HAMILTON TWP. – Little Miami students are checking their baggage at the door — their locker doors — in compliance with a new safety measure.

For the 2013-14 school year, students at Little Miami High School and Little Miami Junior High School are permitted to carry their backpacks to and from school each day, but these bags must now be stowed in their locker for the duration of the school day and may not be carried into class.

“Many academic classes have 35 students in the classroom. It is very difficult to move around safely under normal everyday learning activities. Having backpacks on the floor of these classrooms during an emergency could create a dangerous situation that we now can easily avoid,” LMJH Principal Ryan Cherry explained.

This rule change was implemented after district staff attended a school safety training session provided by the district’s School Resource Officer Shane Brandenburg and Det. Paul Bailey of the Hamilton Twp. Police Department.

District officials said Little Miami staff members review school safety measures annually in order to provide students with a safe learning environment. This safety review includes conducting drills, updating safety procedures and attending training sessions like those led by Brandenburg and Bailey.

LMHS Principal Cathy Trevathan said the new rule improves student health and school safety by decreasing the chance of something dangerous being brought to class and makes evacuation easier.

“With so many backpacks on the floor, it became a safety issue. We also had teachers that would trip over backpacks while they were teaching,” she explained. “There have been back issues for students that carry around a heavy backpack all day, especially if it was very heavy and hanging off of one shoulder.”

In a letter sent to students before the start of the school year, Trevathan, LMHS Associate Principal Brian Dalton and Cherry said they realized the new backpack procedure would be an adjustment for many students, but they believed it was important to follow the recommendations of law enforcement in making decisions on student safety.
Cherry said his students have adapted easily to the change.

“Most of our students have all their academic classes in the same hallway as their locker. They can get to their locker between most classes, so not having a backpack has not been a problem,” he said.

“Students are already getting used to the change,” added Trevathan. “It will take some time, and we will continue to monitor the situation. Change is always difficult, but this new rule is definitely in the best interest of the students.”
Gateway School District gets a little more clear on backpack policy

By Kyle Lawson
Thursday, July 24, 2014, 1:39 p.m.

Gateway elementary students will receive clear backpacks at no cost next school year, as part of an ongoing community effort to help prevent a school tragedy.

Corporate sponsors Day Automotive Group and Trib Total Media purchased the backpacks for every K-4 student in the district, which will allow teachers and administrators to see the contents of each bag as students enter the buildings, Gateway spokeswoman Cara Zanella said.

A temporary policy enacted in May banned backpacks at the elementary schools, after a student at Ramsey Elementary discovered a loaded gun in his book bag.

The student immediately turned the gun over to a teacher.

If parents decide against using the clear backpacks, students will be permitted to bring mesh backpacks, Zanella said.

If a student arrives at school with anything else, they'll be permitted to keep any school supplies for the day, but their parents will be called to pick up the bag, Zanella said.

“There won't be any kind of discipline for students,” she said.

Gateway Middle School students are permitted to bring backpacks to school but the bags must be stored in their lockers for the entire day.

High school students are permitted to carry backpacks throughout the day.

In addition to the backpack policy, a police officer will be stationed at Gateway Middle School, in addition to an officer already stationed at the high school.

Pitcairn Council voted July 14 to split the cost with the district for a Pitcairn officer to be stationed at the middle school. The Gateway School Board approved the agreement last month.

An officer and substitute officer at GMS will be certified in areas of training that include active shooter, school resource and crisis intervention, Pitcairn police Chief Scott Farally said.

Experience gained on the job also will help officers with their new positions, Farally said.
“Our officers already deal with teenagers in volatile situations in the neighborhood, probably more so than they would in a school setting,” he said.

The Plum School Board in June created a second school resource officer position effective January 2015, and allotted an additional $50,000 in the 2014-15 budget to fund the position.

Plum School District officials don't plan to enact a backpack policy for students this fall, Superintendent Timothy Glasspool said.

“There has been no discussion, and I have not made any recommendations,” Glasspool said Tuesday.

Franklin Regional High School students are permitted to arrive at school with traditional backpacks, but throughout the day can only carry a clear or see through bag, which had been a district policy prior to last school year.

Kyle Lawson is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. Reach him at 412-871-2369 or klawson@tribweb.com.
No-backpack policy challenged by Jackson High School students and parents

By Claire Cummings | Jackson Citizen Patriot
Follow on Twitter
on September 22, 2009 at 12:17 AM, updated September 22, 2009 at 9:30 AM

Students at Jackson High School are not allowed to carry backpacks such as this one. A new policy that bans backpacks from being used during the school day at Jackson High School drew criticism from several students and parents Monday who urged the board to rethink the policy it approved in August.

