

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

**SUBJECT: SCHOOL BOARD ENDORSEMENT OF WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2019 AS NATIONAL SCHOOL BACKPACK AWARENESS DAY**

**COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL, & COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc. (AOTA) celebrates National School Backpack Awareness Day annually on the third Wednesday of each September. This year's event officially will take place on Wednesday, September 18, 2019.

AOTA and occupational therapy practitioners, educators, and students across the United States continue to support and motivate others to live life to the fullest by avoiding the pain and injury that can come from the practice of carrying heavy backpacks. Backpack overload can stress the back, neck, and shoulders. Heavy book loads or poorly distributed weight can place pressure on the lower back, shoulders, and neck. Carrying a heavy backpack may possibly become a trauma for lower back pain.

Educating students and parents is key to preventing situations that may last into adulthood. Therefore, strategies to find the best ways to carry a backpack and safeguards for every child, regardless of his or her age, must be advanced and encouraged in order to minimize strain and pain on the lower back and other areas of the body. Furthermore, the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines recommends that backpacks should not exceed 10 to 20 percent of a child's body weight.

As we start the 2019-2020 school year, it is of utmost importance for Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) to join AOTA's National School Backpack Awareness Day. This awareness campaign should continue in M-DCPS throughout the school year. This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's office as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY**

**MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS:** That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, endorse Wednesday, September 18, 2019 as National School Backpack Awareness Day in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.