

In my opinion, the Davenport Community School District should adopt a uniform policy for all of its students. A safe and disciplined learning environment is the most important ingredient of a good school. Parents, teachers, and school authorities have seen that school uniforms are a good and creative way to have fewer problems and more safety at school.

In addition to promoting school safety and reducing discipline problems, the adoption of a school uniform policy can improve the learning environment. The results of this include the following benefits from uniform policies:

- causes less violence and theft over expensive clothing and shoes;
- prevents gang members from wearing their gang colors or signs in school;
- teaches students discipline;
- helps school authorities recognize visitors in the building; and
- helps parents and students resist peer pressure.

In order for uniforms to be a success, the following must be considered when deciding to adopt a school uniform policy:

1. Get parents involved—parental support is important in getting the student to wear the uniform.
2. Protect students' religious expression—a uniform policy must consider students' religious beliefs and not stop them from wearing their religion's requirements.
3. Protect other rights of expression—such as wearing items as long as they do not cause disruption or interfere with discipline or the rights of others.
4. Decide on a voluntary or mandatory policy.
5. Assist families that need financial help by providing uniforms to students who cannot afford them.
6. Treat school uniforms as part of an overall safety program including drug prevention, drug testing, and conflict resolution programs.

The adoption of a school uniform policy for all students would help improve the learning environment by helping students concentrate on their school work. To be a success, many things must be considered when deciding to adopt a school uniform policy. Again, in my opinion, the Davenport Community School District should adopt a school uniform policy for all of its students.

—Rachel Springsteen

In my opinion, the Davenport Community School District should adopt a uniform policy for all students and enforce such a policy.

Students wear inappropriate clothing. When it's winter, students wear capris and tank tops. Students wear skirts that fall above their knees—above where their hands touch their thighs. Most students come to school in clothes that don't match the season of the year. Some students wear flip-flops to school when it's snowing outside. During summer, some students wear layers of clothes, then complain they're too hot. All of this affects the students' learning environment.

According to the Davenport Community School District, inappropriate clothing should be prohibited from schools. Tops should not show the stomach, waistline, upper chest, arm-pits, or undergarments. The arms of the top should be at least 2 inches wide; if not, then kids should be allowed to get another shirt from either the office or their lockers. Clothing should not be so tight that it shows off inappropriate areas. Pants should not be so tight that you can't walk up stairs in them. Clothing should not be so baggy that students cannot walk from class to class without holding up their pants. Students are offered the use of rope or a belt to hold up their pants.

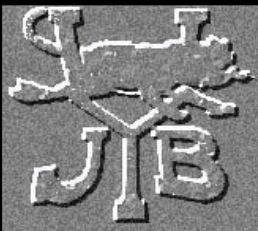
I believe the uniform policy should allow pants and skirts for girls. Girls who really don't want to wear skirts shouldn't be forced to do so. Whether girls wear skirts should also depend on how short or long the skirts are. Some girls don't like to show their legs. Common sense tells us that we don't really need to have so many outfits for school. This is something that parents will appreciate. It will end the morning hassle that some households go through regarding appropriate school clothing.

If the Davenport Community School District does adopt such a policy, I think this will encourage more students to attend school in Davenport, as they will see that in Davenport, we expect and give only our best.

—Dominique Dickerson

In my opinion, the Davenport District should adopt uniforms for all its students because if we had uniforms, we wouldn't be different. People who are poor wouldn't stand out. Kids' moms wouldn't have to worry about buying their kids new clothes. Kids wouldn't get jumped because they may be wearing gang colors by mistake. If all students wore uniforms, people wouldn't make judgments based on clothes because everyone

W H A T I T H G R A D E S T H I N K



would be dressed the same.

If we had uniforms, some children wouldn't worry about how they look. They'd be able to worry about their education. Right now, kids are sent to the office because they are wearing something inappropriate. Teachers wouldn't have to worry about that if we had uniforms. Kids wouldn't be made fun of because of their clothes. Maybe some people would change.

Without teachers having to write referrals for clothes, maybe some kids would be nicer. There might be less yelling between teachers and students—and maybe more talking. The kids might get a better education. Because kids wouldn't be worrying about their clothes, teachers wouldn't worry about referrals and education would be better. For that reason, the Davenport District should adopt a uniform policy.

—Ethan Slutts

In my opinion, the Davenport Community Schools should adopt year round school. I think in the three months of summer we forget all the education we learned the year before. With year round school, we'd go to school the same number of days. That's why the kids don't like it—they think they have to go to school longer if we have year round school.

