



NNPS Implements New Safety Initiative for All Students

([en español](#))

The safety and wellbeing of NNPS students and staff remains a priority. Over the past six months, the School Board and school division leaders have increased safety measures to include adding more school security officers to ensure coverage at all schools, installing weapons detection systems at all schools, conducting a safety audit, and hiring a former FBI chief as Executive Director of Crisis Planning, Prevention and Environmental Risk Management, and an experienced Director of School Safety to heighten school and office safety.

To further enhance safety, upon distribution, **Newport News Public Schools will require all students to use clear backpacks provided by the school division for the 2023-2024 school year.** Traditional solid color backpacks and totes will no longer be allowed.

NNPS is committed to making this change hassle-free for our students and families. The school division will purchase and distribute backpacks to all students in preschool through 12th grade at the start of the school year. In addition, the school division will provide each student with a small, opaque (non-clear) pouch to hold personal items. School principals will announce each school's backpack distribution date. Once students receive their clear backpacks, they will be required to use them every school day.

Clear backpacks will provide another layer of security as part of NNPS' multi-faceted school safety framework. Parents and guardians are encouraged to maintain an open dialogue with their children and teens about safety concerns and their wellbeing. If you or your child have a safety concern, please inform a school administrator or other employee right away. Safety concerns may also be reported anonymously through SpeakUp 24-hours a day:

- Students may click the SpeakUp icon on their Chromebook
- Email speakup@nnschools.org
- Call or text: (757) 765-4440

By working together, we can increase safety and security across Newport News Public Schools. As always, we appreciate your support and partnership.

Frequently Asked Questions about Clear Backpacks

Why is NNPS launching this initiative?

Clear backpacks will provide another layer of security as part of NNPS' multi-faceted school safety framework. Clear backpacks make security checks more efficient. While all students, visitors and staff proceed through the weapons detection system when they enter our schools, clear backpacks allow school administrators and school security officers to better see the contents, which can help prevent banned items from entering our schools.

Clear backpacks are now also required by other organizations including college and university stadiums, National Football League venues, and some concert venues to expedite safety procedures upon entry.

As an added benefit, students will be able to find their books and supplies easier and they can quickly see if they are missing anything without having to open their backpack.

Can we purchase our own clear backpack?

No. The school division is purchasing clear backpacks for all students. Upon distribution, all students will be required to use the clear backpacks purchased by Newport News Public Schools.

Can students decorate the clear backpack?

No. Designs or decorations are not allowed. Art and decorations can hinder the ability to see inside the backpack.

Can students line the inside of the backpack?

No. Fabric, wallpaper or any other material that conceals the contents of the backpack is not permitted.

Do lunch bags have to be transparent too?

No. Lunch bags and lunch kits do not have to be clear. Please note however that lunch bags may be searched.

Will gym bags, which are not clear, be allowed at school?

Yes. Gym and athletic bags are allowed at school; however, they are subject to be searched. Gym and athletic bags must be stored in a locker or other assigned location as soon as the student arrives at school.

What about purses or pocketbooks?

Purses and wristlets are allowed to be carried at school and may be subject to search. Small, opaque pouches, which may be used to hold personal items, will be issued to students along with the clear backpacks.

Will instrument cases be allowed on campus?

Yes, these are permitted, but should be stored in the band or music room, a locker or other assigned location as determined by school administrators upon the student's arrival at school. Instrument cases may be searched.

What about other items that students may need to bring to school that can't fit in the clear backpack? Can another bag be used to bring these items?

Students participating in an extracurricular activity are permitted to carry non-transparent bags to store items pertaining to their particular activity (i.e. project materials, experiment supplies, etc.). Upon entry into the school, all extracurricular activity bags must be stored in lockers or designated areas. All bags are subject to search.

What happens if a student refuses to comply with the NNPS clear bookbag requirement?

The student will be cited with insubordination which is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

All backpacks not meeting the criteria outlined above will be collected and kept in the school office where the students can retrieve them at the end of the day.

Will the district provide a replacement clear backpack if it becomes damaged, stolen or misplaced?

If a replacement clear backpack is needed, students should notify the school office. A replacement may be issued.

Clear backpacks are not required for teachers, staff, volunteers or visitors; however, all bags and purses are subject to search upon school entry.