Topic Overview:

Of course schools try to create a positive **environment** for students. It helps students feel happier and learn better. Some argue for uniforms as one way to create a positive environment. This **op-ed**, written by a student, argues that a common sense **dress code** helps create this kind of positive environment. While a uniform policy is easy to **enforce**, the author feels it is too **restrictive**. A dress code sets out guidelines and requires students to make a **judgment call** about what they can and cannot wear according to the code. Some people think that even dress codes are too restrictive because they violate students’ right to free speech. **As you read, decide which policy you think is best for schools: dress codes, uniforms, or no dress policy at all.**

##### Vocabulary:

##### Anglo-Saxon

(adj): associated with the Germanic inhabitants that arrived in England in the 5th century

assembly

(noun): a mass gathering

dress code

(noun): a set of rules that state what students can and cannot wear

enforce

(verb): make another person follow a rule

environment

(noun): surroundings

environment

(noun): surroundings

judgment call

(noun): a decision based on someone’s personal thoughts about a situation

op-ed

(noun): an opinion essay in a newspaper by a guest writer; short for opposite editorial, because the essays usually run opposite of the editorial page

potential

(adj.): having the ability to develop and grow in the future

prohibited

(adj.): banned

restrictive

(adj.): limiting

wardrobe

(noun): a collection of a person’s clothes

Create circle maps within your group for EACH word. You may divide the workload however you see fit.

Text: Uniform or Dress Code: There's a Difference

I attended sixth grade at a school that had a very strict uniform policy. The boys had to wear button-down white shirts, ties, and navy blue pants. The girls wore white blouses, blue tights or knee socks, and pleated navy blue skirts. Both boys and girls could add a navy blue blazer if they desired. But that was the only wardrobe choice they got to make on their own.

I do understand the attitude that uniforms can be a good thing. A 2016 international study on student discipline had some interesting results. The researchers’ aim was to show the relationship between discipline and learning. They compared the levels of school discipline in five different geographic clusters throughout the world. These included Europe, the Americas, Far East Asia, the rest of Asia, and what they called the Anglo-Saxon cluster. In this study, titled “School Discipline, Uniforms, and Academic Performance,” the researchers defined “discipline” as the kinds of actions and policies schools used to reduce unwanted types of behavior. The study looked closely at how actual school policies in different parts of the world affected academic performance. The peak performing cluster, they found, was Far East Asia, a region that generally enforced strict discipline in the classroom as well as a widespread requirement that students wear uniforms.

The “uniform” portion of the study didn’t address the relationship between uniforms and student violence. Instead, the focus was to discover whether wearing uniforms had any effect on school discipline. The researchers found that it did. According to published results of the study, “…for countries where students wear school uniforms, our study found that students listen significantly better, there are lower noise levels, and lower teaching waiting times with classes starting on time.” So uniforms helped students stay disciplined, which in turn resulted in higher academic performance.

That’s a pretty good argument for uniforms, I admit, but in my experience it’s still not the best option. During school assembly I would gaze around at a sea of kids all dressed exactly alike. If you had asked me if I was in favor of uniforms, I would surely have answered no. In fact, I would have told you I hated them. To be honest, despite research results, I still don't care for uniforms. But my new school has a dress code, and I'm very much in favor of that.

Now maybe you're thinking "Why? What's the difference?" First, the typical uniform policy is more restrictive than a dress code. But that said, uniform policies are easier to enforce. That's because it is obvious right away if someone is out of uniform. With a dress code, it can be a little more complicated. It's often a judgment call. In essence, a dress code is a set of guidelines about what you can't wear. A uniform is a set of hard-and-fast rules about what you must wear.

Consider the uniform at my old school, which I mentioned earlier. Compare that with my current school's dress code, which asks students to follow a few simple rules. These include avoiding any clothing printed with profanity or hateful language. That just seems like common sense to me. Who needs to see bad language or racist comments coming through the halls? Any gang-related clothing is also prohibited. In many parts of the country, kids have been beaten up or even killed over gang colors or symbols. Both boys' and girls' pants must fit well enough that they aren't falling down, or "sagging." Visible underwear, strapless shirts or dresses, and anything with a very low-cut neckline are not allowed.

Some of my fellow students complain about our dress code. They say it should be abolished because it violates their right to free speech. The way I see it, the dress code makes sense. It creates a safer, more positive environment. Sticking with a few simple rules solves a lot of potential problems and builds respectful attitudes. Though it does provide a guideline, the dress code also allows students freedom of choice. For me, being told what I absolutely can't wear still allows me a say as to what I can wear. It lets me take some control over how I present myself. On the other hand, strict uniform policies offer almost no freedom of choice. Being told exactly what we must wear is just too limiting.

Step 1 with the text:

Using a BLUE pen, find evidence and reasoning that dress codes are GOOD for schools. Write down that evidence on your own sheet of paper and take a note about why this policy is better or worse than school uniforms or no dress policy.

Step 2 with the text:

Using a BLACK pen, find evidence and reasoning to support the argument that school uniforms are good for schools. Write down that evidence on your own sheet of paper and take a note about why this policy is better or worse than dress codes or no dress policy.

Step 3: Summarize the article. If you need help, use the following sentence stem:

According to the article “Uniform or Dress Code: There’s a Difference,” the difference between a uniform policy and a dress code is \_\_\_\_\_\_. Three examples of dress code guidelines are \_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_.

Step 4: Create a claim that answers the following: Which school dress policy creates a more positive school environment: uniforms or a dress code?

If you need help, use the following sentence stem: [Dress codes/School uniforms] create the most positive school environment because \_\_\_\_\_\_.

Do not begin your claim with “I think” or “I believe.” Readers will know these are your thoughts and beliefs, since you are the author.

Step 5: Create an interesting beginning sentence. Put your opening sentence, summary, and claim (thesis) together as one introduction.

Step 6: Think of three reasons you believe what you believe about the topic. Use these reasons to create three topic sentences.

Step 7: For each reason, attach evidence from the text to it. Explain how that evidence proves your topic sentence. Every time you have evidence, explain your reason. You may need to do this 2-3 times to have a fully complete paragraph.

Step 8: Transition to your next topic.

Step 9: Counterclaim: Explain one good reason why someone might disagree with your claim and then explain why that claim is incorrect or weaker than your claims. In other words, prove the other side WRONG.

Step 10: Conclude your paper. Rewrite your thesis, sum up your main points, and close.