

FLINT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

923 E. Kearsley Street ■ Flint, Michigan 48503 ■ Email: superintendent@flintschools.org

Dear Flint Families,

With the first day of school less than three weeks away on Wednesday, August 9, we have an important update for you regarding our backpack policy. Near the end of the last school year, we made the difficult decision to ban backpacks for scholars across all buildings, and we appreciate our school community's flexibility and understanding throughout that process. We had no major issues stemming from this policy change, and academic instruction was able to continue smoothly. This was an important safety measure, and we have spent the summer reviewing and discussing the policy with our key stakeholders.

As a result of these conversations, we want to share the policy for the 2023-24 school year. **Scholars in Pre-K to sixth grade will have the option to use a clear backpack. Flint Community Schools will supply a clear backpack at no cost to you (details forthcoming), or you may purchase your own clear backpack (must be completely clear). Our scholars in seventh to 12th grade will not be allowed to have backpacks, similar to the policy we had last year. Additionally, all visitors are required to present a valid driver's license or state ID before entering the building.**

Small purses with personal items (i.e., hygiene products, wallets, keys, phone, etc.), clear plastic bags with gym clothes, and lunchboxes will be allowed within reason. These bags will still be subject to search. If a scholar brings a backpack to school, they will be sent to the office where they will need to call a parent or guardian to pick up their belongings. The office will not hold this property.

This policy has been approved by the Flint Board of Education, the district's administration and principals, with support from the Flint Police Department and other safety advocates. Across the country, we have seen an increase in threatening behavior and contraband, including weapons, being brought into schools at all levels. Backpacks make it easier for students to hide these items. Weapons can be easily disassembled, and the individual pieces can then be concealed in pockets, inside books or under other items. Clear backpacks do not completely fix this issue, but they do make it easier for safety advocates to search and monitor activity for our younger scholars. We cannot implement the same policy for our older scholars, so we ask that scholars in seventh to 12th grade understand the need for the backpack policy at their buildings.

In addition to this backpack policy, we know that we are navigating other major changes this school year. As always, we appreciate your willingness help us do what is best for our scholars in the long term, even when it may cause minor inconveniences in the short term. Most notably, [Holmes scholars](#) will have their own wing at Southwestern Classical Academy, [Brownell scholars](#) will attend Holmes STEM Academy in the spring and our incoming sixth graders will attend Doyle-Ryder Elementary. Families have already been contacted and informed of these changes, and we will have orientations and open houses in the weeks ahead to ensure a smooth transition.

We apologize for any inconvenience that the backpack policy will have on our scholars and families, but when it comes to the safety of our school community, we will not take any chances. We will share details with families on how to receive their free clear backpack in the next couple of weeks. If there are additional questions regarding school safety, including our backpack policies or temporary relocations, please do not hesitate to reach out at superintendent@flintschools.org.

Sincerely,
Kevelin Jones, Superintendent