

Positive reinforcement still answer, teachers say

Kinder, gentler education

BY CAROLINE GRECH
Staff Writer



BILL HOGARTH: Education director says students are aware of what is expected of them.

Never say "fail". Every day teachers walk the fine line between encouraging and coddling students.

In many schools, teachers no longer mark papers in red ink, preferring less aggressive colours such as green or purple.

In York Region, teachers can decide for themselves what colour marker they use and they will keep a student who doesn't meet expectations back for a year. But they are unlikely to say the student failed.

But does this kinder, gentler approach prepare students for the "real world"?

Richmond Hill mother of two Robin Wilner says focusing on the positive is the only way students will excel.

"Every child has strengths and you need to encourage those strengths and you also need to encourage the areas that

on a test, if a teacher focuses on how they might be able to improve for the next test, it gives the child a goal."

The York Region District School Board doesn't hesitate to alter a problem to help a struggling student do better, education director Bill Hogarth said.

Although it is not the preferred option, students will still be held back if necessary, he said.

"Students really do know what's expected of them," Mr. Hogarth said.

Mr. Hogarth also disagrees with critics who say positive reinforcement does not prepare children for the real world.

"I think it's an old argument," Mr. Hogarth said.

In the business world, companies fail all the time, Mr. Hogarth argued.

"The business community is allowed to fail. CIBC just paid Enron 2.4 billion, is that not failure? We have a lot of companies that are not meeting their financial expectations," Mr. Hogarth said, adding the board isn't just allowing students to coast.

they are not strong in," Mrs. Wilner said.

"If you just tell a child they've failed, then the child is going to think, 'why should I even try?'"

When a teacher gives positive reinforcement on the student's effort, even if a he or she doesn't excel academically, it can go a long way, Mrs. Wilner said.

"If a student doesn't do well

Man turns outstanding debt into online business

Site now receives 6,000 hits a week

BY PATRICK MANGION
Staff Writer

Until about a year ago, Bruce Weddel's experience on the Internet could best be described as aimless and leisurely.

After running a local publishing and graphics company the past seven years, the 49-year-old Newmarket businessman seemed the most unlikely of entrepreneurs to climb aboard the dot com bandwagon.

In fact, it was a most unusual business deal which spawned his e-business initiation.

Mr. Weddel's takeover of the website www.savingmoney.ca, essentially an electronic coupon service, wasn't sealed with a handshake, or the usual legal wrangling.

"One of my customers owed me \$16,000. It was clear I wasn't going to get a penny from him," he said.

Instead, they negotiated so Mr. Weddel could take over the website.

At the time, Mr. Weddel wasn't happy about the deal, but so far, the transaction has proved fruitful.

"I took a website worth \$250, in lieu of \$16,000," he said.

"I didn't know anything about the Internet, other than surfing."

After hiring a website specialist to undertake a redesign, savingmoney.ca re-launched last March.

A variety of companies, from golf courses to mechanics, across the Greater Toronto Area pay to have their coupons posted.

They're often the same as the bundled coupons arriving in mailboxes.

Users can scroll, point and click their

way through hundreds of coupons by city or business type and print out the ones they want free.

Mr. Weddel calls it on-demand coupon clipping.

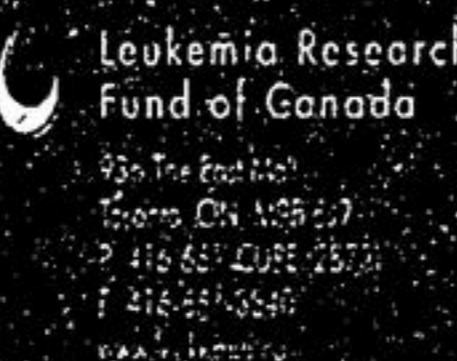
The website went from 48 hits a month to 6,000 a week, Mr. Weddel said.

It's also prompted a move to a new Leslie Street office as he looks to add staff.

"There was some trepidation spending money on something I'd never done before," Mr. Weddel said.

"I'm spending more time on the website now than my publishing business."

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