LWPTSA Council – National School Backpack Awareness Day

Purpose: Backpack Awareness Day is a nationally recognized event that was created by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). The AOTA and the APTA (American Physical Therapy Association) recommend that a backpack should weigh no more than 10-15% of a student's body weight. The purpose of this event is to educate and build awareness for students, staff and parents around backpack safety, including how to size, pack, and wear their packs properly. This forum also creates a platform to gather data by weighing backpacks, enabling us to compare how our students' backpacks measure up to the recommended limits and what corrective actions need to be taken.

Budget: $0-300. Laminated sticker chart. Round multi-colored stickers. Print cost for BMI reference graph (12x18, qty 4) and educational signs. Print cost for flyer take-away for students. If you will do this every year, a one-time investment in a banner was approx. $125.

Basic Plan & Decision Principles:

1. **Determine Event Date/Time/Location** National School Backpack Awareness Day is always the 3rd Weds of September. Check www.aota.org/backpack to confirm. Or you can always do it on another day if you choose.
2. **Gain approval from PTSA Board and Principal** following your school's typical protocol for proposing an event. Be prepared with purpose, budget and volunteer requirements.
3. **Assemble a planning committee** utilizing parents that have an interest in the subject of Backpack weight/safety. You will want to have a meeting or two in the spring so you can assemble a plan to hit the ground running in September.
4. **Invite Community Partners to** your event that may share concern around the message you are conveying. This is an 'extra' but it's nice to have if you can locate parents or local businesses that you can leverage as resources such as physical therapists or chiropractors to participate. Some will also donate prizes/giveaways.
5. **Secure a Team of Volunteers** that will get as many backpacks weighed on that morning as possible and minimize bottlenecks at the sticker chart. Parents can also volunteer their household scales that you can borrow.
6. **Communicate and Promote Event** in all of the marketing channels available to you. School newsletter, FB page, electronic postcard, morning announcements, signs at school, reader board, etc.
7. **Event Organization is important**. Volunteers typically get 300 kids through stations in 30 minutes so it's important to be prepared and have everyone ready. It's critical that a quick training happens just prior to event start so that everyone follows the same process. A uniform approach will make for more usable data.
8. **Analyze and Communicate Results-** An excel spreadsheet is used to capture and collate data from the event (template provided) It is important to learn what the average backpack weight is per student, and also helpful to understand how this data relates to varying grade levels and genders. Be sure to share your results with the parents, students, staff and district.
9. **Thank Volunteers and Community Participants –** a heartfelt personal note to thank volunteers and participants from the community is a great way to ensure they'll sign up next year.

Dates and timings suggested here are approximate based on National Backpack Awareness Day, which is always the 3rd of Weds of September. If you prefer to host your Backpack Awareness Day on a different day, participation is encouraged, so please do whatever works best for your school. Dates below assume the 3rd Weds of Sept:

1. **Between April and May of previous schoolyear:**
   - Gauge concern and interest in your school community around backpack weight. Perhaps ask at a GM meeting, talk to friends, start a conversation on your PTSA FB page. Begin process of assembling parents that would like to support and participate in Backpack Awareness Day.
   - Gain approval from school admin and PTSA board. Establish budget requirements and request PTSA funds as needed.
2. **Between April and May:** Appoint a Chairperson and assemble committee members.
3. **Between May and June:** Hold initial planning meeting.
   - Agree on date of event
   - Establish goals for the event and how they will be measured
     - ☐ Number of students weighed
     - ☐ Decrease in average backpack weight (if not the first time)
     - ☐ Student/Community Feedback

   - Assign volunteers for:
     - ☐ Filling out a Building Use form w/your school
     - ☐ Marketing Strategy
       1. Signs, posters, updating website, handouts, newsletter, FB page, morning announcement, postcard
       2. Communicate results after event
     - ☐ Reach out to community partners and gain early commitment that they can participate in event
       1. Physical therapists, chiropractors, public health, etc
       2. Possible sponsors for backpack raffle or donation of luggage scales
     - ☐ Create event layout
       1. Mapping layout- traffic flow, number of tables,
     - ☐ Materials for event
       1. Signs, flyers for kids, data collections sheets, posters to capture data/stickers, educational signs, prizes, sign up for follow up events
     - ☐ Volunteer Coordination
       1. Create a Sign Up Genius and recruit people and materials (scales and clipboards)
       2. Have a point-person to educate volunteers and keep flow of event
     - ☐ Data Analysis
       1. Someone with spreadsheet/data skills to input data from event and analyze results

