

## BACK TO SCHOOL TRENDS

**C**omfort is key, thanks to the dress-down pandemic, say Long Island retailers. Whether the kids are in the classroom or not, the oh-so-casual look should serve them well.

—Valerie Kellogg



TIE-DYE

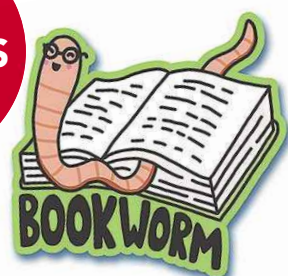
WHITE KICKS



CONCERT Ts



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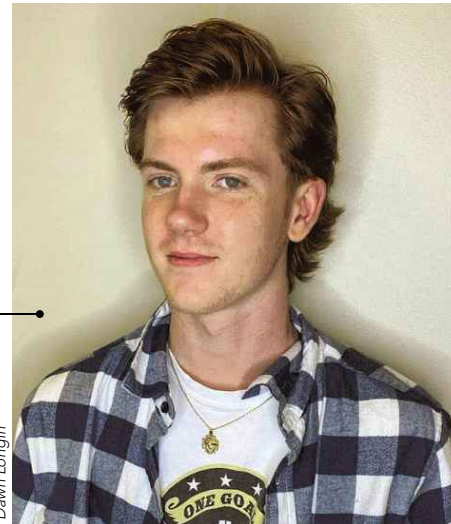
## BACK TO SCHOOL TRENDS

Compiled by Valerie Kellogg

### MULLET

The low-maintenance but “new-and-improved” mullet is an example of the laid-back style tweens and teens are looking for, says Tracy Messina, marketing and public relations manager for the JD Thomas & Co. Salon (6168 Jericho Tpke., Commack, 631-486-4443, jdthomasandco.com). Braids are also big, oftentimes with streaks of color, she says.

Dawn Longin



### WHITE KICKS

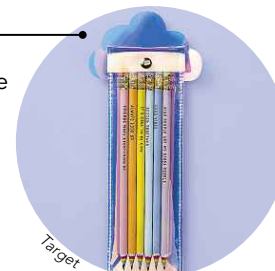
Another classic is new again at Renarts East Northport (2060 Jericho Tpke., East Northport, 631-493-2333, renarts.com) – the Nike Air Force 1 (\$80 and up) in the white colorway. Kids like that the sneakers are easy to style and wear and go with anything, says Jordan Chan, manager.



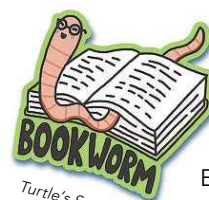
Nike

### RAINBOWS

This rainbow case (\$4.99 at Target stores) from More Than Magic contains six pencils with inspirational sayings, including, “It’s cool to be kind.”



Target



Turtle's Soup / @turtlessoup

### STICKERS

Everyone seems to be into stickers now, most especially tweens and teens (and college students, too). This removable, waterproof bookworm sticker (\$3.99 each) from Turtle's Soup is part of a line that is popular for using on phones, laptops, walls, sneakers, school computers, everything, says Lori Badanes, who carries them at Einstein's Attic (79 Main St., Northport, 631-261-7564, einsteinsatticnorthport.com).

### JOGGER

“For staying home or running around, joggers are super comfy and cozy,” says Carrie Arcilesi, manager of Aldee's Sportswear (114 Commack Rd., Commack, 631-499-1296). Pictured is the Camo Jogger from the Suzette Collection. Prices for joggers at Aldee's range from \$18.99 to \$21.99.



Suzette G

### TIE-DYE

What's comfier than a sweatshirt? How about a tie-dye sweatshirt (\$42)? This one is from Scarlett Rose Runway at The Shoppes at East Wind (5768 Route 25A, Suite R, Wading River, 631-846-2339, eastwindlongisland.com/shoppe/scarlett-rose-runway). “We felt this would be a cool fashion statement for teen girls to gear up for the fall,” says Charlotte Coté, a spokeswoman for East Wind.



