

Let kids co-design their rooms

By DEBRA LANDAU
SPECIAL WRITER

If you're a parent, you know kids shift from one activity to another before you can say Nintendo.

Moving from Monopoly to a computer game to a dance workout with a friend might be one daughter's idea of fun. Your son, on the other hand, watches "Fresh Prince of Bel Air," assembles model cars and relaxes with his stereo headphones when his homework is done.

More and more often, these scenarios take place not in the kitchen or family room, but in the kids' rooms.

"The bedroom is a youngster's multi-activity room for the '90s," says Blomfield Township interior designer Terry Ellis, owner of Room Service and an allied member the American Society of Interior Designers.

"And they should be co-designer," she said, "because this is their living space. They can have very definite color preferences and priorities to how space can be used."

With all the design buzzwords one might consider, space is critical, says Ed Wormshlager, owner of Bates and Kids Bedrooms in Novi and Rochester Hills.

"Builders often don't consider lifestyles when planning bedrooms. For instance, even in smaller homes, walk-in closets are frequently in-talled in children's or second bedrooms. Heat ducts, electrical wiring, windows and doors can all present obstacles."

"Taking precise measurements of your son's or daughter's room will avoid overcrowding or improper buying," Ellis and Wormshlager agree.

If starting a new room or redesigning an older one daunts you, Ellis has some basic advice: "Think first what the room has to do, then think what your child wants it to do."

She has categorized what she sees as universal needs for growing kids. Space, budget, imagination and hobbies will help you pick and choose.

For functions, Ellis considers the following:

- Homework/computer desk and good lighting
- Guest bed for sleepovers.
- Trundles, futons and sleeper chairs



WILLIAM HANSEN

Youthful look: The Pencil grouping, produced by Harper Designs, sports many room accessories as well as furniture pieces. At Bellini Juvenile Designer Furniture, Birmingham, Ann Arbor.

are options.

- Book and game storage area.
 - Personal space for collections of artwork or memorabilia. Can be corkboard, back of doors or extra storage in built-in cupboards or on shelves.
 - Mirror for grooming.
 - Floor space for board games, dancing, exercise.
 - Sitting area for reading.
 - Room for TV, VCR, stereo.
- Being practical doesn't mean boring. One of Ellis' personal designs is a loft bed atop a double-duty playhouse. A violet door is centered on the fascia structure. It's flanked

by a curtained window for a puppet theater or mock ticket booth on one side and a chalkboard on the other.

Ellis brought in the color turquoise for a two-drawer storage unit that runs the width of the play structure and sits flush with it. The occupant of the bed is protected by railing around the perimeter.

Child-sized versions of adult styles give kids the freedom to relax in their room.

Bellini Juvenile Designer Furniture in Birmingham and Ann Arbor features a well-cushioned miniature loveseat and chair upholstered with a whimsical print called Rush

Hour. The primary-colored fabric sports puffed autos, which lend a slight 3-D appearance to the pieces.

A consistent topper is the Pencil line of furniture and accessories manufactured by Harper Designs, says Gert Glazer, Bellini owner. The pencil motif is used in a downsized table and chairs, a clothes rack and other functional, fun options.

If whimsical furniture isn't the route you want to take, you can use imaginative murals or a motif like a wooden picket fence to inspire a stuffed animal collection for a small child to launch a theme room.

Royal Oak artist Julie Albanese painted a Wizard of Oz mural to go in a local child's bedroom. Another client's youngster received a custom wall scene of Babar, Celeste and their family.

Albanese also specializes in textual painting, restoration and trompe l'oeil — "fool the eye's" designs that offer an alternative to wallpaper or murals.

Ellis reminds homeowners to keep in mind growing patterns: "If you use pieces with castors and handles, you can change an arrangement easily. Wallpaper borders and paint colors are other quick-change options."

Kids of the '90s identify with action heroes and storybook characters like generations before them. But never before has the choice in bedding so widely complemented those trends.

Juanita Wansac, domestics supervisor at Target in Livonia, says bedding items from recent movie hits like "101 Dalmatians," "Little Mermaid," "Batman" and "Beauty and the Beast" are tough sellers. Likewise, the pattern "Save a Place," depicting wildlife and aimed at introducing children to conservation.

Wansac says old standards like Mickey and Minnie still sell well and Sesame Street for toddlers continues to be popular. "Most of the theme bedding offers sheet sets and comforters. Some also have blankets and matching curtains."

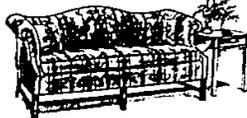
Wansac says other area Target stores in Canton, Westland, Farmington Hills, Rochester Hills, Pon-

See KIDS, 8

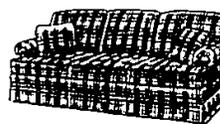
■ 'The bedroom is a youngster's multi-activity room for the '90s.'

Terry Ellis
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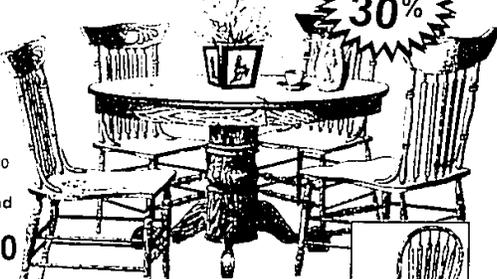
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