

NLWJC - Kagan

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Education - Discipline

Promoting Discipline in Our Schools

School Uniforms

- **Spreading school uniform policies across the country.**

Recent push by schools to adopt uniform policies. Since President Clinton highlighted school uniforms in 1996, a large number of schools and school districts have adopted uniform policies to improve student discipline, attendance, and school climate.

The Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics estimates that 34% of public schools with mandatory uniform policies initiated their policy in the 1996-97 school year.

The 1998 NAESP survey of principals in 10 states shows that 11% of elementary schools require uniforms, and 15% are considering a policy. Almost two-thirds of schools with policies adopted them in the last two years.

In March 1998, the Education Commission of the States reported that 26 states have school uniform or dress code policies -- nearly double the number in 1996 (14). These policies allow school districts to institute uniform or dress code policies.

Many of nation's largest school districts moving first on uniforms. Some of the nation's largest cities have adopted school uniform policies, including: New York City, Dade County, San Antonio, Houston, Chicago and Boston. In New York City alone, this will mean 560,000 elementary school students in the nation's largest school system will have school uniforms by fall of 1999.

- **School uniforms are helping to improve school attendance and school safety in Long Beach, CA:**

School attendance hits all-time high. In the 1995-96 school year -- the third year school uniforms were required -- attendance at the Long Beach Unified School District K-8 schools reached the highest point ever recorded during the 17 years the district compiled these statistics. With excused absences for illness added in, attendance exceeded 99%.

School crime dramatically reduced. Between the 1993-94 school year (before uniforms were required) and the 1996-97 school year, total school crime plummeted 76%. Fighting dropped by 51%; sex offenses declined by a stunning 93%; robbery/extortion decreased by 85%, chemical substances are down by 72%; and weapons offenses decreased by 83%.

Youth Curfews

- **Keeping kids off the street -- and out of trouble -- with community curfews.** Curfews are designed to help keep children out of harm's way, enhance community safety, and give parents an important tool to impart discipline, respect, and rules.
- **A key part of a community effort to keep our children safe.** In May 1996, President Clinton released a Justice Department report on curfews which shows that curfews, when backed by a community of support and are part of a larger plan to help fight juvenile crime, can play an important role in keeping our children safe. The Justice report reviewed the impact of curfews in 7 selected jurisdictions (Dallas, Phoenix, Chicago, New Orleans, Denver, North Little Rock, and Jacksonville). Highlights include:

The New Orleans program combines a curfew, a summer jobs program and the revitalization of recreation program -- and resulted in a 27% reduction in juvenile crime during curfew hours in 1994, compared with the previous year.

The Dallas program allows for fines of both parents and children. Juvenile arrests during curfew hours decreased 14.6%.

North Little Rock, provides sports activities and academic tutoring. Juvenile violent arrests during curfew hours decreased 12%.

Denver's curfew program works in partnership with 234 different community programs. The law enforcement community believes it contributed significantly to the 11% drop in serious crime during the program's first two years.

- **Curfews are in effect in a majority of the Nation's largest cities.** In a December 1997 survey released by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, 276 -- 80% -- of 347 cities surveyed had youth curfew laws, up from 70% in 1995. A 1998 update surveyed 18 cities with curfews in place for two years or less. The survey found:

55% report a decrease in crime since curfew implementation, with an average 26.8% decrease in crime during enforcement hours.

88% believe that curfews are a useful tool in curbing juvenile crime. Some of the reasons cities cited are that curfews: provide police with authority to remove juveniles from the streets, allow parents to set standards and police to monitor juvenile activity, and prevent youth from becoming perpetrators or victims of crime.

72% of cities report no problems with implementation of the curfew, and 77% responded that there were no new costs associated with enforcing the curfew.

Anti-truancy

- **Truancy is a gateway to crime, drugs, and alcohol.** High truancy rates are linked to high rates of daytime burglary and vandalism. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Study Group on Serious and Violent Juvenile Crime found that truancy is one of the major risk factors leading to serious and violent crime. The Justice Department's 1997 annual report on Drug Use Forecasting from the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program reported that drug use is higher among detained male juveniles who were not in school, with higher rates of marijuana and cocaine use, as compared to juvenile males still in school.
- **Anti-truancy efforts can have an impact on absenteeism, classroom-related incidents, and crime.** In furtherance of the President's effort to focus national attention on anti-truancy measures, the Education Department provided several grants to local school districts to develop innovative truancy prevention programs in the 1996-97 school year. Highlights from the anti-truancy efforts include:

Los Angeles Unified School District. The Truancy Prevention and Dropout Recovery Project is in effect in 24 schools in the district. During the first full year of the program, the attendance level jumped two full percentage points to 90.1, as compared to the 1995-96 school year. This means that 400* more kids were in class -- and not unsupervised.

Roanoke, VA. This program is a collaborative effort between the City Public Schools, City Department of Social Services, and Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. During the first year of the project, the number of students missing school for 25 or more days in the targeted schools decreased by an average of 35%. During the second year, the number decreased by 28%.

Philadelphia School District. The Weapons Reduction and Truancy Help (WRATH) initiative helped to increase school attendance by over two percentage points in the 1997-98 school year. In addition, the number of students arrested for weapons offenses dropped by nearly 40% -- from 194 in 1995 to 119 in 1998.