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Student Uniforms at Riverside School Virtual Session Jamboard Comments Oct. 4, 2022

Below you will find all comments provided in the Jamboards as they were written. These comments represent the opinions and perceptions of the respondents and cannot be considered statements of fact. Comments have not been edited for spelling, grammar, sentence structure, truncation or otherwise. Comments have been edited to ensure anonymity. We also edited or omitted abusive, discriminatory and otherwise inappropriate comments.

Impact on student learning

- Students benefit by being able to focus on learning and not their clothing.
- Changing the name was an excellent decision and decisive. Get no credit for managing that issue well - overshadowed by how poorly the more nuanced uniform decision was made.
- Are we going to start changing other policies at the school level now that we are no longer wearing uniforms - ie: hat policy, other dress code policies? The time spent on this would enable teachers and administrators to focus on the student learning
- Uniforms are far far better than dresscodes and research supports this.
- Uniforms support pride and belonging!
- appreciate there are many considerations but it is important to identify the important ones! I also suggest sharing more research on uniforms so it is a balanced report rather than just one data point on academice performance (if this research exists).
- Riverside has great diversity, which is our strength. Uniforms help reduce socio-economic differentiation, no "clothes competition", which I like.
- Since this process is designed to fail, and since uniforms have been established as the environmentally, economically, and socially superior option to the alternative of a dress code, can you commit to reinstating uniforms as the default while we wait for the next "consultation" process?
- Was the dress code (uniform) causing a problem? We were not advised that there was an issue. From my perspective the decision to eliminate uniforms appears to be for convenience on the school system. I perfectly understand that the name change caused an immediate uniform change. Then the question on whether a uniform was required was asked by CBE. I would say that parents signed up for a uniform and that was the expectation when we applied to this school so for many it was an undesirable change.
- I don't believe references one way or another to "research" - I think you can find "research" that supports and opposes uniforms. This decision should be left up to parents.
- I have a daughter in a non-uniform middle school and theoretical 'dress codes' are enforced and there is endless chatter about which girls were pushing the dress code limits. I hate this early sexualization of young girls. Please bring back the uniforms.



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- Dress codes invariably degrade to being focused on whether young girls are wearing short-shirts or you can see their bras. We should be prioritizing science and increasing women's participation in STEM. Uniforms help level the gender playing field
- Has the CBE already made their decision?
- Uniforms promote community and feelings of belonging. They are even more important now post-COVID, coming off a period of isolation,
- Uniforms allow to prioritize attention to learning - there's research behind why Steve Jobs and others choose to essentially wear uniforms.
- Research supports uniforms can promote inclusivity and equality (especially important for girls in science)
- Used uniform sales are a great opportunity for "reduce, reuse, recycle" messaging. And the Riverside uniform is entirely reasonable and affordable, no silly "jackets". It's simple, comfortable, accessible.
- It was shared that research shows uniforms do not have any impact on academic performance. I like hearing about research based data - can you share other research on uniforms? I am curious if there is any research on impact uniforms have on inclusion, equity, and social aspects of students development.
- Maybe a new question should be asked - do we make uniforms a policy for all science schools?
- If we are truly stepping away from uniforms as we have this year, then what will we be doing with other policies ie: DRESS CODE, which were not that much of an issue when uniforms were in place?
- How will the CBE re-build parental confidence after the way communications and decision-making has been handled regarding student uniforms in the past year?
- The pressure to have the newest and best brands of clothing is going to add stress to kids that cannot afford it. Uniforms take that stress away.
- I find it taking away time to find the clothes and changing and it seems to be more a focus on looks than learning now that uniform is gone
- Can focus on learning and not on what they're wearing / or not wearing
- Uniforms remove one distraction that may result from having different clothing within the classroom.
- Uniform vs dress code both require enforcement
- uniforms remove pressure to have latest brands/trends for girls and boys. Following youtuber trends or video games, etc.
- I think it will be important that the survey questions are presented in an open unbiased way

Providing a welcoming and caring learning environment that promotes diversity and inclusion

- "I am in favour of school uniforms. Socio economic equalizer, sense of belonging and saves time in the morning are a few reasons. Also the students don't feel pressure to compete in what they wear. I wore a uniform at a public school and to this day have fond memories when I look back of the sense of community and pride it created. I was sad when Riverside



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announced ending the requirement for uniforms and I hope they bring them back!"

