How Does a Strict Dress Code Cause Problems for Kids?

by Rose Welton, Demand Media

A school dress-code might place rules on the style and color of shirts that can be worn.
During the 2009 to 2010 school year, 19 percent of public schools required student uniforms and 57 percent of public schools enforced a strict dress code, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. A strict dress code might include rules regarding fabrics, colors or styles, and often times, the use of logos or images. Although a school dress-code policy includes both pros and cons, there are some specific problems it can cause for students.

Expression and Conformity

Kids who follow a strict dress-code policy at school are limited in expression, especially if the dress code also places restrictions and rules on other features, such as hairstyles. While prohibiting clothing with slogans can cut back on disagreements and controversies, it can also reduces the students’ freedom to express personal, political and religious views.

Focus

Enforcing a strict dress code can place the focus of school on clothing and rules, rather than on education. Scott Key, Ph.D., warns that a dress code can actually hinder a child’s opportunity to learn about other lifestyles, cultures and styles. This can make your child less prepared for a future work place, where he will need to adapt to different clothing expressions and find a balance between blending in and expressing his individuality.

Expense

GreatSchools.org indicates that strict dress-code policies can be a financial burden for families on top of other educational costs, such as books, additional class fees, school supplies and in some cases, tuition. This can cause a problem for kids whose parents lack money for other educational
opportunities or extracurricular activities.

Considerations

Keep in mind that there are potential benefits from dress codes, as well. According to GreatSchools.org, dress-code policies and school uniforms can encourage discipline, diminish social barriers and increase a student’s sense of belonging. The existence of a dress code or uniforms can also help to identify school intruders. You will need to learn the school’s rules regarding dress thoroughly to determine if the benefits outweigh the costs.