** Back to School: Study says consumers likely to spend more this year

K-State’s Kiss shares tips on how to buy school supplies on a budget

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – The National Retail Federation reported in mid-July that back-to-school shopping for children in elementary grades through high school is expected to increase by nearly $25 this year.

The Washington D.C.-based group said families likely will spend an average $890.07 on back-to-school items this year, up from last year’s previous record high of $864.35. College students and their families are also predicted to set a new record, spending an average of $1,365.95 per person – ahead of a record $1,200.32 in 2021.

But Kansas State University family finance specialist Elizabeth Kiss says families don’t have to concede to higher spending. Some tips for saving money include:

Restock, Replace, Refresh

Some items left from last school year may still be useful this year, she said. “The first thing we probably want to do is look through backpacks,” Kiss said. “Let’s look around the house. What do we have that’s on the school supply list that maybe we don’t need to duplicate this year?”

Start early and compare prices

“You should comparison shop for anything, really, but definitely for back-to-school items,” Kiss said. In addition to comparing between local businesses, consumers may find deals online – though delivery costs may chip away at the savings.

“We’ve talked about this regarding holiday shopping, too, but sometimes you just go out and kind of look at what things costs, then you go home to regroup and make a plan to go out another day to just do the buying,” Kiss said.

Now? Or Later?

Parents and children can take a look at a school’s supply list and make decisions on what will be needed in the short term, compared to what will be needed later. Prioritize the short-term
items, then spread out the bill by buying other items later. You may be able to buy the additional items on sale later.

Thinking ahead to next year, parents may also make a plan to begin buying back-to-school items in spring or early summer to spread out the expenses.

**Communicate with children**

Parents often give in to buying more expensive items because they want their children to have good things. However, name brands may not be better than generic brands, particularly when it comes to clothing, shoes and other items.

“That’s just a place to have a conversation with your child,” Kiss said. “It’s really about trade-offs; I think it’s never too early to talk to kids about trade-offs.”

Parents may also consider negotiating with teenage children, she said. “If a teenager has been working or if they’ve been saving money, a parent may have a conversation about how much (parents) are willing to pay, and the teen can make up the difference with their own funds.”

More information on stretching a family budget and planning for regular expenses is available in a series of extension publications under the heading, *When Your Income Drops*. The publications are available online from the K-State Research and Extension bookstore.

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**FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS:** Links used in this article


- K-State Research and Extension bookstore, [https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu](https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu)

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