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Macon County Schools

Backpack Safety Act 2017-19



Parents, Guardians, Teachers and Administrators

Please review these backpack safety tips

We would like for you to be educated about the potential health impact of heavy backpacks and take protective measures to avoid injury.

Overloaded school backpacks are causing an increasing problem of back pain and spinal strains from student the across the nation. Ligaments and muscles are not fully developed until age 16, overweight backpacks are a source of repeated low grade stress that may result in chronic neck, shoulder, or back pain in children.

The Macon County School district has begun using I pad (EBooks) and other means of educational materials, not only to stay up to date with technology but to prevent the need to carry heavy backpack back and forth to school each day.

- Backpacks should weigh no more than a maximum of 10% of a child's body weight.
 - Encourage ergonomic backpacks with individualized compartments to efficiently hold books and equipment.
 - Encourage students to use both straps and not sling the backpack over one shoulder.
 - Encourage wide padded adjustable straps that fit the child's body.
- As stated earlier, we all need to be educated about the potential health impact of heavy backpacks and to take proactive measures to avoid injury.

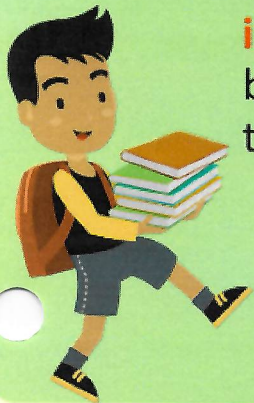
KIDS BACKPACK SAFETY



Tips to help you and your child make smart choices about selecting, packing, lifting, and wearing a backpack.

WEAR BACKPACK ON BOTH SHOULDERS

Carry **books in arms** if the backpack is too heavy.



Tighten shoulder straps so the backpack hangs at the waist.

Backpack should **not hang more than 4 inches** below the waistline.



Backpacks should be **10% or less of your child's weight.**



Use chest straps to help **distribute weight evenly.**



Place heavier, **larger books closer to the body** with the smaller items furthest away.



Choose a backpack made of **lightweight material.**



Choose a backpack with wide padded shoulder straps, a padded back, and a waist strap.



School Backpack Safety

The Alabama Department of Education strongly recommends that all school administrators, teachers, parents, and students be educated about the potential impact of heavy backpacks. Therefore, proactive measures should be taken to avoid injury.

School backpacks when overloaded can cause an increase in back pain and spinal strain for students, because spinal ligaments and muscles are not fully developed until after the age of 16. Overweight backpacks are a source of repeated low-level stress that result in chronic neck, shoulder, or back pain in children.

More than 90 percent of students carry backpacks. Children's textbooks are much heavier now, and in addition to textbooks, student often carry computers, cell phones, water bottles, band instruments, and other equipment considered essential to have available.

Studies have found that backpacks weigh as much as 25 percent of the child's body weight, and are often not worn correctly. Backpacks are often slung over one shoulder or allowed to hang below the waistline, increasing the weight on the shoulders causing the child to compensate for the weight by leaning forward when walking or stooping forward when standing.

Recommendations for backpack safety include:

1. Backpack should weigh no more than a maximum of 10 percent of a child's body weight.
2. Encourage ergonomic backpacks with individualized compartments to efficiently hold books and equipment.
3. Encourage children to wear both shoulder straps and not sling the backpack over one shoulder.
4. Encourage wide, padded adjustable straps that fit a child's body.
5. Encourage the heaviest books be left at school and handouts or workbooks be used for homework assignments.

For more information regarding Act #2017-19, Backpack Safety, please visit the Alabama Secretary of State Legislative Acts website at: sos.alabama.gov/government-records/legislative-acts, or Alabama Department of Education website at: <http://www.alsde.edu/>. Information can also be obtained at www.bacsupport.com.