

1-1-1993

Criteria For Developing An Alternative Education Program For Pregnant And Parenting Young Women

Sharon S. White

Eastern Illinois University

This research is a product of the graduate program in [Educational Administration](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

Recommended Citation

White, Sharon S., "Criteria For Developing An Alternative Education Program For Pregnant And Parenting Young Women" (1993). *Masters Theses*. 222.
<http://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses/222>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses & Publications at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

LB
1861
.C57x
E34
1993
W4
copy 2

CRITERIA FOR DEVELOPING AN
ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR
PREGNANT AND PARENTING YOUNG WOMEN

WHITE

THESIS REPRODUCTION CERTIFICATE

TO: Graduate Degree Candidates who have written formal theses.

SUBJECT: Permission to reproduce theses.

The University Library is receiving a number of requests from other institutions asking permission to reproduce dissertations for inclusion in their library holdings. Although no copyright laws are involved, we feel that professional courtesy demands that permission be obtained from the author before we allow theses to be copied.

Please sign one of the following statements:

Booth Library of Eastern Illinois University has my permission to lend my thesis to a reputable college or university for the purpose of copying it for inclusion in that institution's library or research holdings.

7-27-93

Date

Sharon White

Author

I respectfully request Booth Library of Eastern Illinois University not allow my thesis be reproduced because _____

Date

Author

Criteria for Developing an Alternative
Education Program for Pregnant and Parenting
(TITLE)
Young Women

BY

Sharon S. White

Field Experience

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Specialist in Education

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1993

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

July 27, 1993
DATE

Donald W. Smalley
ADVISER

7-22-93
DATE

Larry Jones
DEPARTMENT HEAD

Abstract

The specific problem examined in this study was the identification of factors for developing an intervention program which addressed the needs of school-age pregnant and parenting young women. This program was explored in the context of a rural community in Illinois.

Despite the growing concern in this country about high rates of pregnancy among unwed teenagers, reliable information about the effectiveness of programs serving young mothers was extremely limited. Available data was presented. Insights were derived from surveys completed by individuals that had participated in these programs. Criteria for developing an alternative education program for these young women was originated. Areas that were included in the recommendations were transportation, staff, academic programs, social services, day care services, stipends, on-site services, and political aspects.

Hopefully, by keeping these young women in school, a school district could positively affect their futures and the futures of their children. This extra involvement by a school would pay dividends for a community as these young women would be able to join the work force, care more appropriately for their children, and assume their roles in adult life.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Chapter I: Overview.....	5
Introduction and Problem.....	5
Delimitations and Limitations.....	8
Operational Definitions.....	8
Chapter II: Rationale, Related Literature, Research and Research Design.....	10
Rationale.....	10
Review of Literature and Research.....	11
Research Design.....	15
Summary.....	16
Chapter III: Criteria and Recommendations.....	17
Introduction.....	17
Criteria and Recommendations.....	17
Transportation.....	17
Staff.....	17
Academic Program.....	18
Social Services.....	18
Day Care Services.....	19
Stipend.....	20
On-site Services.....	20
Political Aspects.....	20
Success Stories.....	21
A Student's Viewpoint.....	21
A Teacher's Viewpoint.....	21

A Director's Viewpoint.....22

Summary.....22

References.....24

Chapter I

Overview

Introduction and Problem

In the opinion of the researcher, in the first half of this century it was not uncommon for a couple to marry and have children during their teenage years. Most individuals had received the available schooling and job training by their mid-to-late teens and were ready to assume the responsibility of marriage and of caring for their new family. Today the process of preparing for the task of caring for a family and meeting responsibility within the world of work has been extended several years. In the opinion of the researcher, many individuals are not ready to assume this responsibility until they are in their twenties.

Baldwin (1985) found a strong association between "younger ages at first birth and higher proportions of unwanted and out-of-wedlock births, a faster pace of subsequent childbearing, and higher completed fertility" (p.17). Baldwin also found that women who had their first child at a young age experienced a higher rate of marital separation, divorce, and remarriage. The younger the adolescent at the time of marriage, the more likely he/she was to be dissatisfied with the marriage and have the marriage dissolved. The adolescent mother, who was not married at the time of her child's birth, was very likely

to marry soon after the birth and she, too, was at high risk for an unsuccessful marriage.

