



Back To School

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SURVIVAL GEAR**

ATTITUDE!

Dress cool for back to school

BY PAULA L. MOLINO

What's in the fashion forecast for back-to-school this fall? Cool clothes in fun patterns with lots of detailing will surely send kids to the head of the class.

Girls like clothes with attitude. Tunic tops are feminine in sophisticated prints like paisley and Asian-inspired florals. These novelty tops look great when paired with pants in khaki twill or denim trimmed with cargo pockets and stitched detailing. School appropriate pants have a modest low rise and flare legs. A sportier look includes athletic styling such as track pants and jackets in knit or terrycloth. Many of the tops or jackets have hoods (the new word is "hoodie"). Leather loafers or clogs offer a more polished approach to sneakers.

For "girlie" girls who prefer dresses, April Cornell in Princeton is known for their Cornelloki line for girls up to size twelve. An artist, Ms. Cornell designs the prints and manufacturers the fabrics in exceptional high quality cotton. "The line features absolutely, adorable dresses with petticoats that customers go crazy over," said store manger, Ann Carol. The fall line consists of a variety of florals with a Bohemian, ethnic kind of feeling.

For boys, the retro look of polo shirts, varsity stripes and rugby shirts are trendy paired with carpenter pants or cargo pocket pants in khaki or denim. Boys like graphic T-shirts in character motifs for little boys and athletic brands for bigger boys. Active looks like track pants in nylon or knit with color blocked tops and sweatshirts offer comfort and are perfect for gym days. Branded athletic shoes seem to be the preferred shoe of choice.

For parents who don't subscribe to the Britney Spears' School of Fashion with belly shirts and low slung pants, GAP Kids offers the once again clean, all-American look that baby boomers remember. Traditional styling like polo shirts, rugby shirts and skirts are re-colored in new combinations giving a modern twist to classic silhouettes.

Both GAP Kids in Newtown and Oxford Valley Mall reported that the hottest items have been the girl's plaid kilt skirt and argyle vest layered over a blouse. "Girls love the whole look of the plaid skirt and vest. The layered look, layering one item under another is always big," said Stevie DeMain, one of the store managers at



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Novelty tops look great when paired with pants or skirts in khaki twill or denim trimmed with cargo pockets and stitched detailing.

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Among fall's must-haves is a denim jacket. This one in black-wash denim from GAP.

Fashion

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the GAP in Newtown. The plaid skirt is featured in a pink or blue plaid combo, all with coordinating pieces to mix and match (including argyle knee socks). “It’s beautiful how it all blends. It has been well received,” said Ms. Demain.

Boy’s polo shirts and T-shirts in stripes and solids are selling well, according to Anna Bell, associate store manager at GAP Kids in Oxford Valley Mall. She said that boys prefer the palette of red, grey, light blue, green and black.

At the Newton GAP, boys like the skateboard look because it is cool. Ms. DeMain said that guys are real sporty this year, layering with soft fabrics like fleece.

“One of the nice things we have right now are Teflon coated pants,” said Ms. DeMain. The fabric is treated with Teflon fabric protection to repel spills and stains. It’s the perfect solution for any dirt magnet kid.

Both GAP managers said that boys like cargo jeans with all the pockets and loose fit jeans be-

cause they want something comfortable. Khakis in flat front and pleated styles have been popular.

“Cords (corduroy pants) do well for kids. Cords are a big thing and this year you need a pair of cords,” said Ms. DeMain. Designed for boys and girls in sizes 4-16, the pinwale corduroy pants have adjustable waistbands to ensure a custom fit. For private schools that require a generic uniform, GAP Kids has targeted basic items such as khaki pants, jumpers, white blouses and cardigans that suit the need.

One of the most successful accessories brought back from last year are the backpacks that connect together with lunch buckets.

“The whole idea of the GAP line is fun. And making it fun to come back-to-school, not make it a drag,” said Ms. DeMain.

Paula L. Molino is owner of Fashion Fix, a full service fashion consulting business. She is a frequent contributor to Packet Publications on fashion, home, garden and lifestyle topics. Contact pmolino@fashionfix.com or (215) 321-7399.

Your Best Choice!

A Wardrobe Primer

BY PAULA L. MOLINO

IT'S the most wonderful time of the year..." Remember the commercial from the office supply store depicting a father skipping behind the shopping cart as he loads up school supplies for his kids? Are you sharing in this dad's enthusiasm? Are you longing for the school year to begin once again because your children have gotten on your last nerve?

Whether its school supplies or clothing, back-to-school prep requires time, planning and patience to guarantee your kids return to reading, writing and arithmetic in an organized manner.

