# [***SADDLED STUDENTS LIGHTEN THE BACKPACKS SO KIDS CAN STAND TALL***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:47KN-TCK0-0094-53BX-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

Incredibly heavy book bags are creating a generation of students who could be stooped and hunched over before they reach middle age.

Health-care professionals are increasingly concerned about the heavy loads many kids carry today in their backpacks. Some of these bags are so big, and packed with so many features, that a kid could almost camp in one. Some seem to try, toting textbooks, lunch, ***cell phones***, electronic games and who knows what else to and from school and between classrooms.

Of course, many of their parents and grandparents will dust off stories about how they walked five miles to school, in the snow, carrying books and supplies, long before there were backpacks. But there are valid reasons for public concern.

For one thing, textbooks really are heavier. The addition of graphics, charts and photographs, sometimes to comply with education reform mandates, has increased their weight. In addition, to counter the drug and gang cultures, some schools have done away with lockers to eliminate a place to hide weapons or drugs. That means the backpack must be lugged around all day.

A story in Sunday's Post-Gazette reported that one California school district plans to provide students two sets of books, a solution few districts can afford. California is also looking at a ban on overly heavy textbooks, but who's to say what's too heavy? There are other solutions. Schools can provide more access to lockers. They also can allow students more time to change classes, though the teachers unions might not support lengthening the school day. And in school districts where most or all children have access to computers, homework assignments can be placed online.

This isn't merely a matter of complaining students and overly protective parents, not with a growing number of students seeing doctors about back problems. This is a health issue.

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