready to succeed.
- Many youth are angry.
- One-way out of poverty is to get an education.
  - We need to make education job one; ignorance is not acceptable.
- Many put in special education just because they can't read.
- Kids today are smart...brilliant!
  - But, don't appreciate school...
  - and value hip-hop and the fast life.
- Sagging: Don't kids know sagging in jail means you're "available"?
  - A man doesn't walk like a duck...
  - we're not going to have it!
- IPS is offering too many choices to be stupid:
  - We give them too many options...options to destroy themselves, and we get upset when they do it!
- We've got to get it (IPS) all right again.

He said he was tired of hearing what IPS kids can't do.

- So, he's drawing the line on the dropout problem.
  - To be ignorant with no education and say it's OK is unacceptable.
- We don't care enough to discipline.
  - Kids demand discipline and if they don't get it, they take it from you and turn it on you!
- Look how kids dress, they have \$100 shoes but can't buy a shirt and tie for church!
- Next year, there will be a dress code

Finally, a **reverend from a local church** spoke. (His name is being kept anonymous)

- The family is the main structure in society.
- The switch...corporeal punishment...remember when it only took mom to give "that look" or say something and children would straighten up?
- But now, with no father structure and no fathers in the home...
  - Hip-hop has become the father of our children.
  - Hip-hop tells them how to wear their pants.
  - Beads on your head, that's for women!
- We have let hip-hop take spirituality out of the house...
  - Hip-hop performers only love themselves...
  - They don't care how low kids wear their pants as long as they buy their CDs.
- If we don't like the (school) system...So what?

- Kids need to go along to get ahead.
- Parenting and being buddies with your kids is not the way.
  - Parent and child cannot be buddies.
  - A little smack with the belt now and then will save our young men from jail.
- All they need is for us to be men. We need to:
  - Hold parents accountable...
  - Teach youth how to conduct themselves like gentlemen.
  - Can't "sag" at church...with shoes untied, shorts...showing your underwear...I don't let them!
- Music can mesmerize our minds.
  - Hip-hop has taken over our children's minds.
  - There's a rap out about, "I sold my soul to the devil and the price wasn't that bad..."
- 75% of black families have one parent
- Because we're fatherless...
  - This is why kids get depressed and evil.
- Also, because most one parent families are run by females...
  - And since females are very emotional...
  - They pass on this emotionality to sons....
    - Which causes boys to over-react and shoot someone when they get frustrated or upset.
- Have you ever seen a happy hip-hopper?
  - They always look so sad or mad...
- We need to get back to, (*and he sang*) "My girl, my girl, my girl...talkin' 'bout my girl...my girl!"

### **What does all this mean?**

Depending on your point of view, these talks can be interpreted differently. This paper argues that the ideas presented at the rally, which were critical of hip-hop culture, are a part of the rationale being used by IPS to justify mandated school uniforms. Is this the "untold story"? Are uniforms a way to remove hip-hop clothing in schools? Is mandating IPS high school students wear school uniforms a stalking horse for the oppression of urban youth culture, better known as hip-hop?

No one can doubt that too many urban youth are raised in homes without a father or male role model and that this is a major, major problem. Yet, to single out hip-hop, especially without the knowledge and appreciation of the culture, smacks of disgust and resentment. Repulsion this deep may most likely be there to cover up any guilt and lack of past responsibility these civil rights generation men experience because they dropped the "civil rights ball" after they became integrated and successful. Many moved out of the old neighborhoods into "better" ones and a middle class lifestyles and culture.

If there is anything about hip-hop culture that the civil rights generation dislikes, these characteristics may have manifested because these (now successful and integrated) men did not stay in the urban areas. This would have helped make sure the power of the civil, political, and

economic rights they initiated continued to grow and influence each following generation. **But this did not happen.**

Left on their own, in blighted urban communities, post-civil rights generation adults and youth created hip-hop culture and worldview as an expression of their unique situation and their attempts to deal with it.

### **Do these men have a point?**

This begs this question: Do these men have a point? Can the suppression of hip-hop culture in IPS be legitimized and can it be legitimized on a rational and universal basis? Dr. Shawn Ginwright (2004) does not think so. To him the views of Dr. White and the reverend who spoke at the “Save the Streets” rally exemplify a disconnect between the civil rights and the hip-hop generations. This can be understood by a review of the present and ongoing debate between Dr. Bill Cosby and Dr. Michael Dyson.

Yet, Dr. Ginwright says is best: The cultural disconnect between the civil rights generation and the hip-hop generation is perhaps the single most important challenge in reaching youth who are simply not motivated, interested, or inspired by school reform efforts in which their urban identities are not represented.

Ginwright also asserts: *While progressive hip-hop culture functions as the voice of resistance for America's urban youth, it also provides a blueprint for the possibilities of positive social change for the entire society-helping America live up to its promise of liberty and justice for all.*

### **From a national civil rights movement to a global human rights movement**

The irony of the critique of the hip-hop generation by the those civil rights generation IPS board members and staff, and local community leaders is that the hip-hop nation has the potential to carry forward what these same civil rights generation members could have but did not: A push forward from a national civil rights movement to a global human rights movement.

### **Hip-hop can be described as an emerging worldview of those born after 1965.**

“When we ask, what is the state of Hiphop?, the quick answer is that Hiphop (the community) must mature to a level of self-government where it creates, regulates, and profits from its own elements, resources, and intellectual properties. The state of Hiphop is that Hiphop is being negatively exploited by the recording industries of America who manipulate its public image to sell the fantasy of pimpin', thuggin', hoein', flashin', flossin', and ballin' to predominantly young White Rap fans that are impressed by such behaviors. On the one hand it is Hiphop's rebellious image that attracts young people to it. However, on the other hand, the real lives of those that live around pimps, thugs, whores, drug dealers, etc., are far from being just fantasies of defiance that you can turn off and on when you want to feel sexy or macho! The real lives of those that are affected by injustice, lawlessness, and corruption created (and continue to create) Hiphop as a way out of oppression.”

KRS-ONE, *Ruminations*, 2003

*On one hand, public education is vehicle for social mobility and a higher quality of life. On the other hand, it represents mis-education and a tool to reproduce social inequality.*

### **Framing urban youth identity: The promise of hip-hop culture**

Reform efforts designed by the IPS board and superintendent to strengthen academic performance must be built on a more complete picture of urban youth (African-American, working class white and Latino) identities. Within the context of community, urban youth identity can be thought of as a complex puzzle with many pieces--some large, others quite small, but all necessary to construct a complete picture. While social class and ethnic identity comprise a sizable part of this puzzle, other aspects of identity are also important. Sexuality, physical ability, religion, style of dress, language, music, diet, gang affiliation, type of automobile, and of course with the current popularity of dreadlocks, one's hair style--each can play a role in how post-modern urban youth construct their identities in a globalized world.

For black urban youth, identity is also the product of resistance and struggle. Black youth in urban communities find themselves perpetually challenging racist stereotypes while at the same time struggling to find meaning and freedom in the context of racist public policies.

#### **Negative perceptions of black youth and hip-hop culture**

Many black youth are pushed out of school and into prisons, resulting in significant social, political, and economic forces that shape the experiences and identity of all black youth. For example, in the wake of the crack epidemic during the 1990s, the term black male became synonymous with predator. Ideas such as the "war on drugs" ushered a public assault on black youth and their communities. Fear of crime helped shape public policy hostile to black youth. Legislators responded by drafting public policy that underscored the idea that to be black, young, and poor was also to be criminal. These negative perceptions were reinforced through public policies that increased repression through institutions such as uniforms in our public schools, law enforcement, and juvenile justice systems. As a result, black youth were more likely to be incarcerated and received longer sentences than their white counterparts in when charged with the same crime.

*Black youth identity is constructed in resistance to public school education.*

Black youth in urban communities struggle to not get caught up in complex systems of control and containment, and their identities are often constructed in resistance to such racist stereotypes and unjust public policies. Their struggle for identity is played out through the expression of new and revived cultural forms such as hip-hop culture, rap music, and various forms of political or religious nationalism that redefine, reassert, and constantly reestablish what it means to be urban and black. These forms of identity are organic expressions of racial meaning that emerge out of a context of struggle within urban environments.

*There is a common theme between all these expressions of black identity and that theme is that they all define blackness as a form of resistance.*

Black youth identity draws from the legacy of resisting white supremacist notions of blackness and reclaiming an identity that is rooted in everyday struggles.

*Today, urban reform efforts that focus entirely on ethnicity are insufficient.* Reform efforts that attempt to improve the academic performance black youth must consider economic, social, and political realities because they intimately shape the experiences of many poor and working-class

black youth. In a similar way, hip-hop culture provides today's black youth with an identity in opposition to racist public policy and oppressive urban conditions.

Ginwright notes that the hip-hop generation has witnessed corporate corruption, immoral religious leadership, and gross neglect of the plight of the poor on the part of politicians. Many youth of the hip-hop generation have lost faith in a system that seems to only protect the wealthy at the expense of their communities. This political perspective is key to black youth identity because it provides insight into the experiences, motivations, and aspirations of today's black youth, which are all necessary to connect with them in meaningful ways. Hip-hop culture provides not simply a voice for disenfranchised youth, but an identity that challenges racist practices, speaks to economic struggles, and sometimes provides a blueprint for the possibilities of social change.

### **The civil right generation often misunderstands hip-hop**

A hip-hop worldview is comprised of shared beliefs, practices, and language all tied together by a common appreciation for the urban aesthetic.

*To seriously discuss urban youth identity, IPS must consider the inseparable relationship between youth identity and hip-hop culture. Failing to do so is a gross oversight.*

### **Hip-hop culture shares at least two important characteristics**

First is the urban youth aesthetic, which is perhaps the most easily recognizable aspect of hip-hop culture because it is expressed through music, clothing, language, and art. More than simply rap music and graffiti art, the urban youth aesthetic refers to visual and artistic expression of hip-hop culture. Rap music--expressive and innovative syncopated rhythms, laced with poetry, and story telling--was perhaps one of the first expressions of hip-hop culture during the early 1970s. The urban youth aesthetic is now a global multibillion-dollar industry complete with clothing, art, language, and of course music.

Second is urban youth experience, which is often shaped by economic isolation, poverty, and a struggle to "make it out" of the trappings of urban ghettos, barrios, and neighborhoods. Hip-hop culture oftentimes validates, legitimizes, and celebrates experiences of violence, pain, fear, love, and hope that for urban youth are overlooked in mainstream America.

“Dr. White's like a Macintosh. He's out of date and needs an upgrade.”

Current IPS teacher

### **Bridging, not ignoring, the generation gap: The main challenge for IPS**

Many black educators today, however, do not identify with or understand hip-hop culture.

Ginwright refers to, *The Hip-hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African-American Culture*, a 2002 book by B. Kitwana. *The hip-hop generation* argues that blacks from the civil rights generation cannot fully understand the complex modes of oppression confronting today's black youth. The removal of blue-collar work, the approval of legislation that has created an unprecedented number of incarcerated black males, and a growing workforce that requires more specialized education have created a hostile environment that further marginalizes today's black urban youth.

*The civil rights generation's views of poverty, unemployment, and limited job options exacerbate tensions between black youth and black adults because older black adults view poverty as simply something many of them overcame.*

Kitwana's observation points to how the civil rights generation experienced segregation and second-class citizenship first-hand, and the antagonisms between black liberation and white supremacy offered an unambiguous analysis of oppression. In contrast, oppression for the hip-hop generation is not simply a line in the sand with white supremacist blocking access--us over here and them over there. Kitwana highlights the fact that the older generation's views of poverty, unemployment, and limited job options exacerbate tensions between black youth and black adults because older black adults view poverty as simply something many of them overcame.

- Why can't your generation do the same?
- Or, why does your generation use poverty as an excuse?

**Because of these divergent views of oppression, many young black youth often see their own parents and other black adults as the enemy within the race.**

*This could be the reason why Dr. White has faced hostility and accusations of racism, classism, and materialism when he's spoken to students in the high schools? The "confrontation" between the superintendent and a group of female students at Northwest is well known in IPS circles and is an example of how many black youth see him.*

This argument is also played out along class lines. Despite the fact that most middle-class blacks might have been poor once themselves, they now tend to view poverty as an inherent behavioral trait that is passed from one generation to the next. This phenomenon is attributed to the fact that middle-class blacks have deeply held beliefs about race and rarely calls into question their own class privilege.

*This black middle-class initiated multicultural reform will fail if it does not go further and develop students' capacity to confront and transform the serious day-to-day economic challenges they face.*

Ginwright agrees with M. Castells. He notes that in his 1997 book, *The Power of Identity*, Castells asserts that in general, affluent African Americans do not feel welcome in mainstream society. Indeed, they are not. Not only racial hostility among whites continues to be pervasive, but gains by middle-class blacks still leave them way behind whites. Also, Ginwright notes W. J. Wilson's 1996 research, *When Work Disappears*, that suggests that many middle-class blacks escape the inner city by moving to the suburbs and leaving behind masses of urban poor. As a result, many middle-class blacks are caught between being racially stigmatized by whites and viewed as removed and disconnected from their plight by poor blacks.

*Middle-class blacks have deeply held beliefs about race and rarely call into question their own class privilege.*

### **The paradox of black middle class success: What IPS doesn't get**

Ginwright notes Castells' description of what motivates the actions of middle-class blacks: Most middle-class blacks strive to get ahead not only from the reality of the ghetto, but also from the stigma the ghetto projects on them through their skin. They do so, particularly, by insulating their children from the poor black communities (moving to suburbs like Lawrence or Pike or Ben Davis), integrating them into white-dominated private schools (like Cathedral), while at the same time, inventing an Afrocentric middle-class version of an African-American identity that revives the themes of the past, African or American, while keeping silent on the urban plight of the present black poor and working class citizens.

*Urban school reform must be viewed in context of urban poverty. This is difficult due to the socio-cultural everyday distances between educators and urban students.*

Black-middle classes experience both racial exclusion from whites and class criticism from poor blacks--and this in addition to the generation gap between their civil rights era experiences and the hip-hop culture of the youth. As a result, black educators (like those on the IPS school board, and Dr. White and his regime) mistakenly develop schooling strategies that are out of sync with the most pressing issues of their black working class students.

*IPS wants school uniforms, and exposes the negative influences of hip-hop culture, but has yet to speak out publicly on local police brutality, neighborhood cigarettes billboard ads, teen employment, and our terrible IndyGo bus system.*

Identities are products of human interests, needs and desires, strategies and capacities" and points to the contradictions and discontinuities that emerge from these multiple interests. Ginwright's point here is that identity, particularly as it relates to urban youth and working-class communities and schools, cannot be isolated from the struggles from which it emerges. Thus *Black in School* argues that identity for poor black youth is largely tied to the everyday struggles found in their communities. It is the product of competing interests brought on by multiple forms of oppression; in the negotiation between these forms of oppression, black urban identity emerges.

***IPS must realize that hip-hop culture is central to conceptualizing black youth identity because it is an essential pathway to understanding their struggles, realities, and possibilities.***

While civil rights reform provided us with the necessary critique of race, it did not advance to confront class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and so on. **Thus the civil rights generation tends also to see identity as race only.** The multi-dimensional approach to identity formation discussed above allows educators to understand the ways in which black youth and their communities respond to oppression through the often unacknowledged strength, resilience, and resistance that emerges from alienation.

“The youth of today, in general, and specifically black youth, are the best generation we’ve yet to see. The culture we know as hip-hop is God’s answer to our prayers. We prayed for a generation that would be raised amongst us that would be fearless...because most of us know what is meant to have fear. We prayed for a generation that would stand up and speak out, that if they had

anything else they'd know God; they'd have a spiritual foundation...who would be creative in words, symbols...and who would be rebellious...a culture that would transcend race...we have that generation now.”

Dr. Benjamin Chavis Muhammad, Empowerment Symposium on “Social Factors” at Indiana State Commission on the Social Status of Black Males conference, Dec.15, 2006

**An anti-hip-hop solution to IPS problems is not only misguided, but also, from an enlightened globally generalizable perspective, it is wrong and must be resisted.**

Mandating school uniforms, (as an attempt to counter the influence of hip-hop culture) in order to make students pliable so they'll go to class in order to do what society says they must do to survive and not end up in prison, is misguided. This circus of costumes and 20<sup>th</sup> century behavioral psychology mandatory school uniforms represent, in light of the global sophistication of today's urban youth, is simply and plainly an ignorance for which there is no excuse.

Hip-hop has been and continues to be a global phenomenon. Internet-oriented global youth culture will easily see through the ploy of mandatory school uniforms. And, especially in light of those American urban students who manifest a hip-hop ethos and worldview, a mandated uniform policy may not only fail, but has the potential of alienating students from their own schools.

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## **Uniforms: What will happen to those who do not conform?**

“What’s going to happen to the alternative kids, the bikers, the “Goth” or punks with Mohawks, or those with orange hair, chains, pins, dressed in black...they’re not going to wear uniforms?”

IPS student

“It’s easy to order us to wear school uniforms, but what if we don’t obey?”

IPS student

### **The IPS school uniforms will actually create societal misfits**

Educator Deitre Kelly posits that the traditional school’s norms (reflecting society’s) actually create “misfits.”

Consequently, Kelly asks the question:

- Is who gets defined as deviant and for what reasons a matter of political and economic power?
- In the social matrix that attempts to define deviant, do some groups have the advantage due to age, gender, class, or race?

Kelly argues that:

- Schools actually create nonconformity by making rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and then applying the rules, labeling those who break them as ‘outsiders’ (p. 69).

Bowers (1987) notes that so-called ‘successful socialization leaves the child with the increased capacity to perform behaviorally in a manner congruent with the expectations of others’ (Bauman, 1998).

IPS students’ failure to conform will be attributed to individual character flaws rather than the larger more broad-based systems of exclusion (created by the school uniform policy) through which most of these children must traverse.

Now labeled deviant, a misfit, “unsuccessfully socialized,” or worse an “uncooperative malingerer,” what have these students actually done? Non-compliance? Insubordination?

