

EXPERT ADVICE

a clean SLATE

Two renovation projects highlight the latest trends in home organization

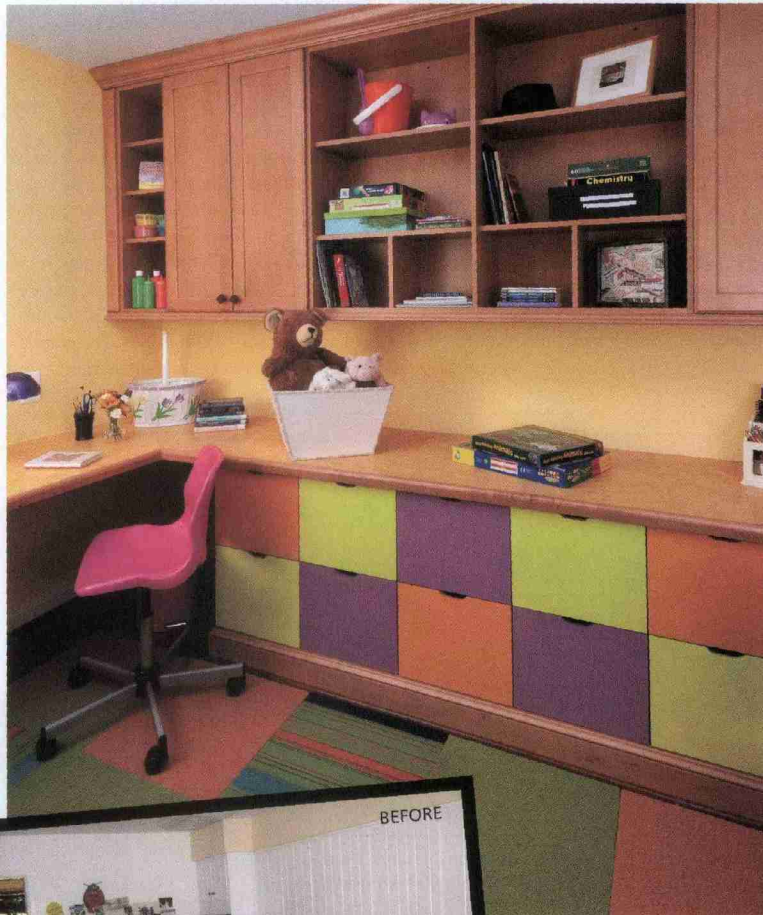
BY JULIE SANDERS

As their kids approached school age, homeowners in McLean, Virginia, thought about the practical impact of that milestone: Finding a home for backpacks and the other detritus of school life—including projects, school supplies and arts and crafts—would be of paramount importance in keeping their home organized and clutter-free.

The couple tapped McLean, Virginia-based Bowers Design Build, Inc., to create a streamlined space where their children could gather for homework, school projects and more, with plenty of storage for supplies. Bowers added a new kitchen and mudroom/laundry area (see page 152) to the home's footprint, then transformed the former kitchen into the bright, cheerful kids' crafts and homework area the owners were looking for.

"The clients had a list of priorities," says company co-owner Bruce Bowers. "The objective was to create a separate zone for the kids, to have a place for everything, to eliminate clutter and to be able to store things away."

Increasingly, design/build companies like Bowers are reconfiguring existing spaces to accommodate mudrooms, laundry areas, closets and even kids' spaces such as the one mentioned above. "We're building more mudrooms," Bowers observes. "The biggest trends are cubbies for each member of the household, and we see a lot of drawers with electrical outlets for cell phones, keys and wallets, docking stations for charging laptops and built-ins for recyclables." Mudrooms often house a separate walk-in pantry for supplies that don't need to be in the kitchen, or an alcove for a built-in desk. "Laptops make things so portable," Bowers explains, "people are not asking for desks in the kitchen anymore."



Bowers transformed an outdated kitchen (inset) into a brightly hued kids' space (above), with custom maple cabinetry, cubbies for storage, multi-colored drawer fronts (painted in the kids' favorite colors) and copious countertop space for spreading out school supplies.

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When **BOWA** vice president George Hodges-Fulton met with clients for a pre-purchase consultation, he was able to assure them that the “monstrosity” of a mudroom/laundry room in the Great Falls, Virginia, home they were about to buy was, indeed, salvageable. The couple bought the house, then hired BOWA for a major renovation, during which their design team overhauled the mudroom/laundry room completely. “We took the laundry function away,” Hodges-Fulton recalls, pointing to a trend he’s noticed in the last five or six years of relocating the laundry room upstairs for convenience.

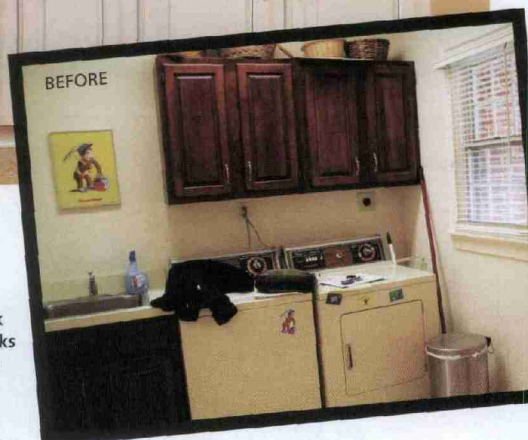
Once the laundry room was moved, a new, spacious mudroom was designed around the needs of the owners’ elementary school kids, with a sink for washing up, cubbies for storage and a durable tile floor for easy cleanup. Access to the garage, kitchen, powder room and outdoors made the room a functional space.

According to Hodges-Fulton, the story of his clients’ mudroom is emblematic of

BOWA’s makeover of a cramped combination mudroom/laundry area (inset) includes custom light-painted built-ins, granite countertops, an undercounter sink and cushioned seating below hooks and cubbies, where kids can stash their stuff (above).

the trends in renovation design generally. “Since the economy dropped off, we’re seeing more responsible building with less waste,” he says. “People want better space, not bigger. We’re redesigning existing spaces more often, reorganizing them. Areas that used to be single purpose now are multi-use—like a sunroom that used to just be a sunroom but now combines with a breakfast space.”

Another popular organizational innovation is what Hodges-Fulton calls “mom’s command center”—a six- or seven-foot surface complete with outlets, USB cables for laptops and more—that is replacing the traditional 30-inch counter space for bill-paying and other house-related chores.



“It allows us to recapture office space and maybe use it differently,” he says.

In the master bedroom suite, according to both Bowers and Hodges-Fulton, spaces are being reorganized rather than enlarged. Installing custom built-ins in the dressing room can allow a smaller footprint for the bedroom, which no longer requires dressers or armoires. Closet outfitting is increasing, with drawers dedicated to a particular item such as jewelry or belts. In a recent project, BOWA found ingenious ways to create more storage space in a bedroom (see page 154). These days, observes Hodges-Fulton, “bigger is not necessarily better.” ❖