

About Our Children

Useful, Current, Accurate Information for Jewish Families

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Local Students Have Pre-College Options for Studying Fashion

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Budding fashionistas who live in this area may think that their knowledge of the fashion business will be limited to visiting Nordstrom's until after high school graduation. But there is actually more than one way that kids of adolescent age (and even younger) can get a head start on a career in fashion. By taking advantage of these diverse programs, youngsters can learn about fashion, test their own design sense, and decide whether a career on 7th Avenue is something they want to pursue.

For instance, **Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT)** in the city has non-credit programs on Saturdays and in the summer for high school students. The Saturday Live program offers classes for high school students during the school year; Summer Live provides the equivalent over the summer. There is also a summer program for kids in grades 7-9.

This spring's Saturday Live program offered courses in advertising design, fashion design techniques, sewing, fashion art, exhibit design, digital photography, drawing, embroidery, experimental media, fashion illustration, design, composition, and color theory, and an introduction to the fashion design industry, among others. For 11 Saturdays, from March through May, teen-age fashion wannabes in grades 9-12 can travel to FIT for a day of study each week in the world's center of fashion and business.

The Summer Live courses are similar to the Saturday Live ones, except that they run for three weeks in July, meeting four days a week. Registration for Summer Live begins on April 22nd; classes start July 7.

Summer Live is also open to middle school students who are offered a different array of classes. Among the choices: basic drawing skills, fashion design, jewelry design, hot fashion trends, designing with color, and fabric decorating. For further information on any of FIT's pre-college programs, go to www.fitnyc.edu, click the Search button, and type in Pre-College.

Parsons/The New School for Design offers a Pre-College Academy offering year-round art and design classes for grades 4-12. Courses in fashion design, as well as drawing, painting, animation design, architecture, digital design, illustration, interior design, portfolio development, product design, and graphic design build observational drawing skills and introduce students to the design process. Classes meet on Saturday mornings in 11-week fall and spring sessions. In the summer, the Academy offers two-week intensives on a Monday through Friday schedule. For more information, see www.parsons.edu/pre_enrollment/index.aspx.

Closer to home, high school students in Bergen County can take advantage of the Fashion, Design & Merchandising Program at **Bergen County Technical High Schools'** campus in Teterboro. Students must apply for the program and be admitted. For all or part of their classes, students travel to Teterboro

to learn the process of color and fabric selection, design, pattern-making, and sewing. They study fashion analysis and critique, design aesthetics, fabrics and draping of materials, costume design, men's and women's wear, and the use of industrial machines and computer technology. Graduates of the program are well-qualified for numerous entry-level positions in the fashion industry, as well as admission to fashion design institutes, colleges, universities.

The program also offers a traditional annual spring fashion show that has become a school district extravaganza, as well as a venue for the presentation of the students' best work. The quality of the student projects receives consistent recognition at local and national competitions. For information, go to www.bergen.org, and click on Technical Schools, then Teterboro.

Art for Learning, a summer arts and fashion program run by Sheryl Urmans of Englewood, is another place where girls in grades 4-11 can study fashion and get a real taste of the business through weekly field trips. Urmans, an art and art history teacher, has run her summer program for 12 years, and began to focus on fashion for girls as young as 9 when her daughter's friends at the Moriah School requested it. Each fashion program has a focus—fashion illustration, perfume, costume design, doll making, sewing, etc.—that the girls study with Urmans or one of her teaching staff three days a week, with trips to actual fashion businesses taken on the other two days.

Urmans run eight week-long fashion programs, divided up according to grade level. Each one is designed to be age-appropriate, but to show the diversity of jobs available in the fashion industry. "I wanted to demonstrate that you don't have to be a fashion designer to work in fashion. There are marketing jobs, sewing jobs, public relations, editorial work, illustration, wig-making, costume design—so many things to do and ways to work," says Urmans.

Among the trips taken by the Art for Learning participants in the past: visiting the showrooms of Ralph Lauren, Kate Spade, Juicy Couture, Tommy Hilfiger, and Steve Madden; going to Teen Vogue magazine; going backstage at Beauty and the Beast, Mary Poppins, and other Broadway shows; taking a tour of the office of American Girl Dolls and hearing about how the business is run; visiting the corporate office of Build-a-Bear and learning how the business is licensed and marketed; going to Wilhelmina models to meet child-sized models and learn about running a modeling business.

"My students are all serious about learning and I make that clear to these places before we go," says Urmans. "They have to teach us something; the girls aren't just there for fun." Although the kids have also visited such stores as Barneys, Henri Bendel, and Abercrombie and Fitch, they are not permitted to spend money there, but take a pre-arranged tour to learn how stores are set up to market their clothes.

Art for Learning's fashion programs fill up the fastest of Urmans' programs, so early registration is recommended. For information, call 201-503-9796, or email ArtForLearning@yahoo.com