- Schedule a meeting for late August/early Sept to reconvene committee

4. **Late August/Early September:** Reconvene with your committee.
   - Re-confirm with professional community partners that are participating
     - ☐ Review their role and materials they are bringing, what do they need?
   - Re-confirm date/event with principal and admin/scheduler
   - Fill out and submit Building Use Form at school. Check with team lead re: # of tables, easels required
   - Check in with custodial staff on day-of event needs (hanging a banner), borrow tables
   - Have kids create large posters to promote event (you provide details)
   - Customize Marketing Materials/Posters. Submit to printer.
     - ☐ BMI chart- need 4 of these large enough to be posted on wall and seen
     - ☐ What Zone Are You In? poster- LAMINATED/large for stickers
     - ☐ General Educational Posters
     - ☐ Banner, if applicable
   - Submit promotion info for newsletter and announcements, reader boards, etc
   - Determine quantities required
     - ☐ Make assumption re: % of student body that will participate (half??)
     - ☐ # of stations (for 300 participants 5 tables, which is 10 stations, works well)
     - ☐ # of volunteers (4 per table, 1-2 organizer/overseers, vendors, 1 raffle person, 3-4 at the BMI/sticker chart)
     - ☐ # of scales (2 per table)
       1. Overask on these-some easier to operate or 'zero' than others
     - ☐ # of student handouts (based on guesstimated participation- 50% student body?)
     - ☐ #of data recording sheets for each station (3-4 per station based on 300 participants)
   - Send out Sign up Genius to Parents
     - ☐ Volunteers
     - ☐ Scales
   - Advertise and Promote Event to encourage student attendance.

5. **Second week of September:**
   - Monitor Sign Up Genius- ask again if more volunteers/scales as needed
   - Reminder email to participating vendors with timing and location details
   - Check back in with principal and key staff (custodian/tables)
   - Finalize layout and flow
   - Hang large (kid made) posters promoting event in most visible areas of school
   - Consider making announcements or quick interactive games at school lunch during BPA Day and during regularly scheduled school announcements
   - Customize and print materials:
     - ☐ Data collection sheets
     - ☐ BPA day flyer handout for kids (includes BP weight)
     - ☐ Raffle entry forms

- Assemble or purchase other materials needed for day of event. Stickers for "What Zone am I in?" chart, clipboards, baskets to collect forms, pens/pencils, calculators, wipes. Optional but nice - decorations, table clothes, tents (if uncovered and rainy)

6. **Monday Before Event**
   - Final reminder to volunteers
   - Visible marketing effort at school- last push: signs hung, reader board, TV screens, morning announcements, PTSA postcard, etc.
7. **Day of Event:**
   One Hour Before the Morning Bell
   - Set-up in pre-planned area(s) that will capture maximum number of students entering school in the morning
   - Station set-up –each table houses 2 stations
     - ☐ One Station= 6' table, 2 scales, 2 clipboards, 8 data collection sheets (4 per side), 4 pens, 2 phone calculators, 4 volunteers, approx. 40 kid handouts per clipboard
   - Set up Vendor Booths if applicable
   - Hang the station signage
   - Greet community helpers and volunteers
   - Add decorations
   - IMPORTANT: 10 minute Briefing for Volunteers on flow and process (detail below)

   When Kids Start Arriving (approx. 30 mins before morning bell)

   - Principal/Asst Principal welcome kids outside and encourage participation
     - ☐ Kids love getting their packs weighed-
   - Process for getting students through stations:
     - ☐ 2 volunteers per scale
       1. One weighs backpacks and calculates weight
       2. One documents backpack weight on take-home flyer AND data recording sheet
     - ☐ How to weigh a backpack- Choose ONE of the following methods.
       1. Use luggage scales – OR--
       2. Use borrowed (body weight) scales
          a. You CANNOT put a backpack directly on a scale and get an accurate (or easily viewed) weight, especially when in a hurry..so….
          b. Adult volunteer discreetly weighs self on station scale
          c. Adult volunteer stands on scale with the backpack
          d. Subtract bodyweight from total weight= backpack weight
             i. Use phone calculator if easier than mental math
          e. Zero scale prior to picking up next backpack to weigh
     - ☐ What to weigh

1. ONLY the backpack and whatever is inside or attached to it
2. Students MAY NOT step on scales due to privacy/permissions. Do not weigh the kids.