If you prefer not to wake up to the sound of "Mom, what am I wearing today?" knowing what basic clothing items should be in any kid's wardrobe can help make the morning routine less stressful.

First and foremost, it's important that your children feel good about themselves. Be sure to shop at stores that reflect your child's personality and are kind to your Visa card. Specialty stores such as Old Navy, Limited Too, Delia's, The Children's Place and boutiques are more fun to shop than department stores and offer more exciting selections.

If you're tired of seeing your kids hop on the bus in sloppy T-shirts and sweat pants, take along this shopping list. A well-rounded wardrobe means you'll not only end mid-week laundering (with the right quantity of items), but your child will sail through the school year appropriately attired. (Ideally, tops should be purchased at a ratio of two tops to every one pair of pants).

12 Essentials

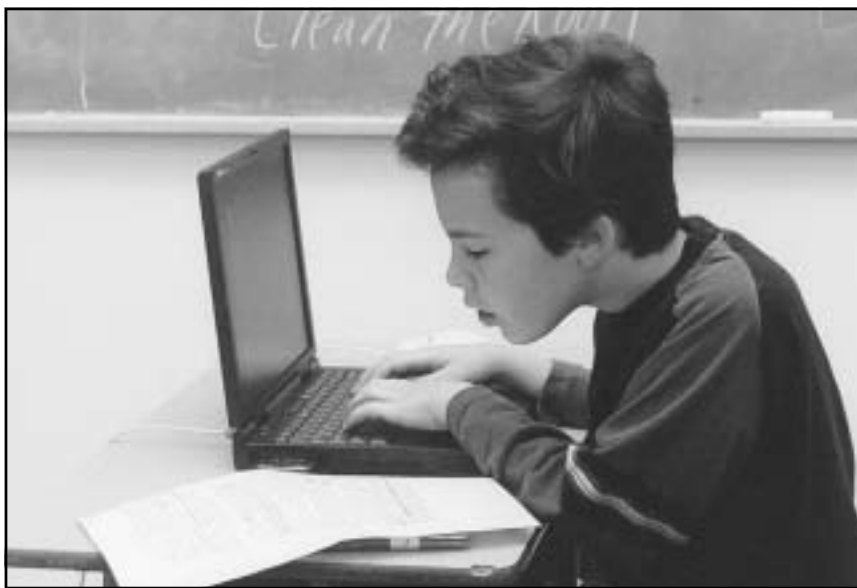
- **Blue jeans:** 2 - 3 pairs in updated styling (embellished or detailed for girls, cargo pockets for boys);
- **Khaki pants:** 2 - 3 pairs in various styles such as cargo pockets, carpenter pants, flat front (one pair of cords);
- **Tops for girls:** 10 -12 assorted styles (print shirts/tunics, trendy motif knit tops, novelty turtlenecks, patterned sweaters or hoodies);
- **Tops for boys:** 10 - 12 assorted styles (varsity stripe knits, polo shirts, rugby shirts, graphic T-shirts, woven button front shirts, novelty turtlenecks, patterned sweaters or hoodies);
- **Athletic clothing:** track pants (terrycloth, fleece, nylon, knit), hoodie sweat shirt, miscellaneous T-shirts to coordinate;
- **Dress outfit:** skirt or jumper with blouse for girls, nice pants and shirts for boys;
- **New underwear;**
- **Socks:** 8 - 10 pairs mainly white (for sneakers), a few navy for jeans, tans for khakis;
- **Shoes:** 1 casual slip-on or loafers for dressy, 1 branded athletic shoe for sporty;
- **Jackets:** one lightweight jacket for fall/spring, one winter coat (including hat, scarf, gloves);
- **Backpack/rolling book bag with attached lunch bag;**
- Fresh **haircut** prior to first day of school and every six weeks after.

Follow these tips to facilitate getting dressed quicker.

- Help child pick out clothing the night before.
- Weed through wardrobe and replace clothing as needed when items get too small, too short or worn out. This reduces the need to replace many pieces at once. Keep a shopping list in dresser drawer and add to when needed.
- Discard any hand-me-downs or yard sale finds more than two years old. Chances are they are out of style.
- Assist toddlers in picking out their clothing to eliminate mismatched outfits like a winter wool sweater paired with summer cotton pants.
- Instruct children how to properly care for garments (dirty clothes in laundry basket, clean clothes re-hung in closet and folded in dresser drawer).

And don't forget to kiss them on their way out, even if you are silently humming, "It's the most wonderful time of the year..."

Paula L. Molino is owner of Fashion Fix, a full service fashion consulting business. She is a frequent contributor to Packet Publications on fashion, home, garden and lifestyle topics. Contact pmolino@fashionfix.com or 215-321-7399.



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