Students said the short time between classes — five minutes — and the size of the school make it difficult to run back and forth to store and retrieve books, and get to class on time.

Previously, they would carry a portion of the load — which many students brought to show as an example — in backpacks.

Principal Barbara Baird-Pauli said Monday the policy was enacted as part of the school's student handbook to improve safety, stem congestion caused by backpacks left in aisles and between lunch tables, and eliminate a way for students to easily steal things.

Junior Stephanie Pierce gave the board a petition with 368 signatures from students who opposed the ban.

"It's really hard on us," Pierce said. "So if we can find a compromise even, that would be great."

Pierce said a copy of the petition was given to Baird-Pauli, but students did not meet with the principal.

Nonetheless, Baird-Pauli applauded the students who were in attendance Monday.

"I give you credit," she said. "I appreciate the fact that you have … the fortitude to say, ‘I believe in this. I'm not afraid to express what I believe in.'"

Of eight Jackson County schools surveyed, six have a no-backpack policy once school begins, Baird-Pauli said, adding that she recognizes Jackson High School is the largest.

"We have been very clear that school safety is of utmost concern to us," she said.

The principal said she believes traffic flow also has improved but said there are things the administration can consider altering, such as the amount of time between classes.
Pierce, 16, said she understands there is a similar policy at the middle school.

"It works there because it's a one-level school," she said. "Here, it's just not logical."

Parent Juli Donoho provided the board with literature on clear backpacks in schools and urged board members to consider alternatives to the ban.

The board left the future of the policy up to Baird-Pauli, who said she would take a few days to consider the options.

"I do believe fully in being fair to our kids and doing what's right," she said.
NFL's new bag policy to improve public safety at games

By Gregg Rosenthal

• Around The NFL Editor
• Published: June 13, 2013 at 02:03 p.m.
• Updated: June 14, 2013 at 11:32 a.m.

NFL fans arriving at stadiums for games in the 2013 season should leave their large bags at home.

That's the big takeaway from the new NFL policy revealed Thursday, which will limit the size and type of bags that are allowed into stadiums starting in the preseason. In an effort to increase public safety and expedite entry into the stadium, the NFL Committee on Stadium Security in May unanimously recommended the implementation of the measure.

Fans will have a few options for bringing smalls bags into stadiums. They only will be allowed to bring in small clear plastic, vinyl or PVC bags that do not exceed 12” x 6” x 12”, according to a press release from the league.

Other options include a one-gallon clear plastic freezer bag (like Ziploc) or a small "clutch bag," approximately the size of a hand. An exception will be made for medically necessary items after they've been properly inspected at a gate designated for this purpose.

"Prohibited items include, but are not limited to: purses larger than a clutch bag, coolers, briefcases, backpacks, fanny packs, cinch bags, seat cushions, luggage of any kind, computer bags and camera bags or any bag larger than the permissible size," the statement reads.

Similar measures have started at many large college sporting event venues.

"Our fans deserve to be in a safe and secure environment," said Jeffrey Miller, NFL vice president and chief security officer. "Public safety is our top priority. This will make the job of checking items much more efficient and effective. We will be able to deliver a better and quicker experience at the gates and also provide a safer environment. We appreciate our fans' cooperation."

For more information on the policy, visit NFL.com/allclear.

Follow Gregg Rosenthal on Twitter @greggrosenthal.
Backpack bans, sealed lockers latest efforts to keep schools safe

By Perry Chiaramonte

A New York high school is the latest in the nation to ban backpacks following several bomb threats, and has even taken extra steps, including sealing up students' lockers.

For the last two weeks of the school year, students at Wantagh High School -- located about 34 miles east of New York City -- are being forced to carry their books and belongings in plastic bags, sign in and out to use the bathroom and submit to searches when entering the building. But the sealing up of lockers took school security to a new level.

"It is an inconvenience, but it's like an airport really," Erik Beuttenmuller, an 11th-grader at the school told Fox 5 New York. "That is horrible, especially with all the classes cramming for the Regents [exams]. You need all your books, [and it] isn't fun lugging everything around."

“It’s something that makes people feel safe, but it actually doesn’t make them safer.”

- Ken Trump, school safety and security expert

School officials took the extreme measures after finding multiple threatening messages located around the campus, one of which prompted an emergency evacuation. The final straw came one week ago, when a message was found scrawled in black marker on the wall of the men’s restroom saying, “Blowing The Skool [sic] up today no joke I’ve had it.”

