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Dear Parents/Guardians:

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) is counting down the days until students return to school on Monday, Aug. 28. Earlier this week, parents received an email with important back-to-school updates. All this information is posted on our back-to-school webpage at <https://www.ccboe.com/quick-links/back-to-school-2023-24>. Please take some time to review this important information prior to Aug. 28.

Highlighted in our back-to-school updates is an important reminder for parents regarding our backpack/bookbag rule for students. This rule has been in place since 2019 for safety reasons. We have restricted the carrying of bags and other items between classes by students for the safety of both our students and staff. Our rule was updated after the pandemic to allow students to carry an approved laptop sleeve and small hand-size purse for the carrying of personal items. The current language for our backpack/bookbag policy is listed on [Page 14 of the Code of Student Conduct](#).

While the rule does not specifically state that **zippered binders** are prohibited, these items do not meet either the laptop sleeve or small, hand-sized personal item requirements. We have safety concerns about such items, as they can be used to conceal items prohibited at school, which is why our reminder addressed them. If students bring a zippered binder to school, it must be stored in their locker as they would their bookbag.

Our leadership team is aware that some schools have loosely allowed students to carry these items, as they support student material organization. Some of our schools even included such items on their supply lists this year, not considering the safety concerns they present. Principals have been reminded of our rule and their role in enforcing it among students.

Students are permitted to carry traditional binders but not ones that can be used to conceal any items. As a reminder, students are allowed to bring a lunch box to school. The important difference is that lunch boxes are NOT typically carried in the hallways, between classes and into classrooms. And the reality is that student possession of inappropriate items at school has increased over the past two years. While we hope these instances decrease, we will continue to reduce the use of bag or bag-like items during the school day. In preparation for the school year, CCPS convened its *Code of Student Conduct* Committee to review rules and guidance such as those pertaining to the dress code and backpack/bookbag use. When the committee reconvenes in the spring, we will review concerns expressed over zippered binder use to determine if any changes are needed.

As always, student and staff safety are a priority for school system leaders, and we appreciate the support from our parents in ensuring all students and staff are able to learn and work in safe spaces. On behalf of the school system, we look forward to welcoming back students and staff for another successful and safe school year.

Respectfully,

Marvin L. Jones, Ed.D.
Chief of Schools
Charles County Public Schools