

LESSONS

James Sterngold

Taking a New Look at School Uniforms

LONG BEACH, Calif. For Carl Cohn, the path to educational innovation began a decade ago on a gritty Long Beach street when a few dozen children, caught in the middle of a gang shootout, were forced to the floor of a school bus.

Mr. Cohn was a former truant officer in this heavily industrialized port city adjacent to Los Angeles, and in the wake of that lawlessness he was asked to head an antigang task force. Its principal aim was, like that of some United Nations peacekeeping missions, to protect noncombatants, known elsewhere as primary school students.

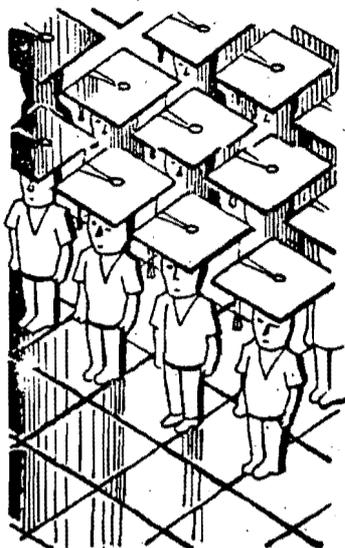
"We needed to give safe passage for students through some very tricky terrain," said Mr. Cohn, now the superintendent of schools here. "We realized the way to make it visible who the students were was clothing, uniforms. We didn't think about all the other issues. It was safety, pure and simple."

It was an unusual start for what came to be hailed as a major step in helping to reinvigorate public education, not just here but across the country. In 1994, Long Beach mandated uniforms at all its elementary schools after trials at a couple of schools. Test scores and grades rose. Absenteeism, failures and discipline problems declined. Schools in more than 35 states have now adopted uniforms policies, with Philadelphia set to adopt such a policy this fall.

But it is worth recalling the sobering origins of that success as Long Beach takes the next step, completing the introduction of uniforms at its first high school. The school district that helped push school uniforms to the front lines has now pulled them back, if slightly, as a tool.

Woodrow Wilson High School, to which students must apply for entry, has phased uniforms in one year at a time, and next year, students in all grades will be wearing khaki bottoms and burgundy or white collared shirts. But a visit to the school and conversations with administrators, parents and students reveal a subtle appreciation for the limitations as well as the merits of uniforms.

For one thing, if uniforms mean



David Suter

uniformity, these are a failure. The school allows the students to fulfill the requirements in many ways. They can wear trousers, skirts, baggy shorts or capri pants on the bottom and a range of tops on condition they are white or burgundy and have collars.

Jon Meyer, the school's co-principal, said the administrators chose loose standards to allow older students to express themselves while minimizing the potentially divisive effects of dress, like designating gang affiliation or economic differences. He is even toying with eliminating a rule requiring students to keep their shirts tucked in in the classrooms.

The point, Mr. Meyer said, is that they have found uniforms just one of several tools for refocusing the school, and, he insisted, they require complete support by parents and students.

"It's not the answer, but it contributes," he said. "I don't think that the uniform alone does a whole lot, actually."

Nonetheless, there have been improvements. Three years ago, the school had 861 suspensions. This past

year, there were 280.

And that is not just because the school began a policy three years ago that students apply to get in. Despite that, the student body still represents a cross section of the city. Well over a half of the students come from families with incomes below the poverty line, said Keith Hansen, the assistant principal, and 350 of the students speak English as a second language.

But the real issue is that uniforms were just the most visible of several reforms introduced. Students are required to take more credits, including four years of a foreign language, math, science and English. They must maintain a C average.

Noelle Ebright, who will begin her senior year at Wilson in the fall and was the student government president last year, said of uniforms, "They aggravate me more than they help me." But she added that they appeared to have cut down on the number of fights.

Richard Flanary, a senior administrator at the National Association of Secondary School Principals, in Arlington, Va., said the limited amount of research on the subject had placed only modest emphasis on uniforms as a way of turning around a troubled high school.

"There is no direct link between uniforms and performance," Mr. Flanary said, "but we know there is a link between the school environment and performance. Uniforms might be one way of affecting the environment, but just one."

Still, even with their expectations moderated, Long Beach officials are believers, if well-informed believers.