“The increased measures, including bag checks and interior camera installation, were executed smoothly with the help of additional security personnel,” Maureen Goldberg, superintendent of the Wantagh School District, said in a statement. “Students were extremely cooperative throughout the process and attendance at the high school remains at a normal level.”

Backpack bans are not new, but have increased in school districts across the country in the past 10 years. School officials say the bans help keep out contraband items such as weapons or drugs, and also make crowded hallways more passable.

In 2012, Waukesha West High School, in Waukesha, Wis., instituted a requirement that backpacks be kept only in lockers during school hours. Students are only allowed to carry a small pencil case and a form-fitting case for laptops or tablets. Officials for the school cited safety issues at the time for instituting the policy, although parents complained that it was an excuse for the school to conduct locker searches at will.
Last year, the school officials in Oxford, Pa., banned bulky backpacks from being carried in the hallways as a safety measure, forcing students to either leave backpacks in their locker and carry books around or go back and forth to their locker between classes.

As far back as 2005, Clark County School District in Las Vegas banned backpacks and even purses because of increasingly cluttered hallways and reported thefts. The ban was also implanted out of concerns for safety after a teacher had sprained her ankle after tripping over a backpack left on the floor during the previous school year.

“Generally speaking, many more schools have been regulating use of backpacks,” Ken Trump, an Ohio-based school safety and security expert, told FoxNews.com. “It’s more of a day-to-day issue to avoid clutter to maintain mobility in the hallways and classrooms, which is reasonable.”

But Trump warned that the measure Wantagh High School is taking will do little to improve safety.

“If a school is doing this in response to some sort of threat, it’s just window dressing to create a visual cue that there is a perception of increased safety,” he said. "The fact of the matter is that if someone wanted to get something into the school they could.

“It’s something that makes people feel safe, but it actually doesn’t make them safer,” he added.
Clear bag policy causes confusion for some students

Posted 6:30 PM, September 3, 2013, by WGN Web Desk and Robert H. Jordan Jr

As part of their safety policies, some Chicago public schools now require students to use only clear bags to carry their books and supplies to class.

At Curie High School, 4959 South Archer Avenue, the policy has been in place for more than a week.

But students say they were caught off guard today they were told they would not be allowed to bring their old style multi-colored backpacks into the building because they would be violating school rules.

A message posted on the school website says students who show up at the school without clear backpacks will not be allowed in the building. They can leave those backpacks with security and pick them up at the end of the day.

But some students who spoke with WGN said using clear backpacks puts them at risk for having money, phones and other personal items stolen because it is easier to see those item in clear bags.

One student said he bought his clear backpack for $25. Others say they will have to do the same because they have no choice.

CPS tells WGN that no students were turned away from Curie High School. They were given the option to leave their old style book bags with security and pick them up at the end of the day. Some students chose not to do so.
Following recent questions, complaints, and controversy over the enforcement of a decade long policy requiring students to only carry clear or mesh backpacks, I feel that I need to answer some questions and address the FACTS in a more public way. My hope is that this will clarify the matter for those who are truly interested.

Superintendent Steve Anderson

Parents, the Shoe Department at the Hot Springs Mall now has backpacks ranging in price from $9.00 to $19.98. Also, backpacks may be found at Locker Room Athletics, Shoe Carnival, and Wal-Mart.

- Following school shootings at places like Jonesboro, Arkansas; Columbine, Colorado; Pearl, Mississippi; and several other schools in the late 1990s, the Lake Hamilton School Board and administration took a number of steps to strengthen the safety efforts to protect the lives of our students and staff during the school day. One such measure was an attempt to make it more difficult to bring weapons or drugs to school by addressing one very vulnerable safety concern, school backpacks. The LHSD realized that it would not be realistic to outlaw backpacks, school duffel bags, purses, book cases, music instrument cases, or athletic bags. However, like many schools across the nation, they rationalized that while not every student carried music cases, athletic bags, or brief cases, most students did bring backpacks to school. Many of these other bags were placed in the band room, locker room, or other more controlled locations that took them out of the control of students for the majority of the day. Backpacks on the other hand were generally carried with the students throughout the day. Therefore, they rationalized that requiring students to have only clear or mesh backpacks would make it more difficult for someone to bring drugs or weapons to school. Obviously, this safety measure would not be foolproof, but it would make it more difficult for someone to bring these things to school. Also, it would send the message that school personnel are aware of the danger and are being vigilant in taking our responsibility to protect the lives of students and staff. This policy was never intended to be an all-encompassing solution, but only one layer of a more comprehensive safety plan.

