



Photo: Frances Isaac Photography

Classic needn't be boring, as seen in this bathroom designed by Gaelle Dudley in collaboration with Towle Builders. In the shower, navy blue penny mosaics contrast against white tile to create stripes; blue pennies are repeated as a 'rug' in front of the white vanity.

# Sharing the Love

Designers are paying more attention to kids' bathrooms as parents recognize the benefits these spaces bring to the entire family.

BY KIM BERNDTSON

**H**istorically, kitchens and primary bathrooms have often gotten the bulk of the love when it comes to allocating funds for renovation or new-build projects. But designers have begun to notice that other spaces are seeing budget bump-ups.

"In general, people are paying much more attention to all the spaces in their home," says Heather Weisz, principal designer, HW Interiors, in Wellington, FL. "I think they are realizing more and more how much their environment and surroundings can impact their mood and how they feel."

Kids are one age group that is reaping the benefits of the shift in how people view their environments.

"Our lifestyles are designed much more around our children," remarks Gaelle Dudley, founder, GLDESIGN in Fairfield, CT. "Now we have video gaming rooms, media rooms, teenage lounges – even whole floors are sometimes dedicated to children."

Certainly, not to be left out are kids' bathrooms.

"There's a growing awareness of the importance of creating child-friendly environments that promote independence and confidence," stresses Lindsey Wojski, designer, Style & Structure in Stillwater, MN. "Additionally, parents are seeking ways to make everyday routines, such as bathing and grooming, more enjoyable and efficient for their children."

Mariette Hedeshian, founder, Designer's Touch in Shrewsbury, MA, agrees, adding, "Parents want their kids to be more independent in their own spaces. They want them to be able to step up on a stool to brush their teeth or hair, and to take a shower by themselves. It helps to make mornings and bedtimes easier."

As well, these spaces need to 'age' well over the course of several years to accommodate changing needs, stresses Trish Lynn, founder/principal designer, who notes, "My clients want to have a design for their kids' spaces that will grow with them."



## EVOLVING OVER TIME

Kids bathrooms are often designed just once over the course of the time that children live with their parents. As such, regardless of whether they are initially designed for a toddler, adolescent or teenager, Hedeshian focuses on adaptable and timeless foundational elements to help ensure the space grows with them so that few, if any, changes are needed by the time they move out.

“If the space is well designed and functional, there usually isn’t much that needs to be changed as a child ages,” says the designer, “except maybe to move up access to towels and toilet paper that have been set low for a young child. You can easily touch up drywall, but I don’t like to use kid-size versions of things like vanities or toilets. Instead, I use standard sizes and make them accessible with a small stool stored in a practical place so it can be brought out when needed. Sometimes a kids’ bathroom might also be used as a guest bath, so it needs to be functional for adults.”

The designer also typically tries to remain gender neutral, especially if a boy and girl share the same space.

“I don’t want to be too specific, such as too many princess things for girls or cars for boys,” she explains. “When both genders are using the same bathroom, I like to mix and match so it looks more grown up and neutral.”

Such was the case for a recent renovation where a young boy and girl, six and five years old, respectively, share the same bathroom. Hedeshian collaborated with Vision Design-Build to update it to fit the personalities of the children. For example, for him, blue, gray and white geometric 6"x6" wall tiles were precisely arranged to create a fun, custom pattern that appears random. For her, the plumbing fixtures and hardware are a unique pink hue that matches the shelves in the storage alcove.

“When we think about kids, we usually think about color and pattern,” she reports, in reference to her go-to elements. “This young girl was obsessed with pink, so I integrated the pink faucet and accents in the background. It’s more of a grown-up pink, and the shelves can be repainted and the faucet replaced in a few years, but the rest can stay.”



■ Mariette Hedeshian, who collaborated with Vision Design-Build for this bath, combined elements for a young boy and girl who would share the space. For him, blue, gray and white geometric wall tiles create a fun, custom pattern, while for her, the plumbing fixtures and hardware are a unique pink hue that matches the shelves in the storage alcove.

