

BACK TO SCHOOL Savings

What children look for in back-to-school shopping

Every August, back-to-school shopping brings about the age-old dilemma: what children want vs. what parents think they should have. After a seemingly eternal struggle, could it be that these two polar opposites are moving in the same direction? Surprisingly, yes. According to research done by back-to-school expert Mead, many of the characteristics that students are looking for in back-to-school items also are priorities for parents.

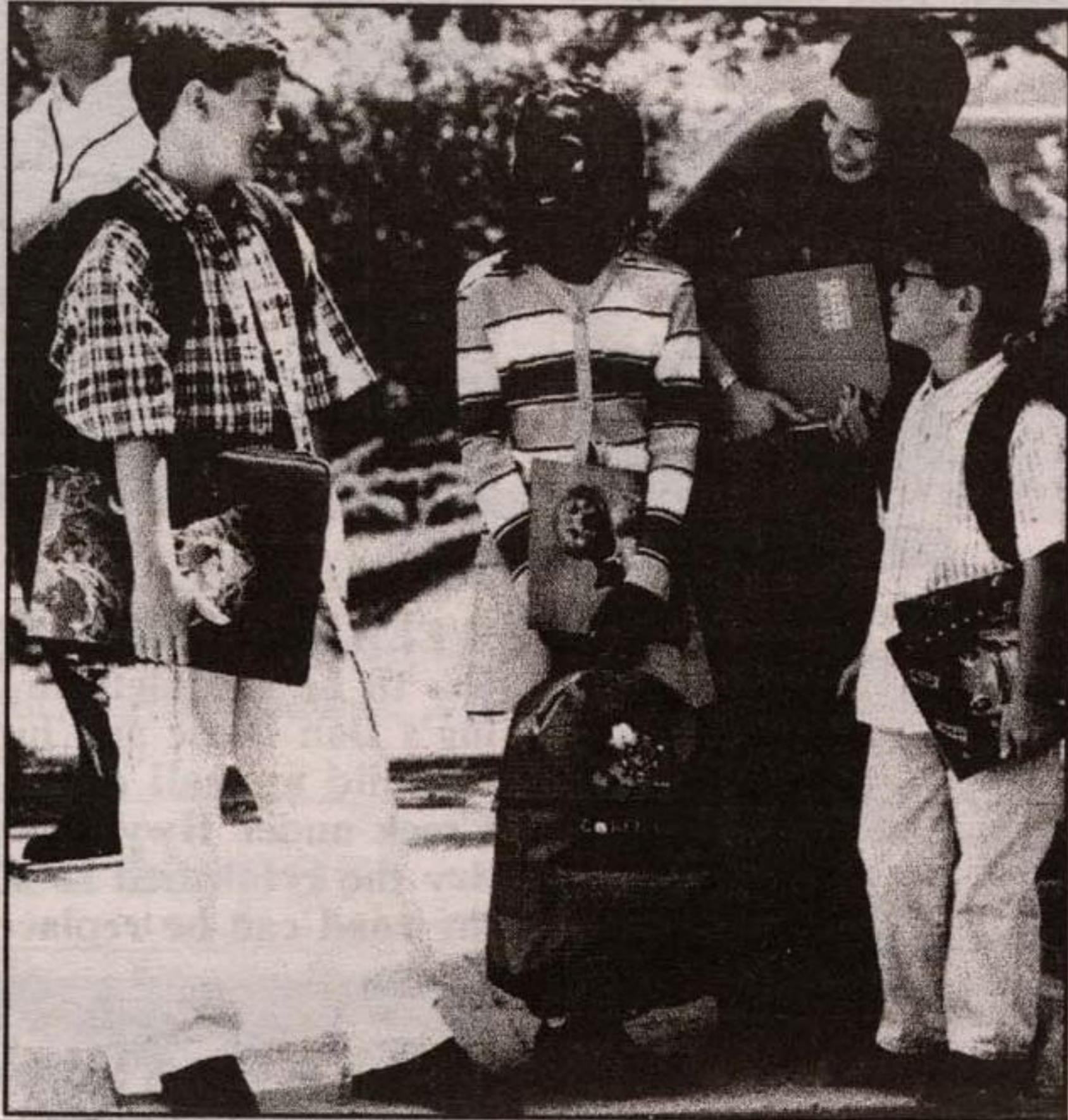
Demographers have looked at today's student body and dubbed them "Generation Y," a group aged 5 to 20 who are both media-savvy and marketing-conscious. As educated consumers who know what they want, this year's back-to-school crowd has a list of qualities that they are looking for in everything from school supplies to clothes.

As "Gen Yers" go shopping this fall, here is what they will be looking for and "Y" it's important to them.

- **quality** - Quality is one of the most influential factors in the decision-making process for back-to-school supplies and accessories among children. Students are interested in items that are well-made, attractive and bear a brand that stands for quality. Whether it's a folder or favorite outfit, students are learning at a young age that if you want things to last throughout the entire school year, you have to invest in top-quality merchandise. Simply stated, quality is cool!

- **durability** - Nothing is more annoying for parents or students than back-to-school gear that doesn't last through the first semester. According to classroom research performed by Mead, as early as elementary school, students consider strength and durability important factors when purchasing school supplies. From desk to locker to backpack, items like notebooks need to endure the test of time and trauma.

- **functionality** - Practical items that work with a child's lifestyle are of the utmost importance in back-to-school shopping. Clothes that are comfortable and suit children's tastes also must be functional and allow students to work and play hard. However, practical and functional still can be fashionable and fabulous. This year's back-to-school wardrobe is full of "seasonless" clothes that work well year-round. Simple, weightless pieces are all the rage, allowing children to mix



THIS FALL, the bus stops here with the latest fashions in clothes, hairstyles, and backpacks and school supplies.

and match throughout the school year, extending the life of their favorite outfits. As students hit the stores this fall, they should remember that nothing needs to work more for them than school supplies.

- **economy** - From the first time that children collect an allowance, they begin to learn about the value of the almighty dollar. Inevitably, the search for a good buy becomes the focus of most shopping sprees. However, those who have opted for "cheap" rather than "value" quickly learn that the least expensive item doesn't always end up being the most

economical.

- **personality** - Children have a special knack for letting their personality shine through in everything they do. Clothes, accessories, hairstyles and even school supplies serve as an outlet for children to make a statement about who they are.

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Study tips to help parents

Parents: Research shows that the more a family is involved in a child's learning, the better prepared that child is to learn and excel in school. To help your child do well this year, follow these tips.

1. **Get involved.** Talk to the teacher to monitor your child's progress and learn how to help your child at home. Let your child know that you care about what he or she is studying and that you believe he or she can do well in school. Show support by attending school events.

2. **Help your child become organized and develop good habits.** Together, map out consistent study times and mealtimes. Carve out a special place where your child can study each day. Help your child learn to keep organized class notes and materials by getting involved in choosing school supplies.

3. **Check your child's homework.** Make sure it's completed correctly and neatly. Provide a constructive environment and help your child study, but make sure that the work turned in is his or her own.

4. **Don't judge your child on the basis of one test or grade.** If a grade disappoints you, use it as an opportunity to work with your child on setting standards for improvement. Set goals that are an attainable stretch, like a half-grade improvement next time.

5. **Read with your child every day.** If you have a young child, this is easy. If you have an older child, ask him or her

to read a newspaper article to you and then discuss it together. Welcome your child's opinions and ask questions to help him or her learn how to articulate responses.

Performing well in school

boils down to good organization, disciplined habits and interest on the part of students and parents. Once you've tackled that, making the grade should be as easy as, well, saying your ABCs.



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