"Frankly, it's a very good question as to whether 5 or 7 years from now uniforms will still be a priority," Mr. Cohn said. "There is a part of me that says if we really want to grow these young people into young adults, it is, in fact, their behavior that will really mark them, not what they wear."

"Having said that, these are difficult times. And there is the reality that there is something to be gained if these young people spend less time paying attention to their dress."

Basic History Test Stumps Many Collegians

WASHINGTON, June 27 (AP) — Nearly 80 percent of seniors at 55 top colleges and universities, including Harvard and Princeton, received a D or an F on a 34-question high-school level test on American history.

More than a third of the students did not know that the Constitution established the division of power in American government, said the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut, which administered the test as part of a study to measure the teaching of American history.

Students were much more knowledgeable about popular culture — 99 percent of the seniors tested identi-

fied "Beavis and Butthead" as "television cartoon characters."

But confronted with four options in a multiple-choice test, only 35 percent could name who was president when the Korean War began. And only 23 percent identified James Madison as the principal framer of the Constitution.

Asked the era in which the Civil War was fought, 40 percent did not know the correct period, 1850-1900.

Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, Democrat of Connecticut, said that he and other members of Congress would introduce resolutions calling on college and state officials to strengthen American history re-

quirements at all levels of the educational system.

The study, sponsored by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, found that none of the 55 institutions required American history for graduation. And only 78 percent of them required students to take any history classes, said Jerry Martin, one of the report's authors.

The history test was given by telephone to 556 college seniors chosen at random. The questions were drawn from a basic high school curriculum, and many had been used in the National Assessment of Education Program tests given to high school students.

Drug Agency Looks Again At an Informer's Career

Man Who Lied on the Stand Is Suspended

By JO THOMAS

URBANA, Ill., June 27 — Andrew Chambers has the easy manner of a friend you can trust. Federal agents trusted him, and so did drug dealers. Over a 16-year career as an undercover informer, Mr. Chambers helped send 445 drug dealers to prison.

Now, in a reversal of fortune, the Drug Enforcement Administration has suspended Mr. Chambers and is re-examining the 295 cases in which he was involved. For reasons that are not clear, Mr. Chambers, who is one of the agency's top informers, has been caught lying on the witness stand.

"Our investigation shows he has lied 17 times about his personal history," said Michael McManus, a public information officer for the agency. "D.E.A. is concerned about any lies, but there is no evidence he has ever lied about the facts of a case. There are lies about his college education, payment of taxes to the I.R.S. and his arrest records. It appears his motivation was that he was embarrassed."

H. Dean Steward, a former federal public defender in California who has spent three years trying to get information about Mr. Chambers on behalf of a client, Daniel Bennett, who pleaded guilty in a murder-for-hire case, said he was outraged about Mr. Chamber's lying.

"There are no such things as little lies in federal court," said Mr. Steward, who has sued the agency in federal court in Washington, to get information on Mr. Chambers. "D.E.A. has put this guy on the stand many times, knowing he was a perjurer."

"I took him down," Mr. Steward said.

Mr. Chambers sees things differently, saying the arrests were minor.

He admits he should have told the complete truth about himself, but he insists he has always told the truth about drug dealers. He said he doubted that the new turn of events would affect many cases, saying, "Ninety-five percent of my cases pleaded out." He said he had not helped send an innocent man to jail.

While out of action, he has gone on something of a public relations campaign, granting interviews and planning a book and a movie. But his heart is on the street. "I'd go back to work tomorrow if I could," he said.

Mr. Chambers is 43, and as he arrived for dinner at a local restaurant, the only thing exceptional about his appearance were his fingernails, which were manicured and very, very long.

"They're real," he said, holding them up to the light. "I don't look like no cop. I look like somebody that could be a player. I'm not working, I don't have no 8 to 5, but I'm doing something."

In the years since he first walked into the drug enforcement office in Clayton, Mo., to inquire about becoming an agent, Mr. Chambers has been a player, on the government's side. He did not have the college degree required to be an agent, so he became an informer.

He was valued, several agency officials said, because he had a clean record, did not drink, smoke or use drugs, and always tried to keep himself, the agents and the drug dealers safe. In 16 years, he said, no one ever pulled a gun on him or robbed him.