- Hopefully, everyone realizes that there is no guarantee against violence at home, in school, on an airplane, or anywhere a person might find themselves. However, there are a multitude of measures that individuals, law enforcement, the government, and others take to try to improve the odds of safety. Over the years, LHSD has done a number of things to improve school safety for the children and staff: Licensed Armed Security Officers on campus, video surveillance on campus and on school buses, criminal background checks for employees and volunteers, requiring clear or mesh backpacks, improved communication tools such as parent notification systems, opening our facilities to local law enforcement for tactical training to prepare for possible threats on campus and school buses, use of law enforcement drug dogs on campus, improved school procedures for visitors on campus, safety training for school personnel related to school violence, campus lockdown procedures, emergency response team to protect lives of students and
staff until law enforcement could arrive in a crisis situation, programs to encourage students to tell someone about threats of violence, Anti-Bullying programs, counseling and psychological services for students, and simple increased visual surveillance and watching for threats.

The use of a multi-layered safety plan is a widely accepted approach to school safety. According to Kenneth Trump, a national security consultant who has advised a number of public school districts in the country, "there is no panacea" for safety concerns. Referring to the clear or mesh backpack rule in another school district, Mr. Trump made the following comments, "Is it going to guarantee that a weapon can't get in? No. Even in prisons, with all the searches there, we still have weapons, drugs, gangs and murder.” But, he added, "Collectively, [security measures] create a climate conducive to safety and orderliness and raise the consciousness of students and staff about safety issues.’’

- The National Crime Prevention Council, headquartered in Washington, D.C. produced a pamphlet for school administrators entitled, "A Dozen Things Principals Can Do To Stop School Violence." In the pamphlet, there are a number of suggestions, including "Consider...Mesh or Clear Backpacks." This is a well respected organization best known for the children's character, "McGruff the Crime Dog" and the slogan, "Take A Bite Out of Crime." In addition, one market study conducted by the producers of backpacks stated that while there is no guarantee, "Market research shows that clear or mesh backpacks reduce drugs and weapons in the school by 50%.”

**Common Questions and Answers Related to the Backpack Issue in the LHSD**

- **Why do we have to have a clear or mesh backpack?**
  Very simple, it is board adopted policy that is designed to be one aspect of our student and staff safety procedures.

- **Why has this policy not been enforced before district wide?**
  Great question, I would wonder too! To my knowledge, it has been enforced. However, it is true that in the past few years, some of our buildings may have become lax in that enforcement. If so, that was a mistake and we are correcting that now.

- **Why were we told in some buildings that it would not be required and in some it would be required to have clear or mesh backpacks?**
  I provide an uncomfortable answer... In some buildings, some of our people did not do a very good job and others followed policy and did not make a mistake. Our building administrators do an excellent job and I believe are second to none. However, they are human and like all of us, they too make mistakes. We are not in a position to ignore board approved policy or rules.

- **Why does this not impact athletes, band students, and teachers?**
  As explained above, this is simply related to backpacks (bags designed to be worn on the back) and does not invade into more personal bags like purses, athletic bags, or even
instrument cases. I attended 12 years of public school, 5 years of college, and 2 years of graduate school and I never had a backpack. I realize that this was back in the dark ages and in modern times backpacks are common. Basically, every student carries backpacks; therefore, this policy impacts them all. As for our teachers and employees, they have all passed a criminal background check and not all rules that apply to minors apply to adults.

- **Does the school realize that the clear and mesh backpacks don't hold up as well as the solid canvas bags and that this becomes a financial issue on families?**
  Yes, we do realize that. In fact, most of the school staff and administrators are also parents or grandparents of Lake Hamilton students and have to purchase backpacks. The old saying of, "You get what you pay for" probably could be applied here. There are cheap backpacks that don't hold up all year and then there are those in the $35 range that wear much better. Yes, we do realize that this can become an expensive issue for families with multiple children. If this is a major financial hardship on a family, they need to speak to the building principal or counselor and we have avenues to assist in getting their student a backpack that complies with the policy.

- **Why will the school not consider changing the policy?**
  We will consider changing the policy. Each year, we review our school policies and student handbook rules. A committee at each building reviews our policies and then they work with the principals to make recommendations. This year, there will be very serious review of this policy. We will consider if the parent concerns, wishes, and cost of this policy outweigh the safety we currently feel that this measure helps provide. We are currently doing extensive research, conducting a statewide survey; we will have a question on an upcoming parent survey at our Parent/Teacher Conferences in the fall and spring, and visiting with parents that wish to share their concerns. In the end, once we gather facts and data on the matter, we will make a recommendation to the school board on the matter.