### **What will IPS do with those who (all of a sudden) do not it in?**

The issue is not do schools (under *loco parentis*, etc.) have the right/power/authority, they do and the courts back this up. The issues are:

- What does equal educational opportunity mean?
- Do public schools have the right to deny a student an education if they will not wear a school uniform?
- Will an expansion of the current IPS alternative schools be necessary for those students (and families) who refuse to wear uniforms?

- Indeed, the courts ruled in favor of school districts and districts have suspended students. Even if students are expelled (or suspended), will the “state” have to find a way to educate them?
- Will the responsibility be placed on families to find a way to meet state school attendance requirements?

These “deviants” cannot be sent to IPS alternatives at No. 69 or No. 26 (John Hope Scholars Program for the expelled), schools focused on the issues of discipline and behavior modification, or the Pacers Academy. All require uniforms. An IPS “zero tolerance climate” will not allow student to go to these schools if not in a uniform. Alternatives could be:

- For those over 16, Day Adult can be an option.
- Students could go online to university sponsored or other virtual high schools.
- Most charters require uniforms, so this option is limited.
- Students could go to another district.
- Home schooling, private school, private tutoring, or on line schools are possibilities.

Or, this may necessitate the Indiana Department of Education create a parallel system of public alternatives for those who “all of a sudden” are "socially defined" as misfits (those who do not want to conform, those not “ready to learn”) may be necessary. This may be the only way the state can handle students who will not (and cannot be made to) wear uniforms.

- Will IPS/the state be forced to educate these students at home?
- How much extra cost will it be to taxpayers to educate those who hear a different drummer?

### **What will happen to students of the so-called “Normal” IPS Families**

White highly educated middle-class IPS families who identify with the mainstream culture of individualism, competitive personal effort and accomplishment will have reason to reject the suppression of individuality intended by the singularity of look-a-like IPS uniforms. Students from these families are quite successful academically and artistically. It is this sense of “self” that mainstream IPS families cultivate in their children so they can compete with students from Carmel or Cathedral.

Also, since historically, private school uniforms meant distinction, and urban public school uniforms meant “branding and corralling” students for control purposes, what few white highly educated middle-class families IPS has left will not want to be associated with such backward philosophy and psychology. See Brunσμα’s ideas in Conclusions Part I.

### **Roads paved with good intentions: 20th century answers to 21st century problems**

Of course the IPS school uniform initiative is full of good intentions, but the methods are misguided: 20th century answers to 21st century problems. This Singapore-oriented policy will appear to work at first, but will backfire. Why? Because people, especially students, will know this is not about children, but adults.

If school uniforms were about students, the board/superintendent would teach and use/model system-wide classroom/school democracy involving students in confronting the issues that affect the success/failure of our IPS.

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## **School Democracy: The middle way is an education for democracy**

“What does it say about current American society when families and students go along with a mandated school uniform policy?”

IPS employee

“Student government has never been taken seriously by school reformers, but it must be central to any new model of schooling.”

Dixon, *Future Schools*

“What are you doing in my hallway?”

Question asked of student walking in hallway during class time by an IPS high school principal, October 2006

“In the new model, all school rules issue from and are enforced by student government and its committees.”

Dixon, *Future Schools*

“It is confounding that with the spread of democracy around the world, that our own children are not given the opportunity to learn and practice democracy in their schools—fulfilling Thomas Jefferson’s idea for the purpose of public schools: To create citizens.”

Former IPS social studies teacher

### **School uniforms or school democracy? An opportunity of a lifetime**

As is being discussed in this paper, IPS is in the middle of a legitimization crisis. Its nationally recognized low graduation rates, and the especially low rates for males from the “dropout factories” and the K-8 system that feeds them, calls for wise, strong, and immediate action.

In the hope that these tragic outcomes will be confronted and eliminated, IPS proposes mandated school uniforms for IPS students. This paper challenges this means, not only because there is no scientific data to support such a policy, but also more importantly because there is a wiser, more American, more universally justifiable means, that will not have the unintended consequences of school uniforms that destroys social capital (community)--and that is democratic education.

**Even if one could argue that school uniforms in our IPS schools serve some rational universally generalizable interest, is it the best way to serve this interest?**

### **Democracy could do the same thing for school improvement as uniforms intend**

If IPS would put the same amount of time, money, and effort into building civic capacity and social capital, doing research, and educating and enlightening families, staff, students, and the community about democratic education, the district would see much greater benefit than it would by doing the same thing with its mandated school uniform policy initiative.

### **Democratic education**

Advocates of democratic education believe that students, if they are to acquire the skills, knowledge, and values they need to perform their roles as citizens in a democracy, should receive a type of education that actively engages them as citizens in their own schools and communities. For example, they believe that students should participate in the governance of the school and engage in service-learning activities in their local communities (ASCD, 2002).

IPS would start with 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 7<sup>th</sup> grade and 9<sup>th</sup> grades simultaneously. They would teach, and encourage, while slowly extending the amount and quality of freedom and responsibility according to each grade level. In four years, a new IPS would arise with a democratic culture based on cooperation, diversity, shared decision-making with shared accountability instead of a school uniform policy based on obedience, conformity, competition, and fear.

### **Schools of conformity or laboratories for democracy?**

What is interesting it that what IPS is trying to do could be done by:

- Teaching students democracy
  - Teaching the democratic habits of mind
    - How to listen and understand different points of view
    - How to deliberate
    - How to compromise
    - How analyze problems
    - How to organize for action
    - How to petition for grievances
    - How to determine: What is justice? What is fair for everybody?
- Involving all students in all the particulars of school improvement
  - Having educators and students ask these questions:
    - What are schools for?
    - What does a democracy require of its school?
    - What can students do to help run this school?
    - What can students do to improve student behavior?
    - What can students to improve instruction and assessment?
    - What can students do to make sure the school is safe?

### **That is what they did in England!**

Many local residents and Indiana citizens are pushing for and supporting pro-democracy movements worldwide. President Bush in an early November 2003 foreign policy speech noted, "The advance of freedom is the calling our time," and "It is no accident that the rise of democracy took place in a time when the world's most influential nation was itself a democracy."

Educator Gary Howard, speaking at the October 2004 IPS Infusion Conference, noted a **third revolution** taking place in America. The first was the American Revolution, the second the civil rights movement and legislation. Under the influence of the US, a third wave of change is the growing global interest in democracy and democratic ideals.

Popularized by the rise democratic governments in the former Soviet Union and South Africa, and the events surrounding the failed democracy movement in China, citizens around the world are more than ever looking to democratic ideals and democratic governments to replace non-elected ones. This is illustrated by the pro-democracy in Myanmar (Burma), the drafting of a

constitution in Afghanistan, or the debate about the best way to bring democracy to Iraq. Recent articles in the *Star* such as, “Bush to pressure Cuba for democratic reforms,” “Bush calls for democracy in the Middle East,” and “Bush urges democracy in African nations,” provide evidence of this American- influenced “third revolution” concept.

The cause of America is, in a great measure, the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances have, and will arise, which are not local, but universal, and through which principles of all lovers of democracy are affected. America’s public schools and classrooms must model for our children and world the power of democracy to bring justice, peace, and freedom to society.

### **Globally: A third wave—democratic education**

This same sense of a new wave of global change comes from the world-class Institute for Democratic Education, and illustrates the international presence of democratic schools. Touting the theme, “**Democratic Schools—the educational answer to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,**” this group promotes: “Educational innovativeness from a democratic point of view.” See [www.democratic-edu.org](http://www.democratic-edu.org).

This institute finds it is very important to compare the present situation in the educational system with past phenomena in order to draw our lessons with regards to the future. There have been three distinct waves in education in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The first wave occurred during the twenties and the thirties and was called “new education” or “progressive education.” The second wave took place during the seventies and was called “open and free education. The present wave, which started in the nineties, and was given the name “**democratic education,**” is spreading throughout the world.

### **The vision: A democratic culture**

The first two waves took place when The Wave of Traditional Schooling, which started in the middle of the industrial revolution, was at its peak. Today, the educational system is facing a severe crisis all over the world. **The world we live in becomes more and more democratic yet the schools, which prepare our children for life, operate in a non- democratic way and thus create a growing estrangement between school life and real life situations.** This brings about the emergence of the third wave of democratic education that may transform a society based on democratic procedure into one that cultivates a democratic culture (Hecht, 2002).

### **Evidence of the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave: England’s national democratic education curriculum**

“Listen, create an environment where students feel that their voice is taken seriously and acted upon, and then involve them in school decision making. The positive action and school improvement follows as sure as night follows day.”

Derry Hannam, School Inspector, United Kingdom

In England, as in America, people are concerned about low graduation rates and low voter turnout rates. Over the last 10 years a handful of British educational researchers have been listening to students’ opinions about schools and the curriculum. This brought the realization that students had insights into what would make schooling work. Following the implications of the

researchers, the national Education Ministry created a Children's and Young Peoples Unit and funded a more elaborate study. As a result of this extensive study, as of the fall of 2002, all English secondary schools were ordered to have students "participate" in important school and community decisions. For the full report see [www.csv.org.uk/csv/hannamreport.pdr](http://www.csv.org.uk/csv/hannamreport.pdr).

### **Outcomes of Democratic Education** (Hannam 2002; Trafford 2005)

In secondary schools that practiced democratic education, compared to similar schools that did not, for a significant number of students involvement in school and classroom decisions:

- Enhanced learning across the curriculum and the full range of academic abilities—sometimes in unexpected and unpredictable ways
- Helped them gain important organizational and time management skills
- Required them to take initiatives and make decisions
- Supported the learning of communication and collaboration skills
- Facilitated quality outcomes, which both intrinsically and through recognition from others, led to enhanced self-esteem
- Fostered an all-over sense of personal and social efficacy
- Brought a greater sense of ownership and personal empowerment leading to greater motivation to engage in school activities
- Made both females and males feel more independent, trusted, and responsible—feeling more a part of the school and the surrounding community

In schools that practiced democratic education, compared to those that did not:

- Disruptive behaviors in classrooms and hallways were significantly lower
- Attendance improved in all students, but significantly in the less academic and potentially alienated students
- Suspensions and expulsions were significantly lower
- School violence was down significantly
- School climate became more positive and the attitudes of teachers and staff improved
- Real-life benefits were brought to the relationships between students and teachers
- The experience did not cause anxiety to parents and teachers

### **"Student Participation" as defined in Section 176 of the Education Act 2002**

The "Student Participation Report" showed how shared school and community decision-making with **all** students improved academics, behavior, attendance, school climate, and lowered suspension and expulsion rates. The report concluded these positive factors were, "...a consequence of higher self-esteem and a greater sense of ownership and empowerment of students leading to a greater motivation to engage with learning across the curriculum" (Hannam, 2002).

Now that citizenship education is a part of the national curriculum, the Education Ministry's working definition of student participation can be a help to us. It refers to Student Participation as learning to:

- Collaborate with others (peers/adults) in the identification of needs, tasks, problems within the school or the wider community,
- Ask appropriate questions and gather appropriate information,
- Discuss and negotiate possible courses of action,
- Share in the planning and decision making,
- Share the responsibility for implementing the plan,
- Evaluate/review/reflect upon the outcomes and to communicate these to others (Hannam, 2005).

“The democratic participative ethos is associated with enhanced learning across the whole curriculum, especially when the participation includes decision making about what is to be learned, how, when, and where, and with whom.”

Derry Hannam

### A democratic high school in the United States

A high school in Ohio is a democratic school. Principal George Wood of Federal Hocking High School argues that we don’t let kids have control of their lives in school. Delegating decision-making power in a democratic fashion, he says, will help to increase student achievement and teacher satisfaction. This is the case because Wood sees public high schools as democracy’s finishing school—the last shared experience that all Americans will enjoy; the place where skills and dispositions, citizens in a democracy must have, need to be secured and nurtured in our youth. Hocking students help run the school by doing everything from helping determine school and classroom rules to hiring teachers. The school’s staff realizes that students are less likely to break rules they helped create and are less likely to disrespect authority they helped give authority to. These are basic American democratic principles.

“The test for student government is this: Is there anything being managed by the school or district officials that could be managed by student government? Is so, student government is not functioning properly.”

Dixon, *Future Schools*

Hocking students/staff run a community of democratic practice and offer these tips:

- **Find as many ways as possible for students to take responsibility for the daily life of the school.** At Hocking, through a bicameral legislature of 20 student trustees and a student council of 60, students help determine class scheduling, curriculum, students activities and others school related decisions.
- **Find ways for students to apply the critical thinking skills that are essential to citizenship.** Voting, when thoughtfully done, requires gathering information from many sources, reflecting on it, and then making decision based on the data.
- **Practice the rights/responsibilities of the Constitution within the school.** School adults should question and provide an open debate on issues of free press, student decent, and whether students can elect their own leaders. These are constitutionally guaranteed freedoms the U.S. has gone to war over. If students don’t get to practice and test constitutional issues in high school before they become potential voters, where will they?

**Thus, democratic education could do the same thing for school improvement as IPS is claiming school uniforms will do, but with less unintended consequences and an automatic universal respect**

There are many who may be against school uniforms, but few against democracy. The negative unintended consequences of school uniforms, particularly in the form of divisiveness, will be less likely to happen in a democratic climate. The fallout, from the stigmatizing and labeling of principled students as misfits or rule breakers, will be eliminated because of the inclusiveness of democracy and the cooperation and sense of fairness it inspires. Add to this, the international community's endorsement of democratic governments and international proof that democratic schools have less violence, suspensions/expulsions and improved school climates, student/teacher relations, academics, and graduation rates. Also see *Demanding greatness not obedience*.

“The goal of our public schools should be to prepare all students—regardless of race, gender, or class—to participate in a democratic way of life.”

Deborah Meier, democratic school advocate

The 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the century of democracy. The proposed IPS school uniform policy initiative is an insult to our intelligence and what America stands for. America does not have to force students to wear uniforms to make our public schools work. We are better than this. We can bring children and youth into the democratic circle and involve them in creating their own destiny. Let us leave public school uniforms in the 20<sup>th</sup> century...where they belong.

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## Conclusions Part I

### The remarks and suggestions of David L. Brunσμα

“Let’s not use school uniform. Let’s use ‘standard school dress.’ It’s all in the wording. That is to say, it’s all symbolic.”

Statement from spokeswoman’s while in the process of implementing a uniform policy in a public school and getting everyone on board. In Brunσμα’s *The School Uniform Movement*

“Perhaps, in the end, uniform policies reflect the general unease of adults about the state of education, society, and teenagers.”

David L. Brunσμα

### Panacea or serious reform?: On the incompetency of the school uniform movement (Brunσμα, 2004)

#### 1. Alienation and Deference: The School Uniform Movement and the Role of Parents (*The problematic relationship set up between parents and schools during the implementation of a school uniform policy*)

Parental involvement has been found to be beneficial not only for individual students but also for the enhancement of the entirety of a school's educational and safety climate.

It is odd that although 100% of IPS parents will be mandated to follow the school uniform policy, only a very, very small percentage of IPS parents are involved in the decision. Historically, top down mandated policy, as opposed to bottom-up parental initiated changes, brings problems. Parents often feel completely left out of the school uniform decision-making process. When they are involved, they often feel that they do not have enough information. As policies are implemented within a given school, as well as across other schools in the district, they complain they are not consistently enforced.

In fact, relationships of all kinds have been found to be negatively affected by uniforms.

**Teachers and students** Teachers are not in absolute agreement regarding the influence of dress policies on their students' achievement and readiness to learn; their jobs are made more difficult, and as a result, relationships may suffer.

**Teachers and teachers** Not all teachers will be for school uniforms. One of the main drawbacks to the school uniform policy is that some teachers will not enforce the code as much as others. This will cause friction.

**Student and student** Students whose voices have been largely ignored in the literature and media coverage of this issue, and especially at the high school level of schooling, often instigate rebellion. Via these rebellions and contexts of uncertainty, relationships between students and students suffer.

**Parent and parent/School and the community** Not all community members or organizations or parents/guardians will endorse school uniform. There will be a spectrum of stances on the policy. Those representing extremes will be in conflict.

In the end, what appears to be a policy aimed at invoking community and school spirit, and enhancing climate and other vagaries, may be creating rifts between key groups in schools where there needs to be more consensus. Indeed, this is what has been found to separate effective schools from ineffective ones: social capital, the potential/power of individuals and/or groups to work together for common interests.

## **2. The Powerlessness of the Powerless: The School Uniform Movement and the Assertion of Administrative Power and Control** *(The differential impact of school uniforms on disadvantaged and disenfranchised groups in American society)*

### **Uniforms reproduce the structure of power and powerlessness in our schools**

Uniforms are being disproportionately mandated for public school students who represent the disadvantaged of our society. Uniforms are mandated in schools where students and families are already the most powerless and dependent on social safety nets. These parents work at occupations that are not creative, flexible, or socially praised, and are rarely paid a living wage. They are already experiencing a lack of power and sense of control over their own and their children's lives.

Many did not complete much schooling and they did not have good experiences there. Thus, uniform policies as they have done throughout history, continue to encourage docility and obedience toward rightful authority disproportionately among a set of parents who already defer to educational authority for structural and cultural reasons.

Lacking the political and social wherewithal, poor and minority parents and their children are simply powerless against school uniform policies. They are blamed for their status, blamed for their lack of information about the policy, and blamed for their noncompliance.

## **3. The Color of Reform: The School Uniform Movement, Racism, and Classism** *(The underlying regression toward racism and classism implied by the structure and protocol of school uniform implementation)*

### **Why doesn't Carmel, Brownsburg, or Southport have school uniforms? Uniform as reproducers of race and class structure--acting as a marker of lower status**

Although not inherently racist and classist, the manner in which school uniforms have been implemented in our nation's schools—in predominantly minority and poor schools—implies that they may be reproducing, not eradicating those differences.

For instance, we know that it is the white parents who opt-out at much higher rates than the minority parents in these predominantly minority, poor, urban schools that have implemented uniform policies. This is strikingly reminiscent of the era of "white flight" in the 1970s.

The white dominant classes set up suburban enclaves in the 1970s to avoid the poverty and,

basically, "black" climate of the inner-city schools. (White suburban development led to the creation of North Central, Pike, Arlington, and John Marshal High Schools.)