Mr. McManus said that the agency had some 4,500 informers. Some, like Mr. Chambers, are mercenaries and are hired by the job. Others have jobs, like baggage handlers and taxi drivers, and serve the agency as eyes and ears on the street. Many are criminals seeking reductions in sentences.

He had attended parochial schools, was an altar boy and a Cub Scout, and played sports.

But he dropped out of high school after two years and joined the Marines. Three years later, he returned home to try college but lasted one semester. Then he decided on a career in law enforcement and chose D.E.A. because he would not have to wear a uniform.

Jeff McCaskill, a retired drug enforcement agent, worked with Mr. Chambers in 1987 on a Long Beach, Calif., case that he said involved "the first and largest crack cocaine organization taken down in the United States."

That case began when Mr. Chambers met Cecil Fuller, the owner of a Long Beach nightclub, on a flight from Los Angeles to St. Louis, where Mr. Fuller was attending a family reunion. Mr. Chambers ingratiated himself with Mr. Fuller and set up a sting operation. Everyone in the organization ended up in prison.

Over the years, Mr. Chambers has

**Re-examining 295
cases involved in a
16-year undercover
career.**

worked for other federal law enforcement agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Internal Revenue Service, and for police in many major cities, including Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Houston, New Orleans, New York and Newark.

In all, Mr. Chambers has been paid some \$2.2 million, including \$300,000 for expenses. He now concedes that he mismanaged his money and neglected to pay federal income tax, of which he now owes \$64,000.

His credibility problems began with a 1936 case involving Edward Stanley, a Los Angeles restaurant owner. Mr. Chambers had given federal agents Mr. Stanley's cell phone number, and on the resulting wiretap they overheard Mr. Stanley hiring Mr. Bennett as a hit man.

In an effort to overturn his client's plea-bargained murder conviction, Mr. Steward challenged the search warrant for the wiretap.

Mr. Steward learned that Mr. Chambers had lied on the stand in earlier cases, saying he had never been arrested. In fact, he had been arrested 10 times from 1984 to 1998, with one conviction.

Mr. Chambers was twice arrested for soliciting sex and pleaded guilty in one case, in Denver, to a misdemeanor and paid a fine. He now says he had hoped that the prostitute, an undercover policewoman, would help him find a drug dealer.

Mr. McManus, the D.E.A. public information officer, said senior agency management learned of Mr. Chambers' problems in August 1999, and put him on restricted use.

In January, Mr. Chambers' hometown newspaper in St. Louis, The Post-Dispatch, published a front-page article proclaiming, "Top U.S. Drug Snitch Is a Legend and a Liar," and in February, the agency suspended Mr. Chambers. Since then, cases in which he was involved, have been dismissed before trial in Miami and Tampa, Fla., and in Columbia, S.C.

"Are the floodgates going to open and hundreds of defendants get out of jail?" Mr. Steward asked. "No, but each case he worked on has to be looked at."

File: School Uniforms
cc: Rahm

Los Angeles Times

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SERIES: CRIME IN DECLINE: Putting L.A.'s changing numbers into perspective. *
One in a series.

HEADLINE: SMALL-TOWN SUCCESS; CRIME: MONROVIA'S 'ZERO TOLERANCE' APPROACH, PARTICULARLY FOR; JUVENILES, HAS PAID HIGH DIVIDENDS AND HAS BECOME A NATIONAL MODEL.

BYLINE: NICHOLAS RICCARDI, TIMES STAFF WRITER

BODY:

Monrovia is the sort of small city that at first glance could be Any Suburb, USA. A grid of bungalow-lined lanes sandwiched between the San Gabriel Mountains and the Foothill Freeway, it even has downtown streets studded with faux cobblestones.

But the town of about 39,000, stands out as a national example of a "zero tolerance" approach to crime--in which police and city officials crack down on petty infractions--and for its emphasis on keeping children on the straight and narrow. It is the type of combined effort that experts say is contributing to the drop in crime nationwide.

Monrovia's anti-truancy ordinance allows police to stop suspected truants and issue citations of \$ 135 to those who turn out to be ditching school. The law was the model for a similar Los Angeles law and dozens of others nationwide. In addition, school uniforms are mandatory for elementary and middle school students in local public schools. Police patrol school bus routes. High school students seeking to escort out-of-towners to the prom must have their dates interviewed and approved by an assistant principal.