A spacious white tiled shower promotes independence with glass doors, a hand shower and plenty of built-in shelves for toiletries.

“These clients wanted a shower instead of a tub,” the designer relates. “Sometimes, when the kids are older, it’s easier to have a walk-in shower.”

A shared medicine cabinet/mirror is complemented with modern wall sconces that keep the space bright. A custom walnut wall-mount vanity provides additional his/hers storage and features gray edges and sides that coordinate with the gray tile floor. A white quartz vanity top minimizes maintenance and is easy to clean, which is an important consideration in kids’ bathrooms.





Photos: Frances Isaac Photography



When space allows, Gaelle Dudley - who designed this bathroom in collaboration with RFK Development - likes to include a double vanity with a combination of doors and drawers to accommodate the ever-increasing array of hair care and skin care products that kids tend to acquire.

↑ Gaelle Dudley notes that a classic white vanity in a child's bathroom allows for the addition of whimsy in other ways, such as a tile 'rug' on the floor and fun mirrors, such as the ones in this bath that are shaped like port holes.

**THOUGHTFUL INVESTMENTS**

Dudley doesn't miss the bygone days of kids' bathrooms where everyone clamored for space at a single vanity, and tension rod shower curtains were joined by 'sticky' shelves stuck onto shower walls.

"In the past, kids' bathrooms were just kids' bathrooms," she reports. "They were often small in scale and everyone would share. Now we are so much more thoughtful about designing kids' bathrooms, and they have become more of a true investment rather than just a side thought. I think bathrooms are really critical for people of all ages, including kids."

These days, when space allows, she includes a double vanity as a way to make the space feel more upscale. Usually, it offers a combination of doors and drawers to accommodate the ever-increasing array of hair care and skin care products that kids acquire. If it is being used by a young child, a pull-out step stool makes it easy to reach the sink and faucets. As well, the vanity is usually white or maybe blue, the latter of which she says is a great gender-neutral color, which can be an important consideration when a boy and girl share the same bathroom space.

"I think a classic white vanity is really pretty, and it gives you the ability to add whimsy in other ways," she explains.

Those 'other ways' can include mirrors, lighting and art.

"Mirrors and lighting have come a long way," she offers. "Rather than traditional stainless steel or chrome, think about how these elements can incorporate texture. It's also okay to add personality through art. These are all great ways to make

the space fun so kids will want to brush their teeth!"

Dudley is also a great fan of tile.

"It's my number one go-to element," she says. "I always love to include fun tile. So much can be accomplished with it, such as a backsplash with penny tiles behind a mirror or a shower with stripes as an accent. Or, instead of a classic bath mat in front of the vanity, how about a tile 'rug' on the floor?"

"I do try to stay classic...something that is fresh, bright and clean," she continues. "You don't want to get too trendy with tile. I can't tell you how many black and white tiles from the 'European days' that I've ripped out!"

Many of her design recommendations are showcased in one recent project where a young boy and girl share the bathroom, which was part of a new addition to a home that was renovated in collaboration with Towle Builders. To maintain some neutrality, Dudley started with a clean, white base for the walls and vanity, then she amped it up with tile, mirrors and lighting...all of her favorite go-to elements.

For the tile, navy blue penny mosaics contrast against white to create stripes in the shower/tub. A glass door adds a touch of sophistication, while a two-level niche provides a place for soaps and shampoo. Blue pennies are repeated as a 'rug' in front of the vanity. A pair of round mirrors, each illuminated with a pair of sconces, are reminiscent of port holes in a boat, which is a nod to the father's Navy career.

"We kept a clean, classic, white look," she states. "But the space also has a lot of personality. Classic doesn't have to be boring."





Heather Weisz emphasizes the importance of being playful with wallpaper, color, art and great lighting. In this girl's bathroom she chose a soft blush wallpaper for the wall behind the vanity, which she accented with a pendant light in a gold-tone finish to match the cabinetry hardware and faucet.

