

Education for Teenage Parents

Jurisdiction: Prince Edward Island

Contact: Roberta Clark

Level: K-12

Theme: Government or board policies

Description of Practice:

Although they are characterized by different names, the Western and Eastern School Boards have initiated programs aimed specifically at supporting pregnant teens staying in school longer. Whether it is the GIFT (Graduating Is For Teen moms) or EPPY (Educating Pregnant Parenting Youth) program, the goal of these initiatives is to help young moms continue their education during pregnancy and to transition more easily back into the school system when the time is right. Tutoring in the student's home is only one aspect of the support offered.

Background:

Teen pregnancy is not a new trend but in the past most of the young moms quit school and never returned unless they took adult upgrading courses to achieve their GED. Through programs such as these initiatives described above, more young mothers on PEI are completing their high school education and thereby increasing their employability skills.

The GIFT program started in 1997 and its objective was to support teen parents to complete the requirements of grade 12 and receive their graduation diploma. Over time the original framework has remained the same, but the complexity of the individual situations has grown. GIFT coordinators will do the following: assist in course selection, make regular contact with teachers, have daily contact with students, follow attendance, arrange tutoring, offer courses when they cannot attend classes, assist in post secondary planning, provide pregnancy tests or arrange doctor's appointments, be a resource person for parenting teens, transport to appointments, contact public health nurse, nutritionist, etc, contact any outside agencies the parents may need to deal with, arrange counselling, host weekly CHANCES meetings, and contact day cares if necessary.

Development:

The need to support pregnant moms to continue their education resulted in the development of the GIFT and EPPY programs. Students and teachers came to recognize that once you leave school, your education doesn't have to be over...you are welcome back. A very individualized program is developed throughout the year at selected schools, depending on where the pregnant students are located and the range of support services they need both during pregnancy and after the birth of their child.

Evidence:

The evidence for success for these programs can be witnessed by the number of over-age youth feeling comfortable coming back to school. Some Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students up to 20 years old are attending high school classes. Overall community wellness, along with a deep sense of respect and dignity for such dedicated moms are evident in these programs.

Adaptability:

The commitment and resources necessary to support teen moms is all that is needed to adapt these programs to another setting. Each case offers individual challenges and as with so many other areas of success, finding the right person for the job as coordinator, teacher, and tutor is essential.

Further information:

Western School Board: Phone: 902-888-8400 Weblink: www.edu.pe.ca/wsb
Eastern School District: Phone: 902-368-6990 Weblink: www.edu.pe.ca/esd