- By having uniforms, you are focussing on the learning. You are not concerned about how you look in your outfit for that day.
- It's important to note that parents/guardians chose this school knowing it was a uniform school - they wanted to be part of this uniform wearing community.
- I am concerned that the factors that the CBE places more weight on will be the factors that drive the decision. Please outline which factors hold more weight than the wishes of the parents and students that attend this school! If there is a weighting, then our opinion may not mean anything, and that will upend our faith in the CBE.
- It is naive to rely on a belief that the dress code for the CBE does not specifically call out "short shirts" for girls. Ask ANY parent in a non-uniform school about the amount of school discussion around short shirts and an imagined "dress code" implication. Society is naturally bent with being fixated on women's appearances. At least dress codes help stave this off for a few extra years...
- Did the policies change to benefit the smaller percentage of students and families that were struggling with uniforms rather than the overwhelming majority of the school population who were pro-uniform? I feel that this should be dealt with by offering accommodations to those families but keeping the uniform policy in tact as a whole.
- A uniform policy can still have accommodations - whether for pan-disability or religion, gender, etc.
- Research decisively shows that diversity and inclusion are better supported by uniforms than by a dress code. If you believe in supporting diversity and inclusions you will reinstate uniforms immediately.
- Overlooking the benefits and desires of this school community for the sake of CBE consistency is highly problematic. Parents/guardians chose to come to this school knowing it was a uniform school.
- Riverside is a school parents apply to believing that their children will be in uniforms. It sounds like the CBE has over-weighted the opinions of parents who don't like what they signed up for at the expense of the agreement you had with parents who chose to apply to Riverside because they wanted their children in uniforms.
- The name change was abjectly, without any sensible debate, the right decision. And I admire how decisively this decision was made. It's such a shame that stopping the uniforms decision was made at the same time. That was a far more nuanced decision done without any consultation. An entirely positive and correct decision doesn't get enough credit because of how poorly the uniform engagement decision was made.
- What is Riverside going to do at the school level now to enforce dress codes? Does this need to be reviewed? How much more energy will this take rather than having a general uniform?
- I am concerned about the feeling of pride and belonging when the kids were out and about in the community - everyone knew that they were part of Riverside School. Uniforms helped with this.



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- "I did not know about the survey in February and was not able to participate in it. However, I oppose getting rid of the school uniform as I feel they add a distinct sense of identity with the school. I support this petition to continue with uniforms at Riverside Science School."
- My kids felt a part of a community at the school when they saw and were with other students with the same uniform
- Balancing the socioeconomic scale would be a significant promotion of inclusion
- Uniforms are gender neutral. Which is amazing!
- Part of the draw to Riverside for me was the uniform. Although I am ok with a plain blue Polo top uniform, I do not want to move to fully free dress clothing. I still continue to send my son in a blue Polo and even khaki pants most days, as this is the routine that works best on chaotic mornings for our family
- Programs for uniforms can definitely be made to be accessible for all families - not only online. And most families talk about how much cheaper clothing is for students now. Many families pass along uniforms that have been grown out of.
- Perhaps exploring more creative 'uniform' ideas... polo shirts, t-shirts, long sleeves, etc
- "I support uniforms. It's one of the main reasons I choose this school. The name of the school was changed for a good valid reason, but the uniforms was just a fall out for the year. I think it helps create unity in the school and also prevents bullying from social economic norms. It was never an issue of kids not wanting to wear uniform and it easier from a parental view point."
- uniforms can help students feel connected to school and each other. Personal expression can shine though with a uniform
- For young females having trouble with self image issues, given the direction of competitive fashion on social media, having a uniform may take away any need to compete with peers.
- Uniforms can easily be made more gender neutral if that is a concern.
- I believe uniforms have been a part of the Riverside identity. It makes all students equal regardless of how they dress. With all the pressures of being a student and a parent this is one less thing for everyone involved to worry about.
- I would like to see uniforms remain an important part of the Riverside Science School culture, mainly because they can be a socio-economic equalizer that helps guard against socio-economic discrimination among students' peers and staff. Students come to Riverside from all over the city, including from marginalized communities, that may put them at a disadvantage – uniforms are one way to mitigate this problem.
- We weren't excited about uniforms initially when we joined the school, but we have found it to be a huge equalizer in the social experience of kids. It reduces social anxiety, and expectations which helps our kids to stay focused on the learning environment rather than who is wearing what