In the researcher's opinion, many young women become pregnant long before they are prepared to assume the responsibilities, both financially and emotionally, of adulthood. Teenage pregnancies today are associated with a large number of adverse social and economic issues that were not as common during the early part of this century.

Society suffers from teenage pregnancies in different ways. These include an increased financial burden through public assistance payments and the teenage mother's potential never being realized. The plans and goals of these young women are often unfilled due to these unplanned pregnancies.

Baldwin (1985) reported adolescent mothers experienced lower educational and occupational attainment, lower income, and were more likely to become dependent on welfare than their peers. These young mothers were likely to express regret over their lack of education and the subsequent lack of occupational opportunities.

A study conducted by The Alan Guttmacher Institute in the late 1970s showed that, of the teenagers who had become parents before age eighteen, only one-half of the women and three-fifths of the men had finished high school by age twenty-nine (cited in Foster, 1987). Thus, dropping out of high school has a direct effect on the teenage parents'

employment opportunities. The employment these young people are able to secure is usually at a lower-status and lower-pay than teenagers who do not have children. Lower-paying jobs or unemployment, in turn, means that many teenage parents and their children live in poverty.

There is a strong connection between educational and occupational attainment. Ten years after completing high school, adolescent mothers were more likely to be working than their classmates and at jobs with lower pay, less prestige, and less job satisfaction. Half of the families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC, commonly called "welfare") started receiving welfare when the mother was a teenager (Foster, 1987).

In the opinion of the researcher, when an individual cannot achieve his or her greatest educational or occupational potential due to an adolescent pregnancy, society is adversely affected. Hopefully this effect can be greatly lessened, through the programs available to pregnant and parenting young women.

The specific problem examined in this study is the identification of factors for developing an intervention program which addresses the needs of school-age pregnant and parenting young women. This program was explored in the context of a rural community in Illinois.

Delimitations and Limitations

This field study focused on the factors for developing an intervention program which addresses the needs of school-age pregnant and parenting young women. The factors covered in this study were explored in the context of a rural community setting in Illinois. Nonrural settings were not the focus of application because the researcher desired to apply findings to only rural communities.

Information gathered in this study was used in the development of criteria for a program. Implementation of these criteria in the actual development of a program was beyond the scope of this study. Before such a program is implemented by a school district, potential students should be identified and interviewed as to their needs and actual anticipated utilization of such a program.

Information gathered in this study was used in the criteria development of a hypothetical program, as this researcher had no actual authority to implement such a program.

Operational Definitions

School-age Pregnant and Parenting Young Women.

Pregnant or parenting young women who have not attained a high school diploma and have not reached their twenty-first birthday.

Project Redirection. A national demonstration of a model of service delivery for low-income teenage mothers

and pregnant teens.

Chapter II

Rationale, Related Literature, Research, and Research Design

Rationale

In the opinion of the researcher, pregnancy and parenthood often lead female school-age students to become dropouts. If students are dropouts or have very poor attendance, they are less likely to obtain a productive, satisfying, and well-paying job. This lack of good job prospects commonly leads to poor self-esteem. Poor self-esteem may be one of the factors that leads to divorce, child abuse, and child neglect. The treatment of abused and neglected children, and the subsequent effect on their lives as adults, is a cost to society.

A second cost of female school-age pregnancy and parenthood is incurred by a school district. For example, the cost associated with attempting to modify their behaviors is one cost. The cost of tutoring students to enable them to catch up academically with their classmates by covering the information these young women missed while absent also consumes district resources. Another expense could include homebound instruction. The absences of these young women also affect the average daily attendance of the school district. It is the average daily attendance upon which the school's state aid is calculated. The fewer students present to make up the average daily attendance,

the fewer dollars given to the district.

A third aspect is the cost to society that often occurs when a pregnant or parenting school-age young woman is unable to fulfill her life's potential. For example, due to the lack of schooling and job training, many of these young women are unable to become productive members of the work force. This lack of ability to acquire higher paying jobs leads to a need to receive federal assistance or welfare.

