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## Board hears uniform proposal

*BY LESLIE BIXLER*  
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FREMONT -- City school board members heard a first reading Tuesday on a uniform policy for students in grades seven and eight beginning next school year.

The board will hear a second reading at Monday night's school board meeting a 6 p.m. in the W. David Carr Lecture Lab.

Tim Cullen, director of Fremont Student Services, gave another presentation at Tuesday's afternoon meeting on the survey results, pilot project focus, proposed policy and guidelines along with a campus wear implementation plan. A presentation was given at the Dec. 15 meeting, and at that time only preliminary research had been done.

Cullen said in order to implement a plan for next year, a decision had to be made by the end of February.

"Many districts did this to improve safety and improve attendance," Cullen said, noting campus wear will help with socioeconomic issues and stop bullying.

District officials are planning on implementing the uniform policy district-wide for the 2010-11 school year.

Typically, depending on a family's budget, parents or guardians will spend about \$200 or more for regular clothes per child, per year. However, campus wear will only cost between \$25 to \$50 a year.

Superintendent Traci McCaudy showed board members some examples of the campus wear, which included a navy sweater, navy pants, purple dress shirts for boys with a tie, khaki pants and polo shirts.

"Our goal is to have everything in stock with contracted vendors by June," she said.

"It might be difficult for the kids, but parents will see it will help them economically," said board member Jim Fails.

Board President Marc Glotzbecker said he has three children in the district and that he wasn't for the idea at first, but is now in favor after learning more.

"We're in the business to provide structure for kids," he said.

Pants, capris, shorts, skirts and jumpers can be khaki, black and navy with a cotton, cotton blend, wool or twill fabric and cannot drag on floor. Jeans, denim, corduroy, sweat or windsuit pants will not be allowed. Shorts and skirts will have to be knee length or longer.

As for shirts and sweaters, they can be dark purple, white, navy or gray. No open-toed shoes will be allowed. Socks, tights or hose must be worn with shoes as well. Caps, hats, sweatbands, bandanas will also not be allowed.

About 2,500 surveys were mailed to families around Jan. 20. Staff and students were provided surveys during school hours. A copy of the survey was also placed on the school Web site.

When the general survey results came in, 27 percent of students are for the uniforms while 73 percent are against. Sixty-six percent of parents are for uniforms while 34 percent are against. Ninety percent of staff members are for the uniforms and 10 percent are against.

A common theme among all the age groups is that by having uniforms there will be less bullying and peer pressure.

The pilot project chosen were the middle school grades because children in this age group are often anxious about their physical changes and they are easily offended and sensitive to criticism. They often feel self-conscious, alienated and lack self-esteem.

"These are researched-based common items," Cullen said.

While the middle school is making improvement on student discipline, the discipline data for the 2007-08 school year reveals the following: 24 dress code violations, 78 instances of disrupting school, 13 cases of sexual harassment, 130 instances of class disruption, 54 cases of harassment, and 86 degrading acts.

During the secondary survey results about campus wear, Cullen said they had a 26 percent return rate.

Those who responded listed Wal-Mart, JC Penney, Kohls and Kmart as the most common vendors to shop.

Cullen has been also checking prices with Goodwill, Peebles, Benchmark Prints and Fremont Athletic Supply.

Students qualifying for federally approved free or reduced lunches shall be provided with assistance in buying uniforms if requested in writing, to the superintendent.

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