

The Great Backpack Problem . . . Resolved?

Visit a school and you'll probably discover that kids these days are not allowed to carry backpacks into their classrooms. They have to take their stuff out of their bags, and transfer it to small bags. The reason for this is that there isn't enough room for their backpacks. Sometimes people trip. Sometimes people can't squeeze between chairs. Kids have been going to school for many years. Why now have their backpacks become such a problem? More importantly, how did teachers and kids get so divided on this issue? Stay tuned though—as in this school, they may not be as divided as you think.

If you do visit a school, you might see a scene like this one, that unfolded recently. Picture this: 8:15 am on the sixth floor. Three eighth graders rushed to make it to first period. Backpacks were stuffed into lockers. First, though, the eighth graders had to empty them. You might wonder why these students would take all their school supplies out of their backpacks, which were, after all, made to carry those schools supplies. They were victims of the NO BACKPACK rule. "WHY aren't we allowed to carry them?" one victim muttered. Witnesses overheard her friend reply, "It's the RULE." Another victim muttered as she pulled mountains of papers and books out of her Walking Dead pack. They gathered their piles of materials. The notebooks, the binders, the laptops, the pens, the books. The calculators, the slide rules, the erasers, the rulers. They turned away. Their piles started to slip from their arms. Slip . . . slide . . . CRASH. The books, the pens, the laptops, the binders, the notebooks, the calculators, the slide rules, the erasers, the rulers hit the floor. "I can't stand this!" erupted from three throats.

Two minutes later, the same girls were seen entering English class. "You're late. You need a pass, leave your stuff with me and go get one" Ms. S. said. Nothing happened for a moment. The girls looked at each other. Then, together, they began to hand materials to Ms. S. First they passed over their laptops. Then they handed over their notebooks. The pile in Ms. S.'s arms was up to her chin. Then they handed over their books. The pile in Ms. S.'s arms began to tremble. Then they handed over their pens. The pile began to slide. Then they handed over their calculators, slide rules, erasers, rulers.

"Stop it, this is ridiculous! I can't carry all this stuff!" Ms. S. howled.

“Maybe we should get our backpacks?” one girl asked with an innocent look on her face.

“Maybe you should go to the office,” Ms. S. said.

This reporter ended up in the office as well that day. The facts will show that there were fourteen eighth graders there by the end of first period. Nine were backpack-related infractions.

A surprise ending came later that day. “Come, girls, I want to speak with you,” Ms. S. said at lunch. Needless to say, the students were anxious. No-one can know exactly what went on in each of their minds, but their pulses were probably racing. Then . . . “I’ve decided to speak up on your behalf about the backpacks,” Ms. S. said. She was like Wonderwoman appearing in her real self all of sudden. She explained that there was a faculty meeting that afternoon, and that she would be raising the issue. No-one knows yet what will happen there—but these students learned that the teachers and kids might be able to work together after all.

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