Review of Literature and Research

Educational attainment is a critical factor in determining future occupational status and economic self-sufficiency. Wage rates are lower, unemployment is higher, and the likelihood of welfare dependency is greater for individuals who do not obtain a GED certificate (Polit, 1983).

The need for programmatic emphasis on education is supported by many research studies. According to figures cited in a report by The Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI), about sixty percent of eighteen-year-old mothers nationwide have not completed high school; forty percent of nineteen-year-old mothers have also failed to do so. Pregnancy is, in fact, the leading cause of high school dropouts among teenaged young women in this country. The fact that lifelong educational attainment is curtailed for teenage mothers, even when other factors contributing to schooling are held constant, has been documented by

Card and Wise (1978), Moore and Waite (1977), and McCarthy et al (1982) [cited in Polit, 1988].

In 1985, the National Conference of State Legislatures began a special project designed to assist states in developing effective public policy to address the issues of teenage pregnancy and parenthood.

The project was entitled "The Teenage Pregnancy Project". It was conducted over a six-month period and was supported by the Ford Foundation. The Project was charged with four specific tasks:

1. Develop a national advisory committee of organizations currently working on the issue of teenage pregnancy.
2. Develop a fifty-state survey of legislative strategies on the topic.
3. Develop a special report with sections on state legislative strategies, policy implications and recommendations, and non-legislative initiatives and resources to address the problem.
4. Develop a briefing program on teenage pregnancy that was held at the NCSL Annual Meeting in Seattle, Washington, August 5-9, 1985. (Maggard, 1985, p.63)

Through the successful completion of these activities, the project has provided a nationwide analysis of the role and contribution of state legislatures in developing public policy strategies regarding adolescent pregnancy and

parenting. The project also has assisted state legislators in learning from their colleagues, thereby increasing interstate communication and cooperation. By enriching the knowledge base of those working to address the needs of pregnant teenagers, it was hoped to ultimately enhance the quality of state-level public policy on this issue (Maggard, 1985).

Four states (California, Connecticut, Michigan, and Wisconsin) enacted legislation to provide for programs. The programs may include parenting education, career counseling, health care, social service referrals and other support services, in addition to an academic program. These alternative education programs provide teenage mothers with a flexible, responsive academic program, which is often accompanied by day care services.

The lack of adequate child care is the teen parent's single greatest barrier to participation in educational programs. Most teenage parents, especially young women who are raising their babies alone, cannot afford typical day care services. Most high school age parents have patched together a typical care giver system of relatives and neighbors to use to meet their child care needs. According to Decker, this system is unfortunately not always dependable and therefore does not meet this critical need for most high school parents (1989).

Parenting education programs or curricula are designed to provide teenagers with information and skills relating to parenting, including information on child growth and development. Often, parenting education is folded into other health education and social services programs serving pregnant and parenting teenagers. The purposes of these programs are usually to minimize parental frustration and possible child abuse, and to maximize optimal development of the child (Polit, 1982).

A program of job training may help reduce the numbers of parenting teenagers who are dependent upon welfare by giving them the means to become financially independent.

Comprehensive services programs provide a multitude of health, educational, social, psychological, and financial services to pregnant and parenting teenagers. Programs that provide case management services help link pregnant and parenting teenagers with the multitude of social and health services that they need through referrals to agencies and programs. Once comprehensive services are available, it is important that teens be directed to the services as needed (Polit, 1982).

Project Redirection is a national demonstration of a program model for services for low-income teenage mothers and pregnant teens. The design and implementation of this program were in response to growing social concern about the costs, both individual and societal, of teenage

parenthood.

It is a comprehensive program that is designed to provide for a wide range of client needs. The program represents an effort to redirect the lives of young women whose life script, without intervention, might involve early repeat pregnancies, curtailed education, limited employment options, and welfare dependency.

(Polit, 1982, p. 1)

Project Redirection is being operated as a pilot program in four cities under the management of Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. The program is funded by the United States Department of Labor, WIN, and the Ford Foundation.