Charlotte Coté

ON THE COVER: A Run DMC shirt (\$42-\$49) from Rowdy Sprout at Lester's (90 Northern Blvd., Greenvale, 516-626-1161, shop.lesters.com)

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<b>\$30 Per Child Per Month</b> (Maximum of \$90 per family)	\$3,190	\$4,310	\$5,430	\$6,550	\$7,670	\$8,790	\$9,910	\$11,030	\$1,120
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\*\*Household size calculation includes all expected children.



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# What's in session out of school

How day care and other centers are making it safe for kids to return



By Maria Ebbets

maria.ebbets@newsday.com

**T**he benefits of after-school and day care programs are immeasurable, say child experts – activities can introduce new interests, enhance social skills and keep kids busy. But parents have questions about safety because of the COVID-19 crisis:

## CAN MY CHILD ATTEND AFTER-SCHOOL CLASSES SAFELY?

"Kids need some sense of normalcy and socialization," says Rosa D'Aleo, owner of Royal Dance Center of Babylon, who says she has seen an increase in enrollment since her studio reopened July 6. Kids are eager to resume their normal routines and see friends once again, she says. Like many other small business owners, Rosa says she has made adjustments to accommodate safely reopening: reducing/adding/staggering classes, sanitizing in between, taking temperatures upon entry, requiring staff to wear masks, closing off the lobby to visitors and livestreaming classes for parents to feel more at ease.

Winnie Grant, head director of All American Gymnastics, which has locations in Oceanside and Bellmore, says her facility opened at 25% capacity (instead of the allowed 50%) in order to reopen safely. Classes there are between five- to seven children and do not overlap. Some of her staff is there solely to sanitize the gym and clean equipment. All American has flexible class schedules as well as a class Grant refers to as "create your own class" – which is for families who have quarantined together and feel more comfortable keeping their children in the same class. "Getting the program back, safely and wisely has been our top priority," says Ori Wilner, director at All American. "The key throughout all of this has been being flexible and willing to adjust game plans and policies as guidelines and community needs change," says Wilner.

## ARE DAY CARE CENTERS EVEN OPEN?

Merokee Day School and Camp in Merrick, which offers early education classes, has been open since May 18 and has also put procedures in place to ensure a safe environment.

Classrooms now consist of no more than 15 students, temperatures are checked upon entry, and only students and staff are allowed to enter the building, says director Tracey Ferguson. Each day, the toys, bathrooms and classrooms are sanitized and art supply bins are not shared, she says. Ferguson says she will not forget the smiles on students' faces when the center reopened. "They were beaming and genuinely excited to see one another," she says.

## HOW CAN I GET MY CHILD BACK ON TRACK GIVEN THE SHORTENED 2019-20 SCHOOL YEAR?

The non-traditional format of school has posed a challenge for many parents. "Most parents never had to homeschool their kids before, so they don't know where to begin," says Anne Huntington, president of Huntington Learning Center, which has 11 locations across Long Island. There are resources available to assist with remote learning. Huntington Learning Center offers programs such



Children at the Merokee Day School and Camp in Merrick at a socially distant magic show

Tracey Ferguson

as HuntingtonHelps LIVE, Huntington Study Hall, as well as weekly webinars that address topics such as "Helping Children Connect During a Socially Disconnected Time." Huntington Study Hall enables students to attend their virtual schools in person at the centers with certified teachers available for questions. Flexible scheduling options are available to accommodate working parents and student needs if there is in fact a hybrid schedule this fall. All facilities are following federal Centers for Disease Control guidelines.