A handful of residents complain that the city is picking on its youngsters, noting that violent crimes are rising or holding steady despite the concentration on juvenile crime. But police, civic leaders and many residents argue that preventing petty crimes early--using measures some might see as draconian--can keep children from becoming violent offenders.

This highlights
Monrovia's anti-
juvenile crime
strategy which includes:
- school uniforms
- day-time curfews
- night-time curfews (which
aren't mentioned, but
are in effect from 10pm
to 6am)

Need

Some experts question whether Monrovia's actions are making a permanent dent in crime. Although Monrovia is too small to be included in the just-released round of FBI crime statistics, it takes pride in a 15% drop in its serious crimes recorded by local police last year.

But it is hard to trace the roots of that drop. After all, reported serious crime throughout Los Angeles County had already decreased 15.6% between 1992 and 1994. Monrovia's leaders say the greatest impact of their policies will be felt in the future.

"We really believe that if we prevent things from happening today, especially with our children, that they won't become the criminals of tomorrow," Police Chief Joseph Santoro said.

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Monrovia's high-profile laws stem from crime-fighting techniques that integrate people from all areas of the community. Most of the city's anti-crime laws spring from a planning group that includes police, school officials, the Chamber of Commerce and nearly a dozen city departments.

"Monrovia is uniquely collaborative," said Louise Taylor, superintendent of the Monrovia Unified School District.

The collaboration began in 1990, when the Police Department decided to combat a steady rise in property crimes with a comprehensive community-policing program, including targeting slumlords and requiring graffiti to be painted over in 24 hours. Last year, that program won a national award from a group of public employees.

The next step was the formation of a committee of local leaders to brainstorm anti-crime measures. That body generated two policies that were heralded by President Clinton during a 1996 campaign stop in Monrovia: The truancy law and the school uniform policy.

City leaders say those laws are in keeping with the town's child-friendly ambience. The city's big celebration is a year-round "Family Fun" festival downtown each Friday night, and the community center and library offer regular children's events. The police chief and the superintendent keep each other's home phone numbers handy to alert one another to any problems at the schools or on the streets. Police regularly patrol routes taken by school buses, and two officers from the 64-officer department are assigned to mentor at the schools full-time.

Monrovia also has a night-time curfew in operation from 10pm to 1am.

Police are proud of their programs, especially the truancy law, the basis for a proposed statewide daytime curfew being considered in the Assembly. They say that during school hours in the two years since the law was passed, burglary has dropped 54%, theft has dropped 48% and grand theft auto is down by 55%.

But a few residents say the efforts are misguided.

"I definitely sense a zero tolerance in Monrovia," said Rosemary Harrahill, the mother of two home-schooled Monrovia teenagers whom police have stopped erroneously nearly two dozen times in their efforts to track down truants. "But it should depend on what they're going after. Of course we want zero tolerance to gang violence, and rape and murder and pillage and all these other things," added Harrahill, one of several residents who have joined to sue the city to have the law declared unconstitutional and voided.

Mike Males, a doctoral student at UC Irvine and author of the book "The Scapegoat Generation," pointed out that neighboring cities like Arcadia have lower adult arrest rates for drug offenses and assault than Monrovia.

"Arcadia had more juvenile burglaries but fewer domestic assaults and fewer felony drug offenses committed by adults," Males said. "If the Monrovia police are going to claim credit for reducing juvenile crime, do they want to take the blame for having greater felony drug arrests?"

"I'm just urging some skepticism about the city of the hour," Males added.

In the streets of Monrovia, though, the zero tolerance approach is a hit.

"You have to try to keep kids busy so they stay out of trouble," Elena Timko, 33, said as her 5-year-old daughter frolicked in a downtown park. "The parents should be involved though."

That level of involvement can be difficult, even in a suburb like Monrovia, whose candy shops and historic downtown strives to capture Norman Rockwell's America.

"When I was in high school some years ago, when you were not in school your neighbor would tell your parents," said City Councilwoman Lara Blakely. "It was a different type of policing. Now a lot of neighbors are working, and they're not there to make sure that so-and-so's kids are going to school."

"Our society and how it functions has changed. The Ozzie-and-Harriet model is not the majority, it's the minority," she said. "And the community has to somehow maintain

support systems. In the absence of the traditional system of your neighbors, its natural for the parents to look to the schools to help them out."

