

# Akron Beacon Journal

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## EDUCATION

# Akron Public Schools administration recommending end of student uniforms requirement

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The Akron Public Schools administration is advocating for the permanent end of school uniforms.

The administration is asking the school board to amend its dress code policy, doing away with a requirement that students in kindergarten through eighth grade wear uniforms. That part of the policy has been put on hold since before the pandemic, with the board voting each year to suspend it while the district worked on a longer-term plan.

District leaders are now recommending the end of school uniforms but the continued enforcement of a dress code. The board is reviewing a revised dress code policy, which was first passed in 2007, that would no longer contain the requirement for students to wear uniforms.

Wanda Lash, director of student and family services, said the district issued a survey to parents, who voted 70% in favor of ending the uniform requirement. Students in grades 5-8 were also surveyed, as they are the students old enough to have had at least one year wearing uniforms before the requirement was suspended.

Lash said the students voted overwhelmingly — 91% — to end the uniform requirement.

School uniforms have always been a debate in education, with proponents saying they provide an even playing field for students in what they can wear to school, removing distractions. Opponents say it can be a financial burden for families, and robs students of a way to express individuality. The school board suspended the policy during the pandemic because of financial concerns for families.

Board member Rene Molenaur, who chairs the legal contracts and board policy committee, said she was glad to hear the survey results were so decisive. Anecdotally, she said, the feedback she heard from families in the lead-up to the administration's recommendation was much more balanced.

The full board will have to vote on the amended policy, likely in February.

"The most important goal that we had was ample time to prepare before next school year," Molenaur said.

Especially with the holidays coming up, she said the committee wanted families to have time to plan financially for what kids would have to wear next year. She remembered her own kids getting uniforms as gifts from their grandparents before the policy was suspended.

"I know that different people have different schedules and finances, and when you have to worry about when you're buying school clothes and when your kids are growing — these things factor into large decisions," she said.

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