

FOUR MINUTES

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That is the officially allotted amount of time students are given to travel from one class to the next. Four minutes to pack up, say goodbye, navigate crowded hallways, cross the school, and arrive ready to learn. On paper, four minutes sounds reasonable. In reality...

IT IS AN OLYMPIC EVENT.

During passing period, students transform from learners into survivalists. Backpacks become portable storage units, stuffed with textbooks, binders, laptops, water bottles, and sometimes a jacket we brought “just in case.” Lockers technically exist, but using one is a luxury few can afford. Stopping at a locker would require time, coordination, and the ability to open a jammed lock while thirty people push past you.

As a result, students simply carry everything. All day. Every day.

This reality became impossible to ignore when Ms. Wilson experienced it firsthand. After a student accidentally left their backpack in her classroom, she picked it up and immediately understood the daily struggle. According to witnesses, she paused, stared at the bag, and dramatically declared,

“This weighs more than the student who owns it. I fear for your spines.” Moments later, after setting it back down like it might cause permanent damage, she added, “If I had to carry this across campus in four minutes, I would simply collapse in the hallway and accept my fate.”

In that moment, the truth was revealed: these backpacks are not accessories...

THEY ARE BURDENS

Some students are genuinely carrying more weight than they should be allowed to, and all before first period.

This has led to a surprising side effect:

Early back pain.

Students walk the halls hunched over like they're decades into a physically demanding career. You'll hear conversations like, “My back hurts,” followed by, “Same,” followed by, “I need a chiropractor.” These are not people in their fifties.

These are teenagers on their way to Algebra II.

And then there's the distance. Many students have classes on opposite ends of the school, which means passing period is less of a walk and more of a speed-walking marathon. Dodging slow walkers, apologizing while squeezing through crowds, and praying no one stops in the middle of the hallway to talk are all part of the routine. There is no time to stop. There is only forward momentum.

Bathrooms?

Ambitious thought.

Using the restroom during passing period requires confidence, speed, and luck. Most students quickly learn that attempting it means arriving late to class, so they just... don't.

HYDRATION BECOMES A STRATEGIC MISTAKE

Students begin to schedule their bodily needs like calendar appointments. By the time students finally reach class, slightly out of breath and carrying the weight of their academic future on their shoulders, they are expected to immediately focus and learn. No recovery time. No stretching. Just sit down and take notes.

Passing periods may be short, but their impact is long-lasting — particularly on our spines.

All we're asking for is enough time to walk like humans again. Maybe even stand up straight.