**Will whites accept the stigma of the uniform's link with the poor and minorities?**

Our public schools predominantly are constructed and organized around white, dominant, middle-class ideologies of education and success. "Urban schools" (read "poor and minority," "poor and black") define for the nation models of "failure," and "inadequacy." This culture of mediocrity may be unacceptable to middle-class whites, uniforms or not.

**4. Anecdotes as Evidence** (*The reliance on anecdote in policy formation*)

**And "We the people" have not truly been at the decision-making table**

The "evidence" that has been invoked throughout this uniform movement has been generalization after generalization from an ever-flowing stream of anecdotes, with little to no critical thinking, and certainly no empirical investigation.

"No. 8. Students, parents, families, and community members are essential partners."

One of the 10 IPS Cultural Imperatives

As is the case with IPS, most districts do not involve the entire school community in school uniforms decisions. IPS knows the "common sense" of the general public would demand more than stories to justify mandatory rules.

**5. Student Compliance and Corporate Compliance: The School Uniform Movement's Links with Corporate America** (*The increasing role of corporate influence and control in American public schooling*)

**Gap/Hilfiger's crusade of consumption: Divide and conquer a market of youth**

It was The GAP and Tommy Hilfiger who largely responsible for the original impetus behind the school uniform movement in the first place. They helped the school uniform movement be more acceptable to school districts with their expensive high quality uniforms. Was this an attempt to bring status to families who could afford these "designer" school uniforms and leave those at the "bottom" to shop at K-Mart?

**IPS will be right back where they started: clothes as status as influence**

Although school uniform are to rid IPS of its socio-economic "pecking order," in reality, since the district will not dictate where families can buy uniforms, some families will seek the more expensive clothing that matches the required colors and style of the policy—returning our IPS right back to clothing as status affecting expectations, perpetuating stereotype, and encouraging bias.

**Land's End's research: Proof or propaganda?**

Looking at Land's End for a moment, it is clear that Land's End created its school uniform division in 1997, at what is probably close to the public school uniform movement's apex.

Furthermore, Sears, which owns Land's End, in the year 2003 alone spent approximately \$3 million marketing school uniforms to public schools and districts. Their corporate office has studies regarding the effectiveness of uniforms in our schools, and, furthermore, that "all studies show that uniforms help." See [www.landsend.com](http://www.landsend.com)

## **6. Fearing Everything: The School Uniform Movement's Capitalization on Fear** (*The role of fear in dictating educational reform movements and policy strategies*)

### **We fear what we do not understand--and understanding takes work and effort.**

The fear underlying the school uniform movement arises from:

- our collective myths about success, hardship, race, gender, power, class, sexuality and ultimately, what education is all about—what is its purpose?
- the struggle we see in schools over the meaning of our collective myths and their correlate collective fears.

What does the uniform movement uncover regarding these fears?

- First, it shows that we fear students because of their diversity. They come from widely varying social-cultural backgrounds that we fear most because we do not choose to understand that complexity—thus, students embody for many, the unintelligible diversity of American society. *School uniforms will ease the complexity due to diversity.*
- Second, we fear our own children. We fear their unpredictability. We blame their psychologies and their characters, we attack their youth culture and place them in alternative schooling and/or put them on prescription medications. But we still do not understand. *Students who wear uniforms are more compliant and docile.*
- Third, we uphold the notion of equality of educational opportunity, but we have witnessed its failure when we visit most urban schools. We react to this failure, not with school democracy, but with a desire to control, discipline, and structure the extremely complicated process of schooling children. *The superficiality of school uniforms is easier to rationalize as we run from the difficulties associated with bringing the ideal of equal educational opportunity into more prominent reality.*

### **Behind the symbol, behind the crusade: Intentions and fears**

Marshall McLuhan, media critic and social commentator, once wrote an incredibly influential essay, containing the following key phrase, "The medium is the message."

In terms of school uniforms as a medium,

- What is their message?
- What is behind this symbol of the school uniforms?
- What message is being sent as numerous students across the country come to school every day wearing this piece of material culture?

What is behind this symbol of the school uniform in several ways: culturally, politically, and socially?

**Culturally Whose culture is being supported/suppressed by uniforms?**

According to sociologist of culture Michael Schudson, in order for a symbol to be effective, it must have the following five properties:

<b>Property of symbols</b>	<b>Effectiveness level of school uniforms</b>
1. <i>Retrievable</i> : One must be able to access it --socially and economically.	Moderate
2. <i>Rhetorical force</i> : It must communicate something effectively.	Weak
3. <i>Resonance</i> : It must make sense to the "audience".	Extremely low
4. <i>Institutional retention</i> : It must be fully institutionalized in a particular setting.	High
5. <i>Resolution</i> : It must enter into one's life at a point where its meaning is relevant.	Quite low

School uniforms are complicated symbols in Schudson's framework.

- First, they are assumed to be completely retrievable, yet this is not true across the socioeconomic spectrum, plus there are different types of uniforms that bring different amounts of status.
- Second, supposedly uniforms "bespeak authority," letting students know that they are to come to school ready to learn. They also symbolize conformity, sameness, the military, groupthink, sexuality, class, distinction, faceless violence, etc.
- Third, if school uniforms were used throughout our public school history, they would make sense. Today there are so many points of view and no scientific support, thus there is little national consensus.
- Fourth, schooling has a "captive audience" for the reception of the idea of school uniforms—after all, they are *school* uniforms.
- Finally, a symbol must have relevance to students. Students know what uniforms are supposed to do, but unfortunately they simply do not do it. It is clear that uniforms remain highly superficial.

**Politically Who benefits?**

Has the political symbol of school uniforms being utilized in what could be called irresponsible fashions by local, state, and national officials?

Are student uniforms really the reform strategy that the American people want?

Is it just coincidental that those who have the least political, social, and cultural capital are the

families whose children's schools are disproportionately faced with mandatory uniform policies?

Uniforms have indeed been used as political devices and strategies—but to what end? And to whose benefit?

### **Socially Glossing over race class, gender inequalities**

The symbol of school uniforms has glossed over

- the important and much more pressing concerns that exist outside of school and come into the halls of our schools, primarily *because* we have not attended to them in the larger society.
- the fact that public schools act as institutions that effectively reproduce the class structure generation to generation.
- the important reality that, in many instances, schools are acting as sorting devices and structures that create a docile and subservient workforce.
- the reality that school uniforms, as a symbol, fail to take into account the system of school funding in the United States.

### **Conclusions: What works?**

There are several empirical factors that *do* make schools successful:

- parental involvement in schooling,
- communications between students and parents about schooling,
- student preparedness for academic work,
- positive approaches to learning,
- pro-school attitudes and peer groups that support these attitudes,
- positive educational climates, and
- safe schools.

What is clear from these analyses is that school uniforms, as a policy and strategy, do *not* play a role in producing more parental involvement, increased preparedness, positive approaches toward learning, pro-school attitudes, a heightened feeling of school unity and safety, or positive school climates.

*Therefore, school uniforms, as a policy, should not be portrayed as increasing the educational atmosphere at any level of schooling.*

### **The issue: Mandate equitable funding not school uniforms**

Uniforms mask the worst problem facing urban schools and districts: Equitable funding.

“We can vote in uniforms, but we cannot vote in new taxes or legislate new systems of funding our schools.”

David L. Brunsma

Since most school uniform policies are implemented in the poorest and minority of schools and systems, what does that acknowledge about declining state and federal funding for schools throughout the 1990s and our overall unequal system of funding schools—the property tax? It says this:

### **A Recipe for uniforms: Or why Greenwood and Zionsville don't have uniforms**

- Take the general public's fear and uneasiness about poor urban neighborhoods and their schools.
- Then add pressure from everyone to make urban schools work.
- Pour in desperate and unenlightened school boards and superintendents.
- Mix this with the tiny amount of political and social capital the poor and their urban districts have to demand equitable funding.
- Sprinkle in NCLB and bake for a year and you have a mandatory school uniform policy that hopes to make kids ready to learn, all in an attempt to compensate for the lack of money that would have made the uniforms initially unnecessary.

**Poor funding=school uniforms. Equitable funding=no need for uniforms**

### **Brunsma's one and only recommendation**

1. Follow the lead taken by other industrialized nations—funding their public schools out of their national wealth instead of the clearly unequal practice of funding schools from local property taxes.

Without equitable funding, we cannot deny that our poor and minority students, in these urban areas, are being structurally and culturally cheated—not failing of their own accord.

Until *we* as a country

- decide what education is for,
- forge relationships and demand change,
- demand the kind of education that we desire for our children,
- face our fears and our corporate society,

***reforms such as school uniforms will not be effective.***

The larger questions that remain are the following:

- 1) Which system shall we fix, the schools or the surrounding societal structures that embed these schools?
- 2) What is our consensus on the meaning and purpose of education in postindustrial, postmodern, global society?

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## Conclusions Part II

At the very minimum, schools should address the issue of a dress code. It is not necessary for the code to be rigid. But it is necessary for the dress code to be reasonable and fair. The best interests of students and their welfare should be addressed. There is no magical solution to the stopping of school violence and the improvement of discipline. Much of this answer lies in the chemistry that exists in a school between students and staff. Uniforms might appear to the public as the cure-all for a school's ills, but the children themselves make the ultimate decision on behavioral change.

“Schools will simply reject any views that it's disgusting to ‘discipline’ children into wearing uniforms.”

From: Those disgusting school uniforms, 1998

*Although it's almost certain IPS will mandate school uniforms, the district must continue to look at the policy to make sure it will satisfy our generalizing interests, insuring all concerns of everyone in society are represented. IPS must gradually refine its dress code and its mandatory school uniform actions until we have a truly just society whose coercive measure are entirely legitimate in the eyes of the world.*

It's more sensational and self-serving to demand obedience, not greatness, from urban students because it fits the stereotype that they're out of control, and criminally and violently inclined.

*Who has entered into these discussions about the school uniforms? How many on the task force actually attended meetings? No valid and legitimate solution, to such an important issue, is going to arise when only 5% decide for the 95%.*

From dropout factories to schools of conformity: Is this progress?

*To force poor urban children into wearing uniforms (supposedly for their own good) with even the slightest result (intended or unintended) that this implies there is something wrong them, that they are not as good as others, and that their place in society is some how their fault, without first and foremost making known the documented potential negative influence of an pervasive, generational, and abject poverty on the child's God given innate academic potential and without a public commitment to challenge and change these stark day-to-day living conditions is not only ignorant, but mocks our kindness with children, and misrepresents our humanity.*

Many child development researchers, policymakers, and practitioners suggest that, in the past, the primary socialization agents of youth were families, schools, and faith-based organizations. Commercial influences can fuel youth to desire, obtain, and use products and may contribute to problems across socialization settings. Some of the newer influences on the lives of youth and their families must be analyzed and understood by researchers, policymakers, practitioners and, most importantly, parents and youth themselves. Dress related problem behavior involves a host of individual and ecological factors and conditions across many socialization settings-families and communities, schools, the workplace, the marketplace, human services, the media, and others. Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners must continue to elucidate the importance of context in the problems and prospects of youth, families, and communities (LaPoint et al, 2003).

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Those disgusting school uniforms. (1998, October). *Optionality Magazine*, Queensland, AU

“Beware of enterprises that require new clothing.”

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

## Recommendations

- **Enforce the dress code we have.** Mandating school uniforms is a sign of weakness and undermines our quality as natural learners. This sends the wrong message to children and the world.
- **Give an exception to each small school.** Let each school community (staff, students, parents) decide on uniforms or not. That is what small schools are all about. Mandating school uniforms in all small schools will smother and corrupt the spirit of autonomy and responsibility of these fine innovative schools that are the hope and good genius of our IPS.
- **Realize our IPS can accomplish the same thing,** school improvement and academic excellence, **through democratic education.** Mandatory school uniforms appeal to the worst in our nature; democratic classrooms and schools appeal to our highest:
  - Involve all students, at levels of responsibility according to age and grade, in school decision about what they wear, on their own bodies, to school.
  - Involve all students, at levels of responsibility according to age and grade, in school decisions about student behavior in hallways and classrooms.
  - Involve all students, at levels of responsibility according to age and grade, in answering this question: What can students do to help run their school?
- **Do your ethnic and culture homework** and act accordingly:
  - Hire Latinos for important school and downtown administrative positions.
  - Validate and affirm urban black youth identity. See hop-hop culture as an asset, not a liability. The cultural disconnect between the civil rights and hip-hop generations is perhaps the biggest challenge in reaching black urban youth who are simply not motivated, interested, or inspired by school reform efforts in which their urban identities are not represented.
  - Create a task force to insure so-called white working class males like school, stay, and graduate.
- **A new role for IPS: Anti-poverty broker**  
IPS has no choice but to create a Division of Poverty Studies. IPS must broker the various local agencies, organizations, and groups, which deal, directly and indirectly, with the “culture of poverty” and its influence on academic achievement. IPS will be improved, not by school uniforms, but only when school improvement is complemented by social and economic reform.

“Urban school reform must be viewed in context of urban poverty. This is difficult due to the socio-cultural everyday distances between educators and urban students.”

Shawn Ginwright, *Black in School*

- **One-size-fits-few: IPS must resist the easy way out: Uniforms and uniformity**

To the extent that a compulsory school uniform policy intends to suppress all individuality, and to that same extent the success of students (and so IPS teachers, the superintendent, and school board) will be judge by the singularity of state ISTEP and GQE tests, to these same extents citizens must be aware of the temptation and so the tendency to create a one-size-fits-all schooling climate.

“I look forward to the day when our schools offer every student the opportunity to become a leading expert on a chosen topic.”

Mel Levine, American psychologist

Customizing curriculum and individualizing instruction for self-actualization must be the goal of all public school education.

- Along with traditional standardized tests, provide students a variety of authentic assessments that measure how a student thinks about and applies knowledge and skills over and above the ability to recall facts.
  - These types of assessments bring out each student’s strengths and provide ways for each student to shine.

- **Literacy with an attitude: Promote liberating education**

Uniforms are a stigma and handicap for those students who are poor and urban, whose identity and pride are based on resistance to school and the social order it represents. When “schooling” becomes truly transformative; when literacy is politically empowering and helps students get a better deal; and, when education is liberating and leads to self-actualizing, students will then acquire the education they know they need because it will be in their own self-interests, not the interests of others.

### **The choice is ours**

By 2010 when IPS claims it will be the best or one of the best districts in America, the 3 years that have passed will acclimate students to the discipline, order and seriousness of school uniforms and adult directed schools and learning.

During the same 3 years, IPS students could be trained in and start using the “democratic habits of mind” to help them run their schools and become self-directed learners—both tasks preparing them to run their country and be self-governing citizens.

School and classroom democracy will inspire students, teachers, families, and the world. Our public schools will blossom and fulfill their destiny. Uniforms and uniformity will ruin urban schools because they prove the adage that explains why this public institution is failing to capture the hearts and minds of urban students: “*You gotta follow each rule, and each regulation; there’s just too much school, and too little education.*”

## **Appendix A**

### **The Social and Economic Realities that Challenge All Schools: Independent, Charter, and Regular Public Schools Alike (Rothstein, 2006)**

#### **Parental occupation, child rearing practices and student achievement:**

1. Educated parents read in order to solve their own problems or for entertainment.
2. Educated parents are more likely to have children involved in decisions, indirectly encouraging the child to understand the reasoning behind the directions or requests to behave. These parents have jobs that require them to share in decision-making, or think for themselves-- jobs that entail responsibility to solve problems. Thus, these parents encourage the child to solve their own problems or help negotiate what they eat or wear. These children are more likely to feel they can solve problems they face, in and out of school.
3. When middle-class parents give orders, they are more likely to explain why the rules are reasonable. Parents whose employment entails following orders or doing routine tasks see less need to explain. Following orders, after all, is how they themselves behave at work.
4. Middle class children's self-assurance is enhanced in after-school activities, which are not available to the poor due to high fees and transportation problems.
5. Parents whose own occupational habits require problem solving are more likely to help with homework by posing questions that help children figure out correct answers. Lower-class parents are more likely to guide children with direct answers or not help at all.
6. By age three, children of professionals had vocabularies that were nearly twice as large as those of welfare children. This difference is equal to a gap of 30,000,000 words!
7. Wealthy parents verbally encouraged rather than scold/punish, which makes these "encouraged children more likely to take responsibility for their own learning."

#### **Social Class and Race Discrimination**

1. Social class differences in role modeling also make an achievement gap almost inevitable. Middle-class professional parents tend to associate with similarly educated professionals. Working-class parents have fewer professional friends.
2. Even disadvantaged children usually say they plan to attend college. But few go and even fewer graduate. This is not due simply to the cost of college. Disadvantaged students don't feel as much parental, community, or peer pressure to take the courses or get the grades in high school required for college.
3. Throughout American history, many black students who excelled in school were not rewarded for that effort in the labor market. Studies continue to find that black workers with darker complexions have less labor market success than those with identical education, age, and criminal records, but lighter complexions.
4. In studies where blacks and whites with similar qualifications are sent to apply for job vacancies, the whites are typically more successful. In one recent study where young, well-groomed, and articulate black and white college graduates, posing as high school graduates with identical qualifications, submitted applications for entry-level jobs, the applications of whites

with criminal records got positive responses more often than the applications of blacks with no criminal records.

5. Thus, as long as racial discrimination persists, the average achievement of black students will be lower than the average achievement of whites, simply because many blacks (especially males), who see that academic effort has less of a payoff, will respond rationally by reducing their efforts in school.

### **Health, Welfare, and Housing**

1. Overall, lower-income children are in poorer health. They have poorer vision, poorer oral hygiene, more lead poisoning, more asthma, poorer nutrition, less-adequate pediatric care, more exposure to smoke, and a host of other health problems.

2. There are fewer primary-care physicians in low-income communities. So disadvantaged children--even those with health insurance--are more likely to miss school for relatively minor problems.

3. The growing unaffordability of adequate housing for low-income families also affects achievement. Rents have been rising more rapidly in urban areas than the wages of working parents with children. Families having difficulty finding stable housing are more likely to be mobile, and student mobility is an important cause of academic underperformance.

