

**BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY  
INFORMATIONAL BOARD REPORT**

**REQUEST TO DELETE THE FOLLOWING BOARD POLICY**

**02-0037-000 STUDENT BACKPACK USE**

**SEPTEMBER 13, 2021**

**Background Information:**

The Board maintains a manual which sets forth the various policies of the Harford County Public Schools. The manual contains policies which are either required by federal and state law and regulation or which are, in the Board's judgment, necessary and appropriate for the school system to operate in a lawful, appropriate and effective manner. Included among these policies is the following policy:

02-0037-000 Student Backpack Use

**Discussion:**

Student backpack use is generally an operational matter which is more effectively regulated at the administrative level, i.e., by the Executive Directors and Directors of Elementary and Secondary Schools, based on information received from school administrators. The nature and extent of student backpack use, and the related need for regulation of such use, changes from time to time. A recent illustration of such a change follows.

The policy includes the following language:

*Students are permitted to use backpacks or similar items to carry their schoolbooks, materials, or equipment while traveling to and from school.*

Because the above language not only prohibits the use of book bags, but also, "similar items," the Executive Directors and school administrators have been reluctant to permit students to use string bags and carrying cases to hold and transport electronic devices, i.e. laptops, tablets, I-pads, Chromebooks.

Consequently, students currently must carry such electronic devices by hand without using a string bag or a carrying case. This limitation has resulted in students often dropping their electronic devices, having the electronic devices strike desks, lockers and other items which, in turn damages the electronic device. Use of a string bag or fitted carrying case would substantially reduce these incidents and resulting damage.

The Executive Directors of Elementary and Secondary School Performance believe that it would be beneficial for students to be permitted to use string bags or fitted carrying cases to carry electronic devices, i.e., laptops, tablets, I-pads, Chromebooks, which are permitted to be used for instructional purposes.

In light of the above, the Superintendent believes that the subject of the policy, i.e., student backpack use, generally is an operational matter and would be more appropriately the subject of an administrative procedure.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:**

The Superintendent recommends that the Board Policy entitled 02-0037-000 Student Backpack Use, be deleted from the Board Policy Manual.

**Attachments:**

1. Current Board Policy 02-0037-000 Student Backpack Use

POLICY TITLE: <b>Student Backpack Use</b>		
ADOPTION/EFFECTIVE DATE: 5/20/2002	MOST RECENTLY AMENDED:	MOST RECENTLY REAFFIRMED:
POLICY/PROCEDURE MANUAL SUMMARY CATEGORY: <b>Students</b>		

Students are permitted to use backpacks or similar items to carry their schoolbooks, materials, or equipment while traveling to and from school. However, because of the importance of maintaining a safe environment in the school, such items must be stored in lockers or designated areas during the school day. The school principal will have the authority to make exceptions based on medical or health conditions, or disability. Harford County Public Schools shall not assume responsibility for the theft, loss, or damage to a student's backpack or similar item, or its contents.

The following conditions shall apply.

1. Bookbags, backpacks, etc. shall be stored in the student's assigned locker or designated area.
2. Musical instrument cases shall be stored in the music room or designated storage area.
3. Athletic bags and gear shall be stored in either the student's locker, assigned physical education locker, or designated storage area, as appropriate.

If any student is determined to be in violation of this policy, the school administrator will take corrective action, including, but not limited to the following:

- Requiring the student to place the item in his/her locker
- Taking reasonable steps to notify the parent
- Initiating progressive disciplinary action for repeated violations or insubordination as appropriate, which may include suspension from school.

The principal or assistant principal may make a reasonable search of a student, including the search of a student's backpack or other belongings, on the school premises if he or she has a reasonable belief that the student is in possession of an item, the possession of which is a criminal offense under the laws of this State or a rule or policy of the Board of Education. This search shall be made in the presence of a third party.

### **Board Approval Acknowledged By:**

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Patricia L. Skebeck, Secretary and Treasurer  
Board of Education of Harford County

Policy Action Dates		
ACTION	DATE	ACTION DATE
Adopted	5/20/2002	

Responsibility for Policy Maintenance & References		
LAST EDITOR/DRAFTER NAME: Unknown		JOB POSITION OF LAST EDITOR/DRAFTER: Unknown
PERSON RESPONSIBLE:		JOB POSITION OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE:
DESIGNEE NAME: N/A		JOB POSITION OF DESIGNEE: N/A
REFERENCE 1 TYPE: Legal	REFERENCE 1 NO. 13A.08.01.14	REFERENCE 1 DESCRIPTION: COMAR
REFERENCE 2 TYPE: Legal	REFERENCE 2 NO. Section 7-308	REFERENCE 2 DESCRIPTION: Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland
REFERENCE 3 TYPE:	REFERENCE 3 NO.	REFERENCE 3 DESCRIPTION:
REFERENCE 4 TYPE:	REFERENCE 4 NO.	REFERENCE 4 DESCRIPTION:
REFERENCE 5 TYPE:	REFERENCE 5 NO.	REFERENCE 5 DESCRIPTION:
POLICY NUMBER PRIOR TO NOVEMBER 1, 2005: Students .07.01.136		