

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

To promote the safety and security of students and staff, Harford County Public Schools has established policy for the use and storage of backpacks, bags, and similar items (collectively, “bags”) during the school day. Students are permitted to use bags to carry their schoolbooks, materials, or equipment while traveling to and from school. However, to maintain a safe environment within the school, backpacks must be **transparent and** stored in lockers or designated areas during the school day. The superintendent or their designee has the authority to make exceptions for medical, health, or disability reasons, or other qualifying factors, such as a lack of lockers, special events, or extracurricular activities. Harford County Public Schools assumes no responsibility for the theft, loss, or damage to a student’s backpack or its contents.

Transparent Bag Requirement:

- All students bringing a bag to and from school must utilize a transparent bag. A transparent bag is one where objects can be distinctly seen from the outside of all sides of the bag.
- Students shall store the transparent bag in the designated area as listed below in the Elementary and Middle and High School sections.
- The principal has the authority to grant an exception to the transparent bag rule or the storage rule as noted in the Exceptions section below.

Elementary School Policy:

- Elementary school students are permitted to carry bags to and from their classrooms at the beginning and end of the school day.
 - **Bags must be transparent.**
 - Bags must be stored in designated spots within the classroom during the day.
 - Bags shall not be carried in the hallways throughout the school day, except when arriving or departing from school.
 - Music instrument cases must be stored in the music room or another designated area.

Middle and High School Policy:

- Middle and High school students are permitted to carry bags to and from school at the beginning and the end of the school day.
- Bags must be stored in assigned lockers or designated storage areas after arriving.
- Students may carry a nontransparent bag no larger than 4.5 x 8.5-inch with them for personal hygiene purposes.
- **Musical Instruments:** Musical instrument cases must be stored in the music room or another designated area.
- **Athletic Gear:** Athletic bags and gear should be stored in the student's locker, physical education locker, or designated storage areas and should not be carried during the day. **It is not a requirement that athletic gear be carried in a transparent bag.**

Exceptions:

- Principals have the authority to grant exceptions to the Student Backpack/ Bag Use Policy.
- **Students with specific medical needs may be approved for self-carry medication/medical supplies with a non-transparent manner to carry those items like a belt bag.**
- Students with medical, health, or disability-related needs, or those in buildings without lockers, may apply for permission to carry bags throughout the day. Additionally, special circumstances such as:
 - **Special Events** (e.g., **school events**, field trips, off-campus events),
 - **Extracurricular Activities** (e.g., sports, music, academic competitions),
 - **Emergency Situations** (e.g., weather-related events, lockdown drills), or
 - **Transportation Constraints** (e.g., reliance on public transportation or special buses),
 - **Logistical concerns in the building** (principals can request a variance for school use of transparent bookbags during the school day)

Search Policy: The principal or assistant principal may conduct a reasonable search of a student, including the search of a student's bag or other belongings, in accord with the Board's policy on Search and Seizure.

Enforcement and Disciplinary Measures: If a student violates the bag policy, the school shall follow the administrative procedure.

Board Approval Acknowledged By:

Dr. Sean Bulson, Superintendent
Harford County Schools

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

Responsibility for Policy Maintenance & References			
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