### DON'T FORGET THE 'FUN'

Weisz has some clients who start accommodating their kids young – as young as infants and toddlers – by providing them with a suite that includes a bathroom.

“Admittedly, kids that age won't know the space is a beautiful sanctuary, but parents spend a lot of time bathing and taking care of them,” she explains. “It affects their mood, so parents want their kids' bathrooms to be beautiful and relaxing.”

To ensure it functions well through time, Weisz incorporates foundational elements that are often earthy neutrals and color tones that can readily morph with the design.

“Don't go crazy with a super patterned, primary colored tile,” she says. “Save the 'crazy' for wall coverings, towels or other accessories that can be changed to give the space a refresh without changing everything.”

However, the designer emphasizes the importance of still being playful with the design.

“Don't forget to have some fun,” she emphasizes. “Include a fun wallpaper, color, art and great lighting...it's the jewelry of the space.”

Such was the case in one young girl's bathroom where the designer chose a soft blush wallpaper for the wall behind the vanity, which she accented with a pendant light in a gold-tone finish to match the cabinetry hardware and faucet.

“It's a great example of bringing in color with wallpaper,” she explains. “The whole feel of the room could be changed by just changing the wall covering. Plus, the pendant light is a great way to bring in some personality.”

Weisz also likes to tile the entire vanity wall, all the way to the ceiling.

“It gives a lot of bang for the buck and makes an impact, while also being practical,” she says. “Tile is great for kids...it won't get scuffed and it's easy to clean. And don't forget to tile all the way up to the ceiling in the shower.”

Glass subway tile is a focal point in one boy's bathroom where its navy hue encases the shower and mimics the dark color found in the cement tile on the floor. The adjacent



Photos: Jessica Glynn

Heather Weisz likes to tile walls from floor to ceiling, such as in this bathroom where navy blue subway tile encases the shower.

shelving, which is convenient for storing towels, is painted to match the tile.

“I consider navy to be neutral,” she explains. “It's the color of the sky. It's earthy yet impactful, especially for a boy's bathroom.”

As well, another boy's bathroom showcases blue, this time a bit lighter shade, in geometric tiles for the floor. It is complemented with a white oak vanity and matte black hardware and faucet.

“This bathroom is very timeless,” Weisz offers. “It could easily be a guest bathroom or a teen bathroom.”

When the design allows, Weisz also likes to include medicine cabinets to hide clutter and help keep kids organized. Because they have so many products today, niches in the shower or tub area are useful as well. For younger kids, step stools built into the vanity eliminate the need for more unsightly plastic versions.





■ In her own kids' bathroom, Lindsey Wojski wanted to create a locker room environment with an industrial, modern feel. The focal point is a custom trough sink that sits atop a custom white oak vanity. A trio of industrial-style pendants emphasizes the three wash stations, one for each boy.

**MORE THAN CARTOON DECALS**

Designing a bathroom for her own three adolescent boys, Wojski knows first-hand how these spaces have changed with regard to how they meet the needs of kids.

"In the past few years, we've seen a real shift towards designing bathrooms specifically for kids that are personalized, fun, whimsical, safe and made for their needs," she explains. "This goes beyond just slapping some cartoon decals on the wall. Clients are investing more into creating an enjoyable space their kids will love as their own, while also being adaptable as they grow."

For example, parents of young children often want to include features like safety locks, step stools, built-in tubs and adjustable-height fixtures to facilitate independence. As they get older, priorities tend to shift towards privacy and a desire for more mature color schemes. Storage for toiletries and personal items becomes more important, so solutions such as adjustable shelving and modular organizers can accommodate changing needs and preferences. As well, backlit mirrors improve visibility.

Regardless of age, Wojski also likes to include some playful and fun elements like bright colors, patterns and whimsical accessories.

Photo: Virtance Photography



Photo: Julie Greer Photography

■ The contrast of black and white is playful in this bath by Lindsey Wojski. The black and white sunburst porcelain tile beneath the ledge matches the niche in the shower, while black grout helps elongated white subway tiles pop. Matte black shower fixtures match the faucets at the sink and add a sleek, modern look.

