

Parents need help with uniforms

In November last year (2012), PEP ran a survey to find out attitudes towards Back-to-School (BTS) issues. From the hundreds of thousands of responses to the survey, it appears parents have strong opinions about how schools could help them more with uniforms.



PEP, which ran the research using its free messaging service, says 66% of parents would like their schools to help them pay less for uniforms by standardising the uniform - i.e. a white shirt, grey trousers/skirt instead of clothing in special colours - and 56% of parents said it would be easier to manage if everyone had the same uniform style.

As the country's largest school-wear retailer (with 57% of the market), PEP was pleased to see that parents are generally well-informed about their rights: the majority (70%) of respondents know it is against the law for any school to turn away a child for not wearing the school uniform but an astonishing 59% of people said they know of an incident whereby a child's been turned away from school for not wearing the correct uniform (NB: this would be against the law). 62% of the sample is aware that the government has produced guidelines for a standard school uniform (and perhaps this is also why they would like schools to opt for a less expensive uniform).

While 63% said their school already helps them by selling second-hand uniforms, over half the sample (of more than 100,000 people) said they would like their school to help them more with selling second-hand uniforms.

Key behavioural buying patterns

The findings also reveal key behavioural buying patterns by cash-strapped parents: nearly three-quarters of parents give BTS items to their kids for Christmas (72%); they also start planning and saving for BTS long before Christmas (63%) and research prices and promotions ahead of time (54%). Quality is very important to parents when they select school uniforms (69%) - one reason for this could be that they invariably pass down uniforms within their family (66%) and even more so to their friends' children (70%). Half of all respondents buy school-wear and shoes a size bigger to allow their kids to grow into them and 70% say they spend more than R500 a year on school uniforms.

PEP's marketing director, Nobesuthu Tom says the research helps them understand their customers better. "While we know our customers are remarkable people making it possible for their families to live with dignity and pride, we continually strive to understand them better and where possible we want to find new ways to help them face their daily challenges."

PEP school-wear

As in previous years and as part of its commitment to help parents at a critical time of the year when the burden on household expenses is high, PEP is holding its prices on many of its main entry level (Grade 1) school-wear items during the January 'back-to-school' period - namely; entry level white shirts (girls and boys) and school shoes.

For PEP's basic range of school-wear, parents could kit out their girl or boy for first day at school for just over R100 and this includes a white shirt, a black/navy skirt for a girl or grey shorts for a boy, socks and shoes.

Entry level (5/6 yrs)

Item	Boy	Girl
White shirt S/S	R14.99	R14.99
Grey Shorts	R17.99	
Black/Navy Skirt		R17.99
Anklet socks SP	R8.99	R7.99
Shoes	R59.99	R59.99
Total	R101.96	R100.96

Grade 8 (13 yrs)

Item	Boy	Girl
White shirt S/S	R34.99	R34.99
Grey Shorts SP	R59.99	
Black/Navy Skirt SP		R59.99
Anklet socks SP	R10.99	R9.99
Shoes	R79.99	R69.99
Total	R185.96	R174.96

S/S = short-sleeved

SP = Student Prince

Giving education a boost

The PEP Academy helps give the building blocks of education - literacy and numeracy - to Grade 4 learners. Run in 11 existing schools nationally, the PEP Academy for Grade 4 will, in 2013, give 1650 children after-school core competence training in literacy, numeracy and life skills on three afternoons a week. While the children are given this supplementary education, they are also off the streets, given a light meal and are kept in a safe environment.

The PEP Academies, which are in Gauteng, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Free State schools, have been endorsed by the Department of Education and are successful: based on pre and post-tests, learners increased their literacy scores by 24% and numeracy scores by 20% at the end of the last academic year.

The Grade 5 PEP Academy, which specifically promotes a joy of reading, is expanding to four sites in 2013; two schools in Johannesburg and two in Bloemfontein. The new Grade 5 programme includes a classroom library of 100 books with lessons and learner activities based on the books.

In 2012, PEP created the Teacher of the Year award to give primary school children nationally a chance to vote for their favourite teacher. The responses were unprecedented and Nobesuthu Tom adds: "We were really impressed by the pride this initiative generated. And, at PEP, we are very proud to have found a way for people to recognise and salute what's important in our primary schools and in our communities - the people who inspire us later in life ... our teachers."

The 2012 Teacher of the Year, announced in October 2012, is Mrs Bell from Belhar Primary in Belhar, Western Cape.

Belhar Primary now receives a PEP Grade 4 Academy as part of the prize.

Student Prince

For over 40 years, Student Prince has been providing good quality school-wear that can withstand tough conditions without tearing, shrinking or stretching. 80% of the Student Prince range, which is stocked all year round in PEP stores, is produced domestically, helping to protect jobs in a challenged local industry.

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