Alignment with the values and outcomes of the CBE Science Program

- textile waste has an incredible impact on the environment. Because of a uniform policy, I have had to purchase significantly less clothing for my



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children. Through the sale of used uniforms, the textiles are given an extended life as they do not “go out of fashion” and the impact of this can not be underrated

- People chose Riverside as a science and uniform school. The chose these values.
- The value Riverside parents are clearly aligned on is "science" - we all voted with our feet. Conduct a survey, it will appeal to the "science" value espoused by parents. The rest of this process is too subject to bias.
- When we think about outcomes - leaders in this space like Dr. Gereluk served as the Chair of the Board of a school that had uniforms - we should follow that example.
- Education directors holding this decision doesn't seem to align with the accountability principle - especially when it's clear majority of the school community is in favour of uniforms
- I believe the prior decision on student uniforms was a scientifically undefendable choice.
- I don't believe the consultation process has been objective and research-based in the way it should be.
- I am concerned that this discussion is steeped in anecdotes, which isn't very scientific. Let's admit that there's no clear right or wrong and revert to an appropriately interpreted parent survey. Let's be data driven. Go science!
- It seems to me personally that the CBE had arrived at a decision, and used bad statistics to support the decision. If there is another survey, the weight of the parent community should not be the same as the other factors. If you apply here, you know what is expected.
- Please use this process as an opportunity to rebuild trust with the parent community - be transparent about the decision-making process. The CBE has some 'rebuilding trust and transparency' work to do given the incorrect interpretation of the survey earlier this year.
- The scientific method demands that reporting of results must include transparent discussion of how the conclusion was achieved. In our case, transparency dictates that the decision must be supported by a disclosure of the factors involved and how each factor contributed the outcome. Anything less will invalidate the results, and erode or destroy trust in the process.
- Teachers have options about which school they work at, we don't have options to send our kids to another school where they can be in uniforms. There's an obvious solution here, you're just not finding it.
- All students and parents signed and agreed to uniforms and I really hope to see them continue. uniform doesn't mean all students exactly the same, student expression was alive and well in the past
- I feel uniforms have the potential to create an inclusive and welcoming learning environment
- The process is concerning. The survey mishaps occurred in early spring, and was acknowledged after quite a lot of parent communications. Then the decision to move away from uniforms was made in June. This feels like the organization has made a decision and the engagement is not genuine. Even if it is, moving back to uniforms now is far more challenging (an inherent resistance to change function)



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- Uniforms are easy to reuse, and can be sold readily between grades so the impact financially and environmentally clearly aligns with the environmental values of the science program.
- the simple polo shirt is gender neutral
- It is not clear to me why the conversation about removing uniforms was initiated? Was there a concern about the uniform?
- the lack of a uniform is more impactful on girls, who already have enough body image issues to worry about. The dress code as it exists now is useless. Girls are wearing tank tops, crop tops etc
- Using the research of one academic researcher who studies a variation of what we are looking is questionable background research. Again, struggle with the alignment with how information and data is applied to analysis and decision-making.
- Not necessary to all match with uniforms. Riverside could be the only one
- How much is alignment with other science school uniform or not, a factor in this decision. Why can't Riverside have a uniform while other schools do not?!
- As field studies have been and hopefully again are a huge part of the program Uniforms are a huge help to keep track of Riverside Students
- Transparency of data and producing a WWH and What We Did report is key. We need to know what the students, staff and administration's perspectives are. Providing clear reporting on how the decision was made - what impacted the decision and what didn't at the end of the day, and why.
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Available resources

