

How Can We Lighten the Load?

Backpacks at Kirkland Middle School

Today's Agenda

- o How we started
- o Why Backpack Weight Matters
- o The situation at KiMS
- o What we've done so far
- o Why we need your help
- o Determine next steps



How we Started

Parents Raised Concerns Last Year

- o A committee was formed; 40 parents
 - o Wellness Committee
 - o Represent broad spectrum of parents/ students
 - o Monthly meetings, Listserv

Mission Statement:

Assure that students' backpacks are no more than 10-15% of their bodyweight (APTA and AOTA recommendations) which is critical for the safety, health and well-being of our students



Why Backpack Weight Matters

LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF CARRYING A HEAVY BACKPACK:

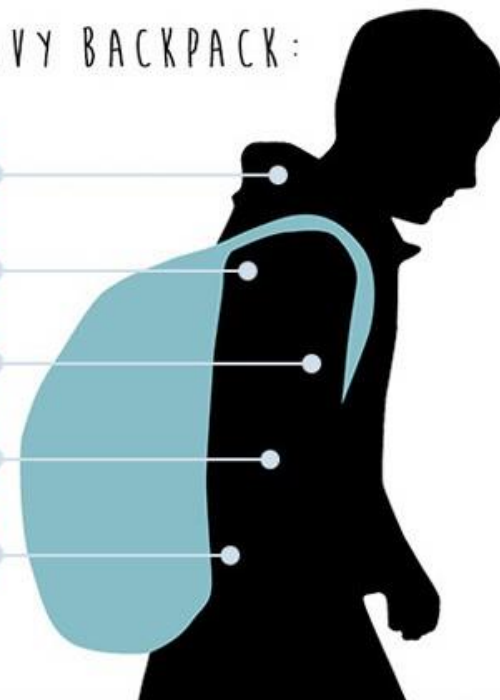
Strained neck and shoulders leading to headaches

Damage to the spine

Reduced breathing capacity due to poor posture

Scoliosis

Back pain and muscle spasms



Source: www.treatingscoliosis.com

Why Backpack Weight Matters

A backpack should weigh no more than 10-15% of a child's body weight (APTA and AOTA recommendations)

- o The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission says nearly 7,000 children are injured every year due to the heavy load of textbooks in their packs.
- o 37% percent of children aged 11 to 14 years report back pain, the majority of whom attribute the pain to wearing a school backpack. ([WebMD Health News Feb 3, 2010](#))
- o Carrying a backpack weighing 15% of body weight changes all the postural angles in preadolescent children. (Source: Srinivas College of Physiotherapy and Research Centre, Mangalore, India)
- o Children with lockers available reported less back pain. (Source: Journal of School Health)

Why Backpack Weight Matters

- o Carrying the school bag may lead to forward leading of the head and trunk which may result in spinal deformities. (Source: Department of Basic sciences, Faculty of Physical Therapy, Cairo University, Giza, Egypt)

And in the news.....

- o Concerned about students carrying 20, 30, even 50 pounds in backpacks, school systems across the United States -- in New Hampshire, Michigan, Florida, and Nevada, to name just a few states -- have considered limiting the use of backpacks in school. [WebMD](#)
- o CA passed a bill to limit the weight of backpacks for schoolchildren. It's believed to be the first anywhere that will set a maximum weight for textbooks used by elementary and middle school students. ([Poytner.org](#))
- o There is even a [petition](#) to the House of Representatives (started by a chiropractor in NC)

