

REL Appalachia Ask-A-REL Response

Discipline

July 2017

Question:

What published research is available regarding the impact that school uniforms have on safety in urban school districts?

Response:

Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about school uniforms. Ask-A-REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. Ask-A-REL provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations in response to questions about available education research.

In 2016, REL West addressed a similar question about research on school uniforms. We have provided the Web link to this resource in the “Additional Ask-A-REL Responses to Consult” section of this response. This Ask-A-REL response has updated and added additional references and organizations to consult about this topic, based on the most current information available.

Following an established REL Appalachia research protocol, we searched for research reports and descriptive study articles on school uniforms. We focused on identifying resources that specifically addressed the effects of school uniforms on school safety. The sources included ERIC and other federally funded databases and organizations, research institutions, academic research databases, and general Internet search engines. For more details, please see the methods section at the end of this document.

The research team did not evaluate the quality of the resources provided in this response; we offer them only for your reference. Also, the search included the most commonly used research databases and search engines to produce the references presented here, but the references are not necessarily comprehensive, and other relevant references and resources may exist.

References

Granberg-Rademacker, J. S., Bumgarner, J., & Johnson, A. (2007). Do school violence policies matter? An empirical analysis of four approaches to reduce school violence. *Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice*, 4(1), 3–29. Retrieved from http://www.swacj.org/swjci/archives/4.1/School_Violence.pdf

From the abstract: “Using data from the 2000 School Survey on Crime and Safety, this study examined the effects of school uniforms, security cameras, parental input, and school counselors on school-related deaths, sexual attacks, assaults, and weapons possessions. The results were mixed but generally showed that school uniform policies, security cameras and formal mechanisms for parental input can help in curbing certain types of school violence. Specifically, school uniform policies can help reduce the number of sexual attacks and the supply of weapons in school. The presence of security cameras can reduce instances of school-related deaths, sexual attacks, and the flow of weapons into schools. Formal mechanisms for involving parents can help decrease the number of school-related assaults. Overall, these findings suggest that school officials can take both proactive and reactive policy steps to address violence problems in their school, and that policy remedies can be narrowly tailored to attend to the specific type of violence encountered.”

Han, S. (2010). A mandatory uniform policy in urban schools: Findings from the School Survey on Crime and Safety: 2003–04. *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership*, 5(8). Retrieved from <http://journals.sfu.ca/ijep/index.php/ijep/article/viewFile/253/96>

From the abstract: “The main purpose of the study is to examine the relationships between a mandatory school uniform policy and students’ problem behaviors. The study is based on the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) 2003–04 data. Analyzing data from 421 urban schools, the study found that schools adopting a mandatory uniform policy are negatively associated with number of students’ problem behaviors while the level of schools’ safety initiatives are constant. In addition, the study revealed parental involvement at the elementary school level and teacher training and community efforts at the high school level as negative predictors of students’ problem behaviors.”

Sanchez, J. E., Yoxsimer, A., & Hill, G. C. (2012). Uniforms in the middle school: Student opinions, discipline data, and school police data. *Journal of School Violence*, 11(4), 345–356. Abstract retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ978349>

From the abstract: “This study investigated public middle school students’ opinions on the benefits of wearing a school uniform. A review of related literature is provided along with results of the opinions obtained from 604 seventh- and eighth-grade middle school students attending a public school in Nevada that had recently initiated a school uniform policy. Improvements in discipline data and school police data were also examined. Results highlighted the perceived benefits (i.e., decreases in discipline, gang involvement, and bullying and increases in safety, ease of going to school, confidence, and self-esteem) of wearing a uniform to school, as reported by students through a survey instrument. The results focus on gender, grade level, and racial/ethnic differences in students’ responses. Few significant differences were found. One benefit was found between genders, six benefits between grade levels, and three benefits related to racial/ethnic groups.”

Additional Organizations to Consult

Ithaca College WISE: Working to Improve Schools and Education:
http://www.ithaca.edu/wise/school_uniforms/

From the website: “The purpose of this website is to provide anyone interested in improving U.S. schools with valuable information and resources about important issues in education and teaching. Started by Professor Emeritus of Education, Jeff Claus, the information and resources presented here are the product of ongoing work by an education professor, Ellie Fitts Fulmer, at Ithaca College, in Ithaca, NY and students.”

Additional Ask-A-REL Responses to Consult

Ask-A-REL West at WestEd. (2016). *Information on school uniforms*. Retrieved from https://relwest.wested.org/system/documents/pdfs/480/original/REL_West_Reference_Desk_Memo_School_Uniforms_092016_508.pdf?1474663475

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- school uniforms
- “school uniforms” AND (safe* OR climate OR disciplin* OR violen* OR suspen* OR expell* OR expulsion)

Databases and Resources

We searched ERIC, a free online library of more than 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), for relevant resources. Additionally, we searched the academic database ProQuest, Google Scholar, and the commercial search engine Google.

Reference Search and Selection Criteria

In reviewing resources, Reference Desk researchers consider—among other things—these four factors:

- Date of the publication: Searches cover the most current information (i.e., within the last ten years), except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- Search priorities of reference sources: Search priorities include IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols. Applicable resources must be publicly available online and in English.
- Methodology: The following methodological priorities/considerations guide the review and selection of the references: (a) study types—randomized controlled trials, quasi experiments, surveys, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, policy briefs, etc., generally in this order; (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected), study duration, etc.; (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, etc.

- Existing knowledge base: Vetted resources (e.g., peer-reviewed research journals) are the primary focus, but the research base is occasionally slim or nonexistent. In those cases, the best resources available may include, for example, reports, white papers, guides, reviews in non-peer-reviewed journals, newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, and organization websites.

Resources included in this document were last accessed on June 20, 2017. URLs, descriptions, and content included here were current at that time.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by education stakeholders in the Appalachia region (Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia (REL AP) at SRI International. This Ask-A-REL response was developed by REL AP under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0004 from the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, administered by SRI International. The content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.