### **Wealth vs. Income**

1. Differences in household wealth are also likely to be important determinants of achievement, but these are usually overlooked because most analysts focus only on annual family income to indicate disadvantage.

2. White families are also likely to own more assets that support children's achievement. This difference means that, among white and black families with the same middle-class incomes, the whites are more likely to have college savings. This makes white children's college aspirations more practical, and therefore more commonplace.

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## Appendix B

### **An apology from the adults to children and youth for dress codes and school uniforms**

“Like its politicians and its wars, society has the teenagers it deserves.”  
Joseph Priestley

We apologize for the fact that the society we have created for you is a shallow one. It is a petty society that judges people by the expensiveness of the clothes they wear. It is a society that encourages its children and youth to try to out dress each other in order to feel important, in order to believe they are as good as or better than others. It is we adults who have created the world of obscenities, and violence as entertainment, where death is the new pornography, and alcohol, drugs, or affluence are the ways to solve or cover up our problems. It is we adults who believe big cars, big houses, big egos, and outlandish dress will get us the attentions we starve for. We apologize for a world that is run by global ad agencies and advertisements that push products on you by using every tool and psychological manipulation to sell what they have pre-determined is “cool” and that you must have in order to be accepted. We apologize that we sell you goods that were made by children and adults in 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries where the workers are paid quarters a day to work, where working conditions are poor, where there are long hours, and no unions or worker committees.

We adults apologize that we have to put you in uniforms because we have created a world that is so fake and unfair it lacks integrity and equity, and caring, and a respect for the individual. We have to apologize because we are so ignorant and trivial that the only way we can fight this weakest part of our nature is by making you dress the same. Rather than fight for change by demanding wisdom in society so that people do not judge others by appearances—we apologize. So, instead of wisdom, we demand costumes and dress codes at school, which conveniently hide our inability to help you see beyond the pecking order of clothes and fashion.

We apologize that we think the sameness of uniforms will somehow solve the problem of shallowness or make its underlying causes go away by covering it up with an outfit or by stripping it of style and the clothing it represents. But, we know it will not do any good. It is just a salve for our conscience because you know our world is phony. It is just an aspirin for a cancer that is a symptom of our lack of community--a lack of caring and genuine relations by adults with children and youth. We apologize that we have to pretend we care when it is actually all about control, all about us not losing our jobs if we do not bow to the monster of peer pressure we've created, and so, all about not being the same outcast we claim you will be if you do not conform.

So we apologize. Yes, we admit we are hypocrites, but we love you; it's just that we cannot love you enough because we are afraid to challenge and change a world we ourselves have bought into.

## Appendix C

### **IPS wants high expectations--Well, let's go real high: Democratic Education**

The potential of democratic classrooms and schools to improve our public schools is presented here to contrast to the use of mandated public school uniforms.

Only enlightened school administrators, school boards, and policy makers will take serious the challenge of demanding greatness, not obedience, from urban students.

It is so much more sensational and self-serving to demand obedience, not greatness, from urban students because this fits in with the stereotype that they are out of control, and criminally and violently inclined. Thus, mandated school uniforms are rationalized as vital to meeting the need for discipline, which leads to the obedience the community believes urban youth must have to assure society's survival.

Vorrath's and Brendtro's essay makes a policy of mandated school uniforms look so misguided it's almost sad. The IPS Board of School Commissioners must table the school uniform idea immediately and begin efforts to demand greatness from students and a democratic climate in each classroom and school. These are real and authentic expectations worthy of global respect.

#### **Demanding Greatness Instead of Obedience**

by Harry Vorrath and Larry Brendtro

“Great persons are able to do great kindnesses.”

Miguel de Cervantes

As adults encounter the challenge of difficult youth, the typical response is to demand conformity and obedience. Elaborate sets of rules are concocted and then the search for ways to enforce them begins. Rewards are offered to students for behaving, and punishments are applied to keep them from misbehaving; adults send for reinforcements; students are shunted to special programs—but still the problems persist. Rather than demand obedience, Positive Peer Culture demands that young people become the mature and productive human beings they can be. Unfortunately, many adults do not really believe that young people possess the quality of "greatness," which is perhaps not surprising since youth seldom are provided with opportunities to display their true human potentials. Positive Peer Culture is concerned with setting expectations high enough to challenge the young person to do all he is capable of doing. To expect less is to deprive him of the opportunity of feeling as positively about himself as possible. Many teachers and youth workers have long been aware that demanding conformity and obedience was not an effective way of dealing with adolescents, but they usually knew only one alternative: the granting of total freedom. Many attempts to give responsibility to young people are instead really "freedom" approaches. In these programs adults sometimes totally abdicate authority and return all decision making to the young. Not surprisingly, a common outcome is that the students run loose in a manner reminiscent of the classic novel *Lord of the Flies*.

Sometimes attempts are made to institute self-government among young people. In most cases

this self-government is in reality a sham. Most public school student governments, in which youth are allowed to decide little more than the color of crepe paper for the school prom, fall into this category. Usually adults do not really want to give up their power; so they make sure that youth do not have much territory to govern.

Positive Peer Culture makes no pretense of turning over all decision making to the students. Adults never abdicate their authority or responsibility. Instead, PPC is so designed that adults are in control without controlling. A flight instructor does not give full control to the student pilot but is always available to take charge if hazards are encountered while the student learns to fly. So in PPC adults assign responsibility to youth and then teach them to follow through on that responsibility. The notion of heavy demands on students is not altogether fashionable, and traditional mental health concepts have sometimes been interpreted to say that setting high expectations actually is harmful for young people; hence, those with problems sometimes have not been sufficiently challenged to use the strength they possess. These ideas were criticized by Victor Frankl.

If architects want to strengthen a decrepit arch, they increase the load that is laid upon it for thereby the parts are joined more firmly together. So if the therapists wish to foster the patients' mental health they should not be afraid to increase that load through a reorientation towards the meaning of one's life.

This is the demand of greatness in Positive Peer Culture. PPC defines greatness as showing positive, caring values. PPC groups help members to learn helpful and non-delinquent ways of handling themselves and meeting their needs. Youth must come to reject all behavior that in any way hurts self or others and to replace it with behavior that shows care and concern for others.

### **Values or rules?**

In Positive Peer Culture youth are not given a complicated road map of explicit rules they must follow. While rules obviously are necessary in any society, still young people must be able to make decisions when no clear rules for behavior exist. Too often rules are geared to keeping unruly youth in submission and meeting the adult's need for control. Adult rules do not prepare a young person to live responsibly amid the complexities and uncertainties of the real world. While our students may learn to obey all the rules we concoct, they may still fail miserably at the business of living. All too often rules give youth an easy way out of having to make wise and independent judgments. Youth must learn how to make sound decisions even in the absence of specific guidelines.

A prominent federal judge has a large law library in his office. On an adjacent wall he has placed a sign with the family ethic, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Beneath the sign an arrow points in the direction of the thousands of law books, and another inscription notes, "All else is explanation."

Young people must learn the basic values for living and not merely memorize a set of rules. Positive Peer Culture does not tell youth that they should stop their behavior to avoid punishment, for perhaps they are intelligent enough to avoid being caught. Youth are not told to

alter their behavior because it is illogical; honesty may not always be logical, and a case sometimes can be made for a crime. Is it always more logical to work at low wages as a domestic servant than to accept employment as a well-paid prostitute? Why should a person work at a tedious job if he has the skills to be a successful thief? PPC does not develop logical arguments against every misbehavior but turns instead to the ultimate issue of values; Is this helping or is this hurting?\*

While PPC is oriented toward the teaching of values, we should emphasize that this reference is not to middle class values or any specific ideology. Rather, there is one basic value — the value of human being. Such a value is tied neither to social status nor to culture and does not become obsolete with the passage of generations. Anything that hurts any person is considered wrong, and people are assumed to be responsible for caring for one another. Caring means "I want what is best for you." This value is reflected in the thinking of the Judaic-Christian tradition and in most other ethical systems.

\*The authors are aware that, theoretically, this judgment is not always simple to make. A question is sometimes raised about the conflict between the interests of the individual and the best interests of the group. This ethical dilemma is, of course, the classical, and we will not attempt to reopen the debate here. Fortunately most problems of young people do not pose such complexities.

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## Appendix D

### Effects of Student Uniforms on Attendance, Behavior Problems, Substance Abuse, and Academic Achievement

#### Summary

*In one sentence, this study showed that uniforms did NOT lead to an improvement in attendance, behavior, drug use, or academic achievement.*

#### Abstract

Mandatory uniform policies have been the focus of recent discourse on public school reform. Proponents of such reform measures emphasize the benefits of student uniforms on specific behavioral and academic outcomes. Tenth grade data from The National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 was used to test empirically the claims made by uniform advocates.

The findings indicate that **student uniforms have no direct effect on substance use, behavioral problems, or attendance.** Contrary to current discourse, **the authors found a negative effect of uniforms on student academic achievement.**

Uniform policies may indirectly affect school environments and student outcomes by providing a visible and public symbol of commitment to school improvement and reform. Brunsmas and Rockquemore wanted to investigate the extraordinary claims being made about how wonderful school uniforms are, particularly from the Long Beach California. It was being claimed that mandatory uniform policies were resulting in massive decreases (50 to 100 percent) in crime and disciplinary problems.

#### Results

The only positive result for uniforms that the study showed was a very slight relationship between uniforms and standardized achievement scores. The correlation coefficient was 0.05, indicating a very slight possible relationship between the two variables, but showing that uniforms are a very poor predictor of standardized test scores and that the relationship is much weaker than has been indicated in the uniform debate. Notice 0,05 is much closer to 0 than to 1.

Other than this one weak, possible relationship, uniforms struck out. In the authors own words: *Student uniform use was not significantly correlated with any of the school commitment variables such as absenteeism, behavior, or substance use (drugs). In addition, students wearing uniforms did not appear to have any significantly different academic preparedness, pro-school attitudes, or peer group structures with proschool attitudes than other students. Moreover, the negative correlations between the attitudinal variables and the various outcomes of interest are significant; hence, the predictive analysis provides more substantive results.* In other words, the authors saw no relationship between wearing uniforms and the desirable behavior (reduced absenteeism, reduced drug usage, improved behavior). They did, however, see a strong relationship between academic preparedness, pro-school attitudes, and peers having proschool attitudes and the desirable behaviors. Furthermore, they saw no relationship between wearing

uniforms and the variables that do predict good behavior (academic preparedness, pro-school attitudes, and peers having pro-school attitudes).

### **Conclusion**

Based upon this analysis, the authors were forced to reject the ideas that uniforms improved attendance rates, decreased behavioral problems, decreased drug use, or improved academic achievement. The authors did find that pro-school attitudes from students and their peers and good academic preparedness did predict the desired behavior. They saw that wearing uniforms did not lead to improvements in pro-school attitudes or increased academic preparation.

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## Appendix E

### Facing down the fashion police\*

Students who oppose dress codes and uniform policies have support among educators and civil libertarians willing to take their case to court. Together they decry the spread of “fashizm.”

A demonstration by students of Brookfield East High School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on a warm April morning served as a microcosm of the broad issues of and opposition to dress codes.

As reported by Gehl, twenty-five students, mostly girls, paraded in front of the school in protest of the administration’s recent stepped-up enforcement of its dress code. The code prohibited, among other items, clothing that revealed too much skin. Current fashion trends (skin was in) and a hot spell brought out some of the banned clothing, notably low-cut pants and thin-shouldered tank tops that revealed bare midriffs. The administration’s reactions were immediate and predictable: Students were sent home to change into more “appropriate” attire and threatened with suspension.

At the demonstration, one senior girl claimed the school administration overreacted to the problem of exposed stomachs and backs, which were in fashion that season. She further stated that students felt threatened by the rigid enforcement of the dress code and the consequences of violating it.

Administrators asserted that the purpose of the dress code was to limit distractions and disruptions in the school setting. Many students did not see the need for the new dress policy and took issue with the motives behind it.

“Being hot in our school is way more distracting than a spaghetti-strap tank top,” said one senior girl. “I want to see a statistic that shows this policy has helped grades go up,” said another.

These students and their actions and comments captured the essence of opposition to dress codes and uniform policies, which revolves around two basic points:

Dress codes and uniform policies are shallow solutions to deeper problems.

Dress codes and uniform policies deprive students of fundamental freedoms.

### **Problems More Than Skin Deep**

Critics claim that strict dress codes and uniforms offer a simplistic approach to preventing school violence and other problems. “While most parents and teachers seek to ensure the safety and security of their school children, some believe adopting a mandatory school uniform policy is not the appropriate method for ensuring such safety.”

Older students, the most outspoken challengers to dress codes and uniforms, have received support from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). As far back as March 1996—only two months after President Clinton expressed support for uniform policies, which prompted the experiments of recent years—Loren Siegel, director of the public education department of the ACLU, wrote:

### **What students suggest instead of uniforms**

If policy makers are serious about finding solutions to the problem of school violence, maybe they should ask the real experts: the students themselves. The ACLU recently conducted a series of focus groups and discussions with high school students and asked them what they thought would help. Uniforms didn't even make it onto the list. Their suggestions:

- Since school violence mirrors that of society at large, schools should seriously confront and discuss issues of racism and cultural conflict.
- “Safe corridor” programs should be supported to protect the safety of students as they go to and from school.
- School entrances should be secured.
- More extracurricular activities and clubs should be established.
- Open-mike assemblies should be held on a regular basis to give students the opportunity to express themselves.
- Programs to help students find part-time jobs should be established.
- Conflict resolution techniques should be taught.

Siegel went on to write that debate over uniforms is a diversion and that resources should be directed toward creating more attractive, clean, and safe school buildings; smaller classes; well-stocked libraries; new computers; and more elective courses such as music and art.

### **Basic Freedoms at Risk**

Opponents argue that restrictive dress codes and uniform policies suppress students' freedom of self-expression, not to mention their spirit of creativity and individualism. There are too many clones in the adult world already, they contend. Some believe that school uniforms are analogous to prison uniforms and cause students to feel entrapped. They also point to the loss of freedom of parents. Schools that impose dress codes or uniform policies dictate to parents how they should raise their children.

When asked, “What is the harm in dress codes?” on a CNN.com chat room, Nadine Strossen, then president of the ACLU, answered:

The harms are many. From a free speech point of view, they prevent students from expressing themselves, either directly, such as through a tee-shirt [sic] that contains a message, or indirectly, by conveying attitudes through apparel. In addition, dress codes violate parents' rights to make basic decisions about the upbringing of their children. Finally, as courts have agreed with us in many cases, dress codes violate religious beliefs and freedoms of particular parents and students.

As Lumsden reported, several legal challenges to dress codes and uniform policies have asserted that students' freedom to choose what to wear to school is, indeed, a form a self-expression that schools have no right to infringe upon.

Opponents also point to a lack of conclusive evidence that dress codes have had a positive effect on behavior and academic performance. “All we have are self-serving, anecdotal reports from

particular schools that have promoted dress codes and are, not surprisingly, trying to justify them.”

Finally, foes of uniforms note that virtually all uniform policies are in place in elementary and middle schools, even though uniforms are promoted as a means to halt violence among older teens. Few attempts have been made to implement uniform policies in public high schools because they would almost certainly be met with resistance from students approaching adulthood and determined to make their own decisions. Even dress codes in public high schools are not always readily accepted, as the students of Brookfield East High School recently demonstrated.

### **SIDEBAR: Disadvantages of Uniforms**

In 2001, the Clarksville-Montgomery County (TN) School System surveyed the local community concerning dress-code issues. Results of the survey revealed the following perceived disadvantages:

- Requires an initial expense of purchasing the clothes
- Leads to inconsistent enforcement of the dress code in schools system-wide
- Causes problems with noncompliance
- Infringes on freedom of choice
- Hurts families who may not be able to afford it
- Causes everyone to look the same
- Becomes difficult to enforce in areas that are extremely transient
- May contribute to negative behavior such as rebelliousness

### **Sidebar: Viewpoints**

“First they threatened to suspend me for three days, but there was no way I could miss school for a dress-code issue.”

Jacklyn Lipovsek, student, Brookfield East High School, Milwaukee, WI

“Aside from reading and writing, public schools are supposed to be teaching democracy. Uniforms are antithetical to teaching people how to make choices.” Stefan Presser, legal director, American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania

“The assistant principals won’t listen. They yell, ‘Just do it! Do it now!’” Damir Abdurahamovic, student, Hillcrest High School, Dallas, TX

\*Facing Down the “Fashion Police”

[http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/policy\\_reports/dress\\_codes/fashionpolice.html](http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/policy_reports/dress_codes/fashionpolice.html)

## Appendix F

### **Do School Uniforms Improve Student Behavior: It Depends**

by David Lamont Bell & Martha Ellen Wynne — October 12, 2006

*The perceived impact of school uniforms on student behavior has led many urban school districts to adopt a dress code policy. Many of the studies are anecdotal in nature or have not considered the role socioeconomic status on student behavior. We argue that this factor and the type of uniform policy a school adopts is critical in understanding the impact on student behavior.*

Over the past decade, many schools have adopted a uniform policy to combat behavior problems associated with gang colors (McCarthy, 2001; Padgett, 1998). Uniforms were usually prevalent in Catholic and other private schools that experienced few gang problems, leading some parents and school administrators to conclude that school uniforms were causing a reduction in behavior problems. In 1969, the Supreme Court (*Tinker v. Des Moines*) found that—without evidence that the school rules regarding dress codes were necessary to avoid interference with educational endeavors or the rights of others—any ban on particular clothing was unconstitutional. However, as behavior problems escalated over the next decade, school districts attempted to link student appearance to the maintenance of an orderly environment in order to impose dress code standards upon students (Brunsma, 2005).

According to Long Beach (CA) Unified School District officials, uniforms were successful in reducing violent crimes (theft, weapons possession, and assaults) by 36 percent in the three years after the district began requiring students to wear uniforms (Mancini, 1997). The idea of dress codes gained official popularity when President Clinton endorsed the idea of public school uniforms in his 1996 State of the Union Address: “I challenge our schools to teach good values... And if it means that teenagers will stop killing each other over designer jackets, then our public schools should be able to require their students to wear school uniforms” (Clinton, 1996).

