

# School website ads a big hit

**John Masanauskas**

education reporter

CASH-strapped public schools are set to reap tens of thousands of dollars a year from advertising on their websites.

Sponsors including banks, car makers, travel companies and charities are lining up for the opportunity to advertise to school communities.

School councils have the power to approve ads, but the state Education Department will consider developing guidelines to help schools deal with the new trend.

More than a dozen government schools in Melbourne's east run websites that have been provided free in return for advertising space.

They include Wattle Park, Greythorn, Mont Albert, Kew and Glen Iris primary schools, and Kew High School.

The schools are encouraging parents and other community members to visit the sites because the more hits that are made, the more revenue is earned.

Dozens of other schools have also signed deals with computer design firm sponsor-ed, which has a former primary school principal on its team.

Wattle Park Primary assistant principal Randal Symons explained that online ads were a new way for schools to make money amid funding shortages.

"It's potentially a significant amount of money," he said. "The fact that it generates funds itself so you don't have to do anything is even better."

Mr Symons said his school was able to vet sponsors —



**Denis Masseni**

ads from companies spruiking alcohol or junk food would not be accepted.

"As long as advertisers are ethically sound and fit in with the philosophy of our school we wouldn't have a problem with that," he said.

Sponsor-ed director Denis Masseni said schools could expect to earn between \$10,000 and \$30,000 a year, depending on the number of site visits.

"Sponsorship in schools has been there forever, but it's usually been in the form of a donation rather than something more commercial," he said.

"What we're doing is packaging it and giving it a lot more strength in numbers."

Mr Masseni said the websites contained school information such as newsletters and key dates, and would eventually allow parents to make transactions such as paying fees and submitting forms.

Parents Victoria executive officer Gail McHardy said she welcomed the concept, provided advertisers were carefully scrutinised.