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## ETCETERA

COOL

for SCHOOL



BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN  
Staff Writer

Vests and fleece. Flare pants for girls, baggy jeans for guys. Cropped shirts with three-quarter sleeves, platform shoes and puffy coats.

That's what's cool for school this year, according to local teens.

"Flares are comfy and cool," said Ashlea Lips, 16, browsing Markville Shopping Centre.

"Tapered pants make your legs look too big," added Laura Bennett, 16, a Grade 11 student. Vests are very in this year, both girls agree, and their opinion is confirmed by displays in many shop windows.

"The vests will sell for sure," said Stitches acting assistant

manager Reena Thakur. "They're worn for style over a sweater or a jean jacket, not for warmth."

The Markville Stitches store, like almost all retailers in York Region, has rolled out its fall and winter merchandise in time for the back-to-school frenzy.

Teens are haunting the malls in these last weeks of summer, deciding what they want, what they can afford and what they really need.

"Baggy pants, long shirts and boots," is the standard outfit for 16-year-old Bshen Clarke. "I'm in jeans mostly."

He said many of his friends sport silver chains around their necks, but ear-piercing is definitely out.

T-shirts under vests until it's too cold, then puffy coats for winter, advised Clarke.

Jean Machine staff is gearing up for a busy season with bright, primary colours — reds, yellows and deep blues — dominating the displays.

"Lots of colours, that's what's in," said assistant manager Francis Asturias. "Baggy jeans and vests, jean jackets and overalls."

And feeling good is the name of the game, he said.

"Bummy in a fashionable way," Asturias explained. "Comfort is in, comfort with style."

Parents of the younger set are keeping their eyes open for sales as their children actually look forward to going back to school.

"I like very expensive running shoes," said Rainer Hilland, 9, going into Grade 4. "I like anything expensive."

Big brother Sanborn, 11,

digs long shorts, especially the newest trend — zip-off pants. He zips away the legs and is left wearing shorts.

"And tear-away pants," he added.

His sister Denver, 8, going into Grade 3, usually goes for the big splash.

"Sparkly shirts, like this one," she said, sporting a blue tank top with sequins. "I like bell-bottom jeans too."

She wears running shoes and choker necklaces. She also likes to wear head scarves — a la Survivor. She's cool.

And it seems these kids know what they're talking about.

Sears Canada calls Denver's style "The new Bohemian — gypsy turned fashionista is what this look is all about," explained Rick Stefiszyn, children's wear fashion director.

"These days, children's fashion is really just the pint-sized version of what's hot in men's and women's wear," he said. "Kids tend to be adventurous when it comes to fashion."

Beads, mirrors, sequins and embroidery will adorn jeans, bell-sleeved tops and jean jackets, as well as bracelets,

chokers and chains.

Skirts are handkerchief-style and fringed scarfs are hot for belts and headwear.

"Techno style" is an athletic-based look inspired by extreme sports and the DJ culture, Stefiszyn said.

Velcro closures and drawstrings, cargo, break-away and zip-off pants all belong in this category.

They're paired with T-shirts and fleece pull-overs or vests and the look is for boys and girls.

See COMFORT, page 17.



Francis Asturias, assistant manager at Jean Machine, says comfort is in.

A sneak peek at Wal-Mart's top 10 best-sellers for back to school — in no particular order.

### Backpacks

While teens are leaning more toward the bigger cross-shoulder bags, most younger kids want or need the traditional backpack. They're inexpensive enough to re-place every year with the latest hot image or the new built-in features like mini-wallets, lunch kits and water bottles.

### Calculators

They're a big seller for kids of all ages, with those for younger kids sporting over-size buttons and those for older kids' encased in wallet-type covers.

### Barbie

Barbie's 40th anniversary last year is continuing into 2000. Look for Barbie's face on shoes, lunchboxes, backpacks and clothing.

### Zippered binders

Zippered binders, student planners and organizers are functional, protective and cool.

### Portable filing cases

These lightweight port-a-file boxes are ideal for high school students toting term papers and other big projects.

### Watches

Sport watches for older kids, Winnie-the-Pooh and Mickey for the younger set. "Time teacher" watches are becoming the latest fad for elementary kids, where the hands tell the wearer, in words, what the time is.

### Khaki pants

Hot last year, the trend continues.

### Turtlenecks

For both boys and girls, especially when worn under a vest.

### Zip-off pants

Similar to break-away pants, the wearer can zip off the legs and is left wearing shorts. Very cool.

### Athletic-influenced footwear

Running shoes patterned after basketball stars or those with logos — NHL teams, Barbie, Pokemon and Hot Wheels are big sellers.

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