

BACK TO SCHOOL

School supplies are colorful, practical and box office hits

By CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

"Batman" and "Pocahontas" aren't only cleaning up at the box office. They're among the popular themes for this year's school supplies.

"I think licensed products like backpacks and lunchboxes with 'Batman' and 'Pocahontas' are going to be big sellers this year,"

said Carolyn Brooker, a spokeswoman for Target stores.

Even though the caped crusader, Pocahontas, Casper the Friendly Ghost and the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers are at the top of the heap, the "Lion King" still roars.

"That, for some reason, has really hung on. Kids still sing the songs. This has really sustained itself," Brooker said.

According to Kmart spokeswoman Joy Corneliusen, a "Lion King" backpack is one of the stand-out items at her store.

"We have a 'Lion King' Linticular backpack," said Corneliusen. "It has a hologram that shows Simba from a cub to a lion in 10 different stages."

The role of backpacks has changed during the past year. Instead of just providing a convenient way to carry school supplies, backpacks now allow students to show their individuality, said Dave Penrod, divisional vice president, fashion accessories, at Kmart.

"Accessories, perhaps more than any other category, offers kids affordable, versatile ways to make a statement," he said.

Styles at area stores range from micro-mini to mega-size backpacks made with patent or flat leather, denim, plaid, nylon, suede or waterproof material.

They feature locker loops, organizer pockets and padded back straps. Besides cinematic themes, backpacks decorated with license plates, Looney Tunes characters, sports logos, rock bands and Olympic designs also are popular.

Walk down a school supply aisle at any drugstore and it's obvious that bright colors are still

"in." Pens, pencils, notebooks and rulers glow from the shelves.

"The brighter-colored ones are the trend among younger kids," Brooker said. "The more colorful and wilder the better."

Nike-brand products are new to Target this year. The sporting company is slam-dunking notebooks, binders, book bags and student planners in solid colors with colorful Nike graphics into stores.

"Student planners are similar to day planners except they may have class schedules, homework pages, or sports schedules. They cover all the different activities in school," said a spokeswoman for one store who wished to remain anonymous.

If backpacks aren't your style, organizer bags are also pegged to be a trend setter. The bags, primarily made from leather, come with tons of compartments for things like makeup and wallets and sometimes even calculators, eyeglass case, agenda, memo pads and mirrors.

Lunch boxes may become a thing of the past. Many customers are opting for mini-coolers instead.



Hot trend: Backpacks are the rage this school year. At Kmart, styles range from micro-mini to mega-size backpacks made of patent or flat leather, denim, plaid, nylon, suede or waterproof material.

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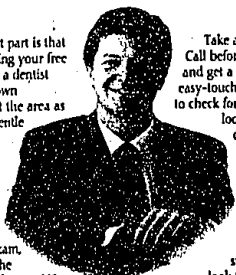
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