"These can really make the space more engaging and exciting for kids," she says. "You can mix and match these elements throughout the space to create a cohesive and cheerful look. Have fun decorating!"

In her own kids' bathroom, her goal was to create a locker room environment with an industrial, modern feel and high contrast.

"I wanted to switch things up and create one bigger room instead of the usual ensuite for the oldest child and a Jack and Jill bathroom for the two younger kiddos," she relates. "I have three boys. If I had a girl in the mix, I would have done something different."

The focal point feature is a large 72"x26"x8" custom trough sink fabricated by Dusty's Concrete & Landscape and Minnesota Modern Rustic Concrete.

"I dreamed of having this sink for years, and with the help of my cousin, who works in concrete, we made it happen!" she relates. "I did have some concern about whether personalizing it with the word 'bros' was a smart decision for resale value, but we decided to go for it...and honestly, I'm so thrilled that we did!"

Other standout features of the vanity area include a custom white oak vanity and a trio of industrial-style pendants that emphasize the three wash stations, one for each boy. An extended ledge beneath the mirror gives them a place to set toothbrushes, toothpaste, etc.

The black and white sunburst porcelain tile beneath the ledge matches the niche in the shower. To create high contrast, Wojski used black grout for the elongated white subway tiles. The matte black shower fixtures match the faucets at the sink and add a sleek, modern look. The black and white checkerboard luxury vinyl tile floor provides softness and warmth, the latter of which is important for the Minnesota winters.



Photos: Linda Pardon Photography



■ Brick flooring in this bathroom Trish Lynn designed for a young girl will ‘age’ well. She also used tile to clad the apron of the tub so it blends seamlessly with the shower wall. Brass sconces flank the brass-framed mirror and coordinate with the faucet.

### FOCUS ON FUNCTION

When it comes to kids’ bathrooms, a common design goal for many of Lynn’s clients focuses on functionality, without breaking the bank.

“There’s an understanding that kids will be using the space, and they will probably be using it in a highly trafficked manner, so parents are looking for functionality,” she relates. “They also want everything to be very durable...and not get super dirty.”

With those thoughts in mind, she often uses quartz and quartzite for vanity tops and porcelain to clad floors and walls since they are relatively forgiving for children’s spaces. As well, she is very particular about the grout that joins tile together.

“Even with light tile, I don’t like to pair it with a light grout selection,” she explains. “Instead, choose one that won’t show much dirt. I also like to use tile that can be installed with smaller joints, which means smaller grout lines so they don’t get as dirty.”

Tile, as well as lighting, pattern, textured paint and wallpaper, has the added benefit of bringing texture into the space.

“Layers of texture make it feel a little more whimsical and approachable while giving it an element of dimension,” she offers. “Plus, some of these layers, for example lighting, can be easily updated.”

Because clients want a bathroom that grows with their kids, Lynn is cognizant about making timeless choices. For example, foundational pieces such as vanities, need to stand the test of time. In one young boy’s bathroom that she recently designed, a timeless floating vanity is topped with quartz. Its vertical fluting mimics the vertically oriented tongue-and-groove paneled wall, which is painted a cool blue/green.

“This room was designed for a young boy, but it can definitely grow with him,” the designer indicates.

As well, brick flooring in a bathroom Lynn designed for a young girl will ‘age’ well. In this space, she also used tile to clad the apron of the tub so it blends seamlessly with the shower wall. Distinctive brass sconces flank a brass-framed mirror and coordinate with the gold-toned faucet. ■



■ Trish Lynn’s clients wanted a bathroom that grows with their kids so foundational pieces such as vanities need to stand the test of time. In this young boy’s bathroom she included a timeless floating vanity topped with quartz. Its vertical fluting mimics the vertically oriented tongue-and-groove paneled wall, which is painted a cool blue/green.



■ When it comes to kids’ bathrooms, many of Trish Lynn’s clients want materials that are durable, such as the quartzite that tops this vanity in the space she designed for a young boy and girl.