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Police Chief Santoro acknowledges that much work remains to be done. Homicides doubled over the last year, from four to eight, and rapes and assaults have fluctuated. Santoro said these crimes are usually committed by adults, and are more difficult to prevent.

But the department and the rest of the city officials remain steadfast in believing they are on the right track.

"I've been in law enforcement a long time," said Police Officer Bill Couch, who has worked the Monrovia schools for the last seven years, "and I've got to tell you, 20 years ago we were able to take kids to juvenile hall who were incorrigible or truant and keep them there for the weekend and it would scare them stiff."

Those youths straightened up, Couch recalls. But truancy was decriminalized, and crime rose.

"Now," Couch said, "we are going back to the way things were because we find it works."

(BEGIN TEXT OF INFOBOX / INFOGRAPHIC)

Monrovia Profile

Officials in this San Gabriel Valley suburb credit a sharp drop in petty crimes to a policy of zero tolerance for offenses by young people.

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Population: 39,100

Crime Statistics:

	'94'	'95	'96
Murder	0	4	8
Rape	11	6	10
Robbery	100	100	75
Assault	130	114	75

Burglary 332 347 262
Larceny-Theft 901 848 743
Vehicle Theft 316 249 229

GRAPHIC: PHOTO: (SAN FERNANDO VALLEY EDITION, B15) Students hear Monrovia Police Officer Bill Couch address the risks of alcohol consumption.

PHOTOGRAPHER: CAROLYN COLE / Los Angeles Times PHOTO: Monrovia Police Officer Bill Couch has student Natalie Soder, 14, demonstrate a field sobriety test.

PHOTO: Officer Bill Couch, right, with Natalie Boro, a freshman at Monrovia High School. PHOTOGRAPHER: CAROLYN COLE / Los Angeles Times GRAPHIC-MAP: Monrovia Profile, Los Angeles Times GRAPHIC-TABLE: Monrovia Profile, Los Angeles Times

LANGUAGE: English

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RETAILING

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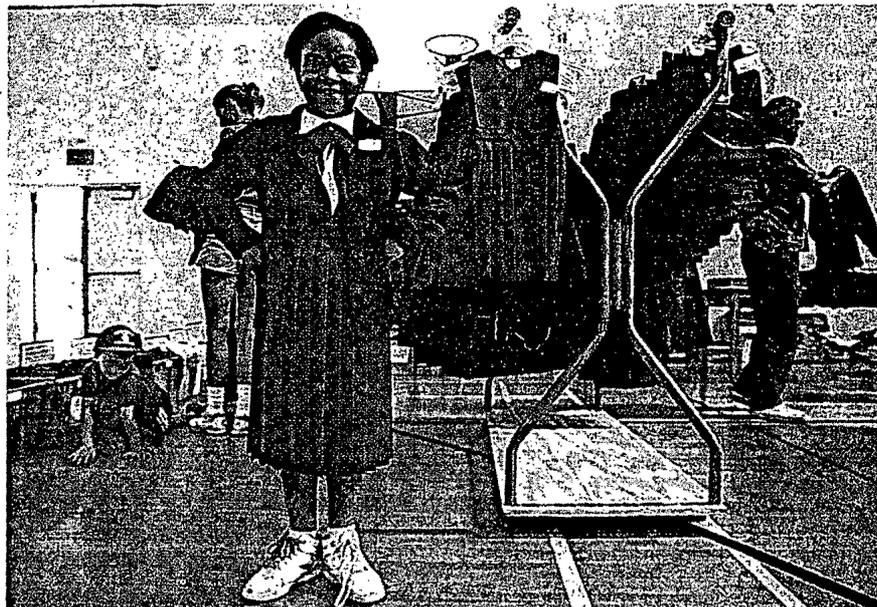
School uniforms are hot—and merchants are cashing in

Flared jeans, plaid miniskirts, and chenille, short-sleeved, V-necked sweaters are among the hottest back-to-school fashions for 1997. But whatever style mavens say is cool for school this year doesn't apply to students such as Zalencia Dorrough, a sixth-grader at the Daniel Chappie James Elementary School in Dallas. She'll be wearing a uniform—and she couldn't be happier. "It makes getting dressed in the morning a lot easier," says the 11-year-old, who on a recent school day donned navy shorts, a white blouse, and white and purple Nike tennis shoes. "It also looks a lot more sophisticated and a lot cooler than normal clothes."

