



U Choose to Know

Number 6

Supporting Young Parents to Reach for the Stars!

Since the 1990s, the teen birth rate has steadily been declining. However, in 2015, there were still [3,247](#) births to women under 20.¹ These students—moms and dads—who are pregnant or parenting need extra support and understanding from adults like you.

It can be hard keeping up with schoolwork, and even harder when pregnant and/or parenting. While it is true that only about 50% of young mothers graduate from high school (as opposed to 89% of women who have not had a baby²), with the support of teachers and school staff, these young people can be the best students and parents they can be. Young parents (young fathers included!) need to know that they can still meet the goals they had set for themselves before they became parents.

Many girls are told outright that they have to leave school if they become pregnant, and face many other kinds of discrimination, when in fact it is their right to receive an education just like any other student. There is a growing movement to support young parents and to avoid shaming young people. Join this movement by facilitating your class with young parents in mind:

- Never call out a student who is pregnant or parenting to share their experiences without asking them privately first. Their peers may not know that they have a child and they may not want them to know. Never make a student who is pregnant or parenting an “example”.
- Don’t assume just because young parents have engaged in sexual activity that they already know everything about sex and sexuality. Sex education is about so much more than sex! Our curriculum covers healthy relationships, negotiation skills, and reaching goals—all topics that are just as relevant to young parents as other students.



Learn more about the young parent experience:

- Check out [#noteenshame](#), a social movement by and for young parents to eradicate the stigma that affects them.
- Read [blog posts](#) by former young parents who speak about how shame impacted their experience as a young parent.
- Watch these videos of young parents sharing their experiences:
 - [Uniqwa speaks of changing relationships.](#)
 - [Alba speaks on the challenges of finding work.](#)
 - [Uniqwa on the challenges of financially supporting her son.](#)
 - [Lisette speaks on education](#)
 - [Alba speaks on education](#)

- Always assume that young parents are good parents. Young parents want to be good parents just as much as older ones, but they may need more support and encouragement to do so. Be their biggest cheerleader!
- Relationships in high school are hard, and relationships as a young parent in high school can be complicated. Be sure to spend ample time on the parts of the curriculum focused on healthy relationships.
- Know federal, state, and school statutes that could help or hinder a young parent's ability to stay in school. For example, students who are pregnant and/or parenting have a right to their education and to learn. When these students are supported, they'll reach the stars!
- Teen parents may need extra assistance with child care, housing, education completion, medical care, and parenting. Be sure the young parents you work with are connected to a school counselor or social worker to help them navigate these challenges.
- Be aware of the higher rates of sexual or physical abuse/violence before or after pregnancy. Young parents may bring these experiences with them to your classroom - thus the importance of using a trauma-informed approach in all your work with young people.

¹ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Adolescent Health. (2017). Maryland adolescent reproductive health facts. Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/facts-and-stats/national-and-state-data-sheets/adolescent-reproductive-health/maryland/index.html>

² Perper, K., Peterson, K., & Manlove, J. (2010, January). Child Trends fact sheet: Diploma attainment among young mothers. Retrieved from https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/child_trends-2010_01_22_FS_diplomaattainment.pdf



For more information, visit uchoosebaltimore.org.

Resources

- The Family and Youth Services Bureau has an excellent [tip sheet](#) on working with young parents.
- [This resource](#) from the American Civil Liberties Union outlines the education rights of young people.
- [Pregnantsurvivors.org](#) provides [great tips](#) for working with teen parents who may be victims of trauma.
- Check out how New Mexico and California [established a day of recognition just for teen parents!](#)
- Learn more about how to support young fathers with [this resource from Healthy Teen Network](#).
- The National Women's Law Center outlines how [young parents need support, not shame](#).

