
Re: [External] Concern over new backpack policy

From Lisa R. Smithson <Lisa_Smithson@hcpss.org>

Date Wed 8/13/2025 3:59 PM

To [REDACTED]

Cc Emily Perry <Emily_Perry@hcpss.org>

Hello [REDACTED]

Thank you for reaching out to share your concerns regarding the updated BBMS backpack expectations. I understand that this change impacts students' daily routines, and I appreciate you taking the time to explain how it may affect your child and their peers.

The decision to adjust our backpack expectations was made after discussions with the BBMS Administrative Team, the BBMS Leadership Team and other HCPSS middle school principals. After a lot of consideration, the overall consensus was that backpacks in the classroom have the tendency to create a safety issue. Our class sizes can go up to 33 students, can have anywhere from 1-4 adults in the room, and the inclusion of backpacks in the classrooms, present issues with clear walkways in classrooms. Additionally, we have found that oftentimes students keep items in their backpacks that are unnecessary for instruction, and those items sometimes become a distraction to the classroom environment. We also anticipate that since students' hands will be occupied during transitions to class, that we will notice a decrease in horseplay in the hallways. That said, we know that any change in procedure can raise questions and create challenges, especially when students have multiple items to carry throughout the day.

As far as staying organized, years ago, prior to middle school students being permitted to carry backpacks throughout the school day, I found that a lot of students used binders with zippers so that their items were contained, and often kept a pencil pouch clipped directly in their binders for smaller items such as writing utensils. I also noticed that some students used a 2-binder system- where they had one binder with all of the items for their morning classes, and a second binder for their classes after lunch. Perhaps one of these suggestions may be useful for [REDACTED] needs.

Regarding Chromebooks, our media specialist who is the staff member who manages all technology in the building is in support of backpacks in lockers during the school day. She shared that often times, students actually don't think about their devices in their backpacks, and they thoughtlessly throw them around. We have also found liquid damage caused by devices in backpacks with lunch boxes that contain drinks. The

repair policy is not a school-based decision, it is a HCPSS district level decision, so unfortunately, I do not have the authority to make any adjustments to the repair expectations.

I know that this change will take some adjusting for all. Please know that administrative and leadership team will review the practice before the end of November to determine if we need to make any changes.

Sincerely,
Lisa R. Smithson
Principal
Bonnie Branch Middle School

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, August 13, 2025 10:43 AM
To: Lisa R. Smithson <Lisa_Smithson@hcpss.org>
Cc: Emily Perry <Emily_Perry@hcpss.org>
Subject: [External] Concern over new backpack policy

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Dear Principal Smithson,

I am writing to express my strong concern about the new BBMS policy requiring students to store their backpacks in lockers for the entire school day.

This change will make it far more difficult for students to stay organized and prepared for class.

Restricting access to needed materials will only increase the chances of forgotten homework, books, or supplies—especially with such short transitions between classes.

The policy also raises serious concerns about the safety of valuable school-issued equipment. Without backpacks, students will be carrying Chromebooks and other items in their hands all day, making them far more susceptible to being dropped or accidentally or even intentionally knocked from someone else's hands. I would like to know if the school will be changing its Chromebook repair policy to reflect the increased likelihood of damage.

I do not believe this new policy serves the best interests of students, and I urge you to reconsider its impact on both academic success and the care of school property.

Sincerely,
[REDACTED]