



C.W. Ruckel Middle School  
Niceville, Florida  
Paul Whiddon, Principal

July 18, 2019

Hello to all students, parents, guardians and friends of Ruckel Middle School. I hope that all of you are having an enjoyable summer.

I am happy to report that testing results are in and once again, Ruckel students' test scores were among the leading scores for the Okaloosa School District. Individual Student Reports are to arrive July 31st and we will send those home with the students in early August.

Because of our recent student population growth, we have added 152 new lockers to our locker hall. This will give every student the opportunity to have a locker. We will also be adding another portable classroom this year.

There has been concern about whether we would allow backpacks for the 2019 -2020 school year. We are going to allow students to bring backpacks to school. However,

**backpacks are not going to be allowed in the classrooms** for the following reasons:

- 1) For safety, we are mandated to have "hard corners." This is an area in the room that puts students out of harm's way. This area must be quickly and easily assessable and piles of backpacks in the room hinder that process;
- 2) Our school district promotes active learning such as student collaboration and learning stations. Again, backpacks clutter the classrooms and deter the mobility of the students and teacher;
- 3) Because most students carry all of their personal items and books for every class in their backpacks, they end up lugging heavy backpacks around school all day. This causes concern for student health, particularly our 6th graders and smaller students.

We recognize that there are some personal items students will need to have with them. Therefore, we are going to allow a small purse or pencil bag to be brought to the classroom. The item must be small enough to fit in or under the desk. Students who take physical education will be allowed to take their backpacks or a small gym bag to PE.

We are going to work with all students early in the year to help them manage their time and the materials that they bring to class. For most of our classes, there is either an online book, a class set of books, or both.

Students who bring large items to school such as band instruments and sports bags will secure those items in the band room or with the coach of their sport. This will be a cultural shift that we all need to work toward, but this will help to make our classrooms safer and less cluttered.

Thank you,  
Paul Whiddon, Principal