After the State of the Union address, school districts in New York City, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and New Orleans developed dress codes or uniform policies (Anderson, n.d.; Star, 1998) reflecting the widespread belief among administrators and teachers that such policies would reduce disciplinary problems and assault (Padgett, 1998). Although President Clinton clearly supported the concept of school uniforms, a variety of interpretations of what constitutes a “school uniform” emerged. The range in public schools included strict and distinctive uniforms that closely resemble traditional private school uniforms to lax “dress codes” that merely eliminated the wearing of certain (gang-related) colors/clothing.

Research in the area of school uniforms and student behavior has had mixed results. Some researchers have compared public school students to private or parochial school students with obvious confounding effects of socioeconomic status (SES) and selection bias. Other studies were impressionistic in that outcome measures were based on the opinions of stakeholders who held predetermined views of the efficacy of school uniforms. Further, since SES has a recognized effect on students’ school behavior (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002), it would be critical for researchers to consider the impact of SES in any study of school uniforms and student behavior. Many studies have neither controlled for the types (strictness) of the school uniform, nor SES, although this is necessary to understand the relationships among these variables.

As researchers who have studied both behavioral and academic outcomes of various uniform policies (strict to lax), we conclude that the interrelationships among the strictness of the policy, SES, and outcomes are complex. Like David Brunnsma (2005), we found no positive academic outcomes associated with any type of uniform policy, but the effects on behavior were mixed. As noted earlier, few studies adequately control for what would appear to be very important factors, namely the *type* of uniform and the predominant SES level of the school. When uniforms are divided into *strict uniform* (collared shirt, clothing that is distinctive and/or has an identifying logo); *strict dress code* (no jeans, belt required, conservative colors); *lax dress code* (any combination of dark pants/jeans and white shirts, including T-shirts); and *no uniform or dress code* there is no effect on either major crimes (theft, weapons possession, and assaults) or minor behavior problems (classroom disruptions). This conclusion is not encouraging to those who believe strongly that school uniforms should have a significant impact on diverse outcomes such as school climate, student motivation, attendance, self-esteem and, of course, student behavior.

When SES and strictness of uniform policy are combined, however, there is a modest positive effect for a strict uniform policy on major behavior problems at all SES levels. This finding tends to support the widely held parental and school administrative belief that strict and distinctive uniforms (which closely resemble private or parochial school uniforms) are more effective than lax dress codes in decreasing acting-out behavior. Lax dress codes (such as allowing jeans and white T-shirts) seem to be designed primarily to eliminate gang colors but have no effect on measured behavioral outcomes. It also appears that even in conjunction with SES, strict dress codes (as opposed to strict uniforms) have no impact on student behavior.

We conclude that if a school district is considering some type of dress code to reduce student misbehavior, the only approach that may be effective is adopting a strict uniform policy, which we found reduced the number of violent behaviors at all SES levels. Further, it is noteworthy that students from socio-economically disadvantaged communities were as positively affected by a strict uniform policy, as are other SES groups.

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## Appendix G

### School Uniforms: There Is No Free Lunch

Todd A. DeMitchell

*The basic argument for adopting school uniforms is that merely a change of clothes will bring about desired behavioral and academic student outcomes. That a uniform transforms individuals appears to be at the heart of the argument. But, does just wearing a uniform bring about changes in behavior?*

Educators and parents continually search for policies and practices that create and sustain a safe and secure school environment that supports high student achievement. The United States Department of Education's *Manual of School Uniforms* website states that a safe and disciplined environment is a requirement for good schools (n.d.). Community members join the call for establishing a safe and productive school environment and often add the dimension of efficiency to the problem solution strategies. This added dimension of efficiency requires that the safety and achievement policies be delivered with maximum effect for the minimum cost.

For some, this problem stream of securing student safety and enhancing achievement intersects with a solution stream requiring students to wear a school uniform. For example, former President Clinton supported the use of uniforms to reduce violence and provide a safe environment for students and adults (1996). Other proponents of school uniforms assert that students wearing uniforms to school leads to a safer environment and higher student achievement; in short, a more disciplined learning environment is created by wearing school uniforms. And, these outcomes are achieved with no accompanying expenditure or addition to the budget line for the school. In other words, the school attains important goals with no new costs—the most efficient outcome of the value of efficiency, something for nothing. The cost of the uniforms, which solves the problem of safety and achievement, would be passed on to the parents with the argument that their new cost would be offset by the reduced cost of designer clothes spurred by their child's need to dress in the latest fashions or risk social ostracism. Therefore, reduced peer pressure to conform to the latest styles is added to the benefits of wearing a required school uniform.

In addition, the argument for implementing a student uniform requirement asserts that a change of clothes lowers truancies and tardies, increases attendance rates, raises student achievement, instills a sense of pride in students, and improves the tone and climate of the school. The U.S. Department of Education adds that the potential benefits of school uniforms include reduced violence and theft as well as the means to provide assistance in identifying intruders at a given school.

Student behavioral change, school cultural change, and higher achievement, all for little to no cost, must be the holy grail of school remedies. But, will the bromide of only a change of clothes bring about these desired outcomes? Are school uniforms a real remedy for the thorny problems that beset our public schools or are they just a placebo that masks the heavy lifting that real achievement and school cultural change require?

The implementation of this remedy for what one middle school principal called student “draggin’, saggin’, and laggin’” (United States Department of Education, n.d.) has engendered controversy. There are two prominent arenas in which the school uniform controversy has surfaced: (1) does the research support the claims of uniform proponents and (2) do the courts find the mandatory school uniforms policies constitutionally firm. Each will be briefly discussed below

### **Research on School Uniforms**

Superintendents, principals, and school board members contemplating whether or not to adopt a school uniform policy review the research supporting arguments for and against the proposal.

The arguments for the proposal are often weighted with anecdotes and perception studies of effectiveness. The perception studies provide a background but they do little to assess effectiveness. Whether parents support school uniform policies is a beginning point for a school board considering school uniforms; however, it is not sufficient. Studies that assess principal support for school uniforms may yield an important additional level of understanding because principals are the individuals who will implement the policy. DeMitchell, Fossey, and Cobb (2000) found in their national sample that principals had greater support for dress codes than uniforms.

### **Since principals would have to enforce the policy, they favor a dress code over uniforms.**

High school principals had greater support—although not statistically significant—for dress codes than middle school and elementary school principals. But when asked their level of support for uniforms, high school principals did not support uniforms. They differed significantly from middle and elementary school principals who supported school uniforms. A National Association of Elementary School Principals (2000) nationwide telephone survey of 755 principals reported that school uniforms had a positive effect on the school’s image in the community (84 percent), classroom discipline (79 percent), peer pressure (76 percent), school spirit (72 percent), concentration on schoolwork (67 percent), and student safety (62 percent).

However, this data must be tempered by the fact that 71 percent of the respondents did not have a school uniform policy and were not considering adopting such a policy.

Brunsma (2004) reviewed six small-scale studies. He concluded that these small-scale studies are not “useful as generalizable evidence that can be used by other schools struggling with the decision to implement a uniform policy” (p. 45). The six studies reviewed drew conflicting conclusions as to the effectiveness of school uniforms. Brunsma’s conclusion must be placed within the context of his and Rockquemore’s (1998) large-scale study of school uniforms.

Brunsma and Rockquemore used the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 to answer whether school uniforms decreased substance abuse and behavioral problems, and increased attendance and academic achievement (p. 54). They found that school uniforms did not have a direct effect on behavioral or academic outcomes of students.

### **They concluded that adopting a school uniform policy was largely symbolic.**

They wrote: “Instituting a uniform policy can be viewed as analogous to cleaning and brightly painting a deteriorating building in that on one hand, it grabs our immediate attention; on the other hand, it is only a coat of paint” (p. 60). The research at this time does not appear to support the outcomes claimed by school uniform proponents.

### **Passing Constitutional Muster**

Students have challenged school uniform policies by bringing lawsuits. The argument most often advanced is that the policy abridges the plaintiff’s right to free speech. However, one case, *Byars v. City of Waterbury* (2001), was filed under a theory of a deprivation of a liberty interest to wear jeans to school. Four cases contesting the constitutionality of school uniforms were brought forth in Arizona, Texas, Louisiana, and Connecticut. The school uniform policies were upheld in all four cases using a variety of legal concepts and analyses to support school uniform policies. The uniformity of these decisions is contrasted with the variety of outcomes for dress code cases (DeMitchell, 2001; DeMitchell, 2004). It is interesting to note that dress codes prohibit students from wearing specific types of clothing, leaving a large spectrum of student choice for what to wear to school. A school uniform, on the other hand, is mandatory, leaving the student no choice of what to wear except that which is allowed by the policy—e.g., blue or khaki. Paradoxically, students appear to have greater rights to choose what they want to wear to school when the policy is more flexible, and fewer rights to choose what to wear when the policy is more restrictive. The explanation could be that judges have accepted the rationale advanced by school boards as to the pedagogical purpose for the school uniforms. Currently, the courts do not see a constitutional problem with school uniforms.

### **Todd A. DeMitchell: My Position**

The basic argument for adopting school uniforms is that merely a change of clothes will bring about desired behavioral and academic student outcomes. That a uniform transforms individuals appears to be at the heart of the argument. But, does just wearing a uniform bring about changes in behavior?

**I assert that for some it does, but those individuals may already be predisposed towards the goals of the school—behavioral adherence to rules and academic hard work.**

My concern is that mandatory school uniforms, while not harming students, may mask the hard work that is needed for the public schools to meet its important goals. Changing clothes is a quick and visible fix. Consequently, a mandate involving what to wear is too easily substituted for the hard labor of building long-term capacity.

My concern is that it is too convenient to say we have adopted a school uniform and now we can sit back and not take further action. This is similar to our penchant for the quick fix for financing our schools by using a lottery rather than employing a sustained effort and prioritizing society’s needs and consequent resource allocation.

**Changing schools involves heavy lifting; mandating a school uniform is an easy action belying the enormity of the task.**

If wearing a school uniform brings about behavioral changes and enhanced academic achievement, should we require that teachers and principals also wear the same uniform? Or, does the magic of a uniform only work for students? I am wary of implementing an easy solution for a difficult task. Mandating school uniforms strikes me as an easy solution for the hard, sustained task of changing behavior and increasing academic achievement. The argument for school uniforms is a false promise and a vain hope. There is no free lunch. From: *Teacher's College Record* December 14, 2006

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## Appendix H

### **Attitudes of Youth of Color on Student Dress and Uniforms: A Case of Commercialism in Schools** (LaPoint, Sylvan, Mitchell, & Lee, 2003)

#### **Commercialism Influences**

As indicated earlier, research and reports on commercialism influences in schools have not included the topic of student dress and behavior. Yet, educators, students, parents and family members, community members (e.g., work place employers), and elected officials have grappled with commercial influences on students' dress and behavior in schools. These commercial influences are a part of the pervasive and insidious commercialism in American culture that impacts all children and their families by specifically marketing to children. Commercialism influences on dress among youth may engender: (a) distorted values, attitudes, and behaviors toward the self and others stemming when dress and material culture is overemphasized and (b) involvement in antisocial and illegal behavior in pursuit of designer or popularly branded dress or money to buy this dress. Some inappropriate, disruptive, and problematic dress-related behavior among youth has been described across socialization settings such as families, schools, workplace, and neighborhoods.

Black youth have unique circumstances that marketers use to target them for commercial products and services. Reports indicate that marketing to Black youth includes the use of Black models and celebrities, commercializing aspects of Black culture such as music and language, and cross branding where dress is marketed, with food, movies, and videos. When marketing to Black youth occurs, Black culture is often mixed with commercial messages resulting in Black culture being "repackaged and sold" to Black youth consumers.

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## Appendix I

### **The Promise of Hip-hop Culture: Transforming Schools and Communities through Youth Engagement**

#### **Civil Rights vs. Hip-hop generations or Inter-generational coalitions: A challenge to IPS leaders**

According to educator Professor Shawn Ginwright (2004), The Institute for Education and Social Policy documented a growing trend among low-income neighborhoods in 2000 to organize parents, youth, and community members to demand changes in schools and develop innovative strategies for community transformation. In that same year, nearly 200 community groups across the country became deeply involved with efforts to reform local schools through intergenerational partnerships with young people.

*Black middle-class IPS staff must advocate for and support our urban black working class-youth.*

One of the most significant challenges facing IPS educators is their capacity to connect with, inspire, and move urban youth toward social transformation. However, many (Afrocentric, Latino, white labor class) reform efforts, particularly for middle and high school students, are simply out of touch with urban youth culture and, as a result, experience limited success.

**It is no secret that all the members of the IPS school, and the superintendent and his immediate subordinates are of the civil rights generation.**

*The cultural disconnect between the civil rights generation and the hip-hop generation is perhaps the single most important challenge in reaching black youth who are simply not motivated, interested, or inspired by reform efforts in which their urban identities are not represented.*

**The civil rights generation must help co-create successful multiracial youth-centered organizing activities and leadership development strategies that can prepare youth to change conditions in their schools and communities.**

Organizing for educational reform has become an effective strategy largely because it engages students, parents, and community members in issues that matter the most to them--not black professionals who do not live in the neighborhood--and alters how decisions are made by involving key stakeholders. There is a long history of organizing for educational equality in the United States ranging from the Progressive movement in the 1870s to the Civil Rights movement during the 1960s. Today, our educational legitimization crisis, especially in IPS, requires more than ever that we unleash the capacities of *intergenerational coalitions* to transform their communities.

*Intergenerational organizing, however, requires a shift in how adults view young people, and this shift is particularly challenging for some adults from the civil rights generation who believe that youth should follow, rather than lead, social-change efforts.*

One place to learn more deeply about how youth organize and engage in decision-making is, according to Dr. Ginwright, in the growing field of youth development. Three characteristics that are fundamental to positive youth development:

- Society must have a vision of what it wants for its young people.
- Youth grow up in communities not programs.
- Youth development must be focused on the overall context in which development occurs.

By promoting youth assets, youth development advocates re-conceptualize policy and practice by placing an emphasis on emotional health, empowerment, and exploration. Youth development practitioners and researchers have also reframed their most basic assumptions about youth to view them as resources and acknowledge their self-worth, self-awareness, and value to their communities.

*The idea that IPS school leaders, school administrators, and teachers, and hip-hop generation students work together is an innovative grassroots reform strategy that challenges traditional top-down approaches.*

This shift in thinking can be extremely useful to (multicultural Afrocentric, Latino, white working class) reform in Indianapolis because it challenges both adults and youth to rethink how to create more effective programs and policies that provide greater support for youth and broader opportunities for educational development in their complex and challenging urban environments.

*Indianapolis small school advocates must explore how to achieve greater civic engagement and youth development among youth.*

### **An example of a culture-based and hip-hop orientated program model**

Professor Ginwright uses J. Ward’s 1995 *Harvard Educational Review* article, “Cultivating a morality of care in African-American adolescents: A culture-based model of violence prevention” as an example of how African traditions, values, and norms translate to contemporary social justice issues among black youth. According to Ward, these African traditions are supported by a long history of struggle against systemic racial and economic oppression that surrounds black life. The struggle, however, also fosters a sense of hope and new possibilities for equality. Afrocentric educational approaches can more effectively reach urban black working-class youth if racial identity development is supported by lessons of struggle and resistance to the Indianapolis status quo—which includes IPS itself. IPS small schools students and staff can look at local Marion County and Indianapolis social justice issues, do research, evaluate data, and make recommendations for action and then act.

Given the necessary opportunities, support, and skills, Marion County black, as well as white and Latino youth, can have a powerful voice in educational policy and community transformation. *Shifting the focus of Afrocentric reform efforts toward a greater emphasis on racial and economic justice enables black youth to develop a sociopolitical awareness that can translate to both deeper civic participation and greater educational performance.* Ginwright suggests five guiding principles to consider as ways to refocus and guide students in urban community and school reform toward racial and economic justice:

## **Ginwright's 5 guiding principles for refocusing urban and school reform for all IPS students: Strategies that fit well with resistive and critical nature of urban culture**

### *1. IPS students analyze power within social relationships.*

An analysis of power within social relationships encourages IPS students to examine the root causes of social problems. It also requires that they understand how the misuse of power in institutions creates systems that reproduce multiple forms of inequality. For example, such an analysis might require IPS students to ask who has the power to influence the quality of their education. Such analysis of power often reveals hidden systems of privilege, thus encouraging critical thinking about racism, sexism, adultism, classism, and other forms of oppression.

### *2. IPS students connect ethnic identity development to broader issues of racial and economic justice.*

Often, inequality is linked to identity, and, as a result, identity is often the starting point for students to get involved with racial and economic justice issues. Biracial youth, for example, develop a deeper understanding of the complex ways that race impacts how they identify themselves as well as how they are seen by the larger society. *In some Indianapolis working class multiracial neighborhoods such as the near eastside, substandard housing, youth unemployment issues, lead paint problems, or police brutality are shared experiences-among poor white, black, and Latino youth.* When IPS students experience similar forms of social inequality through shared experiences, they can effectively work together to fight for social change.

### *3. IPS students learn how to promote systemic change.*

The focus on systemic change develops the capacity of IPS students to transform institutional practices that do not meet their needs, and counters the practice of self-blame for their condition. Young people learn how to strategize, research, and act to change school policies, legislation, and police protocols that create and sustain inequality. Systemic change focuses on root causes of social problems and makes explicit the complex ways that various forms of oppression work together.

### *4. IPS students act through collective organizing.*

Organizing is the process of collective action that attempts to alter or change existing social conditions through non-institutional means. Often collective action emerges from groups who are impacted by similar problems and share the same social justice vision. Collective action might include the range of strategies involved in organizing and activism including sit-ins, rallies and marches, and boycotts. The premise is that the capacity to change oppressive social conditions lies in collective efforts, not only individual ones.

