B. Is it the School's Business?

"Stay out of my business!"

    "It's none of your business!"

While adolescents frequently feel that well meaning adults intrude into matters that they wish to keep confidential, if sexual behavior leads to pregnancy, it's everyone's business.

Schools have an opportunity to address reproductive health and enhance academic outcomes for students.

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1.   **Excerpt from "Partners in Progress: The Education Community and Preventing Teen Pregnancy"**

2.   **Working with Schools**

3.   **Education Laws and Pregnant and Parenting Students**

I. Conflicts and Controversy (cont.)

> **B. Is it the School's Business?**

>> **1. Excerpt from:**
>> **Partners in Progress: The Education Community and Preventing Teen**

>> *Pregnancy*
>> AMCHP's National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and the Joint Work Group on School-Based Teen Pregnancy Prevention, May 2002
>> htttp://www.teenpregnancy.org/resources/reading.pdf.partnersprogress.pdf

Introduction

Because the relationship between academic failure and teen pregnancy is so strong, and because young people spend so much of their time in school, the education community and the teen pregnancy prevention community should see themselves as natural allies.

Too often, however, schools find themselves caught in the middle of community controversies over sex education, in particular, and the potential for schools to help reduce teen pregnancy gets lost. In response, this document offers simple ideas on ways the education community can help prevent teen pregnancy — most of which are not at all controversial — without sacrificing its core mission of education.

The Relationship Between Academic Failure and Teen Pregnancy.

Although all students are at risk for engaging in early sexual activity and childbearing, school failure is often the first sign of trouble that can end in teenage parenthood. In fact, half of teen mothers drop out of school before becoming pregnant. Recent studies make clear that students who feel a strong connection to their school are much more likely to postpone sexual activity and other risky behaviors. Teenage parenthood is also a leading correlate of school failure — less than one third of teens who begin families before age 18 ever complete high school. All of which suggests that the most important role for schools in preventing teen pregnancy is to prevent school failure and drop-out and offer all students the opportunity to succeed and to become deeply engaged in their own education.

Is Teen Pregnancy Still a Concern?

Since the early 1990s, teen pregnancy and birth rates have declined nationwide, in all states, and among all age and racial/ethnic groups — the result of less sexual activity and better contraceptive use. This good news shows that efforts to prevent teen pregnancy are paying dividends. Despite these encouraging declines, the United States has the highest rates of teen pregnancy and birth among comparable nations. And it is still the case that four out of ten girls in the U.S. become pregnant at least once before age 20.

The Consequences of Teen Pregnancy.

Teen pregnancy and childbearing have adverse academic consequences for teen parents and their children. In addition to a higher drop-out rate for the young mothers and fathers, early parenting limits a young mother's likelihood of a getting the post-secondary education that is increasingly necessary to qualify for a well-paying job. Not surprisingly, limited educational achievement increases the chances that teen parents will live in poverty. Teen fathers tend to complete an average of one semester of school less than young men who delay father-hood until at least age 21. The children of teen mothers are also at risk compared to those born to older parents. They are 50 % more likely to repeat a grade, they perform worse on standardized tests, and ultimately they are less likely to complete high school than if their mothers had delayed childbearing.

Ways Schools Are Helping Prevent Teen Pregnancies.

Schools play a vital role in the lives of 50 million children each year. By promoting educational success, developing skills that help build a positive future, and by helping young people to feel a strong sense of purpose, schools can help strengthen young people's motivation to delay pregnancy and parenthood. Schools can — and should — also provide sexuality education, and clearly schools are doing so. Although curricula vary widely in both focus and intensity, nearly every teenager in the United States receives some form of comprehensive sex or abstinence education. For their part, parents have expressed consistent and strong support for school-based sex education that stresses abstinence as the first and best choice for youth and provides information about contraception. Parents also want schools to go beyond just the "birds and the bees" and address such issues as how to manage pressure to have sex and the emotional consequences of becoming sexually active. For those concerned that discussing sex and contraception with young people might have a negative impact, there is good news. The over-whelming weight of the evidence is that sex education that addresses both the benefits and limitations of contraception does not hasten the onset of sex, increase the frequency of sex, nor increase the number of sexual partners. In addition, several sex and HIV education curricula have now been shown to delay the onset of sex, reduce the frequency of sex, reduce the number of sexual partners among teens, and/or increase the use of contraception.