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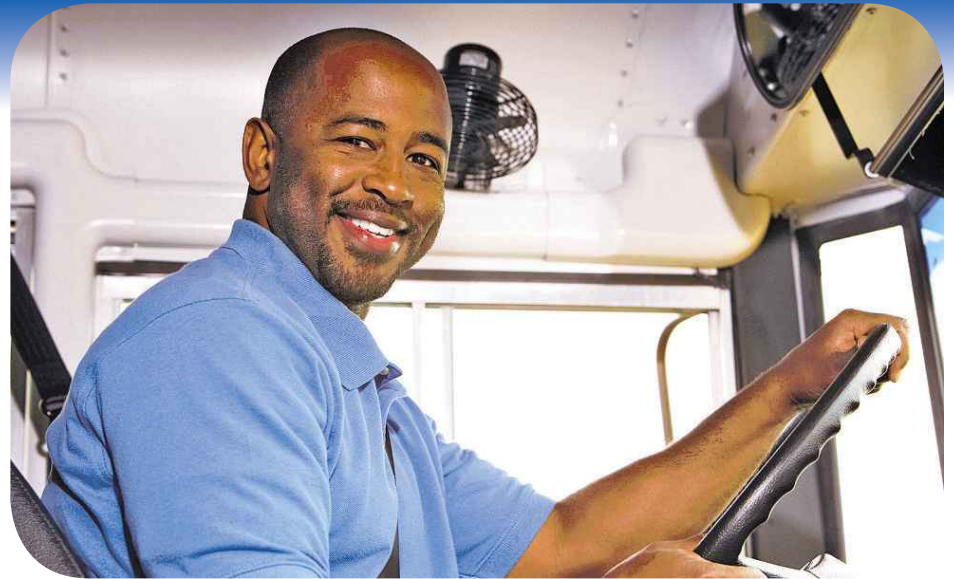
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## Working out the home office



LI designers offer hacks for creating useful spaces on a budget



Designer Rachel Florez teamed with Silkwood Ltd. during the pandemic to create an office in the mudroom of this Farmingdale home.

Vincent Vuoto

By Valerie Kellogg

valerie.kellogg@newsday.com

**S**chool. Take 2. How do we do this again? Those working remotely who have children in school are taking a fresh look at work spaces in the home – both for themselves and for their children, many of whom may continue virtual learning in some form when school restarts next month, say Long Island interior designers.

“First and foremost, the simplest and least expensive approach is to rearrange furniture you already have to create new work stations,” says Port Washington-based designer Keith Baltimore. “Sometimes just moving furniture, grouping tables with chairs, or removing certain pieces are all that is needed.”

Remember too that desks will need to be near lighting and charging outlets, he adds.

He suggests repurposing the dining room, which is often the least used space in the house. Others, like Bellmore-based designer Rachel Florez, recommends areas typically used for storage, such as a closet where a desk can be built. “You have the option of leaving the doors on the closet so you can hide your desk

when you’re finished working,” she says.

Other places to consider converting include mud rooms and walk-in pantries, she says.

“If you can remodel, don’t have a window above your desk,” says Wendy Lepkoff, whose design business is based in Bethpage. “Have shelves for fast and easy-to-get-to office supplies.”

If you have a large room, an island with small stools can be useful for small meetings or laying out items, Lepkoff says. “This works well if you have more than one child that you are working with,” she says. And with everyone using multiple devices – mobile phones, laptops and tablets – label all wires, she adds. “Color coding and giving each wire a letter is very helpful, and attaching the wires to the wall under the desk keeps everything neat and clean,” she says.

Attention should also be paid to walls because of virtual meetings, says Baltimore. “Avoid white or blank walls,” he says. “A calming background that is pretty but not distracting is best. Sit in front of an attractive window treatment, house plants, a textile wall hanging or artwork.”



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# Home is where the mouth is



How LI parents learned to make pandemic meal routines more appetizing

By Maria Ebbets

maria.ebbets@newsday.com

One of the most challenging aspects of working from home is feeding children, report many Long Island parents. But some say they figured it out during the pandemic. Here are their tips for the upcoming school year.