### *5. IPS and community adults embrace youth culture.*

Youth culture has been effective at communicating messages that promote social justice. Youth culture can be thought of as a set of shared ideas and a common worldview shared by most young people. Young people see the world as a place of possibilities and challenge the adult world to acknowledge its contradictions. Much of the dominant youth culture in America can also be described as hip-hop culture. Most hip-hop CDs are bought by white suburban teens. Eminem has popularized hip-hop with poor whites. And Reggaeton, a Spanish form of rap music, is now very popular among IPS Latinos.

*Hip-hop culture is often defined by a style of music, dress, and language that calls attention to the problems urban youth face on a daily basis.*

### **Youth organizations transforming schools, communities, and affecting public policy**

Developing (Afrocentric, Latino, working class whites) strategies that confront issues of racial and economic justice in IPS schools will not be an easy task. For example, IPS reformers need clarity about age-appropriate strategies. Projects that are effective for elementary-school-age students are probably inappropriate for high school students. Clearly, such an effort requires first that young people be given the power, support, and opportunity to be heard concerning educational, community, and social issues that most impact their lives.

Fortunately, there are numerous examples of communities that are engaging youth in school and community transformation. While the following examples may not be applicable to Indianapolis, *they demonstrate how students in similar communities around the country have incorporated racial and economic issues into improving their school and communities.*

#### **The Algebra Project**

The Algebra Project, created in Cambridge, MA, by mathematician and former civil rights activist Bob Moses uses relevant issues and concepts from students' physical environment to teach algebraic thinking. In urban and rural communities around the country the project uses familiar activities like walking home from school, riding a bus, paying for groceries, looking for a job, and stories about "making do" as the bases for building math literacy. In Indianapolis, Dr. Terry Ogle and his wife Marge, have been quietly running the Indianapolis Algebra Project for years.

#### **Books Not Bars: Youth Force Coalition**

Since 1990, youth of color in California have been the targets of legislation that has whittled away educational equity, economic opportunities, and political power. Undocumented immigrants were denied public benefits, affirmative action policies were banned in California's public schools, public universities, and city-county governmental offices, and bilingual education was banned in public schools. In March 2000, the juvenile justice crime bill (Proposition 21) allowed courts in California to sentence youth as young as 14 years old as adults and place them in adult prisons. The bill also gives broad powers to courts and police to detain suspected gang members. In response to the growing assault on young people in California, thousands of young people organized the "No on Prop 21" campaign to try to defeat the latest conservative attack on youth of color.

In April 1999, representatives from 20 youth organizations came together to form a coalition of youth to proactively fight for educational reform, environmental justice, after-school programs, and community centers. By forming the Youth Force Coalition, they worked together for a unified campaign that would be stronger by participation from diverse members and organizations. The "No on Prop 21" campaign signaled the first step in a burgeoning youth movement in California. Working with adult allies, the Youth Force Coalition planned direct actions, designed and distributed public education material, held meetings and hosted conferences about their strategy to reduce jails and increase funding to improve their schools. In February 2000, over 700 students walked out of 15 different schools in the San Francisco Bay Area in protest of Prop 21 and demanded that policy makers pay less attention to incarcerating

youth and closer attention to better books, improved facilities, and more equitable educational opportunities for working-class youth of color. Similarly, in six different cities in California, hundreds of youth coordinated a strike where, rather than attending school, students held public education rallies on buses and in local parks.

Participating in these forms of collective action provided a rare opportunity for youth to put into practice their knowledge and skills toward issues that matter most to them. The students focused on educational reform issues that hold promise for improving their educational options. The students rallied for greater resources that support prevention rather than incarceration, higher pay for teachers, and increased spending on school infrastructure and materials. Their analysis required that they carefully study California's complex state budget and draw conclusions about how the budget might impact their lives.

Despite the fact that the proposition passed in March 2000, the "No on Prop 21" campaign demonstrated a new commitment and energy among urban youth of color for demanding power in school and community reform efforts. For example, in 2001 the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights in Oakland, California, formed Books Not Bars (BNB), a coalition of youth organizers, educators, and community members dedicated to reallocating public resources from juvenile incarceration to educational opportunities and school improvement initiatives. BNB organizes and educates youth in schools about the ways in which large corporations benefit from public dollars directed at incarcerating large numbers of youth of color. Their goal is to rehabilitate youth and community members who have made mistakes in their lives through education and restorative justice principles. Through partnerships with adult allies, BNB combines public education, grassroots organizing, direct action, and advocacy related to criminal justice policy to reform schools. BNB sees the plight of urban school reform intimately tied to issues of juvenile justice.

California's rapid expansion of prisons, jails, and other correctional facilities since the 1990s, coupled with the state's dramatic reduction in per pupil spending, has prompted BNB to seek alternative sentencing practices and *the redistribution of public dollars to go toward proactive educational issues, not reactive punishment.*

In May 2001, 70 young people from BNB marched into a meeting of the California Board of Corrections in order to convince the board to deny preapproved state funding for Alameda County to build the largest juvenile hall in the country. For about 2 years Alameda County officials had been pushing to build a massive 300-bed juvenile hall and just needed to have it "rubber-stamped" by the full Board of Corrections. Armed with statistics, reports, and financial forecasts, young people persuasively argued to the Board of Corrections a sound rationale that prompted the board to deny funding to Alameda County. In a 10 to 2 vote, the board rejected Alameda County's 2.3-million-dollar funding request to build the prison. While not explicitly focused on educational reform issues, *the BNB campaign signaled to educational experts the power and value of youth-led initiatives.*

Similarly, in October 2001 youth gathered and formed the "Schools Not Jails" campaign and set up a network of youth activists in California who organize around various educational reform issues. The campaign has three demands: (1) to create educational priority zones in low-income communities of color where schools would get significant funding and resources; (2) to have a

statewide review that would assess the effectiveness of standardized testing; and (3) to support a statewide effort to have every school in California offer ethnic and women's studies. Students involved in the "Schools Not Jails" campaign made clear connections between youth incarceration and educational resources.

When youth organize for racial and economic justice, they make connections between the local concrete conditions in their schools and communities and how larger social systems can be transformed to better meet their needs. These strategies can strengthen Indianapolis urban community and IPS reform efforts by engaging youth and developing their capacities for greater civic engagement.

**One effective strategy to mobilize youth is hip-hop youth culture.**

Many involved with organizing for social and economic justice have used hip-hop culture as an organizing vehicle. Hip-hop can bring us new tools to organize people. For example, while youth organized to defeat Proposition 21 in California, youth organizations, community activists, and local hip-hop artists joined forces and organized hip hop concerts to conduct mass political education and distributed flyers with youthful graffiti art that encouraged disenfranchised youth to vote and participate in the political process. The strategy to design flyers, host hip-hop concerts that politically educate thousands of youth, and distribute hip-hop music with political messages proved to be a powerful organizing strategy.

*Indianapolis youth initiatives have been and have stayed at the level of recreation (keeping kids off the streets and out of trouble) and education (sex, drugs, gangs), but not serious activism.*

**This begs the questions re: The Indianapolis Public Schools**

Does IPS need this kind of student support? Yes. Do local youth need similar youth-led initiatives to look out for their educational needs and juvenile justice issues? Yes. Does our local community need to emphasize schools not jails? Yes. Do local youth have the potential for the sophistication necessary to challenge the status quo? Yes. Will youth organize to plan and carry out such ideas? No. Why? No local adult leadership. Local youth leaders, either because they do not know better or because they know better but have sold out, are not discussing this level of serious social and economic change with youth. Local youth initiatives have been and have stayed at the level of recreation (keeping kids off the streets and out of trouble) and education (sex, drugs, gangs), but not serious activism.

**Could IPS students organize?**

Could IPS youth organize campaigns focused on both concrete measurable changes in IPS schools such as better books, improved facilities, and quality of life issues within their communities, such as reduction of juvenile incarceration? *This is doubtful.* Presently schools are not teaching for social justice and local youth organizations such as the Girls & Boys Clubs or organizations associated with Community Centers of Indianapolis have never and continue not to be in the business of serious social and economic change.

**Youth United for Change**

In Philadelphia, youth between the ages of 14-19 comprise 8 percent of the population. Impacted by issues of overcrowding in their schools, safety, decent housing, and lack of after-school

activities, high school students formed Youth United for Change (YUC), an organization of youth who fight for educational equity in their schools and communities and work together to hold schools and public officials accountable for services and policies that directly impact their lives.

Since 1994, Youth United for Change has been organizing high school students to improve the quality of their education. For the past 6 years, they have been working closely with school administrators, principals, and teachers to redirect resources toward academic preparation for college. *YUC believes that strong public schools build strong communities because when young people are deeply engaged in a democratic process, they are less likely to commit crime.* Five years of organizing youth at three local high schools resulted in a platform entitled "Education is a right, not a privilege," which is supported by adult allies from the Eastern Philadelphia Organizing Project, a faith-based organization of 20 congregations, parent associations, and neighborhood institutions representing more than 30,000 families in East Philadelphia. The YUC platform addresses three primary issues related to economic and racial justice.

One issue that YUC addresses is availability of internships and after-school programs. The relocation of jobs from the urban communities has left many students in East Philadelphia without opportunities to work and gain valuable work experience. YUC believes that internships give high school students a better advantage in the working world by teaching responsibility and broadening their perspective on what careers are available. More after-school opportunities will also keep Philadelphia teens out of trouble. YUC's stance is, since their schools fail to provide them with these valuable opportunities, schools should begin addressing these issues by keeping the building open until 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. so that after-school programs can be more available. In addition to advocating for after-school programs, YUC also encourages directing resources to support schools in purchasing updated books, and computers.

A second YUC issue is safety to and from school and security while in school. After several incidents of violence inflicted upon students on their way to school, YUC members at one local high school demanded that the mayor, within the first few months of his term, conduct a survey of all the neighborhood high schools and make a public report on how safe and secure they are. YUC members at one of the local high schools worked with representatives from local police, businesses, and city government to improve the conditions near a bridge where most of the crime occurred. YUC was successful at reducing the number of attacks by having the city keep the bridge clean and installing new lighting and working with the police to have the bridge regularly patrolled.

Other issues that YUC addresses include reduction of class size. While the average class size of Philadelphia's urban public high schools is 30, the average class size in Philadelphia's suburban school districts is 24. YUC argues that the school district could reduce urban class sizes by moving teachers who work outside the classroom into classroom assignments and having the city assume the cost of non-educational services such as trash collection and use of recreation facilities. YUC also advocates for more college preparatory courses in urban Philadelphia high schools. After applying to 4-year colleges, students realized that their schools only provided a curriculum that prepared them for community college. They were not being accepted into college because they could not take the required college-preparatory courses.

As a result of YUC's efforts to transform Philadelphia urban schools and communities, the organization has an impressive list of accomplishments:

- The number of students prepared for college at Kensington High School has increased, and graduation rates have been raised.
- Under a partnership between YUC and the school, college preparation courses are now available in all Small Learning Communities, and the course offerings at the school have been upgraded to meet the requirements that students need to gain acceptance to college.
- Freshman attendance rates have increased and the average daily attendance for the entire school population has increased from 60.8 percent during the 1997-98 school year compared with 77.7 percent for the current school year.
- Bathrooms are cleaner and water fountains are working at all local high schools.

### **Could IPS students do this?**

It is very doubtful. Local youth could, but will they? No. Why?

**With the current strict, rigid, and no nonsense climate, which demands passivity and discourages political awareness in schools and classrooms, the level of student apathy needed to perpetuate the status quo is prevalent.**

In fact, one might conclude that after 100 years of youth development in Indianapolis, youth organizations see youth as a limited resource with respect to challenging a status quo--a status quo that pays the wages of the staff of these same youth groups. Would they lose funding if they encouraged youth activism? This is one more bit of proof that poverty is political.

### **Kids First**

In 1995 a group of youth, adults, and community organizations came together to discuss issues that impacted youth in Oakland. Their discussion revealed that young people did not feel safe, respected, or supported, and often get targeted as the "problem." Youth from several local schools in Oakland surveyed over 1,000 of their peers to learn what they thought about reducing issues like violence in their schools. They learned that young people would have a greater sense of safety if there were more places where they could work, learn, and have fun. In 1996 the Kids First coalition drafted an initiative that would require that 2.5 percent of all unrestricted general fund revenues be used to increase children and youth services of the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth.

From March through June 1996, youth and adults formed a citywide grassroots campaign to get the initiative on the November ballot. Two hundred volunteers blanketed local stores, malls, transit stops, and schools to encourage Oakland residents to support the initiative. The campaign wasn't simply "youth friendly," but rather it was driven by the power of youth culture. Using hip-hop and other forms of youth culture, young people in the campaign produced videos, visited neighborhood churches, and circulated thousands of flyers and petitions calling on City Council members to support the initiative. On November 5, 1996, the initiative now called "Measure K" was overwhelmingly approved by over 75 percent of Oakland's voters. Youth working with adult

allies had successfully redirected millions of dollars toward educational opportunities and youth programs. The involvement of youth was critical in shaping the outcomes of the initiative because youth provided a perspective based on everyday quality of life issues.

### **The power of youth in making public policy**

The above examples offer at least two important lessons for IPS. *First, engaging IPS students in addressing issues that most impact their everyday lives leads to more relevant and meaningful programming.* These efforts illustrate that improving every-day quality of life--issues such as transportation, childcare, juvenile justice, availability of AP level classes, after-school activities, and smaller class sizes are all central to how youth experience education. Paying closer attention to what students need, and including them in meaningful problem solving, paves the way for more effective school change.

*Second, in several cases, urban youth culture was the vehicle for organizing, recruiting, and teaching youth about racial and economic justice issues.* These groups used organizing strategies such as hip hop concerts, flyers with youthful graffiti art, and images of youth themselves, all of which resonated with youth experiences. While these multiracial organizations did not focus exclusively on African- American youth issues, they often framed issues in ways that placed racial and ethnic representation issues at the forefront. Urban youth culture was reflected in the music that was played in youth centers and rallies, the hip-hop graffiti art displayed on external communications, and the language young people used to communicate their issues. Youth from the hip hop generation are motivated by new organizing strategies that call attention to their struggles, validate their everyday experiences, and provide a sociopolitical vision of racial and economic justice.

IPS students and the urban youth culture they represent can expand the boundary of current local (Afrocentric/multicultural, Latino, poor white) reform to become more explicit about issues of racial and economic justice while at the same time encouraging educators to consider a more dynamic view of urban black youth identity--as well as the urban identities of other groups

### **The promise of hip-hop culture: Possibilities for urban school reform**

Black youth culture in most urban communities is often defined by hip-hop. As well, many IPS students of all backgrounds identify with this global youth culture. Thus hip-hop culture is a highly effective vehicle for engaging many youth, especially black, in learning. Music, language, style of dress, poetry, and art can all be effective cultural vehicles to educate youth who have not responded to traditional ethnicity-based multicultural curriculum.

*Increasingly, scholars are learning more about how hip-hop culture can be used as a literacy tool for critical education in classroom settings.*

Dr. Ginwright notes the writings of H. Baker's 1993 book, *Black studies and rap in the academy*, and E. Morrell's 2002 study, "Promoting academic literacy with urban youth through engaging hip hop culture," to illustrate this. Grounded in the idea that students are literate in other ways that are simply not connected to classroom learning in public schools, these theorists explore "new literacy," or non-school literacy practices that can provide greater connections with classroom learning in our post-modern diversity-multi-literacies that expand what it means to be smart and how to communicate.

Hip-hop culture can encourage black youth to change their thinking about community problems and act toward creating a more equitable world. While progressive hip hop culture functions as the voice of resistance for America's black youth, it also provides a blueprint for the possibilities of social change and has been utilized as a politicizing tool to inform youth about significant social problems.

Since the mid-1980s, groups such as Public Enemy seized the attention of many urban youth of color because of their ability to boldly criticize and reveal serious contradictions in American democracy. Rap artist such as KRS1 and Arrested Development called for youth to raise their consciousness about American society and become more critical about the conditions of poverty. Hip-hop groups such as Dead Prez, The Coup, The Roots, and Common today provide them with analyses of racism, poverty, sexism, and other forms of oppression. For black youth, hip-hop culture is a vehicle for expressing pain, anger, and the frustration of oppression, which is expressed through rap music, style of dress, language, and poetry. Additionally, hip-hop culture is used to organize, inform, and politicize youth about local and national issues.

*While progressive hip-hop culture functions as the voice of resistance for America's black youth, it also provides a blueprint for the possibilities of positive social change for the entire society-helping America live up to its promise of liberty and just for all.*

For example, Ginwright writes about a social studies unit he taught to high school students about democracy. He used hip-hop music as a pedagogical tool to teach black youth about how the U.S. government ensures democratic participation.

He would begin with a series of questions such as. What do you think about our government? What is the purpose of our government? What would our society be without a government? What is a democracy and do we live in one? These questions would elicit a number of responses that he would use to lead a critical discussion about equity and democratic participation. Next he would play a video or CD from either Dead Presidents or Talib Kwali, both of whom provide a critical analysis and commentary about social, economic, and political issues.

Because the students are often familiar with such artists and have also memorized the lyrics, he used these artists' political commentary as a springboard into a larger discussion about democracy. The lyrics, for example, of Dead Presidents, who are often critical of police violence, the expansion of prisons, and repressive foreign policies, provided an opportunity for black youth to think about issues that impact their communities and shape their lives.

By having them compare and contrast political lyrics with excerpts from their textbooks about democracy, his students were better able to use their everyday experiences to critique and understand concepts such as democracy, equality, participation, and aristocracy in a way that both validates their experiences and highlights youth culture.

*Rather than focusing on how to change black youth and their culture, these strategies use the innovative and creative energy of black youth as a platform to build a strong sociopolitical awareness.*

Hip-hop culture provides a number of innovative strategies that can expand and strengthen (Afrocentric/multicultural, Latino, poor white) reform efforts. For those who work extensively with African-American youth in urban communities, these strategies might be familiar. These strategies develop black youth ethnic identity through explicit connections with racial and economic justice and through affirming black youth culture.

### **Two strategies for working with today's urban youth**

To conclude his arguments Ginwright's *Black in school* suggests two promising strategies for adults working with today's urban youth that would contribute to a more relevant and effective form of black urban oriented curriculum.

