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Is summer school really that much easier?

BY CAROLINE GRECH
Staff Writer

You stand by the door anxiously around noon each day waiting for the mail to arrive.

The letter carrier finally arrives and heads for your front doorstep, but is almost intercepted before he reaches the mail box.

The manilla envelope with your high school report card is part of his

delivery and you snatch it in anticipation of your final grades.

Would Mr. Brown give the extra 2 per cent necessary to pass Grade 10 math?

Or would you fall just short for a second year, leaving you destined for a couple of weeks of summer school?

For students looking to make good on courses they failed during the school year, summer school is an easy ticket to a passing grade.

At least that's what some York Region high school students think.

Thousands of youths will head to summer school this year in hope of improving their marks, but is summer school as challenging as the regular school year course?

Newmarket High School student Cole Breyers has taken summer school and dramatically improved on her math marks.

"I boosted my mark from a 51 to an 80," Ms Breyers said, noting summer school is easier because students already know the course material.

For Grade 10 student Julian Wallace, summer school is, without a doubt, easier than regular course work.

"Last year when I took it, it was easier. A lot of the people there are in the same boat as you and the teachers are a lot easier on you," Mr. Wallace explained.

While some students think it's an easier ride, John Roberts, a summer school teacher at Richmond Hill High School, begs to differ.

Admitting teachers don't have the same time in night school or summer school to reinforce every element of the course taught during the school year, he said summer school is far from an easy ride.

No shortcuts are taken with the cur-

riculum because courses must still meet Education Ministry guidelines, said Mr. Roberts, who has taught summer classes for five years.

Stressing the learning expectations are the same for all core courses, such as math, English and science, he said in some cases classes are more intense.

"I don't see it as being less rigorous. Students taking subjects like grade 11 and 12 physics and chemistry are learning the courses in a month," he said.

For new, accelerated courses, students earn credits by being in class for four weeks from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. with a 30-minute lunch break.

Remedial classes run for two weeks in the summer and students have already spent 110 hours on a course by the time they arrive at summer school.

The additional 60 hours spent at summer school is not meant to go over the course material in its entirety, Mr. Roberts explained.

As for the lazy, inattentive reputation of summer students depicted in movies like the 1987 flick *Summer School* with Mark Harmon, things are different now, Mr. Roberts maintained.

"It's changed a lot in the last 10 years. Students are really committed to do well at school," he said.

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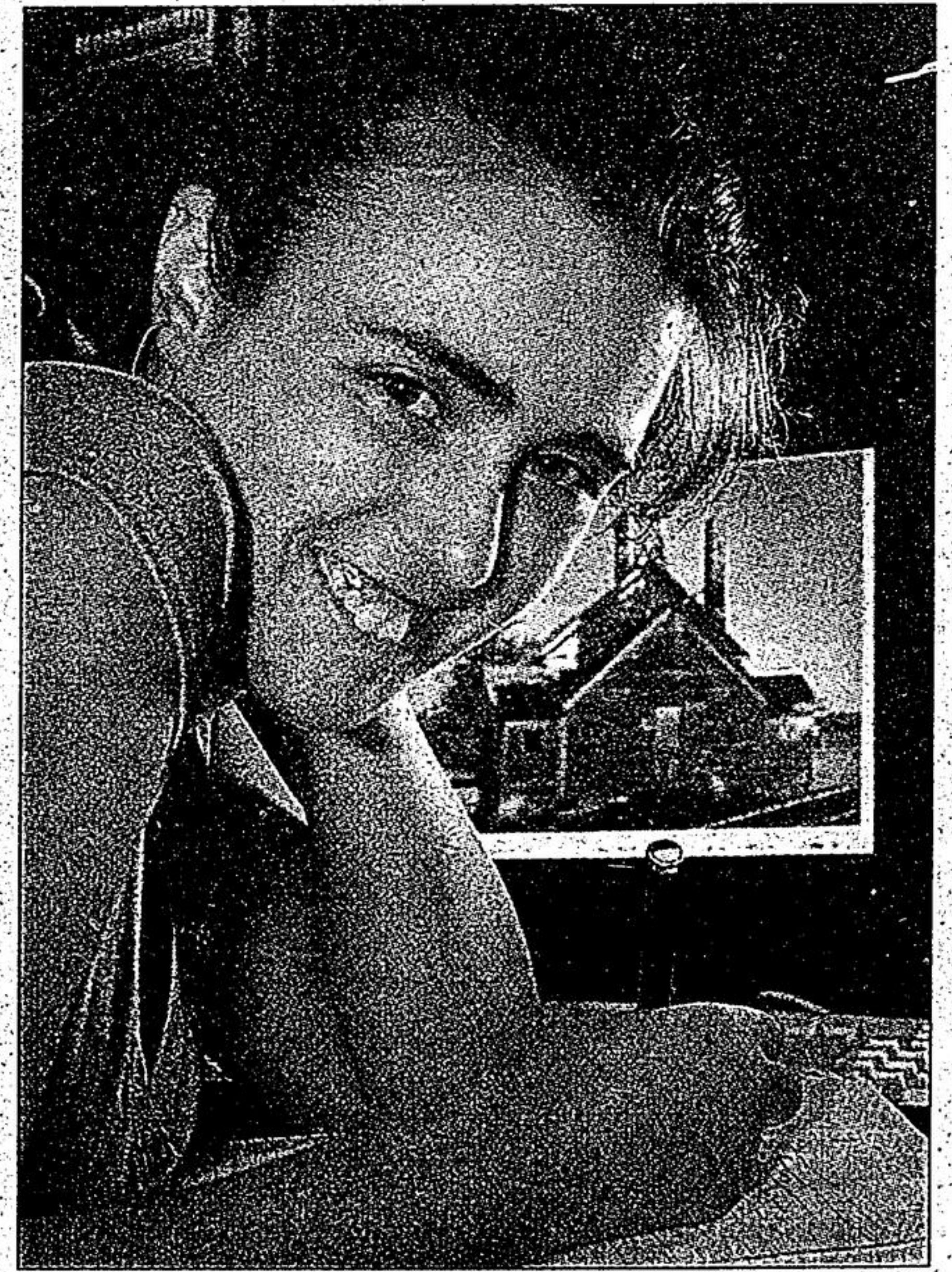
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Megan Parnigoni, 19, of Newmarket is one York Region student who saw her grades improve after taking a summer school course.



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