

Future Planning Ad Hoc Committee  
Parent Forum on Dress Code  
October 21, 2008 5:30 PM  
CIBA Lecture Hall

PRESENT

Karen Howe, Chairperson  
Robert Damaschi  
Anita Morrison

ALSO PRESENT

Mary Alice Dwyer Hughes  
Ram Aberasturia  
Dorese Roberts  
Marcus Oladell, IV  
Hilde Mayranen-O'Brien  
Hank Pawlowski, Jr.

Forum opened at 5:30 PM by Mary Alice Dwyer Hughes. Ground rules read and opening statement made by Karen Howe. Public participation invited. Twenty-nine individuals sign-ed up to address board members.

Comments included:

- Inappropriate clothing observed at EHHS. High heels may be a safety issue, especially on stairways. Students should dress appropriately for school. No uniforms, enforce current policy.
- (EHHS PTO, speaking as a parent) Cites much recent turmoil in district: Kevin Miller, dress code revision last year, financial concerns. Other issues more important: teen pregnancy, violence in community, lack of parent involvement in schools. Sees mixed levels of proficiency of teachers, good administration at EHHS. Accessories will continue to be status symbols. Most are good kids, let Matt Ryan and administration continue their efforts. No uniforms.
- (EHHS PTO, speaking as a parent) Currently, students dress up before sports team matches, they look nice. Does not want a "Stepford Community". Student appearance is a parent/guardian issue and responsibility. Understands some parents claim uniforms would be easier—but disagrees. Understands claims that uniforms would decrease competition—but disagrees. No proof in research to support benefits of uniforms. Pride is not found in uniforms. Enforce current dress code policy at secondary level. If elementary parents want uniforms, give them uniforms.
- No evidence of benefits of uniforms. Schools documenting success often cite uniforms in conjunction with other school improvement initiatives. Students will not change behaviors by simply wearing uniforms; no will gang identity be affected. Non-compliance will be an issue at EHHS. Teachers should focus on teaching. Uniforms more costly than casual wear. No uniforms.
- (Mayberry PTO, speaking as parent) No uniforms. Do not usurp parental authority. Enforce current dress code policy. No research documents benefits of uniforms to students. Some research indicates an increase in behavioral problems with uniforms/very strict dress code. If uniforms are considered, student academic levels and behavior patterns should be assessed both before and after instituting a uniform policy. Uniforms can have a negative effect on family finances. Will there be assistance provided to needy families? Uniforms suppress creativity and individuality.
- (CIBA Parent Board) No uniforms. Student appearance is parent's responsibility, not the schools. Enforce current dress code policy, as is done at CIBA. Empirical data supporting uniforms often included with other changes to school environment. Many districts which instituted uniforms in the 1990's have reversed their policy. Longitudinal data in the Journal of Educational Research does not support academic achievement relative to uniforms. Uniforms are not an answer to issues in public schools. If elementary schools want uniforms, give them uniforms. Imposition of uniforms may equal a decrease in reading scores.
- (CIBA student) No uniforms. Uniforms will not have any impact on social issues. Opportunity afforded at CIBA has been a "Godsend". Cost of uniforms will be a burden, students with financial need will be unable to comply. Is BOE ready to provide financial support for uniforms?
- (CIBA student) Don't punish all for transgressions of a few students. Most students wear T-shirts and jeans—nothing inappropriate. Peer pressure has been working to improve student dress, encourages

moderate clothing. Enforce the current policy. Teachers are often reluctant to enforce dress code by sending students to office.

- (CIBA student) No uniforms. Cost is an issue with students who grow/change sizes frequently.
- (EHHS student) No uniforms or uniform dress code. Instituting uniforms or standard dress code would bring resentment and rebellion at EHHS. The majority of students are dressed appropriately now. EHHS is a good place, don't change dress code.
- (CIBA student) No uniforms. Enforcing uniforms would take time away from teaching. Is there any evidence of positive change in schools with uniforms? Court cases have ruled uniforms an infringement of civil-liberties. High school is a learning time for students to figure out what is/is not appropriate to wear in different environments. Current dress code is not consistently enforced at EHHS. Tolerance of diversity should include acceptance of expression through appearance. Uniforms are costly, and are often made in third world countries.
- (CIBA student) Appreciates opportunities provided by BOE, and the opportunity to be heard. Experience as intern to John Larson shows importance of appearance at all times. No uniform, strict dress code.
- (CIBA student) Sees no issues with students complying with dress code. All CIBA and EHHS students must read and sign student handbook containing policies. No one reads it. Students may not be aware of current policy. Students not violating current policy should not be penalized or punished with more restrictions. High school is preparing for college—colleges do not have dress codes or uniforms.
- Grew up with uniforms, no suppression of creativity or individuality. Uniforms would be OK. Enforce current policy, even though that can be difficult. Parents must take responsibility. If uniforms are to be successful, a cultural change must happen to accept them, start with the elementary level.
- Parents are responsible for children. Wore uniform at parochial school as child, did not like them. Respect for teachers not linked to wearing uniforms. Enforce the current policy with detentions and phone calls to parents.
- Wants uniforms. No decrease in individuality. Opportunities for expression through music, arts, sports. Students are sent to school to learn.
- Previous uniform policy not successful. Enforce current policy. Has noticed a decrease in communication from schools. Wants BOE to make a firm decision. Uniforms OK at elementary level, enforce current policy at secondary level.
- In favor of uniforms. They identify where student belong. Parents need to set rules for children. Uniforms would save money. Start at the elementary schools, work up to secondary.
- Wore uniforms in Jamaica, they take nothing away from students. In favor of uniforms.
- No uniforms. Enforce current dress code policy.
- (EHHS students) No dress code. There are enough restrictions already. Teachers catch offenders now. High school students are old enough to decide what they want to wear. Doesn't want to wear uniforms to school dances. Peer pressure at school to dress appropriately now. Those students who dress inappropriately now will continue to defy dress codes. Enforce current policy, give detentions. Students may comply for brief time before reverting back.
- Dress code may disrupt classed for no benefit. No uniforms. Any research proving behavior improves with uniforms? EHPS has more important issues, like textbooks for every student.
- Some students appearance is awful. Wants uniforms. Enforcement of current policy takes time from instruction.
- Wants uniforms. Wears "scrubs" by choice and appreciates economy and ease. Students would benefit from symmetry in appearance. Likes look of Hartford Public School students in uniforms. Students may not like uniforms, but they will learn to adjust.

Having not other members of the public who wished to address the board, the forum was closed at 7:00 by Karen Howe.

Respectfully,  
Carrie Van de Berg  
Secretary