Indeed, for a growing number of students nationwide, uniforms are the "in" academic fashion, though not by choice. Long the province of private and parochial schools, uniforms are being adopted in public schools across the U.S. Officials say they blur class distinctions, help curb gang activity, and save students the competitive angst of trying to keep up with trendy peers. California's Long Beach Unified School District was the first public district to mandate uniforms in 1994. But uniforms in public schools have become increasingly common since President Clinton endorsed the idea in his 1996 State of the Union address. Today, school districts in some 20 states have uniform requirements.

Uniforms are becoming a big business for retailers. Department stores, discounters, and even catalogers are stocking navy pleated skirts, white polos, and khaki pants. "Uniforms have become an important development in back-to-school sales," says retail consultant Walter F. Loeb. For many retailers, uniform sales are a good way to offset some of the revenue they're losing as kids in non-uniform schools opt for more casual clothes.

J.C. Penney, Sears, Macy's,



BACK TO SCHOOL: A California student dons an outfit at a "uniform fair"

Target Stores, Wal-Mart Stores, and Kids 'R' Us are among the retailers now hawkng uniforms. This year, Lands' End Inc. joined in, launching a school uniform catalog featuring tailored oxford shirts, khaki chinos, and navy blazers. Michael Grasee, the Dodgeville (Wis.)-based retailer's director of school uniforms, says Lands' End jumped in after its research showed 8% of all public schools had uniforms and 15% more may follow suit. "When almost one in four students could be wearing uniforms, that's big business," he says.

GRASSROOTS TREND. Because the public-school uniform movement is spreading at a grassroots level, retailing experts are hard-pressed to pinpoint the size of the market. But with the trend spreading so quickly—in Chicago public

schools, for example, 30% more students will wear uniforms this year than last—the potential appears huge. Isaac Lagnado, principal at Tactical Retail Solutions Inc., an industry research firm, estimates the market could reach "several billion dollars" if it takes hold nationally. The grand total for back-to-school sales this fall is expected to hit \$18.9 billion.

Retailers say uniform sales are already helping at the cash register. Macy's West, a division of Federated Department Stores Inc., says its uniform business has tripled since it began three years ago. Sears, Roebuck & Co., which launched its program in 1995, is expecting a 50% hike in school uniform sales this year. J.C. Penney Co., which hawks its school uniforms in some 500 stores and a "Class Favorites" catalog, expects its uniform sales to see double-digit gains in 1997. "It's really been a nice complement to our back-to-school fashion business," says Carol Brady, a Penney merchandise manager.

Not all kids are happy with their new duds. "We used to be able to wear designer brands," says 10-year-old Jessica Rios. But there she was at a Dallas-area Kids 'R' Us store with her mother, shopping for a blue skirt and a blouse with a Peter Pan collar—her school's new uniform. "Now we have to wear the same old stuff that everybody else is wearing." But Jessica has a plan. She'll spruce up her uniform with tights and a pair of black, chunky-heeled shoes. Even in uniforms, some kids will be slaves to fashion.

By Stephanie Anderson Forest
in Dallas



Uniform Approach

SCHOOL DISTRICTS	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
BALTIMORE	120
CHICAGO	391
DADE COUNTY, FLA.	126
DALLAS	84
DAYTON	17
EAST BATON ROUGE, LA.	48
LONG BEACH UNIFIED, CALIF.	70
NEW YORK	100
OAKLAND, CALIF.	75
WASHINGTON	41

DATA: EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES
LANDS' END, BUSINESS WEEK

(TOP TO BOTTOM) PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUZETTE VAN BYLEVEL/TONG BEACH PRESS-TELEGRAM; RALF FINN HESTOFT/SABA

April 5, 1997

*Edue -
School Uniforms*

NOTE TO BRUCE REED

I thought you would find this interesting. Not sure if it made it into the clips over here.

-- Bill Kincaid

Over the last year, we've seen a marked increase in the number of parents asking for more uniform products."

— Michael Grasee, Lands' End school uniform director

"I think it's fantastic. The less I have to go to the store, the happier I am."

