

## **SCHOOL UNIFORMS POLICY**

Manatee County elementary or secondary schools may implement a mandatory uniform policy, governing students enrolled at the school only if all conditions set forth in the following procedures are met:

### **Initiation**

- a. A favorable vote of at least 67 percent or more by the School Advisory Council (SAC) must occur to support mandatory use of uniforms for students.
- b. The school or SAC conducts a survey of parents of all students in that school and at least 51 percent of the families completing the survey must indicate that they are in favor of establishing such a program. Ballots must be received from a majority of eligible families. Parents are to be surveyed every three years at any school implementing a uniform program.
- c. The school must establish a uniform committee that adequately represents all segments of the school community. The uniform committee must follow guidelines promulgated by the Superintendent for selection of uniforms.
- d. The school-selected uniforms must comply in all respects with the other provisions of the district rules concerning appropriate attire.
- e. The uniforms selected may not be characterized as gender-specific (both boys and girls may wear slacks).
- f. The school must make provisions for those students who, by reason of financial hardship, cannot comply with the uniform and must notify the students' parents of these provisions.

### **Communication**

- g. Each school implementing a uniform policy must communicate to parents the following:
  1. types and colors of uniform;
  2. requirements for jackets or outer garments;
  3. optional articles of attire, if any;
  4. compliance measures to be employed;
  5. the availability of financial support and the procedures for applying for assistance;
  6. methods to facilitate recycling of uniforms within the school community; and
  7. notice of uniform sales and lists of competitive prices from vendors of uniform articles.
- h. The means by which this information is communicated shall include one or more of the following: school newsletters, parent forums, telephone hotline, PTA/PTO meetings and newsletters, school advisory council meetings, television, radio, newspaper announcements, posters displayed at school and in the community, and registration materials.

### **Compliance Measures**

- i. Each school shall develop incentives and positive reinforcement measures to encourage full compliance with the uniform policy. Each school should strive to achieve

full compliance through use of incentives and positive reinforcement measures and should resort to disciplinary action only when positive measures fail to ensure compliance. In addition, schools shall communicate with parents so that expectations, rationale and benefits are fully understood by the student and the family.

- j. If necessary, disciplinary action may be taken to encourage compliance with the policy. Since the intent of the policy is not to inhibit or prohibit any student who is not in uniform from receiving the education to which he or she is entitled, no student shall be suspended from class or from school, expelled from school, or receive a lowered academic grade as a result of not complying with the policy.
- k. Prior to initiating any disciplinary action against a student not complying with the policy, a school administrator shall hold a conference with the parent or guardian to solicit cooperation and support.
- l. Disciplinary action is initiated only after all other means to secure support and cooperation as mentioned above have not succeeded. A "progressive discipline" approach is to be employed by the school support staff so as to encourage full and consistent compliance with the least amount of disciplinary action.
- m. In order to ensure a smooth transition to a uniform policy, and in order to ensure that incentives and positive reinforcement measures are employed before resorting to disciplinary action, no school implementing a uniform policy shall take disciplinary action for the first two months of implementation unless those not in compliance materially or substantially interfere with the requirements of appropriate discipline.
- n. Exceptions to wearing the uniform are permitted when:
  - 1. Uniforms of a nationally recognized youth organization such as JROTC, Civil Air Patrol, or the Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts are worn on regular meeting days.
  - 2. A student wears a button, arm band, or other accoutrement to exercise the right to freedom of speech as guaranteed by the First Amendment, unless the button, arm band, or other accoutrement signifies or is related to gangs, gang membership or gang activity.
- o. Parents or guardians are permitted to exempt their children from the uniform program by the following procedure:
  - 1. Parents should be notified of the exemption procedure.
  - 2. A request is made by mail or in person by the parent or guardian for an Application for Exemption from the Uniform Program ("Application"). The parent or guardian may obtain an Application at the student's school site.
  - 3. The Application is completed in full and submitted to the school principal.
  - 4. The school principal or other designated administrator meets with the parents to discuss the uniform policy and the nature of the objections to the policy. The purposes of this meeting include: (a) ensuring that the parents or guardians understand the reasons for, and goals of the uniform policy; (b) verifying the accuracy of the information on the Application; and (c) preventing fraud or misrepresentation.