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FATHERS DIARY**

Planning school wardrobe can help both you and your child

This month parents will face an array of emotionalism from their children concerning the start of a new academic year. The kindergartner or first grader will be finally making the split away from mom and, for many, the tears will be quite evident. The fourth graders have become pros at going to school. They have learned the ins and outs and know what tests and homework can do to their play time. From the fourth grader you get lots of rebellious statements like, "School stinks," and, "I'd rather run away than go to school." For the college student, even before he or she enters the classroom on the first day, strategies are being planned as to how term papers can be copied and past exams of certain professors secured. From tears to a complete disregard for the institution of school, kids will be kids.

I dare not, of course, overlook the student who celebrates the arrival of school and prepares to meet the challenges each course of study will bring. It seems, though, you don't meet many of this kind of student, but I hear they do exist.

Whatever the reaction of a child to the coming of school, parents have a special role to play. For one thing, you as a parent are responsible for your child's appearance. Having an organized wardrobe and well-groomed body helps a child to feel secure about himself and stimulates the mind to reflect that organization and learn better. But before you go out and buy, buy, buy, some consideration should be given to the following:

- Make an inventory of what clothes you have. Only buy clothes to supplement what you have on hand. Try to mix and match garments to create a greater variety of outfits, just as we do

when we go on vacation or for a short business trip. What's good for us is good for our kids.

- Your child is probably growing by leaps and bounds and what you buy today may not fit in six months. Try buying clothes with hems so there is room for growth. If you're buying a suit, have the tailor at the shop take in a slightly larger size and leave material so it can be altered later on. Also, look for clothes with elastic waists and pleats. Consider the versatility of adjustable snaps and straps.

- My two girls are gentle on their clothes but rough on their shoes. Make sure the clothes and shoes you buy can take the punishment your child will dish out. Durability of wear is as important if not more so than the "in" look.

- If you have several children, hand-me-downs are "in" and can save you a bundle of money.

- Don't exceed your household budget when it comes to clothes. Spend what you can afford and explain your limitations to your children. If it means designer name jeans must be overlooked for less expensive, nameless jeans, so be it. Or try what I did in this matter: I bought my girls labels with their names to sew onto their clothes.

- Certain clothes may be less expensive but check the workmanship and safety. I'm sure you want clothes that are right for your child. Another thought is giving your child bright outer garments to wear if he or she is walking to school. Drivers will be able to see your child more clearly and a possible accident can be avoided.

- If your time is at a premium, buy clothes for your child that read "permanent press" or "wash & wear." They wrinkle less and can keep your child looking good longer.

If money is really tight these days, good used clothes can be bought at the following locations:

Second Act, 1046 Madison Ave., Manhattan.

Thrifty Threads for Kids, 2082 E. 13 St., Brooklyn.

Replay, 664 W. 204 St., Manhattan.

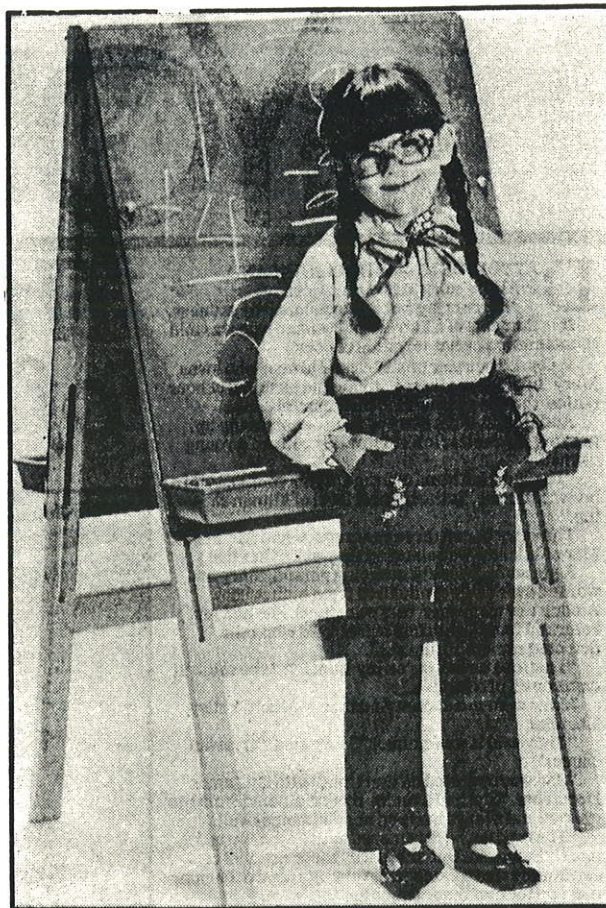
The Frugal Frog, 1707 Second Ave., Manhattan.

Second Cousin, Greenwich Village (by appt. 929-8048).

These shops will also buy clothes from you or help you sell your used clothes on the retail level. For this service, a percentage of the selling price of the garments is kept by the shops. If you are interested in used playthings, consider The Toy Chest at 226 E. 83 St. or Play It Again at 129 E. 90 St.

There are ways in which we can think more creatively and still offer our children clothes on their backs and toys in their hands.

I hope you and your child enjoy this academic year and enter into a partnership of learning.



When your little ones head back for school, they'll feel better in comfortable, practical clothes they enjoy wearing.