#### **1. Validate and Affirm Black Youth Identity**

Start where youth are, not where you want them to be. This is one of the biggest challenges adults face when working with black youth in schools and in after-school programs. Imagine an African-centered teacher who places a high value on African culture as evidenced by the way she dresses and how her classroom is decorated. Now picture a 15-year-old black male student coming into this class with his baggy clothing and his hat turned backwards. The teacher's first impulse might be to correct his "inappropriate" clothing by asking him to wear a belt to class to avoid showing his underwear or to remove his hat when entering a room. While this request might not be entirely inappropriate, it clearly sends a signal to that young person that his cultural orientation is not suitable for a classroom setting and ultimately results in another form of cultural discontinuity between hip-hop culture and black adult middle-class Afrocentric sensibilities.

Placing a greater emphasis on existing hip hop culture can strengthen youth's openness to black urban reform efforts because such an emphasis affirms youth culture rather than criticizing or trying to change it. Hip hop culture emerged from the tremendous economic, social, and cultural pressures black urban youth must learn to navigate.

*By validating hip-hop culture, their struggle for racial and economic justice is also affirmed. This affirmation is a key starting point for building and strengthening other aspects of black youth identity.*

Afrocentric curriculum requires that lessons be relevant and meaningful to students' everyday lived experiences. The use of hip hop and black urban reform ideas can be effective in developing positive ethnic identity, building cultural awareness, and strengthening critical thinking about ways to improve the quality of everyday life.

*Some educators are critical of students who see being black as speaking slang, braided hair, sagging pants and skewed hats. They say that blackness is knowing black history and appreciating African values, not dressing like a gangster. Right or wrong, this disconnects hip-hop from older generations.*

#### **2. Think of Urban Youth Culture as an Asset, Not a Liability**

Expanding and strengthening multicultural reform, and in particular (Afrocentric, Latino, poor white) multicultural reform, through hip-hop culture, however, requires more than simple step-by-step practices and curriculum strategies. More important, it requires a bold and courageous

paradigm shift on the part of IPS educators and reformers to conceptualize (black, Latino, poor white) urban youth culture as an asset rather than a liability in educational change efforts.

It comes as no surprise that many companies have already figured out the power of hip-hop culture in marketing products and transforming consumption patterns among youth around the world. Ginwright believes that though private industry and capitalist greed should not be a model for reforming urban schools, we cannot ignore the ways in which companies like Coca Cola or Nike have embraced the ingenuity and creative force of hip-hop culture.

Unlike private companies, however, multicultural educators must develop a clear and explicit sociopolitical vision for reforming schools in urban communities. *This means that while multicultural reform develops ethnic identity among (black, Latino, poor white) urban youth, it should also strive to strengthen the social and political capital among these youth by building strong intergenerational networks that are transforming schools and communities.*

Effective reform efforts will require new networks that strengthen relationships between multicultural educators, community members, and (black, Latino, poor white) urban youth. These networks, while focused on educational strategies that build ethnic identity and provide culturally consistent learning opportunities, should support youth in community problem solving. This problem solving must begin with developing leadership skills and fostering critical thinking about social and economic patterns that support deeply rooted racist, sexist, and classist, practices in schools and communities. Afrocentric reform efforts hold great promise for transforming youth, their schools, and their communities once these efforts articulate a clear sociopolitical vision by making explicit connections with racial and economic justice issues.

### **The future of urban reform: School Democracy**

*Youth in urban areas deserve democratic schools.*

Starting with the assumption that urban youth should be understood in the context of communities and neighborhoods rather than the confines of IPS schools, school reform efforts must be strengthened by the potential of youth to transform their school and communities. *Armed with the deep understanding of inequality and a passion to achieve social justice, black and other youth around the country are demanding that they have a voice in decisions that impact their lives.* These voices hold great promise for effective educational and socio-economic reform strategies for the hip hop generation.

Despite the fact that nationally, urban black, Latino and working-class youth find themselves navigating formidable economic, educational, and social problems, they seem remarkably resilient and often respond to challenges in their schools and communities in surprisingly innovative and unique ways. Starting with the assumption that urban youth should be understood in the context of communities rather than the confines of institutions such as schools, IPS can evolve by exploring the ways that some urban youth are transforming their schools and communities.

*One of the best ways to promote the evolution of multicultural reform is school democracy.*

Advocates of democratic education believe that students, if they are to acquire the skills, knowledge, and values they need to perform their roles as citizens in a democracy, should receive a type of education that actively engages them as citizens in their own schools and communities. For example, they believe that students should participate in the governance of the school and engage in service-learning activities in their local communities.

*Democratic education fits perfectly in with Ginwright's suggestions for (black, Latino, poor white) reform initiatives and the characteristics of the hip-hop generation to critique the mainstream by resisting education in public schools.*

Historically, one of the primary missions of the public schools in the United States has been to prepare children to perpetuate American democracy. Schools are expected to ensure that all children, regardless of family economic status or future occupation, acquire the skills, knowledge, and civic values they need to perform their roles as citizens in a democracy.

### **School democracy**

School democracy will create a climate where IPS students, as well as educators, are totally involved in the problem solving process. Since by definition students will share in decision-making, democratic classrooms and schools will guarantee the focus will be on the tangible day-to-day problems students' face in their schools and neighborhoods, thus developing strategies that are more connected to students' experiences.

*When youth organize for racial and economic justice, they are practicing democracy.*

Hip-hop culture can encourage black youth to change their thinking about community problems. Democratic schools can provide the model toward creating a more equitable world. In that progressive hip hop culture functions as the voice of resistance, along with democratic education; it can be utilized as a politicizing tool to inform youth about social problems and how to solve them, while democratic practices provide the structure or blueprint for the possibilities of social change.

Democratic schools are viable options for traditional school climate because of hip-hop's natural ability to boldly criticize and reveal the serious contradictions in American democracy itself. Rap lyrics about police violence, expansion of prisons, repressive foreign policies provide the place for black youth to think about issues that impact them and shape their lives.

*Youth input into solving classroom, school, and community problems is needed: those closest to the problem are often in the best position to solve it.*

By including IPS students in education policy decisions, democratic schools can be the "connector" Ginwright claims multicultural reform needs to evolve-to connect to, to recognize the everyday problems youth face. Thus, both the multicultural reform movement and students will be transformed because they are empowered through democratic school decision-making to challenge and affect the problems of poverty that impact their schools and communities. Also, this makes public institutions, like our public schools, more accountable for meeting the needs of a community.

In a democratic school, where the educational process should encourage consistent, informed, and active engagement in school and community affairs, a strong educational cultural development is important, but is simply not enough.

*Therefore, our challenge to school educators is to tap into the oppositional culture of hip-hop so that it might revive new and more inclusive forms of schooling and democratic possibilities.*

When youth organize for racial and economic justice, they are practicing democracy. They make connections between local concrete conditions in their schools and communities and how larger social systems can be transformed to better meet their needs. These strategies can strengthen multi-cultural reform by engaging youth and developing their capacities for greater civic engagement.

Rethinking (black, Latino, poor white) educational strategies through democratic education opens new and exciting possibilities for reaching black students. Ginwright's experiences in working with black youth tells him that the conditions they face on a daily basis need much greater attention on the part of educational reformers. Black youth in urban schools want and deserve a better education, and if scholars, educators, and policy makers would simply listen to what they have to say, they would learn that they have analytical capacity, creative energy, and the desire to make good things happen in their schools and neighborhoods. *This is democratic potential.*

Again, the greatest challenge facing IPS is to connect to black, Latino and working class white youth in ways that are meaningful and relevant to their everyday lives. Indianapolis youth have the incredible power, creative energy, and desire to challenge the Indianapolis status quo and struggle for school and community change. The challenge to IPS is to tap into this energy so that it might revive new and more inclusive forms of democratic possibilities.

### **Conclusions**

Indeed the initial efforts of political activists and educators to challenge narrow racist educational policies were courageous and needed if America was to live up to its promise of equal educational opportunity. It would be good if these educational-political reform efforts had worked, keeping black and white working class children in school and graduated. But, let's be honest, graduation rate numbers, both local and national, tell a different story.

Dr. Shawn Ginwright's respect for the civil rights generation and the school reform they demanded is clear. Now it is necessary to go to the next level, to keep what is useful from the past and reinvented (Afrocentric-based multicultural, Latino, and poor white) school and classroom reform for the 21st century. Ginwright has the road map.

The civil rights generation must see the limitations of the original movement while at the same time reaching out to today's youth through validating and affirming urban youth identity and seeing hip-hop culture as an asset.

With the worldwide interest in democracy, democratic schools have the most potential and provide the best opportunity for inter-generational collaboration. The civil rights generation must support democratic education by supporting the pro-democracy movement in IPS and

promoting school shared decision-making in other Marion County school districts-then work closely with youth for better schools and social justice.

### **The irony of past education reform, urban youth, the promise of hip-hop**

Afrocentric/multicultural reform's challenge to cultural hegemony was an important first step in urban school improvement, but without an explicit discussion of how socio-political realities shape young people's lives, it remains undeveloped because it cannot evolve.

Add to this the fact that through Ginwright's insights exposing the gaps between IPS and the hip-hop generation, we now see the older generation's criticisms of the more in your face, sexually explicit, and over materialistic aspects of rap music are valid, yet, when these same aspects are not also seen as a product of the day-to-day lives and struggles of black, Latino and urban working-class youth, nothing will change for either generation-they must work together, inter-generationally to bring about the social and economic justice each group seeks.

Thus, ironically, it may be that now traditional Afrocentric influences, educational approaches, and a political philosophy born in the early 1970s to influence generations will not affect the hip-hop generation as much as the reverse: The hip-hop generation will enable multicultural reform to evolve and be reborn for a new generation. Multicultural reform will continue to influence textbooks, curriculum, school climate, national and local politics, and black identity. We will have Black History Month, but it may be the hip-hop generation who keep it hip.

### **Let's start to create a legacy of youth activism in Indianapolis**

Indianapolis will not create opportunities for youth to transform their schools and communities through advocacy, leadership training, and alliance building because we have no such vision. Indianapolis will not create serious initiatives that addressed economic and racial justice issues by focusing on concrete problems within the school as well as quality of life issues within the community. We will not create youth organizations that support low-income children and youth by engaging them in policies that directly impact their lives. Indianapolis cannot continue a legacy of youth activism that is a part of the history of cities like New York, San Francisco-Oakland, or Philly because we have no such legacy. This is a part of the way the status quo has and continues to maintain itself-and unfortunately this status has poor and minority youth at the bottom.

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## Appendix J

Mandatory school uniforms in our public schools reflect a worldview of what some call the “Duty Culture.” Also below is another interpretation of this worldview called, “The Strict Father Family.”

Consider these paradigms, along with the “Nurturing Parent Family” and the “Bi-conceptual Model” when judging the pros and cons of a mandated school uniform policy.

**From: *The Healing Teacher* by Dr. Gary Phillips**

### **Duty Culture**

Duty culture homes:

- boundaries are clear
- where authority is control
- where rewards and punishments is the ritual on the home
- Left brain=linear, sequential, logical, rational, sequential learner
- good at storing and retrieving information
- who test well

**From: *Don't Think of an Elephant* by George Lakoff**

**World view** (conceptual systems)

Framing (world view): comes into our brain via repetition.

We all have one. We think via our world-view. It's in our brain. And what's in our brain defines common sense for us.

Notions of family via idealized models: Strict father family and nurturing parent family

### ***Strict father family***

Exemplified by James Dobson and his book *Dare to Discipline*.

We need a strict father because:

--there's evil out in the world and you need protection from that...and the family's father has to be strong enough to do that.

--there's competition in the world, and there will always be winners and losers and in order to support the family you have to be a winner, not a loser.

--children are born bad. They want to do what feels good, not what is right. Thus, we need a strict father who knows right from wrong. He is a moral authority and can teach his children right from wrong.

--And there's only one way to teach right from wrong and that's through punishment when they do wrong. This has to be punishment painful enough so that child will have the incentive to do right and not wrong—and develop internal discipline based on this external

discipline/punishment. So, if they develop the internal discipline they will become moral beings. Thus, the assumption is that this is the only way to develop moral beings.

--If you develop the right discipline to become a moral being, that gives you the self-discipline to become prosperous and seek your own interest and become prosperous.

--so, prosperity and morality are linked to internal discipline...thus, if you are not prosperous, you simply don't have the discipline to be prosperous which means you don't have the discipline to be moral and so you deserve your poverty.

Thus, social programs are immoral because they give people things they haven't earned. It takes away the incentive to be disciplined—the incentive to earn a living and to be moral.

Thus, all social programs are immoral and should be abolished. This is part of conservative social thought...

You are supposed to follow your self-interests and this is connected to free-market capitalism. What Adam Smith said was that if every one seeks their own profit, the law of nature would maximize the profit of all, by an “invisible hand.” If everyone seeks their self-interest, the self-interests of all will be maximized. And therefore it's good when you seek your own interests because you're helping everybody else--you're maximizing everybody else's self-interest.

Who is hurting people and society? The people who get in the way of “the good people” --those who are seeking their self-interest. People who get in the way are trying to help others when they should be seeking their own self-interests. They are called “do-gooders.”

When the children of strict fathers/mothers learn this internal discipline (resulting from the external discipline and punishment from these strict parents), and when they grow up and become adults, they are free. They can be on their own. The strict father can no longer “meddle” in their lives. The parents maybe can protect them, or help them out, but can't tell them what to do because the child becomes their own strict father/mother.

The main point of strict father morality is that there is a moral authority--a moral authority is a father who knows right from wrong, and who has the power to punish and tell you what to do. But, that's OK because he's moral and power and morality go together.

As a consequence, there is a hierarchy which tells who is most moral. This forms traditional definition of power. The hierarchy is:

- God above man,
- man above nature,
- adults above children,
- western culture above non-western culture, and
- America above other nations.

This is the general idea of conservative thought.

And then you get a bigoted extension or this ranking:

- men above women,
- whites above non-whites,
- Christians above non-Christians, and
- straights above gays.

This is the moral order of conservatives.

### **Nurturing parent family**

The parent's job is to be nurturing and raise their children to be nurturers of others.

There are 2 characteristics:

- Empathy--know your child and feel what they feel
- Responsibility—take care of yourself (you can't take care of anyone else if you're not taking care of yourself) and you have the responsibility for those who you have to be responsible for...to be responsible for raising your children

And teach your children to empathize, to care about other people and be responsible for them: To have social responsibilities--responsibility for others.

These central ideas, empathy and responsibility, and thus protection imply: If you care about your child, you want to protect your child. So, we have:

- Environmental protection
- Worker protection
- Consumer protection
- Safe working conditions

Two other characteristics of nurturing parent ideal

- Fulfillment—if you're going to be fulfilled in life be free. To be free you need opportunity, and for you to have opportunity, we need a general prosperity.
- Community--you don't want to live in a strict father community where you are told what to do or else. You want a community where you have leaders who care about people, with community members who care about each other, who are responsible for each other and who serve the community...

### ***Bi-conceptual model***

We all have both of them in us...you may be progressive in most things you do, but conservative in small things. How can you be pro-life and for death penalty? Those in the middle in American politics are bi-conceptual and there's not linear line that simply defines them: nurturant about environment but conservative about everything else, nurturing on social issues, but conservative on financial issues—or the reverse...

## Appendix K

To help readers understand some of the reasons (right or wrong) why certain individuals reject schooling, this poem by rapper Gucci Mane may help. The meanings of the slang terms are in italics.

Artist: Gucci Mane  
Song: "Two Thangs"  
Album: Trap House

### Two Thangs

Gucci Mane in da building (Gucci, Gucci)  
Laflare, Big Kat (Laflare)  
Say we got it like that (like that)  
Everythang don't mean two thangs, watch this

Young Gucci Mane got a style so strange  
Every word I use might mean two thangs [Repeat 3x]  
Young Gucci Mane got a style so strange  
Every word I use dont mean two thangs

Uhhhhh...

It ain't the way, it's da principle  
what kind of student make mo money than da principal  
and I never made da Honor Roll  
But I'm in the lunch line with a honor Roll (*big wad of money*)  
U pumpin' iron in da weight room  
I'm on da grind (*at work*) got a nine (*gun*) in da weight (*weighing drugs*) room  
and I never play softball  
but I always kept da hard (*crack*) and da soft (*powder cocaine*) balls  
U doin math on da calculator  
I'm weighin slabs (*drugs*) doin math on a calculator  
and I ain't tryna to write no essays  
I'm tryna to get a hundred pounds for my eses (*Latino drug business partners*)  
U tryna learn how ta speak Spanish  
but my connect (*Latino drug dealing partners*) tryna teach me ta speak Spanish  
and U a monitor in da hallway  
I'm all day on da grind (*selling drugs*) wit a 4-way (4.5 oz.)  
Uhh....

U da one who won da Spelling Bee  
I'm da first 3rd grader wit a felony  
and I never was a teacher's pet

I'm da one who went and stole da teacher's cigarettes  
and I never went on field trips  
I'm at Walter's (a store) tryna buy me some stash slips (*paper that goes around money*)  
and I always been cut throat  
15 (*years old*) takin' big niggas starter coats  
Laflare entertainment by myself  
but I used to have a high right, low left (*fighting*)  
gettin' money by da truck loads  
rollin up Big Fat el productos  
before I drank V.S.O.P. Remy  
I used to drank that MD 22 (*Mogan David 20/20: aka "Mad Dog 20-20" a very cheap  
wine: 20% alcohol*)  
Woodgrain and reverse 8's (*car speakers*)  
Box Chevy trunk soudin' like a earthquake

Uhhhh....

I gotta give it to U raw (*uncut rhymes*) man  
Cause I still keep a trunk full of raw (*drugs*)  
I'm a nigga from da block man  
In da club (*hangout*) puttin down wit da block (*other hustlers*) man  
U probably gotta worka 9 to 5  
I'm on da grind (*job*) wit da nines (*9 ounces*) for da 55 (*\$5,500.00*)  
bi\*\*\* U a half of a 12 (*girl is not up to par*)  
Low Key bucket (*junky looking car*) tryna duck 12's (*police*)  
So what's up wit dem T-shirts  
I got a T-shirt (*with drugs*) tuck under my T-shirt  
Better watch yo f\*\*\*in' tone man  
Cuz U know Gucci keep a tone (*gun*) man

## Appendix L

To help readers understand some of the reasons (right or wrong) why certain individuals reject schooling, this poem by the alternative genre' band Good Charlotte may help.