☐ What NOT to weigh
1. Any instruments not packed in the backpack
2. Gym clothes/shoes not already in the backpack
3. Skateboards/scooters/etc.
4. Other random items not in the backpack

☐ Document weight on data collection sheet and ALSO
☐ Document weight on take home student flyer
☐ Send student to the 'sticker chart' station
☐ Students find their body weight (they typically know it roughly, remember they can't get on the scales at school) on one of the 4 BMI graphs that charts their body weight compared to their backpack weight and determines their 'zone' which will be red, yellow or green.
1. This station is a bottleneck and requires adult assistance
   a. Overstaff volunteers here if you have extra hands
2. Multiple graphs help for easier viewing of many students crowded around

☐ Students then proceed to "What Zone are You In?" laminated poster
1. Just use one of poster so all stickers in one place
2. Adults volunteer(s) help kids find the square that matches their results (they should know their grade and 'zone color')
3. This is a great visual tool for how your school performs overall
4. Sometimes vendors will have a giveaway, which we give AFTER this step to encourage all to participate in the charting

- Cleanup/breakdown
  ☐ This only takes 10 minutes with so many volunteers on hand
- Hand off data to data person
- OPTIONAL: lunchtime presentations
  ☐ Use humor/short messages (guess the BP wt contest)
  1. Update kids on stats so far
  ☐ Weigh more backpacks of those missed in am
  1. Be sure to ask kids if they participated in am to *avoid duplicates*

8. **After Event:**
- Return scales and clipboards to their owners
- Review data for any obvious errors
  ☐ Occasionally there is a page of data completely skewed from the rest (bad scale or math?). It's ok to exclude one page/sampling if it is an isolated occurrence and there is still a large enough sample size
- Compile data into spreadsheet (provided)
  ☐
  ☐ Enter all of your data from the day into the provided spreadsheet w/formulas

1. Input data in first 3 columns from your BPA Day
2. Input CDC Data for student weight in Column 4
3. Columns 5, 6,7 will calculate automatically once 1-3 are populated
4. Highlight cells in column 7 with a value >1lb in RED and <1lb in green
5. Your red cells represent backpacks that are too heavy
6. Input # of red and green cells into Table 2, which will generate a pie chart representation of students that are in/out of compliance for backpack weight recommendations.

Column1	Column2	Column3	Column4	Column5	Column6	Column7
Gender	Grade	Backpack weight (lb)	Avg. Weight of child (CDC data)	BP weight as a % of student's body weight	Max recommended BP weight (per grade and gender)	Difference: max recommended BP weight (lb) and actual BP weight.
f	6	25.00	81.5	10.19	10.1875	14.8125
m	8	19.00	100	12.50	12.5	6.5

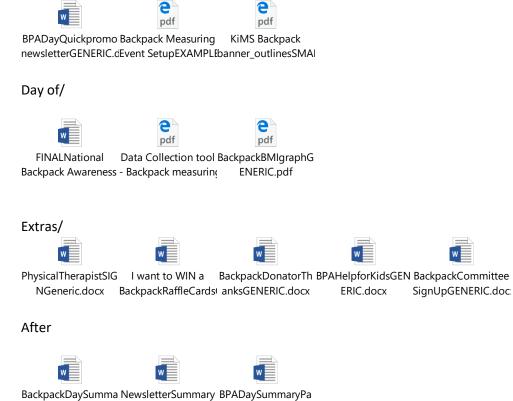| Table 2	#
Number of students with backpacks exceeding maximum recommended BP weight	
Number of students with backpacks that are under the maximum recommended BP weight	

- Summarize findings in layman's terms
  - ☐ Sample summaries provided
  - ☐ Goal is to understand:
    1. Average backpack weight at your school
    2. What % of your students are outside of the 'safe' zone
    3. Extra Credit: Somebody with excel pivot chart skills could break down your stats by gender, grade if desired
- Share and communicate results with principal, parents, students, PTSA, district
  - ☐ Use your communication channels to share your results (newsletter, FB page, staff bulletin, etc)
  - ☐ If justified/desired, create a Backpack Committee to
    1. Further understand why your backpacks are so heavy
    2. Determine next steps
    3. Team with other schools in the district to work on solutions/education

**All supporting documents below

Supporting Documents for this Toolkit:

Preparation/

BPADayQuickpromo newsletterGENERIC.d

Backpack Measuring Event SetupEXAMPL

KiMS Backpack banner_outlinesSMA

Day of/

FINALNational Backpack Awareness -

Data Collection tool Backpack measuring

BackpackBMIgraphG ENERIC.pdf

Extras/

PhysicalTherapistSIG NGeneric.docx

I want to WIN a BackpackRaffleCards

BackpackDonatorTh anksGENERIC.docx

BPAHelpforKidsGEN ERIC.docx

BackpackCommittee SignUpGENERIC.doc

After

BackpackDaySumma ryDocGENERIC-need

NewsletterSummary BPADAYGENERICnee

BPADaySummaryPa geYTYCompareGENE

(insert Ivana's s/sheet)

Is your backpack in the SAFE ZONE?

Backpack % of your body weight:

	6th grade	7th grade	8th grade
RED ZONE **Over 15%** Whoa! Be sure to pack it right and wear it tight.			
YELLOW ZONE **12 – 15%** Caution. Almost maxed out!			
GREEN ZONE **Under 12%** In the zone!			