

Back to School

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The school supply list has taken on a life of its own. Parents are no longer asked to buy a Trapper Keeper, bottle of glue and crayons. Now that list can include a ream of copy paper, Clorox wipes, hand sanitizer and dry erasers on top of the standard supplies.

Each July as I make my way through Wal-Mart, Target and Office Max looking for the illusive three ring accordion folder with Velcro snap, I seriously consider boycotting this whole back to school thing. I realize that decision would leave me to teach my children and snap out of it quickly. I figure why add one more grievance, like their inability to understand long division, to that list of reasons their mother could have done a better job raising them. Plus, back to school means I finally get a break from mid-week sleepovers, summer reading lists and field trips to Pet Smart.

What's more torturing than braving the packed isles at Target to find a 1 ½ inch soft sided binder (in chartreuse)? It's braving the packed isles at Target to find a 1 ½ inch soft sided binder with two children who would rather be cleaning their room or reading than shopping. While my five year old sits in the buggy telling everyone within earshot that he's gonna wipe a bougar on his brother, my ten year old pitches a fit because I refuse to buy him a football video game even though "he promises" it will help him with math.

I had one more supply to go before finishing and of course it was the one thing that could be found nowhere. When I made my way to the last isle of the last store I saw a very confused looking woman. She looked close to tears when she said, "Excuse me, do you know where the 16 pack of Crayola Crayons are? I found the Rose Art but my list says to get exactly what's on the list. I don't know what to do. This is her first year of school. I just hope these lists don't get worse." I looked at this young mom and could sympathize. I remember the first time I shopped for school supplies. I was innocent. I hadn't been jaded by requests for dry erase markers, baby wipes and purple glue sticks. No one told me what I had to look forward to. No one said that one day you'll have to buy a \$100 calculator that your child will lose by the end of the school year. So I looked at her and told her the first thing that came to mind. "Have you seen a pack of dry erase markers in all black?" Who am I to ruin the surprise?

You can reach Becky Andrews at