

## **Frequently Asked Questions about the AHS Uniform Policy**

Thank you for the many suggestions that you have shared with us as we have refined the AHS uniform policy through the years. We have incorporated much of this feedback into the policy, but differences of opinion on particulars will always exist. We appreciate your spirit of unity in upholding the uniform policy. Our uniform is an important teaching tool. Most importantly, it helps us to teach our children to make and keep commitments with exactness—a skill that will serve them well as they prepare to make more significant commitments in the future.

### **Why a uniform policy rather than just a dress code?**

- A uniform policy serves as a better foundation for teaching the importance of making and keeping commitments with exactness, even when the commitment may appear to be small.
- Uniforms reduce socio-economic stigmas. When children come dressed in a uniform, their individuality is expressed more through their countenances and personality than dress.
- A uniform policy is more effective at reducing fashion distractions that can inhibit learning.
- A clear uniform policy allows teachers to focus more on teaching and less on upholding and debating a dress code with students.
- A uniform policy creates a stronger identity with the School.
- A uniform is helpful for security purposes to quickly and easily distinguish between AHS students and visitors.

### **How can my child express his/her individuality if most of what he/she wears is prescribed in the uniform policy?**

Fashion is one form of expressing ourselves, but individuality (who we are) goes much deeper than fashion. We feel that when we eliminate differences in apparel during school hours, it is easier to focus on the more significant aspects of our individuality: our Christ-like character and behavior, our God-given talents, our countenances, our divine nature, and our personality.

### **Why do we have an exclusive provider contract with Dennis Uniform?**

As a result of our exclusive provider contract, Dennis Uniform contracts with fabric mills for the materials needed and provides certain guarantees to have AHS uniform items in stock. Dennis must have a multi-year commitment for their mills and manufacturers to provide these guarantees.

### **Doesn't an exclusive provider contract with Dennis Uniform create a monopoly, when competition can help drive prices down?**

Competitors' prices and quality are still factors in our exclusive provider contract with Dennis. Price is an important factor, but not the only factor in our choice of uniform supplier. Each year, the Uniform Committee compares Dennis extensively with competition before continuing the exclusive provider contract with Dennis. Through this process, Dennis competes with other

companies on price, quality, and customer service. So far, we have found that Dennis continues to provide the best balance of quality, variety of product, size options, online purchasing, and customer service. For example, they offer longer skirt options for our School than are available through other providers. We continue to actively research and compare options for future consideration.

### **Why are girls required to wear dresses and not allowed to wear pants or shorts?**

- Dresses establish appropriate gender distinction and elevate the level of dignity and respect by and for our girls and young women.
- The uniform standards for boys and girls set the tone for an atmosphere of diligent learning and study. Various accommodations and options are available in the uniform policy for activities that require clothing other than dresses (field trips, P.E., etc.); however, the general uniform standard for boys and girls is “classroom” focused and not “playground” focused.
- The requirement for girls to wear dresses predates the School’s uniform policy and has been in place from the founding of the School in 1970. It continues to be a part of the School’s history and identity. Maintaining this dress standard not only displays respect for girls and young women, but also shows respect and gratitude for those who have made immense sacrifices of their time and resources through the years to establish and perpetuate the culture and spirit of American Heritage School.

### **Why are there not more options in the uniform?**

Historically, the School uniform has gone through periods of more and fewer options than are currently permitted. As the Uniform Committee reviewed this history with parents, teachers, and administrators at AHS, it became apparent that a policy with relatively fewer options best supports the underlying purposes and goals of the uniform policy and the mission of the School. Fewer options are easier for teachers to uphold and support in the classroom, and oftentimes less expensive for parents.

### **Who do I talk to about suggestions or concerns I have about the uniform policy?**

Although you are welcome to speak with a School administrator or a Uniform Committee member, we strongly recommend that concerns or suggestions be submitted in writing to the Uniform Committee Chair, [tcamp@ahsmail.com](mailto:tcamp@ahsmail.com), who will circulate it to the full Uniform Committee. An e-mail or letter is far more likely to make a difference for the following reasons:

- It can be circulated to the full Uniform Committee for careful review, instead of heard by a single individual who may or may not act upon the suggestion or concern.
- It can be saved and referenced in future Uniform Committee discussions.
- Written feedback requires careful and thoughtful articulation, and therefore separates it from the less carefully considered and passing suggestions that we sometimes receive about the School uniform policy.

**Who is on the Uniform Committee, how was it established, and what is the process for getting on the Uniform Committee?**

The Uniform Committee is comprised of experienced parents, teachers, and administrators who represent students, parents, and teachers from across the K-12 grade level spectrum. Although students are not represented as voting members of the Uniform Committee, they are included indirectly in the decision making process through in-class and personal feedback opportunities, as well as through the AHS Student Government process, which includes a mechanism for making proposals to administration.

Currently the Uniform Committee is comprised of the following individuals: Leland Anderson, Trudy Camp (chair), Blaine Hunsaker, Katie Holmstead, Liz Jacob, Jill Murdock, Kelly Nielson, Chrisann Patch, Cindy Tolman, Lauri Updike, and Mary Kay Ware.

Members are invited to serve on the Uniform Committee by the Head of School, the Uniform Committee Chair, and the Parent Organization President. Invitations are based upon experience, understanding of and commitment to the principles underlying the AHS uniform policy, ability to effectively listen to and communicate with others, and ability to approach uniform questions objectively and even-handedly. The Uniform Committee bylaws provide for changing no more than 25% of the Committee membership in a given year.

Because there are typically so many recommendations concerning uniforms, the Uniform Committee requires a significant time commitment from its members (monthly and sometimes weekly meetings of two or more hours each). Parents who have made written proposals to the Uniform Committee are oftentimes given opportunities to make brief presentations at the Uniform Committee meetings to allow parents the chance for an in-person hearing with the Uniform Committee, particularly when the written recommendation from the parent was thoughtful, principle-based, and persuasive.