Artist: Good Charlotte

Song: "The Anthem"

Album: The Anthem

### The Anthem

It's a new day

But it all feels old

It's a good life,

that's what I'm told

But everything, it all just feels the same

At my high school

It felt more to me

like a jail cell, or penitentiary

My time there, only made me see

That I don't ever want to be like you

I don't want to do the things you do

I'm never going to hear the words you say

And I don't ever want to,

I don't ever want to be

You

Don't want to be just like you

What I'm saying' is

This is the anthem

Throw all your hands up

You

Don't want to be you

"Go to college,

A university

Get a real job"

That's what they said to me

But I could never live the way they want

I'm going to get by

And just do my time

Out of step while

They all get in line

I'm just a minor threat so pay no mind

Do you really want to be like them?  
Do you really want to be another trend?  
Do you want to be part of their crowd?  
Cause I don't ever want to  
I don't ever want to be

You  
Don't want to be just like you  
What I'm saying' is  
This is the anthem  
Throw all your hands up  
You  
Don't want to be you

You  
Don't want to be just like you  
What I'm saying' is  
This is the anthem  
Throw all your hands up  
Y'all got to feel me, sing if you're with me

You  
Don't want to be just like you (just like you)  
This is the anthem  
Throw all your hands up  
Y'all got to feel me, sing if you're with me

Another loser anthem (Whoa-oh)  
Another loser anthem (Whoa-oh)  
Another loser anthem (Whoa-oh)  
Another loser anthem

## Appendix M

*NUVO*  
INDY'S WEEKLY ALTERNATIVE NEWSPAPER  
HIGHLIGHTING ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

### **The Unconvinced Generation**

October 25, 2006 p. 4

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Our current discussions about IPS/Indiana dropout/graduation rates need a shot of honesty (Cover, Sept. 20-27). Over the last 60 years, adults have tried to reason, warn, plead and even threaten youth to stay in school. Presenting health, lifestyle and employment/wage factors, along with incarceration numbers, year after year messages on TV/radio, buses, billboards, as well as lectures, sermons or crying parents attempt to persuade students to get their diploma.

Many adults are dismayed, believing that despite dropout warnings, youth aren't listening. This implies the message is out there and youth ignore it. However, youth are not ignoring it — they are listening, yet remain out of school. Why?

Part of the problem is educators and others who can't accept that youth remain so unmoved, so they say kids aren't listening. Evidently, the truth is, one in five IPS male students would rather take their chances without a diploma.

And, this will continue to happen despite warnings, discipline actions or alternative schools. Many youth will do anything not to give into "schooling" and the passivity and in-authenticity it requires of them.

What is interesting is that this is not just a local problem. According to International Journal on School Disaffection, this is a global phenomenon. Schools are simply not connecting with students. Japan's "school refusers" have quit public schools and formed their own. Aboriginals in Australia have a 25 percent graduation rate. The working class, minorities or the disaffected in most countries express their alienation from their public schools with their non-compliance or dropping out.

IPS and others have to figure out why, but they won't be helped in their figuring if they think youth aren't listening. The real point [is]: The adults are failing in their responsibility to prepare the next generation for the future.

Examples are the glaring cultural, socio-economic and generational disconnect between students and staff illustrated by the daily confrontations between the hip-hop culture and IPS culture. The "trials" of schooling, in our present dropout factories, an experience by law students must go through and endure, are not only irrelevant to their everyday lives, they are so unnatural, and psychologically/politically hazardous, it's just not worth it to many IPS students.

Our suggestions encompass support for the IPS small schools. However, they cannot do it alone. NUVO must begin to systematically inform the public about small schools development. When

the public is informed, this will put pressure on IPS since everyone will know what is happening compared to what is expected.

This will inform teachers — although they have been informed and trained, 90 percent of teachers still don't get small schools. Thus, IPS has small schools, but large high school oriented teachers.

This will also help each small school to be unique and self-governing, and not micro-managed by IPS campus and/or downtown administrators.

Finally, students will know what is to be expected, and this will be talked about more at home and on the street. We simply can't trust IPS to do small schools without constant public awareness and scrutiny. The discussions and critiques that have heretofore been much too private must become public; there is too much at stake.

It's not that our media-savvy young people are not aware of the messages. Yet, the recent 2006 Schott Foundation's report of incredibly low state (Florida 31%) and district (Indianapolis 21%) graduation rates for black males imply these youth are not persuaded the messages are valid. After decades of hearing this slogan, "You've got to have an education," evidently they, and others, remain unconvinced.

Jose Evans  
City County Councilor  
District 1

## Appendix N

### UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2015

Woven throughout IDEC 2006 was the global theme of sustainability. This was true because education for sustainability and democratic education go together. The future belongs to the children. Our schools and curriculum must be based on the principles and spirit of sustainable development. Since it is their future we are preparing for, students must be a part of all aspects of the processes involved in creating sustainable schools.

The theme of the UN conference was: Sustainable Development and Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: What we can do now for the children of the future--An educational paradigm shift.

#### **Keynote speech: Timely wisdom**

In his keynote speech, Dr. Ervin Laszlo, philosopher, futurist, founder, and president of the Club of Budapest expressed these ideas.

The classical concept of the task of education is the handing down of historical knowledge in society from one generation to the next. This ensures continuity of culture—performing the function of memory in society. Education passed on useful “facts”: historical, scientific, and mathematical “truths,” and the defensible tenets of the social sciences, or philosophy. This concept remains valid, but the definition of what constitutes “useful knowledge” is subject to change. Until recently, this useful knowledge was that which enabled one to pass tests and find “good” jobs so one could maintain oneself or family in the active life of society. In a market-based economy it was assumed that good jobs fulfilled an important function, so that receiving useful knowledge in school automatically ensures usefulness for the student as well as for society.

The above conception is still true, but it no longer covers all the tasks of education. There is an additional element of useful knowledge that goes beyond the immediate concerns regarding socialization or finding useful employment. This additional element is termed, “timely wisdom.”

#### **Useful knowledge and/or Anticipatory knowledge**

Timely wisdom is an adaptive, yet more exactly, a pre-adaptive approach, rather than a memory function. Under conditions of rapid and fundamental change, knowledge that was deemed useful may prove to be obsolete; and knowledge that was deemed abstract or irrelevant may turn out to be useful.

This is “anticipatory knowledge” and is knowledge that comes from the empirical sciences, from the social sciences in regard to trend extrapolations and system-development simulations, and from the frontiers of the natural sciences in regard to new discoveries. Anticipatory knowledge extends historical/useful knowledge into the foreseen and perhaps already emerging future. Ensuring the ongoing viability of society calls for conveying this idea:

*It is the task of enabling the next generation to develop the judgment necessary to function creatively/responsibly under new and perhaps historically unprecedented circumstances.*

Most societies confuse education with ideology, assimilation, indoctrination, or training by authoritarian means, or by compulsory schooling wearing the mask of democracy--all suppressing the development of independent judgment and personal creativity.

Rather than through indoctrination, the young generation must have access to programs of education conducive to developing sound and independent judgment and the creativity to act on the basis of such judgment. This requirement highlights the difference between indoctrinating with preconceived values and beliefs, and catalyzing timely wisdom. Educating for the 21<sup>st</sup> century calls for providing students with relevant state-of-the-world briefings and an impartial learning environment allowing the unbiased assessment of the information contained in the briefings.

### **We need a shift in civilization**

The basic insight to crystallize in this learning process is that the presently unsustainable condition of society cannot be remedied by patch-up solutions: *it is a shift in civilization*. This would not be the first civilizational shift in history, but the first to occur rapidly, in the span of a single generation, and to occur on the level of the planet as a global village.

Systematic exposure to this information can catalyze new insights on the part of students, and this in turn can motivate the search for, and the adoption of, a more adapted and responsible ethics.

### **Competitiveness or Spaceship ethics**

An ethics suited to a new and sustainable civilization can evolve on the part of the students themselves when they recognize the reality of the civilizational shift and the challenges it poses. Central to this ethics must be the extent to which individuals and organizations recognize the limits of stability in human socio-ecological systems. Consequently the indicated new ethics could be many things, but it must also be a "spaceship ethics"—the realization that we are all on this "spaceship earth" together, interconnected and dependent on each other for survival.

In conclusion, the crucial task of contemporary education is to catalyze adapted insight and ethics. Without the insight that we are in the midst of a Great Transition toward a globally interconnected and interdependent civilization, individuals will not fundamentally change the way they are thinking, and without the appropriate ethics they will not feel compelled to act on their insights.

Since a new civilization cannot be created by directives from a higher authority but must arise from the fertile soil of grass-roots concern and creativity, education's task of catalyzing *timely wisdom* in the young generation is crucial. Without it, competitiveness in the short term could spell obsolescence in the long term (Laszio, 2005).

### **Closing remarks: In the midst of unsustainable societies**

To close out the conference Yoshiyuki Nagata, of the National Institute for Education Policy Research (NIER) expressed these ideas.

He began by stating that the idea of growth--that we can sustain an increased and unlimited growth, which encourages "going around and doing whatever we please" with the planet's resources--is a myth. The reality is: We are situated in the midst of unsustainable societies. We must take this precious opportunity to turn full circle: Look back at where we have been, where we are, and where we are going. He noted Dr. Laszio's words appear to be a message directed to each and every one of us, sounding a warning bell for human society

When we turn our thoughts to education, it is crucial that we critique our various motives and expectations so that we can reexamine our vision of what education today should be in light of the reality of unsustainability that faces the entire global community.

This conference contains a message of penetrating insight into the educational community: Education has been entirely too preoccupied with immediate profit, and has placed greater value on competing rather than on coexisting with others.

He closed the conference by emphasizing we must change the nearsighted views of children and their academic ability we have had in recent years. We have to realize our children and youth can and must be prepared to save our planet. This is what the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development is all about (Nagata, 2005). See: [www.EducationForSustainableDevelopment.com](http://www.EducationForSustainableDevelopment.com).

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## Appendix O

### **The presentation of Phil Smith and Sue Burton: A Conversation between Sustainability Education and Democratic Education**

Mr. Smith and Ms. Burton asked the group to list the characteristics of a democratic school. The group listed these ideas:

- Freedom (to think, associate, express, choose, self-regulation)
- Open (clear about what constitutes learning, how it takes place)
- Diversity
- Inclusion
- A philosophy that reflects international human rights laws
- Individualization/customization (respect the uniqueness of each person, enable self-actualization)
- High expectations (being in charge of one's learning, protecting excellence, enabling continuous empowerment)

Burton and Smith then noted that these characteristics could also be used to describe that which enables sustainability. They discussed the UN's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014 (DESD)—a global effort to ensure the future for “every one, every where, every when.”

They went on to explain “sustainable schools” which they defined as a means to carry out the DESD initiative. These schools:

- Require changing the way we think, live, and work
- Are about:
  1. Learning for change
  2. Learning to make informed decisions
  3. Widening our capacity to take action and make practical change

They listed the values for sustainable schools:

- Care
- Excellence
- Responsibility
- Collaboration
- Participation
- Critical thinking
- Future thinking
- Visioning
- Values clarification
- Cross-cultural connections

- Multi-stakeholder dialogue
- Action and reflection
- Organizational change
- Holistic thinking
- Integrating thinking and action
- Exploring the process of change
- Participation and the knowledge and skills for participation
- More on social and structural change than personal
- Local action in workplace and community
- Local community orientated action and learning
- Facilitating the growth of leadership qualities in everyone
- Recognizing local knowledge and capacity
- Education that questions our thinking, our assumptions, practices, and education approaches

That made the point that sustainable schools ask:

- How do we democratize the public school system so students have a voice?
- Once students have a voice, how are students involved with decisions?

They also noted that sustainable schools imply teacher training for quality teaching.

They discussed the term “environmental citizenship” as the duty of citizens to take a voice in environmental issues and decisions. As well as encouraging students to take on their duty to vote and be a part of their political community, *schools must encourage students to take on their environmental responsibilities.*

The relationship between Sustainability Education and Democratic Education was then made:

- Students must be informed and given the opportunity to share in classroom and school decisions that directly/indirectly involve the values, practices, and goals of global DESD efforts.
- This would involve them in the process of:
  - a. Deciding what issue, problem, or task that they, the class, school, or community wants to study, research, solve, or carry out
  - b. How, where, when they want to study/research/solve it
  - c. How their DESD efforts will be assessed

### **Funding possibilities for democratic public schools**

Burton and Smith finally noted that although there is no funding for Democratic Education per se, there is for Sustainable Education. Since the two are very similar, those interested in democratic education could get funding under the DESD orientation.

They suggested contacting the North American Association for Environmental Education ([www.naaee.org](http://www.naaee.org)) for funding opportunities.

In conclusion: If we want sustainability, we have to have democracy. Environmentally sustainable schools/classrooms need student voices. Sustainability Education needs Democratic Education.

### **Relevance/Application**

The argument that there is a relationship between sustainable education (SE) and democratic education (DE) is a solid one. It makes sense that not only must our public schools prepare students (our future generation) to create and maintain a sustainable world, but that students must be an integral and equal part of the decision-making process covering all aspects of our sustainability efforts.

Characteristics of both sustainable education and democratic education require the use of lower, middle, and higher order thinking skills. They also require application processes that rank from the simple task of distributing information to applying solutions to real world situations, and on to the complexities of public policy formation.

Inherent in both SE and DE is teaching for social justice—having students list, research, and solve social/economic issues that affect urban students on an everyday basis. To some urban minorities and working class youth, schools represent the power structure (Polite, 1994; Watkins, 2001; Duncan-Andrade, 2005). When educators enable students to use their time in school to do something about the injustices they experiences, the school will seem less of an obstacle. Respect for teachers and administration will come when students see that staff are on their side and want to educate them in the own interests, not the interests of some other entity. Why would the urban poor want to be assimilated into a socio-economic system where they're at the bottom?

Sustainable schools/democratic schools collaboration would be all encompassing, fundamental, and powerful. As well as being relevant and urgent, it has emotion, challenge, and it is filled with hope. To top it off, this is not just a local or national concept, but also a global initiative. With world communications available for students to talk and collaborate across borders and oceans, the possibilities are remarkable.

View the Education For Sustainable Development website to see links to a presentation by Soren Breiting given at the 2005 International Health Cities conference in Taipei, October 29-30, 2005 titled: "How can schools help healthy cities? Experience from Denmark about the development of students' action competence." [www.EducationForSustainableDevelopment.com](http://www.EducationForSustainableDevelopment.com).

Viewers will see how educators, at the global level, are taking a new look at environmental education in the presentation at 3rd World Environmental Congress Torino, Italy, October 2-5, 2005: "The New Generation of Environmental Education as ESD" (Education for Sustainable Development). Examples from Denmark, Thailand and Hungary are included.

One can also view via the above web page the UNESCO website for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, the Draft International Implementation Scheme for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, and read: “Review the First meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee (IAC) on the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014).”

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[www.EducationForSustainableDevelopment.com](http://www.EducationForSustainableDevelopment.com)
- Watkins, W. (2001). *The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865-1954*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

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## Appendix P

Individuals and Groups Against School Uniforms ([www.geocities.com/school\\_uniforms](http://www.geocities.com/school_uniforms))

- \* Links and background on Mount Carmel Elementary School
- \* ACLU.org. American Civil Liberties Union
- \* SchoolUniforms-not.org--by parents
- \* MandatorySchoolUniform.org--parents opposing mandatory uniforms
- \* NoMoreUniforms.org--Interboro Parents against mandatory uniforms
- \* Citizens for Parental Rights (CPR)--Lafayette, LA
- \* Lowell, Massachusetts--Arguments Against Mandatory School Uniforms in Public Schools
- \* Asserting Parental Rights--it's Our Duty (APROD)
- \* Pauline School Uniforms and Dress Codes Page
- \* Families Opposed to Children's Uniforms in Our Schools (FOCUS)--Cordova, Alabama
- \* StopUniforms.org
- \* Polk County School Uniforms page--Opposes the mandatory uniform policy in Polk County, Florida public schools. Describes parents' lawsuit against it
- \* School Uniforms: Prevention or Suppression? by Raymond F. Felch III
- \* Atherton Community Cooperation Group--Opposes a mandatory uniform policy in Atherton High School in Louisville, Kentucky
- \* Citizens Against Uniforms Supporting Education (CAUSE)--Opposes a mandatory uniform policy in Walker County, Alabama public schools
- \* Parents Against Mandatory Uniforms--Opposes a mandatory uniform policy in Bossier Parish, Louisiana public schools
- \* Parents Against Mandatory Uniforms San Antonio, Texas (PAMUSAT)
- \* Uniforms don't help prepare students for life--Pensacola News
- \* It should be left to parents to decide their child's dress--Pensacola News
- \* Sicker's Anti-uniform page--Student in U.S. presents reasons to not wear a uniform
- \* Sociologists question the premise of uniforms. Review of data/ social theory raises questions that school uniforms may be a "placebo" that make school boards feel better, and little else
- \* The (nonexistent) value of uniforms. Six reasons why uniforms should not be a part of schools
- \* Sanibel Island, Florida--Mike Neal presents arguments against school uniforms
- \* The Anti-uniform Zone--A student in U.S. presents arguments against school uniforms
- \* Wilson County Parents Coalition--Opposes a mandatory uniform policy in Wilson County, Tennessee public schools. Links to sociology studies on effects of uniforms in school
- \* School Uniforms: Seeing Schoolchildren as Canned Sardines--by Jordan Riak
- \* School Uniforms Lead to Fascism by J.C. Miller
- \* School uniforms do not decrease violence or increase academic achievement
- \* Rivermouth Action Group--Queensland, Australia
- \* Those Disgusting School Uniforms. Article in Optionality Magazine, October 1998, discussing school uniforms at schools in Australia and worldwide