Research Design

This is a qualitative study which focused on developing criteria which rural communities could use to address the problem of educating pregnant and parenting young women. Thus, a traditional quantitative design was not used. In its place a review of the literature, research, and established programs was conducted to establish the project's outcome--criteria for developing a program.

To develop the criteria, the researcher synthesized the information reviewed and translated it to application in a rural community. It was the researcher's intent from the inception of this project to only develop criteria and not implement a program.

Summary

Among pregnant and parenting school-age young women, there appears to be a high drop-out rate and also a high number of these individuals who are performing below grade level for their age (Polit, 1982). It appears that getting these individuals back into school programs of an appropriate type should be a major goal. It is also apparent that getting these young women not only to return to school, but to generate interest in school, is essential so they will be motivated to complete graduation requirements.

The deficits in the areas of employment are also a major concern. Emphasis on skills training, employability knowledge, and educational attainment appear critical if a goal is the future economic self-sufficiency of these pregnant and parenting teens.

Chapter III

Criteria and Recommendations

Introduction

Despite the growing concern in this country about high rates of pregnancy among unwed teenagers, reliable information about the effectiveness of programs serving young mothers is extremely limited.

The criteria developed by this researcher was greatly influenced by data from Project Redirection. This criteria was developed for use in rural communities in Illinois.

Criteria and Recommendations

As a school district considers whether to begin a program to address the needs of these school-age young women, several areas must be examined. These areas include, but are not limited to, transportation, staff, academic programs, social services, day care services, stipends, on-site services, and political aspects.

Transportation. One area worthy of consideration is transportation. If the program is able to utilize regular school buses, it would be advantageous to do so. Another way transportation needs may be met is through each individual providing her own transportation. Another alternative might be for a program to utilize its own independent system. Bus services may also be contracted.

Staff. Some positions that would be deemed appropriate to manage a program are a program director, a coordinator

for involvement of people in the community, social workers, several counselors, and other human service professions. Certified teachers must also be on staff to conduct the academic portions of the program.

Academic Program. The curricular program that would be offered to these young women must follow both the guidelines for high school graduation requirements in the Illinois School Code and also the guidelines of the local district from which the young women will receive their diploma. Both guidelines must be referred to, since local district requirements may include additional areas that must be covered.

These programs may be offered to these young women in a variety of ways. One alternative would be to have the women enroll in the regular high school of the district. Another choice would be an alternative education program that would satisfy graduation requirements, but allow these young women to attend at a different time, possibly at night or shortened hours during the day. One more opportunity for these young women to fulfill high school graduation requirements would be through completion of coursework in a computer lab. Intensive remedial education, perhaps entailing self-paced or individualized instruction, might allow more teens to enjoy educational success.

Social Services. These young women could also benefit from other services not directly related to academics.

Social services are one of these areas. These young women need counseling services. Studies also show these women benefit from a big sister program in which a woman in the community volunteers to spend a specified amount of time with an individual young woman each week. This woman would continue this contact throughout the school-girl's pregnancy. Extra classes need to be conducted for these young women in the areas of child care and birth control. It would also be beneficial if each girl could work at a day care center each day. This could be for high school credit or pay. These young women also need an emphasis on employment education. This emphasis should include classes on job training, employability knowledge, career counseling, job readiness skills, counseling to foster openness to nontraditional jobs, and specific skill training.

Programs must make the young woman understand that being good parents and holding good jobs ultimately depend on her educational credentials and ability to plan her childbearing. This understanding would appear to be critical if the ultimate goal of the program is the economic self-sufficiency of teenage mothers.

Day Care Services. Another aspect a school district might wish to investigate is the option of a school-based day care program. This would allow closer monitoring of these young women's school attendance and care of their child. The day care center could also be utilized as an

outreach of the school district's child care classes or preschool program. It could also be used as a day care center for the community. Parents of latch-key kids might also be able to use this service if the hours of the center could be extended beyond the school day. It could be possible that more young women would return to school or enter the world of work if dependable child care were made available.

Stipend. An additional facet of a program might be a stipend that could be made available to the participating individuals. The stipend would be based upon the degree of participation. The more an individual participates, the larger amount she would receive each month.