Two important caveats: (1) When it comes to preventing teen pregnancy, schools can do more than just offer sex education classes. For instance, schools can host parent forums or can provide health clinic services. (2) Regardless of the type of sex education curriculum that schools offer, it is important to recognize that teens receive information and guidance about sex from a variety of sources — parents, television, the Internet, friends, and faith communities, to name just a few. Consequently, it is unreasonable to expect that the education community alone should shoulder the entire burden of the sexual education of young people or be responsible for putting all of the complex issues of love, sex, and relationships in just the context that each family prefers. Moreover, there is very strong agreement within the education community that schools alone cannot address the issue of adolescent pregnancy. While there are a variety of approaches for pre-venting teen pregnancy through schools, support from families, in particular, and the community in general, is essential if prevention programs are to work successfully.

The following tips are designed primarily to help those in the education community strengthen their existing commitments to preventing teen pregnancy and to provide new ideas. It is our hope that these tips also provide some guidance to those outside of schools who are also concerned with how to reduce teen pregnancy but need new ideas for constructive partnerships with schools.

Tips for Success

•Set High Academic Standards for all Students.
>   Students respond best to a strong education program that is stimulating, establishes expectations for all students, and clearly articulates what each student should know and be able to accomplish.

•Involve Parents.
>   Teens consistently cite parents as having the most influence over their sexual decision-making. A solid relationship between a teen and his or her parents is positively related to healthy emotional development and self-esteem. Ongoing, sustained communication between parents and their teens can help prevent teen pregnancy, as well as a host of other risky behaviors.

•Involve Youth.
>   Giving young people meaningful roles in developing and running a teen pregnancy prevention program is critical to the success of such efforts. Their input helps ensure that a program is relevant and that messages, products and methods reach their intended audience.

• Do Your Homework.
>   Become and stay informed about teen pregnancy and about promising interventions.
>
>   Gather data on the need for pregnancy prevention in your community — make the issue

local.

- Prepare Teachers.

    Students cite teachers and counselors as second only to their families as the most reliable sources of sex-related information.

- Use the Youth Development Framework.

    Evidence increasingly supports the view that after-school activities, community service, and other youth development programs help to foster self-esteem, "resiliency," and academic achievement. In fact, current research suggests that programs that include community service by teens and structured time for preparation and reflection before, during, and after such service (e.g., group discussions, journal writing, and papers) may have the strongest evidence of any intervention that they actually reduce teen pregnancy rates while the youth are participating in the program.

- Create an Environment for Success.

    When designing and operating programs that address teen pregnancy, make sure to find friends and advocates outside the education community, such as state and local coalitions focused on preventing teen pregnancy.

- Let Research Help Guide Your Efforts.

    When designing, assessing, and evaluating policies and programs that address teen pregnancy, it is helpful to know that there exists an increasing body of science that can help guide your decisions and efforts.

AMCHP: http ://www.amchp.org

l. Conflicts and Controversy (cont.)

    B. Is it the School's Business? (cont.)

lthy Teen Network

2. *Working with Schools*

Healthy Teen Network Resources

- **Summary: Systematic Literature Review of the Association Between School Climate and Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health**

- **Summary: Systematic Literature Review of the Association Between School Climate and Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (PowerPoint)**

- **Instructor Interview Tool**

- **Instructor Observation Tool**

- **What's going on in the classroom? Tips for assessing the implementation of sexuality education**

- **Art of Storytelling**

- **Instructor Competency Assessment Tool**

Other Resources

- **School-Based Health Centers Literature Database**

- **Evidence-Based Sexuality Education Programs in Schools: Do They Align With the National Sexuality Education Standards?**

- **Measuring School Health Center Impact on Access to and Quality of Primary Care**

- **How Pregnancy Planning and Prevention Help Students Complete College**

- **Differences in Adolescent Relationship Abuse Perpetration and Gender-Inequitable Attitudes by Sport Among Male High School Athletes**

- **Teacher's Guide: Interesting, Fun, and Effective Classroom Activities To Influence Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention**

- Sexual Assault Risk Reduction Curriculum

- Evaluation of a Statewide Youth-Focused Relationships Education Curriculum

- Impact of a School-Based Dating Violence Prevention Program among Latino Teens: Randomized Controlled Effectiveness Trial

- Unwanted Sexual Contact on Campus: A Comparison of Women's and Men's Experiences