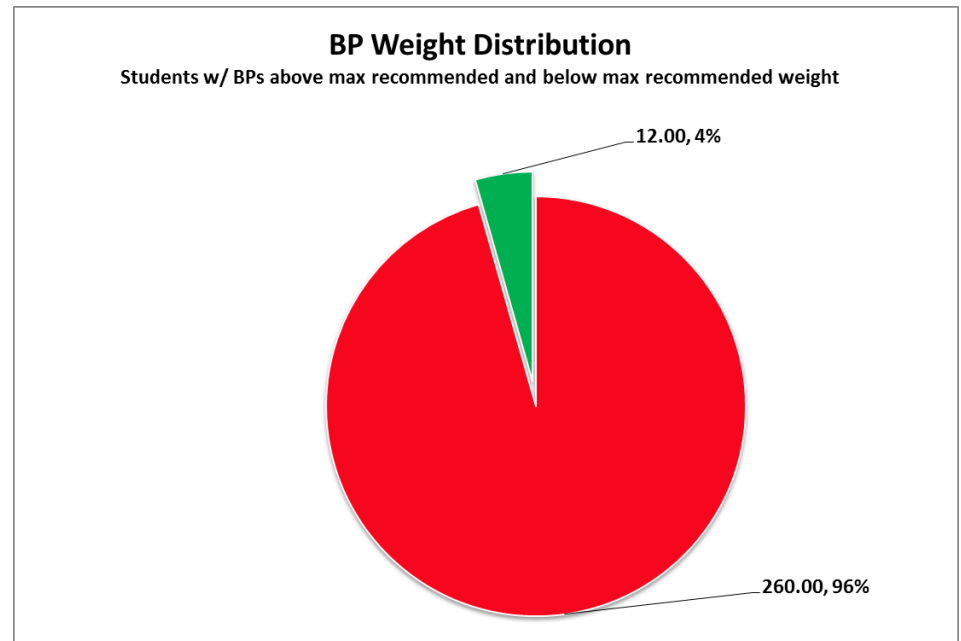
Understanding the Problem



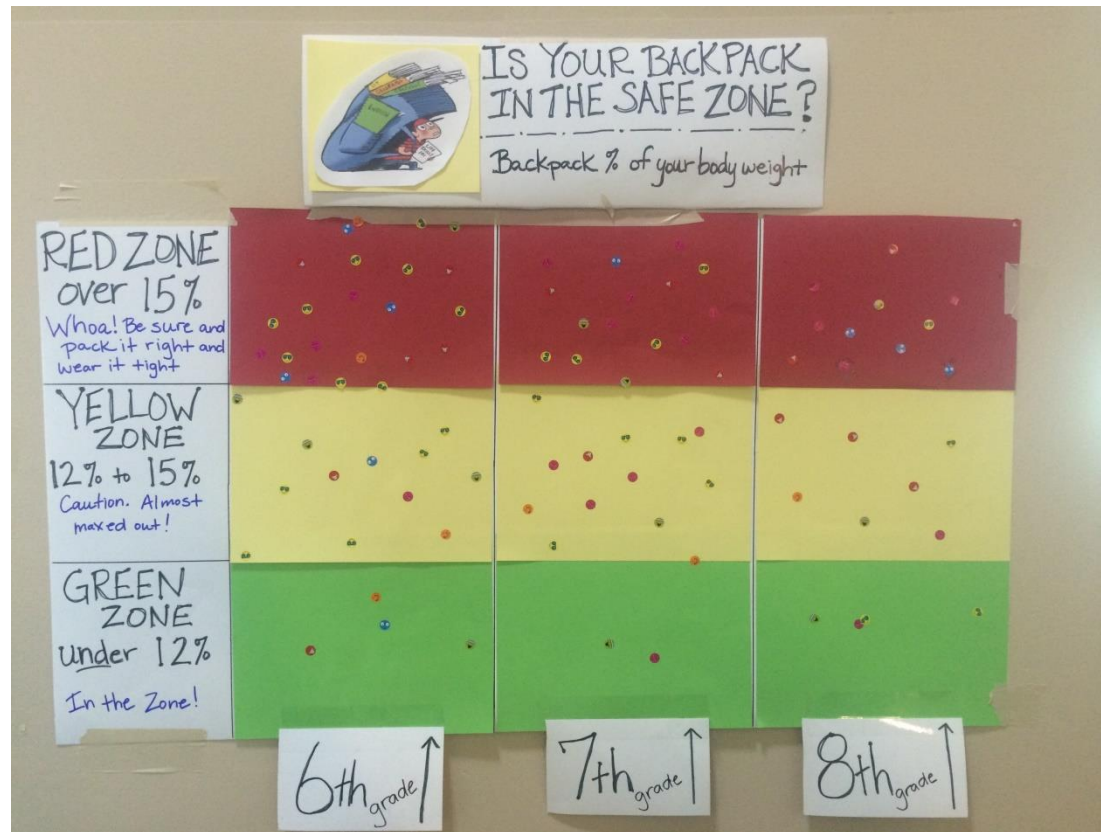
- Backpack Awareness Day-
Sept 2015
 - Weighed 272 packs
 - Average pack: **16 lbs**