On-site Services. On-site services seem to benefit the individuals that receive them greatly. It is easy for the program to monitor the quality of these services. It is also easy to check and encourage the teens' participation in these services. The teens themselves seem to feel more motivated to attend, since they are on familiar ground and do not feel as pressured. They appear better able to incorporate what they have learned into their daily lives in an effort to please and get praise from the staff members whom they already trust and respect. Although relatively costly, offering on-site services may be the most cost-effective strategy.

Political Aspects. One should be cognizant that certain

groups within the community will be resistant to this type of program. Individuals within these groups may think one is condoning premarital sex or births to unmarried teenagers. Others may think too much time and money is being spent on these students. It is best to be vocal from the start. Let the community know that an alternative education program does not promote any lifestyle for students, but rather provides an alternative method to complete high school graduation requirements. For some students, it may be the only way they will be able to complete high school and become more productive members of the community.

Success Stories

Before beginning a new program in a school district, it is advantageous to talk with others who have been involved in a similiar program.

A Student's Viewpoint. According to Denise Torres Gullick, she is a success because of an alternative education program in California. She attends classes for two hours each day and also works at the learning center program. The shortened attendance time helps alleviate the day care problem Denise has for her son. Denise intends to attend nursing school following her completion of the graduation requirements (cited in Hill, 1993).

A Teacher's Viewpoint. Shirley A. Gasparich is an instructor in Belleville, Illinois, alternative programs.

In Gasparich's opinion, schools have an opportunity to play an important role in a pregnant or parenting teenage young woman's life. Schools can provide the catalyst for expanding the life options of these young women. Schools can develop more flexible learning environments, such as alternative education programs, that will allow these young women to experience success as they re-enter school. "The educational level of the mother is the most important variable affecting the academic achievement of her children." (S. S. White, personal communication, June 3, 1993)

A Director's Viewpoint. According to Tom Williams, Director of the Sweetwater Learning Center, alternative education programs may be the only way to keep certain students in school. Centers must keep up with the changing needs of their student population and remain on the "cutting edge" of what is going on. Students in William's programs attend classes two hours a day, may take two or three courses at a time, work independently, and set their own pace at which they will complete a course (cited in Hill, 1993).

Summary

Results from programs that are already in place teach program planners and operators to be modest in their expectations about what can be achieved. Redirecting the lives of teenage mothers who are handicapped by poverty is exceptionally difficult. It is a task that is not likely

to be completed during these mothers' teenage years (Levy, 1983).

Hopefully, by keeping these young women in school, a school district can positively affect their futures and their children's futures. This extra involvement by a school will pay dividends for a community as these women are able to join the work force, care more appropriately for their children, and assume their roles in adult life.

References

- Decker, W. (1989, February). How to get good day care without raiding the education budget. The American School Board Journal, pp. 25-27.
- Foster, C. D., Siegel, M. A., & Plessner, D. R. (1987). Growing up in america. (Available from Information Aids, Inc., Plano, Texas 75023).
- Hill, D. (1993, August). A second chance. Teacher Magazine, pp. 20-25.
- Levy, S. B., & Grinker, W. J. (1983, June). Choices and life circumstances: An ethnographic study of project redirection teens. (Available from Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 3 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10016).
- Maggard, H. F. (1985, October). State legislative initiatives that address the issue of teenage pregnancy and parenting. (Available from National Conference of State Legislatures, 1070 Seventeenth Street, Suite 2100, Denver, Colorado 80265).
- Polit, D. F., Kahn, J. R., Murray, C. A., & Smith, K. W. (1982, May). Needs and characteristics of pregnant and parenting teens: The baseline report for project redirection. (Available from Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 3 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10016).

Polit, D. F., Quint, J. C., & Riccio, J. A. (1988, October).

The challenge of serving teenage mothers: Lessons from project redirection. (Available from Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 3 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10016).

Polit, D. F., Tannen, M. B., & Kahn, J. R. (1983, June).

School, work and family planning: Interim impacts in project redirection. (Available from Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, 3 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10016).