

Target is touting a b-t-s assortment for both in-classroom and remote learning



their kids to actually go to school, it creates a big bump in volume," said Seth Campbell, corporate president of BBC International. "If the pandemic prevents kids from physically going back to school, then this will certainly have a negative impact on sales and demand for new apparel, footwear and other items."

In light of the uncertainty, rain boot brand Western Chief has switched gears — focusing on outdoor-centric messaging themed around gardening, outdoor play and visits to the pumpkin patch instead of back-to-school. "We are anticipating more buy now, wear now. We also are expecting to see the demand for rain boots continue as kids spend less time in the classroom and more time outside," said Kristin Raber,

national sales manager of Western Chief.

According to children's retailers, athletic shoes will be the season's biggest bright spot, regardless of school reopening plans, with many kids ready for a new pair of sneakers after extensive summer wear.

Sneakers are a wardrobe essential, said Sherri Tanner, owner of Buckles in Atlanta, who predicted dressier styles will be put on hold.

Although Tanner said customers remain reluctant to shop in-store, she has no immediate plans to lure them with promotions, instead sticking to her existing five-star rewards program that

At GoldenBug Children's Shoes, shoppers are steering away from dressed-up styles



The B-T-S Forecast: It's Complicated

With many students beginning the school year at home, retailers are anxious about how much demand there will be this season.

BY BARBARA SCHNEIDER-LEVY

The back-to-school season, typically one of the most profitable for retailers, is on hold while states wrestle with reopenings as coronavirus cases surge across many parts of the country.

California has already announced students will begin learning virtually this fall, but New York plans to reopen regionally depending on infection rates — at least for now. As a result, parents are considering whether to pare down on fall purchases or delay buying entirely.

"When parents prepare

HELPING HANDS

HOW BRANDS ARE AIDING INDEPENDENT RETAILERS THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES AND AN UNPREDICTABLE SEASON.

BY JENNIE BELL

Independent footwear retailers are facing unprecedented challenges amid the coronavirus pandemic. After months of shutdowns, stores across the country finally were able to open their doors to customers in recent weeks. But now, with the dangerously high spikes in case numbers in the South and West Coast, the question looms about whether brick-and-mortar will be able to continue to operate normally. And the outlook is also unclear for the all-important back-to-school season, as health officials and government leaders appear at odds over the safety of reopening schools. Here, executives from some of popular brands in the kids' market share how they're working with retailers now.

DAVID KAHAN

CEO, BIRKENSTOCK AMERICAS

"We continue to work closely with our independent accounts, mainly related to product availability as they begin to reopen. As a brand with high consumer demand, we want to make sure they can fulfill requests."



KATIE WAGNER

VP OF AMERICAS WHOLESAL, CROCS

"Our goal has been to provide flexibility, where possible, knowing that cash preservation is the primary goal of all retailers. To that end, we partnered with retailers on cancellation of orders, worked to rebalance our supply of our top-selling key items, and moved to more of an at-once selling model."

YARRA MCCLURE

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, LIVIE & LUCA

"Our retailers have all been impacted by the pandemic and our team is reaching out on a regular basis to see how we can help and to offer solutions to keep their businesses viable. We have created individual plans for each retail customer, including extending dating on spring '20 products, returning products that are not turning and, in some cases, we are completely covering and writing off debt. There is no simple answer, so we are remaining as flexible as possible while bearing in mind that we, too, are a small business."



TRACY PAOLETTI

VP OF SALES, UGG AND KOOLABURRA BY UGG

"Independent retailers have been and remain a very important channel for the Ugg brand. We are working closely with all our retailers, allowing maximum flexibility to manage and adjust their fall '20 order based on their unique situation: brick-and-mortar store openings and closures, maximizing web opportunities and so forth."



BILLY PRICE

CO-FOUNDER, BILLY FOOTWEAR

"We are sharing media assets, which includes photos for social posts, display stands for in store and video clips explaining the brand. We are highlighting partner businesses and intentionally driving traffic their way."