

DRESSED FOR SUCCESS? THE EFFECT OF SCHOOL UNIFORMS
ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND BEHAVIOR

Scott Imberman, Ph.D.

Concerns about safety in urban schools have led many school districts to require uniforms for their students. However, we know very little about what impact school uniforms have had on the educational environment. In this paper we use a unique dataset to assess how uniform adoption affects student behavior and achievement in a large urban school district in the southwest. Since each school in the district could decide independently about whether or not to adopt uniforms, we are able to use variation across schools and over time to identify the effects of uniforms. Using models that include student and school fixed-effects along with school-specific linear time trends we find that uniforms generate improvements in attendance and test scores. These results are particularly strong for girls in middle and high school. In addition, uniforms reduce the likelihood that girls leave the district for alternative education options. Hence uniforms may be useful as a tool for retaining students in the face of increased school choice options.