What we Discovered

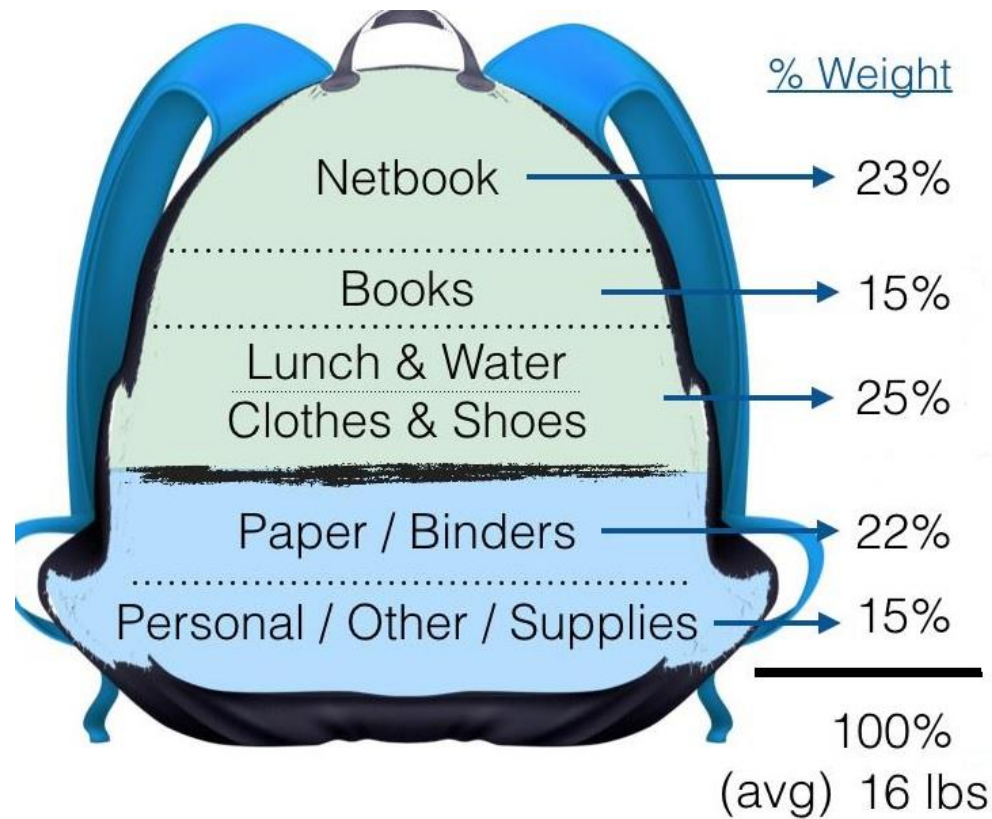
- 48% of student body participated
- **96%** of KiMS students are outside of the “safe zone”
- Younger students and females have an accelerated risk bracket.



Who's in the "Safe Zone?"



What's in a 16 lb. Backpack?



What else did we learn?

- Many students talk to their parents about backpack weight
- Kids carry much more than just their backpacks
- Students have to prioritize what they carry
- Chiropractor and pediatrician visits
- Confusion around what is required to carry
- Climbing the stairs is sometimes difficult
- Notebooks get carried far more than they are used

Identifying Solutions

- o Staff

 - Committee met with staff to gather feedback and ideas

- o Students

 - Met with leadership group

- o Parents

 - Ongoing communication – BP Committee

Things we Implemented

- Purge days to clean out folders/backpacks
- Education on how to carry/pack backpacks
- Looking into streamlining school supply list
- Reviewing alternate options for daily planner
- General awareness via Panthergram
- Education on “home cleanouts”
- Monthly backpack committee meetings
- Report out to PTSA General Membership
- Handouts on Backpack Awareness Day
- Initial outreach to feeder elementary schools

...but it's not enough

- Haven't solved the problem
- We don't have the power to make necessary changes



How you can help

- o Goal:
 - o **Eliminate 6 lbs. out of every backpack for the 2016/2017 school year.**
 - o **For LWSD to acknowledge, educate and take action on this important issue.**
- o Actionable Items:
 - o Netbook policy alternatives
 - o Eliminate planner
 - o Prioritize weight for technology choices
 - o Replicate Backpack Awareness Day
 - o Implement storage spaces
 - o Educate staff and families
 - o Your ideas??????

Attendees

- o Traci Pierce, Superintendent
- o Janene Fogard, Deputy Superintendent
- o Jon Holmen, Associate Superintendent
- o Kathryn Reith, Director of Communications
- o Debbie McC Carson, Kirkland Middle School Principal
- o Janis Rabuchin, rabuchin@earthlink.net
- o Dan Olson dano23@yahoo.com
- o Erin Hofmann hofmannerin@hotmail.com