



Ottawa Hills Jr./Sr. High School

Dear Ottawa Hills Junior High School Parents,

I hope this message finds you well as we continue into the new school year. I am writing to provide you with important information regarding our decision to have junior high students utilize their lockers and minimize backpack usage during the transitions and in the classrooms.

Goals This expectation aims to help students:

- Be better prepared for class with fewer distractions
- Create a more focused classroom environment with less clutter
- Strengthen executive functioning skills through consistent, authentic, and meaningful experiences to ease the transition from the elementary school, as well as transitioning to high school

Support Measures We have implemented several supports:

- Teachers created specific material lists for each class and taught locker organization
- Study Skills class focuses on organizational skills
- We are providing grace periods for students who may be late as they practice navigating between classes and lockers. Our assistant principal is monitoring attendance data to address any issues that arise
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Accommodations We work with families to meet individual needs:

- Students with 504 plans or IEPs receive individualized support through our special services team
- Personal hygiene items may be carried in pencil cases or similar containers
- Accordion folders and organizers are permitted and have been suggested for some students
- Case-by-case exceptions occur when necessary
- Computer bag straps available upon request

Support Resources Our junior high teachers, as well as School Counselor Nikki Tolliver and MTSS Coordinator Courtney Buerman are available to help students manage any stress or anxiety pertaining to lockers/organization. We encourage open communication and are happy to meet with families individually to discuss specific needs or concerns.

Moving Forward We acknowledge that we could have communicated this change more comprehensively at the beginning of the school year, and we apologize for any confusion this may have caused. The feedback we have received has been generally supportive, and our



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initial assessment indicates that the locker usage policy is having a positive impact on our learning environment.

We ask for your patience and grace as we continue to refine this process. Our entire team is committed to partnering with you to help your child develop these essential life skills while maintaining a compassionate and effective learning environment.

If you have questions or concerns about how this policy affects your child, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at Bmcmurray@ohschools.org or via phone at 419.534.5376.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership.

Sincerely,

Ben McMurray, Principal
Ottawa Hills Junior/Senior High School