Parents find that year round school is good for the learning style and good for their life styles at home. The holiday breaks are longer for year round schools. The teachers like it because they get frequent breaks, and they don't get burned out as easily.

The kids remember the education they learned in the year before. According to the National Association for Year Round Education or NAYRE, students showed increased education achievement in year round schools. Seventy-one percent of Hispanics' test scores went up by 400% in some grades. Schools adopt year round education also because of cost saving features.

Although some studies show that there are no advantages to year round school, I think there are. For me, the summer gets too long, and I can't wait for school to start. I get burned out in the school year, and I think more breaks would help. That's why I would prefer year round school.

—Luke Rodriguez

In my opinion, the salary for teachers should be raised in the state of Iowa. The pay is incredibly low. Iowa's teaching standards are wonderfully high, yet Iowa teachers earn very

little. These are but a few reasons why the pay should be raised.

Iowa is ranked 40th for the highest teacher salary, which starts at one, nationwide. At one point in time, Iowa teacher pay ranked 34th in the country, but that rating has now dropped twice. The state of Iowa has the highest SAT scores in the country. This means we have the highest teaching quality in the country.

Teachers must fulfill several requirements before they can teach, then they have to teach for 15 years to earn the state's average pay per year in Iowa. The average pay per year in Iowa is \$39,432 per year; that's nearly \$7300 less than the national average. Iowa teachers, in my opinion, are some of the best teachers in the country. We, meaning Iowans, created the ITBS tests used around the world. The pay is terribly low if you compare their test scores to our test results.

California pays the most in the country at \$55,695 a year. Iowa, which has a much higher teacher quality, pays \$39,432 per year. California isn't even in the top 5 for SAT scores in the country, and yet they out pay us, the highest ranking SAT scorers in the country. These are a few reasons why, in my opinion, teacher salaries should be raised in the state of Iowa.

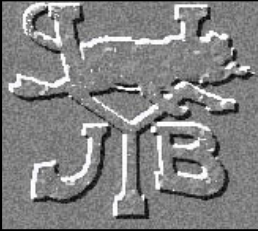
—A. J. Larson

In my opinion, the state of Iowa should raise their teachers' salaries. Teachers teach people, and they learn new things. Teachers don't get enough money a year for what they do because they suffer lots of money loss.

Iowa doesn't have the lowest salary score, but it's just about there. Between 2001 and 2002, Iowa had the 35th lowest teachers' salaries out of 37. New Jersey was the highest; Idaho was the lowest. Now, California is the highest (\$55,693) and South Dakota is the lowest (\$31,383). Teachers with bachelors' degrees earn \$30,296 while teachers with masters' degrees earn \$40,306.

Iowa's teachers' salaries increased \$373 or 1% from 2002-2003 to 2003-2004. That is the lowest increase since 1970. In the last fifteen years, the gap has almost doubled from the national average to Iowa's average. The national average is \$46,432. Why are Iowa's teaching salaries going down? Iowa has the best SAT scores in the United States

**These persuasive essays
were written by Mrs.
Griggs's seventh grade stu-
dents.**



but it has the lowers teacher salaries—almost. Right now, “Teachers face a forty-million dollar shortfall on top of a decade of cuts,” said James Williams, a senior in high school. Debra Williams, of the Maryland State Teachers Association, said that a 5% raise for most teachers in Maryland in 2000 may have made several school districts “complacent” when it came to teacher pay. “However, that was only a first step toward getting salaries where they need to be,” she said. That is what we need to do with Iowa’s teacher salaries; build them up each year.

That’s why Iowa should raise their teacher salaries—Iowa hasn’t had a big increase in teacher salaries, teachers face a forty million dollar loss, and without teachers, we wouldn’t be where we are today.

—Melodie Bou

Suicide: “The destruction or ruin of one’s own interests.” My definition of suicide is the killing of one’s inner self. The world’s definition of suicide is the killing of one’s physical self.

Every day teenagers try to kill themselves. It’s not just teenagers but also senior citizens who try to kill themselves along with other people. If people didn’t kill themselves, would the world be over populated? If people quit giving birth, would the world be under populated? Who knows...and who knows why people try to kill themselves. I, for one, don’t.

Why do people try to kill themselves or ruin their own interests? Tired of living? Tired of living a crappy life? Do they just want to die? Some people who have tried to kill themselves say they were depressed or just tired of living everyday. Why not try to make it better instead of worse?

If you know anyone who is talking about suicide or even contemplating it, take it seriously. I do now. Before today, I have known many people who have attempted suicide, and I know people who will probably commit suicide in the future. It’s not something to play around with. Teenagers shouldn’t want to die. We should be happy doing teenaged stuff—hanging out with friends, going to the mall—not trying to kill ourselves.

