

Peterborough Examiner

Monday 01-Nov-2004

EDUCATION: SSFC, Ontario Business Educators Association conference

"Business education vital for all"

Ontario Business Educators group meets in city

By SAIRA PEESKER

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Everyone deals with businesses, and a lot of people end up working for them or starting their own, but it's not mandatory to take a business course in high school.

High school teacher Michelle Presotto says this makes no sense.

Presotto teaches business and computer studies at a Catholic high school in Toronto, and was one of 100 participants at an Ontario Business Educators Association conference held Saturday at Sir Sandford Fleming College.

She feels business education plays a vital role in preparing students for the real world, and that the government has dropped the ball in making business optional in high school.

"It's ludicrous they are pushing for more small businesses, but don't give people the career education to do so in the curriculum," she said. "If they think people are just going to develop these kinds of skills along the way, they're grossly mistaken."

Presotto was at the conference to give a seminar on how to operate a curriculum-based online school store.

She said offering courses that attract a wide variety of students and offer practical skills is key in keeping business classes full.

Dale Northey feels the same way.

As the academic team leader for management and business studies at the college, he knows that hands-on trials can bring life to a subject many may consider dull.

"If you send students to a mall with a video camera and get them to analyze who shops where, they're probably going to be more interested than if you read them a page out of a textbook on demographics," he said. "We need to make business interesting for students before they develop preconceived notions that it's boring."

Workshops throughout the day were geared at helping teachers do just that.

Sessions included practical computer application courses, live case studies and the media's critical view of the business world, led by association president Laura Pinto.

Pinto thinks business studies do more than just preparing students for employment.

"If that's the only thing you're trying for, you're short-changing yourself," she said. "We live in a society that, no matter what you do, business plays a very important role. These are lessons students need to learn."