



36

WEDNESDAY MAY 14 2014 GEELONGADVERTISER.COM.AU



BUSINESS BEAT

PLUS COMMERCIAL
REAL ESTATE SECTION

Game with life-long payoff

How to handle money is best taught at a young age, say finance experts

Margaret
LINLEY



margaret.linley@news.com.au

It's too important to leave money management skill acquisition to chance, with many adults never gaining the financial literacy needed to make wise decisions.

It is a view shared by many who are calling for it to be included in the training of our young people.

Quay Financial Planning Services' Trevor Boyle has joined the push for financial education of children and has devised a board game called Mazerro for the task.

"You see marriages floundering from financial issues," Mr Boyle said.

"It affects you in your everyday life. I see in my role people can unfortunately make bad financial decisions which can affect their whole lives.

"The education system is slowing coming around but this needs to be at the forefront of everyday education."

A nationwide survey of close to 5000 people, commissioned by GE Money, showed four in 10 people admitting to not knowing much about investment and fewer than one in 10 people understanding how mortgage redraws worked.

A GE Money spokesperson said the results indicated people were missing out on opportunities to make their money work hard for them.

According to Mr Boyle, if children learned key concepts such as money segmentation, credit and investment, they would be less likely to make mistakes as adults.

CONTINUED Page 35

MAKING MONEY MAKE SENSE: Torquay College year 6 students Chay Willingham, Flinn Nowson, Lucie Thompson and Molly Ryan play Mazerro.

Picture: PETER RISTEVSKI




BUSINESS BEAT

Finance comes to classroom

FROM Page 36

"The whole idea of the game is for children to make their choices and then explore the different outcomes," he said. "Children have to learn how to allocate money for savings, for the things you need now and the things you want."

And although there was a positive response from a Business Beat survey of grade 6 students from Torquay Primary who had played *Mazerro*, Mr Boyle knows children need adult support to learn the financial skills.

Unguided, they are not going to choose the game or go in search of the skills themselves. "It's for the kids to play but we need the parents or grandparents to buy it for them," he said.

For accountant Robert Bihar, it was watching the executives he had worked with in large corporations mismanage their personal debts that spurred him to consider educating children about financial

management.

As a father of two, Mr Bihar has his own test group to trial the ideas in his book *Don't Eat the Marshmallow*.

"We give them pocket money and we generate conversation about that," he said.

"They both have three money jars. One is the 'my future' jar. The skill there is to pay yourself first. If they get in a

'Some of them are quite shocked when they learn about taxes and insurance.'

TEACHER SAM BARRY

habit of saving, say, 20 per cent for a big purchase, that is an important money lesson."

Other jars are for giving so children learn about helping others and for their own wants.

"We live in pretty much a cashless society, that's how our kids see it," he said.

"They see us buy with credit

cards and they're being targeted by ads on the television. What I tell parents is, if you give kids pocket money on a regular basis they can learn the value of something."

One of the many programs being run in schools, as teachers respond to the need for financial literacy, is Finance Friday at Point Lonsdale Primary School.

Senior students are enthusiastic about the program devised by teachers Sam Barry and Sharon Hill as they research and choose a job, a house and a lifestyle to adopt in a make-believe world using real data.

"We want to teach them real-life financial literacy skills," Ms Barry said. "Some are quite shocked when they learn about taxes and insurance."

"Lots of children are frugal and others find their income isn't keeping up with their lifestyle."

Student Geordie Whittakers is a biotechnologist in his "restricted fantasy" life during

TORQUAY PRIMARY YEAR 6 STUDENTS TALK MONEY



Lucie Thompson, 12
(On pocket money)
"My mum puts it in the bank. I get \$5 every week or every month, I'm not sure. We've got to do the normal stuff (to get the money), sometimes washing the dishes, putting the chooks away and stuff. Sometimes my Nan gives me some money for Easter and so I have that in my wallet. If I wanted something like a skateboard I'd ask mum if I could go into my bank account."



Flinn Nowson, 12
"(The game) can get confusing so you need an adult with you the first time. It had a lot of words I'd heard mum and dad use and it cleared it up for me. I'm not sure if I'd play it again. If I was a bit bored on a rainy day I'd get it out and play it. It would definitely help me when I'm older. It was pretty well done and had a lot of cool characters."



Chay Willingham, 12
(On spending)
"If it's something I need, I usually ask mum and dad. If it's not important I save up birthday money. I reckon you should only spend it on things that are going to help and not spend it on things that are a waste. The more (money) you have, the more relaxed you are about spending it. "If you don't learn (about money) now, when you're older you won't have a clue what's going on."

the one-hour Finance Fridays sessions, which hone maths skills in particular and life skills in general.

Geordie said outsiders might imagine the focus on money skills in the curriculum could seem mercenary but "money is a big part of life and it's a good idea to learn about it".

He chose his career because "you get a lot of pay but you also pay a lot of tax and it sounded cool".

He also was able to discuss insurance, bills and savings with this reporter.

"It's the first step for us to be able to set ourselves up for life and to be able to budget and

manage our money," the grade 6 student said.

RESOURCES:

Mazerro is available for \$69.95, including postage and handling, from mazerrothegame.com.

Don't Eat the Marshmallow by Robert Bihar is \$19.95 at robertbihar.com