If you know anyone who is talking about suicide, tell an adult, a parent, somebody. Don’t just sit by and watch somebody harm themselves. Don’t become a bystander then later on feel guilty about not doing anything. Someone once told me “Don’t live your life carrying the weight of regret and guilt on your shoulders. Because then you’re not living life at all.”

—Anna Hernandez

Blood

Drip, Drip, Drip, the blood flows from my wound
Drip, drop, plop, I hope it never stops
The pain of the wound pushes away
The pain of the day

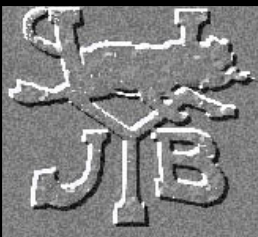
I hear you come into the house
And stop, sensing something's wrong
I smile to myself
So you knew all along

I hear you running down the hall
You stumble, but you don't fall
You call to me, praying that I'm safe
But you know that it's far too late

I told you I was sad
Unhappiness pouring from me like the blood does now
You pound on the door
Yelling “let me in!”
But
It's far too late
I feel the arms of Death
They cradle me
Drawing me into Oblivion

—Nicole Liebe

Why are people so **racist**? Why do people hate a certain race? Why do people hate people of a certain religion, culture, or sexual preference? What did those people ever do? I think people only hate certain people because it gives them something to do. Say an Hispanic person assaulted a Caucasian man. Then that Caucasian man hates all Hispanics. Is that fair? No. Just because one person screwed up doesn't mean you should hate the whole race for what that one person did. That doesn't make sense. I think people only hate people because it gives them something to do, and they want to blame all of their misfortunes on somebody or something.



J B YOUNG

Why do people hate homosexuals? What did they ever do to straight people to get them to hate them? Nothing. What, it's not right—so we hate them? No, it shouldn't be like that. We shouldn't hate people because they are different from us. Somebody is short, tall, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, and/or gay so we automatically should hate them? Look, that person is short. Let's go hate them because they are different. It isn't right. None of this is right. People are people—just like a dog is a dog. There are different breeds, but they get along and play together just like we do. Dogs are everywhere just like humans. No matter what you do to them, they are still going to be around whether you like it or not.

So grow up and be more mature. Don't hate somebody because they are different from you. Who's to say you're so hot?

—Anna Hernandez



Bully

Before spring break we had lessons during enrichment about bully proofing our school, and how not to let ourselves become bystanders or victims. I don't know about the rest of the school, but in my class, a lot of kids said things like, "They can't stop bullying," or "This is so stupid!"

I wonder if the five students who were killed by a classmate recently in Minnesota wish they'd had a chance to take a few of the lessons we scoffed at. I guess they can't decide now.

We dismiss bullying as "okay" because we see it every-day and sometimes participate. It's easy to make a sarcastic remark about someone's hair or clothes. But remember, however much the comment you make affects you, it affects the victim about 100 times more.

Everyone knows who the bullied kids are, and they know who they are. I don't expect everyone to personally apologize to every person they've ever been mean to, but maybe when we walk down the hallway, we can hold back that snide remark. The reason I say this, honestly, is because one of

those kids who is tormented constantly is going to snap some day in some way—and I don't want to be in any way responsible for it.

—Erin Friedrich

DOSER

She sits,
wrists turned toward the ceiling,
revealing criss-cross scratches
barely visible,
the work
of a gentle paperclip
she wants, needs,
them to notice.
I sit, observing her,
a sadistic smile
covering my face.
Adults disregard her act.
They know what she is,
but her peers listen
to her brag about things
she's never done
will never do.
They label her
cool.

That will satisfy her,
for now.

Wannabe.

—Erin Friedrich



The Drama Queen

Sometimes people with very dramatic personalities cut as a way to call attention to themselves. Kirsty used to cut in the school bathroom so her friends could "find" her. When they showed fear or panicked at the sight of Kirsty bleeding, it just reinforced her cutting. Fortunately, a school counselor helped Kirsty get the assistance she needed.

—taken from
the Nemours Foundation

Follow-up Comments from Miss Mallory:

You know how sometimes the best intentions blow up in your face? Well, not quite, but things certainly went wrong. In trying to do Mr. Tadlock a favor, I inadvertently made the situation I was trying to help worse. Mr. Tadlock and I had a miscommunication thing going. He said several things, which I clearly heard, but to my 8th grade understanding, they meant something totally different—which resulted in several nontruths being published as truths. Oops. Live and learn.

—Mallory Cross/Mrs. Searle