

Clear backpack proposal draws controversy

(KAIR)--Steps to strengthen school safety were explored Monday night when Atchison's Board of Education met, with discussion focused on how to utilize grant funds allocated by the state of Kansas.

Received through the Safe and Secure Schools grant is more than \$21,000, with a 50/50 match from USD 409 meaning more than \$42,000 is available for safety use.

A topic of contention is the possible requirement of clear backpacks in the Atchison schools.

Board members said they've received push back on the proposal, with Board Vice-President Carrie Sowers stating she's received strong feedback opposing the possibility. "All I know is we ditch the clear backpacks, because I've had more discussion about those backpacks."

Dr. John Eplee pushed back against the lack of enthusiasm, saying clear back packs are a change in culture that the public needs to get used to. "It's a safety issue. I'm going to push back hard on this because it's a change, people have a hard time with change, they worry about the perception. I'm kind of like, get over it, because we are held to a high standard. If something happens and we didn't have clear backpacks, they're going to say, "oh gosh, you had that opportunity for clear back packs? Why didn't you do that?" We won't have a funding source for it again. I just think we're sticking our head in the sand, worried about the perception."

Other possible safety additions could include metal detectors or a system to allow internal communications in a time of an emergency.

No decision was immediately made, with the matter to be brought back to the school board in November.

Additional discussion is expected prior to that meeting.

What do you think of the clear backpack possibility? MSC News would like to hear your thoughts.

Go [here](#) to voice your feelings about the proposal.