- Uniforms are an equalizer in an inner city school such as Riverside where students come from various socio-economic backgrounds. It removes an element that can lead to bullying/exclusion for kids that are not wearing the "right" clothes
- Kids views seem to be considered a "resource" for seeking feedback - let's not forget they're kids. We still appreciate making many many decisions on behalf of our children - we are considerably more educated and experienced than they are....
- who are the other stakeholders that are integral in this decision making process (and which vetoed the overwhelming opinion of the parents in the school community). The school exists to serve students first and parents, shouldn't their voice hold the greatest weight. This decision essentially undermines the school's perception of the value of parents to its community
- I strongly recommend re-instating uniforms for 2nd semester of this year should the decision be favourable towards re-instating uniforms.
- This is a question for self reflection towards the CBE. If you were one of the parents on the receiving end of all this, how would you feel? Would you feel that you and your children were treated fairly or would you feel betrayed? The onus is on you to listen to the strong desire and needs of the parents. At the end of the day, our children are most important to us and if you were in our shoes, I believe you would feel the same.



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- The CBE's abrupt and unexplained changes and lack of parents involvement in decision-making has damaged the trust relationship. The CBE has a chance to take a step towards repairing that by demonstrating a fair, objective, and TRANSPARENT evaluation of the survey results and perspectives. To that end, I would appreciate if the survey results are presented as is in raw form and the perspectives aggregated. If we truly believe in a democratic process, a strong mandate from the survey results and comments should drive the outcome.
- In our discussions it was confirmed that the resources aren't that significant and shouldn't be a factor in this decision.
- Taking away uniforms took away some of the great values I like to instil in my children. I liked the professionalism, discipline, and presentability aspects of the uniform. Instead, as parents we have to concede to useless debates and discussions on what to wear. In my mind, we have moved the focus away from learning and instead frustrated parents and children alike.
- Uniforms are clearly the environmentally superior option, so they win on use of physical resources. They can be readily designed to be economically superior as well. If you care about diligent use of resource you will reinstate uniforms.
- Uniforms are actually less financially and socially burdensome for families. There is no need to buy a variety of outfits for school and the option to buy used which is more financially and environmentally conscious
- Disappointed in the lack of transparency and integrity in which the CBE conducted themselves on this topic. It feels that there was a clear mandate to eliminate uniforms (an element of the school that all us parents happily signed up for) and the data was manipulated to reflect their agenda
- Enforcing a dress code would take more resources than enforcing a uniform.
- Seems that enforcing the uniform would be no less time consuming than appropriate dress code
- Enforcement of a dress code (vs a uniform policy) puts administration in a much more difficult situation. There has been much discussion about some questionable outfits now that there is no longer a uniform policy. It is my belief that uniforms would reduce the administrative burden for staff.
- I am aware of many parent volunteers that would assist with the ordering and distributing of uniforms
- "I would like to see uniforms remain an important part of the Riverside Science School culture, mainly because they can be a socio-economic equalizer that helps guard against socio-economic discrimination among students' peers and staff. Students come to Riverside from all over the city, including from marginalized communities, that may put them at a disadvantage – uniforms are one way to mitigate this problem."
- how much time/effort do teachers spend? I suspect it is very little. I would be interested to know the opinion of the teachers on uniforms and uniforms vs dress code
- I feel that will be important to clarify what is being referred to with 'uniforms' and 'dress code'.... and/or if there would be input sought to define these
- The Parent Society was in charge of handing out the online orders of Riverside shirts in the spring. Which we would gladly help with again.



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- the used uniform sale was a huge money saver for parents as well as being good for the environment
- Parents/students sign a form agreeing to wearing a uniform when they join the school.
- Will uniform and dress code be discussed and clarified in the survey? Is dress code an option as we had it in spring 2021? Some parents of children in young grades don't know the difference of uniform vs dress code.
- How results are calculated. How much are survey results included in the decision vs how much CBE values or student learning is weighted. Transparency about this is important for parent understanding.
- If costs are an issue, there used to be used uniform sales, which could return. There are also fundraising efforts that could be possible to provide uniforms to anyone that may not be able to afford.
- Transparency with results!! Including teacher survey results.
- The students were excited to be involved in voting on the logo.... let's give them a chance to wear it!
- Would be interested to know how teachers feel about uniforms
- Always appreciate genuine engagement. Background presentation felt like it was making the case against uniforms.... didn't give the impression of an unbiased engagement