

was there at the start, and we've had years to recognize that he's usually right, if rough, in his comments.

Piers Morgan or whoever Fox brings in to play won't have that luxury. They'll be interlopers. DioGuardi was hated and she was barely critical at all. Imagine how a newbie will be treated if he or she comes in and start accusing the pretty blond girl, with the inspirational story about selling her pony, of sounding too karaoke.

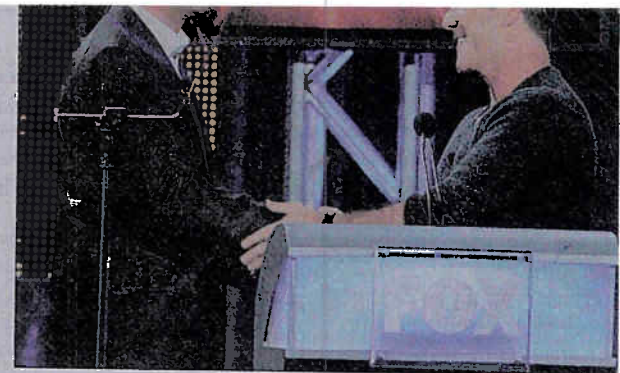
So "Idol" itself has a big problem, and one that will be compounded by the existence of the very "Idol"-like "X Factor" on in the fall.

Fox has been very smart never to air two editions of "Idol" in the same

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MICHAEL BECKER/FOX



FRANK MIGELOTT

Simon Cowell, right, shakes hands with Fox chairman Peter Rice yesterday after signing a contract to leave "American Idol" and launch "The X Factor" during the 20 Television Critics Association press tour in Pasadena, Cal

FASHION TODAY

Accessories take the uniformity out of school clothes



By **Lisa Irizarry**
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

A teenage Britney Spears pranced around in one in the sexy 1998 music video "... Baby One More Time" — propelling the song to the top of the charts.

And for Serena Van Der Woodsen and her preppy Upper East Side classmates from the hit television show, "Gossip Girl," it's just one more outfit in the closet to accessorize.

It's become clear that school uniforms don't have spell b-o-r-i-n-g anymore. Gone are the days when students who wear them are content to put on traditional saddle shoes, khakis or jumpers and leave it at that.

And in this tough economy, a school that requires students to wear uniforms can actually spell

b-l-e-s-s-i-n-g for parents who don't have to worry about being pressed by their kids for an extensive wardrobe. A child can be outfitted for less than \$120 a year.

Yes, a uniform can definitely work for all involved.

"School uniforms aren't just worn by children attending parochial schools. They're also worn in some public schools, and you can make your look unique," says Charlene Alpay, a spokeswoman for the Dayton-based French Toast school uniform company (frenchtoast.com).

"With the recession, they're also doing double duty," Alpay adds, referring to pieces from the company. "They're getting much more mileage in certain economic categories, and they're being worn on weekends or

for a social occasion."

For example, she says, boys can wear khaki uniform pants on weekends when casual dress-up is called for, and girls can raise the fashion quotient on a uniform skirt for the weekend, too. An added benefit is that plaid — a staple of the uniform tradition — continues to be a fashion trend.

"You can wear a uniform ... to a party," Alpay notes. "The trend has really picked up steam with 'Gossip Girl.'"

The trick, Alpay says, is to accessorize, accessorize, accessorize — making a uniform look individualized and reflecting a student's personality. But, if a student plans to incorporate such changes on

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COURTESY OF FRENCH TOAST

Jewelry and tights, left, are a simple way to give uniforms a stylish turn. Right, the girls of "Gossip Girl" — Blake Lively's Serena Van Der Woodsen is just one — have helped to make traditional plaid fashion forward.

KC BAILEY/THE CW



This article first appeared as a blog post at *The Star-Ledger's* parenting site, nj.com/parenting.

uses research on early childhood development to create instructional DVDs. Learn more at Talaris' website, Parenting-

about your children just by playing with them. Your questions, ideas and attention support your children's curiosity

things every night, your child finds comfort in knowing what comes next.

— Carrie Stetler



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FRENCH TOAST

Above, a striped scarf or argyle socks can make a uniform stand out. Right, coordinating a scarf and bracelet to a uniform blouse is a simple way to individualize school clothing.

Fashion

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a school day, be sure to check out the school's rules first — some are more lenient than others about making a look your own. "Accessorizing can be a hair ribbon, a different pair of socks, a bracelet," Alpay says.

There are also a lot of options if a school expresses only general requirements, such as "black shoes"

instead of a particular style. And backpacks, outerwear and hair barrettes also can mix things up a bit.

Boys can wear jewelry to make a uniform their own, too, with a leather necklace or a shell or rubber bracelet.

"I think children are feeling the need for customizing," Alpay says. "The 9 to 12 (age group) will set a lot of trends and the younger siblings will follow."

Lisa Irizarry may be reached at lirizarry@starledger.com

Make it your own

Check out the rules: Consult your school handbook to see where you can stretch the uniform.

Do you: Make a particular hairstyle part of your fashion statement. Girls also can try glossy lips, subtle blush and mascara to personalize their style.

Say it with shoes: Stay within the limits, but try different materials, brands and laces. Cool hosiery also can make your look different.

Nail it: Pop your uniform with colorful nail polish.

Get style in the bag: Remember, a bag for school books doesn't have to be backpack — try a tote.

Source: eHow.com

and getting lower every day.

On Sunday night, face the southwest. The best time to look for the moon and Jupiter will be between 5:30 and 6 p.m., when the two are still high enough to see. Look for a razor-thin crescent moon above the treetops; Jupiter is the bright star above and to the left of the moon.

On Monday night, the moon will be quite a bit higher in the sky. Look for Jupiter below the crescent moon before 6 p.m.

Earth is moving much faster in its orbit than Jupiter, so the giant planet is falling behind. Jupiter will soon disappear in the sun's glare. Eventually, Earth will leave it so far behind that it will be on the far side of the solar system from us. This will occur on Feb. 28.

a solar eclipse on Friday, it will not be visible from United States. The moon's shadow will sweep across Central Africa, the Indian Ocean and Eastern Asia. Eclipse is a special kind because it is not a total ec — the moon will be a little too far away from Earth to completely cover the sun. The sun appears as a "ring" around the moon, hence the name annular eclipse (from the Latin "annulus" meaning "ring").

For updates on the night call the Newark Skyline at 596-6529 or visit [Sky Watch at NewarkMuseum.org/planetarium.html](http://SkyWatchatNewarkMuseum.org/planetarium.html).

Kevin D. Conod is the planetary manager and astronomer at the Newark Museum's Dreyfuss Planetarium.

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