- Family Homework and School-Based Sex Education: Delaying Early Adolescents' Sexual Behavior

- The Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Urban Secondary School Student Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis

- Parent Engagement: Strategies for Involving Parents in School Health

- School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth

- Answer: Sexuality Education Policy by State

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: School Health Policies and Practices Study (SHPPS)

- Improving Outcomes for Teen Parents and Their Young Children by Strengthening School-Based Programs. Challenges, Solutions, and Policy Implications

- Promising Outcomes in Teen Mothers Enrolled in a School-Based Parent Support Program and Child Care Center

- Access to and Use of Vocational Education in Teen Parent Programs

- Prepped for Success? Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Teens in Chicago Schools

- Promoting Sexual Responsibility: A Teen Pregnancy Prevention Resource for School Employees

- Beyond Teacher Training: The Critical Role of Professional Development in Maintaining Curriculum Fidelity

- Building the Missing Link between the Common Core and Improved Learning

- Success by Ten: Intervening Early, Often and Effectively in the Education of Young Children

- Listening to Latinas: Barriers to High School Graduation

- How to Work with Schools to Conduct STD Screening

I. Conflicts and Controversy (cont.)
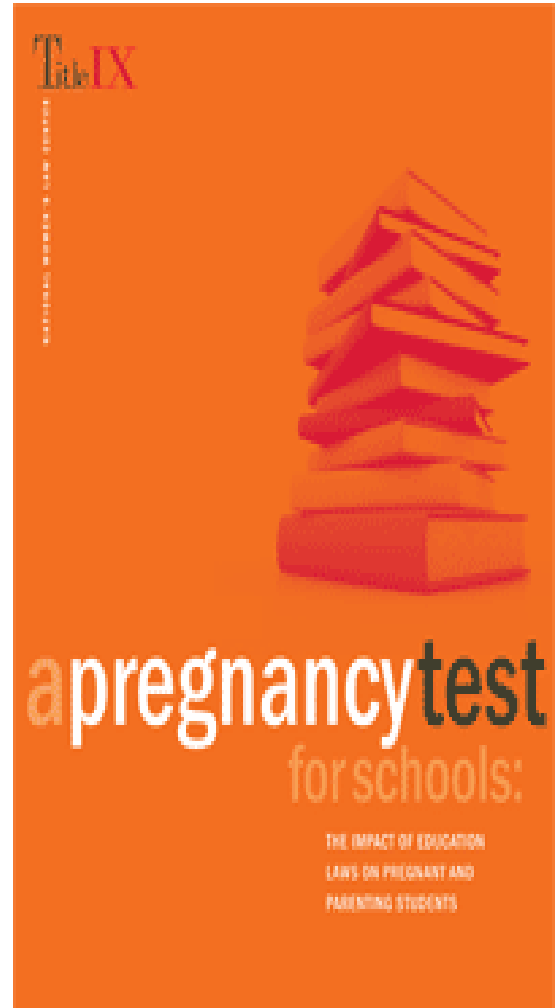
    B. Is it the School's Business? (cont.)

3. A Pregnancy Test for Schools:

The Impact of Education Laws on Pregnant and Parenting Students

http://nwlc.org/resources/a-pregnancy-test-for-schools-the-impact-of-education-laws-on-pregnant-and-parenting-students/

Parenthood is not the end of the road for teen moms. Quite to the contrary, motherhood can serve as an educational motivator for many young women. Unfortunately, educational barriers and discrimination often thwart this drive and determination. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is the landmark law that bans sex discrimination in federally funded education programs and activities. Despite Title IX's prohibition against sex discrimination, there are schools across the country that continue to bar pregnant and parenting students from activities, kick them out of school, pressure them to attend alternative programs, and penalize them for pregnancy-related absences.

A Pregnancy Test for Schools outlines the ways that federal, state, and local laws, policies, and programs can change the landscape for pregnant and parenting students and ranks how well the state laws and policies address the needs of these students. The report describes the particular challenges faced by pregnant and parenting students, highlights the requirements of federal laws, reviews relevant

state laws and policies (some promising and others sorely lacking), and concludes with recommendations for both policymakers and for schools.

Below we've also provided resources for advocates and service providers who work with these youth; download our toolkit to find out how you can help to make a difference.

- **Full Report**   Executive Summary   Toolkit   Fact Sheet for Schools

- **Pregnant & Parenting Students Bill of Rights Wallet Card**