## HAVE CHILDREN DO THE COOKING

That's what Franca Fiorentino, 40, says she started doing with her son and daughter, Phillip, 12, and Carollina, 10. "They learned how to make breakfast and lunch on their own," says Fiorentino, a Spanish teacher from Massapequa whose husband, Phillip, 45, is a business agent for New York City District Council of Carpenters. "I tried my hardest to keep them choosing healthy choices like oatmeal, fruit, yogurt, grilled cheese with tomato soup, avocado toast, eggs ... Snacks ended up being something we made together like baked cookies, pudding or cupcakes."

## PLAN IT OUT

Huntington mother Bridget McKeon Vohs, 49, a director of client services at a family office, must have done something right feeding her two sons, James, 12 and Henry, 16 – she says they have grown

5 inches collectively throughout the pandemic. She says she came up with a routine based on ordering groceries online. Vohs' husband Walter, 50, works in financial services for JP Morgan. "I do not have much wiggle room during trading hours, so I need to plan, plan, plan," she says. "The plan would be based on what got filled in the orders." She writes her lunch and dinner schedules in pencil. "Had to be flexible," she says.

## FREEZE MEALS

For West Babylon resident John Davis, 47, a media agency operations executive, small changes made a big difference for his family. "Our wine fridge became the bottled water fridge, and the pantry remained stocked with self-serve snacks like goldfish, pretzels and minimuffins," says Davis, who has three children, Benjamin, 14, Madison, 12, and Harrison, 9, with wife, Rachel, 43. Untouched fruit became banana bread and breakfast smoothies, he says. "Lunches and dinners remained pre-planned on the calendar for the duration of the school year," says Davis. "This idea of meal planning took all of the stress and decision making off the table. Preparing meals in advance and freezer packing them for easy daily access meant time and cost efficiency."

## ROUTINE IS ESSENTIAL

Planning out snacks and lunches the night before made for a smoother day, says Taneka Jones, 43 of Deer Park, who has six children, ages 18 to 1 year, with her husband. This freed her to focus on helping with school assignments, she says. Often, she would get up prior to the children waking and make a big breakfast of eggs and bacon. Their day would start at 9 a.m. and end at 3 p.m. Snack time would be at noon on a typical school day. She set a basket of snacks on the table that often included fruit or breakfast bars. Lunch consisted of a "do-it-yourself assembly line" of sliced bread, sometimes peanut butter and jelly, cold cuts or microwavable mac and cheese, she says. "With six children, everyone has to chip in and lend a hand," she says.

## COOK A LITTLE MORE

Allison Scilla Bilawsky, 42, a teacher from Northport, says she started doubling up recipes so that leftovers could be served at least one night a week. Her go-to meals include tacos and baked ziti. "I



Taneka Jones with her children, Kallie, 18 months, Brandon, 8, Jamirah, 11, Jamiee, 6, Ariana, 18 and Jayla, 10

also took a super easy recipe from my mom, which was to melt a stick of butter, saute an onion and add a bag of frozen peas and then cook two pounds of gnocchi and add it all together," she says. "Top with grated cheese and it's quick, delicious and enough for leftovers." Bilawsky – who feeds her husband, Dan, 42, also a teacher, and sons, Max, 4, and Jake, 6 – says that she now enjoys cooking when she never did before. Still, at least one night a week she started doing takeout to support local restaurants and ease her routine.

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## What you need to know now if you're thinking of home remodeling



Getty Images

One popular pandemic project is adding skylights.

By Valerie Kellogg  
valerie.kellogg@newsday.com

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Long Island contractor Steven DiMare credits his uptick in business to nesting syndrome. "When people are scared of the world, they stay home," says DiMare, chief executive officer of Unified Window Systems, which has locations in Hempstead, Patchogue and Huntington. "They look at what makes them feel comfortable.

"Your house is your protection."