— Kym Habig, a parent in Long Beach, Calif.

New class of school uniforms

Mail-order firm puts its stamp on growing trend

By Chris Woodyard
USA TODAY

The uniform calls for a tailored Oxford shirt, khaki chinos and a navy hopsack blazer. A jaunt to the yacht club?

Hardly. More like a day at elementary school.

Lands' End, the mail-order purveyor of solid-color sweaters and squall jackets, is joining some of retailing's biggest names in offering uniforms for public school children.

But it may already be late to class. Big chains have steadily increased uniform sales over the past three years.

Wal-Mart stages uniform fashion shows. Sears takes sample uniforms to school districts that are considering dress policies. J.C. Penney offers uniform wear in a specialty catalog, "Class favorites."

The entry of upscale merchanter Lands' End signals that uniforms — adopted by some public schools to ward off the influence of income disparity and gangs — are becoming more mainstream.

"Over the last year, we've seen a marked increase in the number of parents asking for more uniform products," says Michael Grasee, Lands' End school uniform director.

The company, based in Dodgeville, Wis., conducted a survey that found that up to one in four pupils in the lower grades could be ordered into uniforms in public schools by next fall. That would add up to 15,000 elementary and middle schools.

Lands' End's uniform line is presented in a 20-page catalog being sent to parents and school districts.

Besides the blazer (\$65-\$75), the catalog sports hand-down silk neckties (\$18) and Interfection knit polo shirts (\$16). Worried that junior may grab the wrong Oxford button-down after gym class? No program? Cuff: \$5 extra.

Lands' End compiled its uniform catalog mostly by regrouping existing clothing items. A few new items, like girls' blouses with rounded "Peter Pan" collars, were added.

Some parents are downright excit-

ed about Lands' End's move into school uniforms.

"I think it's fantastic," says Kym Habig, who has three uniform-clad youngsters attending public schools in Long Beach, Calif. "The less I have to go to the store, the happier I am."

Habig, who helped pioneer the uniform experiment in Long Beach, prefers to shop for the look-alike clothing in upscale stores, such as The Gap and Nordstrom. She spends \$100 to \$300 per kid.

"I can spend \$30 for a shirt, and if it lasts three years, it's cheaper than buying three at \$12," Habig says. Her 7-year-old son is already wearing his brother's uniform hand-me-downs.

The more expensive uniforms may hold together better, but they don't look much different on the playground, she says. She says kids don't notice the difference, either.

So, she says, she doesn't think

Lands' End's entry into the uniform market will draw new lines between kids with cheap uniforms and those with expensive ones.

Lands' End will join a crowded field of merchants vying for the attention of parents and school districts.

Sears has seen sales of school uniforms double each of the past two years. At Wal-Mart, where girls' knit shirts start at \$6.96, a spokeswoman says uniforms have been "an extremely successful business for us."

Uniform requirements vary among districts and even among schools within a district. The popular look for boys is cotton-twill pants or shorts — never blue jeans — and a white buttoned shirt. Girls generally wear a skirt, or a combination skirt and shorts called a "skort," and white blouse.

"It's a little fashion-challenged," says Cathy Yanis, a Sears uniform buyer. "There are certain districts, like Los Angeles, that allow a little more fashion."

But there are certainly many outliers ready to liven up the look. Uniform makers from as far away as Tokyo have visited Long Beach, one of the districts that helped start the uniform fad in 1994. Each of the district's 56 elementary schools and 14 middle schools decides on its own uniform. One elementary school in a working-class neighborhood requires students to wear ties.

For just about everyone involved, it has been a learning process.

"When we first started this, I didn't know what a skort was," Long Beach school district spokesman Dick Van Der Laan says.

But Lands' End knows. The skort, page 9, is \$22.

Local Teachers Union Head Emerges as Top Candidate

to Succeed Shanker

By STEVEN GREENHOUSE

Sandra Feldman, president of the union representing New York City's public school teachers, has emerged as a leading candidate — some say the leading candidate — to succeed Albert Shanker as president of the 900,000-member American Federation of Teachers, union officials say.

Several members of the federation's 39-member executive council predicted flatly that Ms. Feldman would be chosen to succeed Mr. Shanker, who died on Feb. 22.

Others said it was a toss-up between her and Edward J. McElroy, the federation's secretary-treasurer since 1992.

