ACT - WRITING

Begin WRITING TEST here.

Parents and educators are increasingly concerned about the trend toward inappropriate dress in our schools. They feel that clothing that is too tight or too revealing may distract students and interfere with learning. They believe that a dress code should be adopted which would set guidelines for what students should wear in the school building. Others feel that a dress code should not be enacted because it would restrict individual students' freedom of expression.

Freedom of expression is important, but when inappropriate attire begins to interfere with the educational process, something needs to be done. Allowing students to wear whatever they want is clearly not working. Too many teens today seek to emulate rock stars and pick up fashion tips from MTV. In a culture that is inundated with sexual innuendo or worse, it is not surprising that kids show up at school in suggestive clothing. The educators are right. Short skirts and spandex tops can be extremely distracting to a population group driven largely by hormones. Establishing a dress code could help improve the learning environment in the school; unfortunately, dress codes can be extremely arbitrary and difficult to enforce. What is the solution? I think the

answer is school uniforms. This option would be far easier to enforce and has several advantages.

From a financial perspective, school uniforms could help even the playing field between poor and rich students. We live in a materialistic world and, for some, it is all about the label. They think that if its not Tommy, Levi, Gap, etc. that it is not good enough. Students can be cruel, and make fun of those who do not dress the same as they do. Wearing jeans with holes may be one student's form of expression but another's necessity. Mandating uniforms would dispense with this kind of discrimination. Purchasing a uniform would be far less expensive than a complete school wardrobe, and if there were some families that couldn't afford it, perhaps the school could provide one for them, or at least help defray the expense.

Another benefit of school uniforms is that they could help curb some of the gang-related violence in our schools. Gangs are associated with certain colors and members often hassle students who wear an

opposing gang's color. Sporting the innocent-looking sweater Aunt Rose gave you for your birthday could be like waving a red flag in front of an angry bull. With uniforms, this problem would disappear.

From a personal perspective, I would enjoy the sheer effortlessness of not having to rummage through my closet each morning trying to decide what to wear. Some may enjoy selecting their outfit for the day, but not me! Having a school uniform would make my morning routine go much faster, and maybe even leave a little extra time to finish up yesterday's homework.

While uniforms in high schools promise many benefits, we should not expect that they are a cure-all. Uniforms alone will not raise student grades, confer equality, or make schools entirely safe for all students. Uniforms cannot learn math or earn high schools on state tests. Students must do these things for themselves. However, I do believe that uniforms in high schools can go a long way toward helping students succeed by providing a learning environment that supports achievement rather than one that is distracting, discriminating, and dangerous.

So, in conclusion, I strongly support not just a dress code, which would be difficult to enforce, but a resolution to adopt school uniforms for our entire district. Uniforms would not only solve the problems associated with inappropriate dress and create a better learning environment, but could also serve to end inequality, help curb gang violence, and make our mornings a little less hectic.

Sample Essay (Score = 6)

Scoring Explanation

Essays that earn a score of 6 are ample, effective essays that represent strong responses to the task.

This essay is very strong and effective. It recognizes and addresses the complexity of the issue by recognizing several perspectives on the issue (parents and educators are concerned about inappropriate dress, others who are protective of freedom of expression, the financial perspective, the author's personal perspective), by exploring some cultural dimensions of the issue (popular culture and gang violence), and by anticipating and responding to counter-arguments (*Freedom of expression is important, but when inappropriate attire begins to interfere with the educational process, something needs to be done. While uniforms in high schools promise many benefits, we should not expect that they are a cure-all.*) Development of most ideas is thorough and logical, and the writer includes specific reasons and details for each of her arguments.

Organization is clear and ideas are logically sequenced both within and between paragraphs. Most transitions reflect the writer's logic and are integrated into the essay. (Transitions between the first three paragraphs are particularly effective). The introduction offers a full context for the issue and segues into the writer's statement of position in the second paragraph very effectively. The conclusion is clear and adequately developed as well.

This writer's language is effective (*Sporting the innocent-looking sweater Aunt Rose gave you for your birthday could be like waving a red flag in front of an angry bull*) and shows good command: sentences are varied and word choice is varied and precise (*Mandating uniforms would dispense with this kind of discrimination*).

Overall, this is a considered, eloquent and thorough response. The few errors present do not distract the reader.