

## Stylish Solutions

# Ageless Back-to-School Design

By Ann McDonald



*Vintage and antique drop front desks are easily sourced from consignment shops to new dealers and can be worked into almost any décor.*

*Photos courtesy Couture Chateau llc, photography by Couture Chateau llc*

Let's be honest, those slick advertisements showing us beautiful desks with neat rows of colored pencils, a hot cup of coffee and students happily working away on their homework and art projects for school gets us every time. Even as a professional designer who stages photo shoots for national press, I am wooed.

Each fall I get the bug to update. I have visions of grand efficiency. I picture happy teens in the perfect rec room, a nice movie on, enjoying never spilling buckets of organic popcorn and gluten-free snacks and a happy spouse at the perfect desk chair, swiveling with efficiency and effectiveness while the music plays. Then I look around to find the glue stick on my desk is without a cap and our afghan is draped over a stain from our teen's late night snack. Real life.

So what is a stylish suburbanite to do when it's time to put our spaces back in order for the fall? Our kids need appropriate work spaces for sure. Our spouses and we need clutter free and beautiful inspiring spaces to tackle the demands of real life. Where to start ... and does it really matter?

Yes, it matters. Just this week, I was reminded how important order is. My college freshman dislocated his elbow and we got a call. With a moment's notice I had to find things on his desk, in his room and scurry out the door. His faithful small drop front bedroom desk made a huge difference. Everything was there and in order. Can't say that about the rest of his room, but the desk? Lovely.

Here are my top tools for the Fall Refresh and some thoughts about why they work well:

**1) Contain.** I am a huge fan of vintage and antique drop front desks. They are easily sourced from consignment shops to new dealers and can be worked into almost any décor. Like accent chairs, petit drop front desks are the workhorses that receive little praise. I enjoy placing them in guest rooms, teen's bedrooms and living/family

rooms. These desks can be contemporary, traditional, inexpensive or off the charts but best of all, the compartments for order are built in.

Stock with fresh pens and pencils, note pads and run the electrical cord through the back if it's not a priceless antique. Most newer models from showrooms have the cord hole built in. The one in our son's room was found at a local consignment shop for less than \$200. I had it re-finished – it was not an heirloom but was too pretty to paint over – and the compartments hold everything from pencils to calculators and rulers. The books sat on top stacked and the mac fit even when closed up at night.

When the work is done, a simple close: out of sight, out of mind. I believe the ability for a teenager especially to close the desk is critical to a good night's sleep and these drop front desks are the perfect excuse to unplug and close up shop.

**2) Go Round.** One of the most productive table tops for working is the round table. In my studio we have two 60-inch rounds, one 30-inch round and only one traditional desk top. Guess where everyone wants to work? Yes, the rounds. Why do I like them? From a design standpoint they are hugely flexible and the smaller ones easily move from room to room.

Smartly dressed with seasonal tablecloths, these do double duty as dining and craft tables. We also consistently suggest smaller bistro-style tables for teens and young adults, who are used to more unconventional work spaces. The small round table is easily picked up and moved to a patio, back porch or other space.

A key for effective use of a round surface is to limit function. Don't try to do everything on the round. Productivity experts tell us to focus on a single task. The round helps us do that. These can be easily worked into traditional furniture plans as 30- to 36-inch high end tables.

... continued on page D12