Sharp Student Spots Pencils' Slogan Gaffe

By Alan J. Wax
STAFF WRITER

An upstate fourth-grader has made a point that's become an embarrassment for the Plainview company that sold pencils to his school.

Kodi Mosier, a 10-year-old at Ticonderoga Elementary School, near Lake George, discovered that the anti-drug message imprinted on a pencil distributed by the company, the Bureau of At Risk Youth Inc. becomes radically different once the pencil is sharpened.

The pencils carry the slogan: "Too Cool to Do Drugs." But Kodi noticed that as the pencil is worn down and sharpened, the message turns into "Cool to Do Drugs," then simply "Do Drugs."

The 20-cent, regular No. 2 pencils were distributed prior to Drug Prevention Week in October by the company to hundreds of schools across the country. "They're all gone by now," said company president Ed Werz, adding, "Most people throw them away, but one astute child discovered it all."

The company, which sells more than 200 different items to 50,000 schools and youth organizations across the country, "takes drug prevention very seriously," said Werz. "But we see the humor in this particular situation."

A new batch of pencils has the message imprinted in the opposite direction, so when they are sharpened, they read "Too Cool to Do" and finally "Too Cool."

For pointing out the botched message, Kodi earned his class a letter of apology from the company and a box full of T-shirts.

Werz hopes to benefit from the error. "It's an opportunity to tell about the good things we do," he said.

The company, started in 1991, is one of the fastest-growing private companies on Long Island. It has 70 employees.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.