Here is what he and other local home improvement companies suggest keeping in mind if the fall calls for some remodeling:

### COMPANIES ARE AVAILABLE.

While some Long Island contractors say they are backlogged with work, others say they can take on new customers. "Business is a little slow – a lot of people don't want to meet people, touch what you touch," says Emeri Tafhasi, manager of Manorville-based Expressway Roofing and Chimney, which specializes in exterior work, including windows, doors, decks and patios. "They want to see what's going to happen with the pandemic. If people lose their jobs, they want to make sure they have money."

### BUT THINGS ARE DIFFERENT.

"We have to be distant," says Tafhasi. Workers don't go inside, and they don't shake hands," he says. "Of course, if you have more time to talk, it's more comforting," he says. "This is the new reality." Joe Ayvazian, owner of Perfect Pitch Roofing in Huntington, agrees, "Everything is done via the phone or talking through glass doors."

### EXPECT SOME DELAYS.

"It takes a little longer to get special orders," says Tafhasi. "Some businesses have gone out of business. Also, suppliers don't have as many employees working." Ayvazian says that his roofing supplies are available, but "some of the siding supplies are drying up."

### WHAT YOUR NEIGHBORS ARE HAVING DONE.

"People like to add skylights because they want more fresh air and light," says Tafhasi. And, he adds, "they want to go in the backyard and stay there – decks are very popular." For DiMare, it's doors. "That's what people think of when it comes to securing their house," he says.

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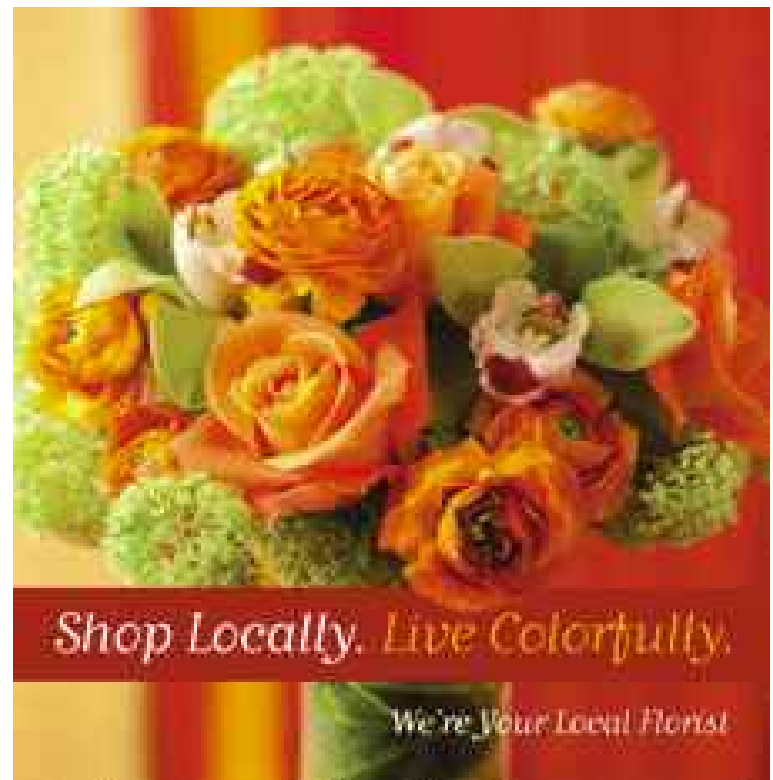
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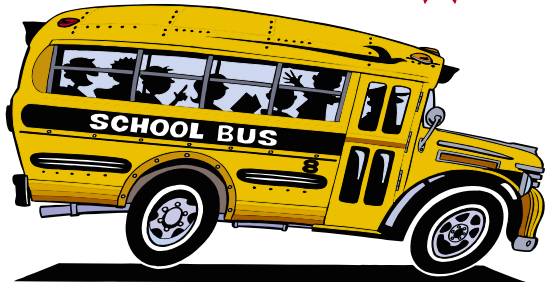
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