"If Sandy were to say she wanted to be president, I don't think there is any question that she would be president; and I'd be surprised if it was anything less than unanimous," said Ted Kirsch, president of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers and a member of the national federation's executive council.

Ms. Feldman, the combative and politically astute head of New York's United Federation of Teachers, declined to say in an interview whether she wanted to become head of the parent union, saying there was a moratorium on campaigning and political jockeying during the mourning period for Mr. Shanker.

"We thought it would not be right to have all this speculation when we want to mourn Al," she said.

Mr. McElroy, former president of Rhode Island's teachers' union as well as that state's A.F.L.-C.I.O., also cited Mr. Shanker's recent death as

his reason for refusing to discuss whether he wanted the presidency. As secretary-treasurer, he is temporarily handling Mr. Shanker's old duties.

The federation's executive council is to meet on May 5 to pick an interim president, who will remain in that post until the rank and file elects a president to a regular two-year term in July 1998.

There is widespread agreement that whoever is chosen will be unlikely to match Mr. Shanker's stature or his mix of forcefulness, brashness and eloquence.

He molded the New York City teachers' union into a powerful force, headed the national union for 23 years and was an internationally known spokesman on educational reform.

"I don't think anyone is looking for someone to replace Al," said Paul F. Cole, a member of the union's executive board and secretary-treasurer of the New York State A.F.L.-C.I.O. "They're looking for someone to succeed him. There has only been one Al Shanker, and there will only be one Al Shanker."

Several executive council members said Ms. Feldman, a 57-year-old Coney Island native and a former teacher on Manhattan's Lower East Side, would be a logical successor to Mr. Shanker because she was his protégée and succeeded him as president of the city's 90,000-member teachers' union, by far the largest in the national federation.

"It's almost a natural for Sandy," said one executive council member

who insisted on anonymity. "She grew up at the foot of the master."

From 1974 to 1986, Mr. Shanker retained the helm of the New York City union while also heading the national federation. It is unclear whether Ms. Feldman would hold onto the New York City presidency if she were elected to head the parent union.

Tom Mooney, an executive council member and president of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers, said Ms. Feldman's elevation was not a foregone conclusion.

"I think the most obvious people, at least in the foreseeable future, would be Sandy and Ed McElroy," he said. "No one's in a big panic because we have a number of very capable people."

Executive council members predicted that Mr. Shanker's successor would be selected through consensus, rather than a competitive contest.

"I think everyone will be together on the interim president," said Thomas Y. Hobart Jr., president of New York State United Teachers. "I don't look for any opposition."

Because the New York State teachers' union has more than 250,000 members, representing more than one-fourth of the parent union, some executive council members say Mr. Hobart should not be counted out in a leadership contest.

The two most likely successors, Mr. McElroy and Ms. Feldman, have different strengths, board members say. According to Mr. Mooney, the 56-year-old Mr. McElroy "is a good

administrator. He's made the headquarters hum in a way it didn't before."

"Sandy," Mr. Mooney added, "not only has experience running a big local, but has developed an expertise on educational reform and has broken the mold by forming new alliances with community and parent groups."

Some New York teachers say one reason Ms. Feldman is not campaigning openly for the national presidency is that she has her hands full running for re-election as president of the New York City teachers' union.

With many city teachers disgruntled about a two-year pay freeze, she is facing a strong challenge, although she is widely expected to win.

Ballots went out March 14 and are due back this Wednesday, with the count scheduled for Thursday.

Officials in the American Federation of Teachers and in the nation's largest teachers' union, the 2.2-million member National Education Association, said Mr. Shanker's death would have little effect on the slow-moving, three-year-old merger talks between the two unions.

Some labor experts say that whoever succeeds Mr. Shanker might want to delay a merger until he or she consolidates power as a way of gaining more leverage in the negotiations.

Other labor experts say now that the A.F.T. no longer has its powerful leader, there is a window of opportunity to complete the merger quickly.

"I don't think Al's death will hurt the negotiations," said Robert Chase, president of the National Education Association. "I don't think it creates a new window of opportunity. We'll continue the discussions in a positive way as we've been doing for the past year."

Officials in both unions say too many issues still need to be worked out, like staffing, leadership structure, and policy on educational reform, to allow a swift completion of the merger.