Meeting the challenge: pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers identify conditions in school for successful learning.

Deborah J. Black

University of Massachusetts Amherst

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MEETING THE CHALLENGE:
PREGNANT TEENAGERS AND TEENAGE MOTHERS IDENTIFY
CONDITIONS IN SCHOOL FOR SUCCESSFUL LEARNING

A Dissertation Presented

by

DEBORAH J. BLACK

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1997

School of Education
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I am grateful to the young courageous women who volunteered to participate in this study and shared their stories of the many challenges they face while balancing the demands of school and parenthood.

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ABSTRACT

MEETING THE CHALLENGE:
PREGNANT TEENAGERS AND TEENAGE MOTHERS IDENTIFY CONDITIONS IN SCHOOL FOR SUCCESSFUL LEARNING
MAY 1997
DEBORAH J. BLACK, B.S., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST
M.Ed., SMITH COLLEGE
Ed.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST
Directed by: Professor Robert L. Sinclair

This study is an inquiry into the school life of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers. The purpose of the study is to gain insight into conditions that exist in schools that make it possible for pregnant and parenting teenagers to be successful learners in school. An additional purpose is to gain insight into the difficulties pregnant and parenting mothers face that hinder their school success.

Four research questions guide this study:

Research Question 1: What conditions in schools do teenagers report make it possible for them to be successful learners in school once they become pregnant?

Research Question 2: What conditions in school do teenage mothers report make it possible for them to become successful learners in school once they have a baby?
Research Question 3: What do teenagers report as the major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they are pregnant?

Research Question 4: What do teenage mothers report as the major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they have a baby?

This study employs qualitative research methods. Twenty-one participants across the United States were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed verbatim then rewritten as narrative profiles. Each profile was searched for data that answered the four research questions. An open-coding strategy was used to identify themes in each narrative profile, and then across profiles that emerged for each research question.

Three themes emerged on conditions in school that support learning: Social/Emotional Support, School Programs, Practices and Policies and Characteristics of Self. The mirrored opposite of these themes emerged as themes that hinder learning. In addition, three themes that hinder learning outside of school emerged: Lack of Social and Emotional Support Outside of School, Life Circumstances and Time. The challenges and support individual school settings create are complex because of the many variables that effect how the individual and the learning environment interact. Striking diversity, as well as common perceptions about the conditions that support and hinder success in school were evident in the findings.
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CHAPTER 1
NATURE OF THE STUDY

Statement of the Problem

Public schools in a democratic society are responsible for helping all young people become informed citizens and are obligated to provide a quality education on equal terms for all students. However, for a variety of reasons, many young people are not realizing their promise in school and find themselves marginalized; on the fringes of learning. Marginal students are disconnected from the conditions for learning in school which severely limits their access to a quality education and hinders their opportunity to succeed. Many of them become underachievers, fail, or leave before completing their high school education.

One segment of the school age population that too often becomes marginal is teenage mothers. The conflicting demands of family and school make it extremely difficult for teenage mothers to continue their education in public school. Learning conditions in school are such that they often do not provide young teenage mothers with the opportunity to continue learning in school while meeting their family responsibilities.

The United States “has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy and childbirth among Western industrialized nations” (Lawson and Rhodes, 1993, p. 1). More than one million teenage girls in the United States become pregnant each year. Just over 400,000 teenagers obtain abortions, and nearly 470,000 give birth (Hayes, 1987). These numbers alone are not unprecedented
given an historical perspective of teenage pregnancy and childbearing in the United States. It is the trends in recent demographics that create the “crisis” and debate over the real problem of teenage pregnancy and childbearing. Lawson and Rhode (1993) present the following demographic picture:

Among the general public, the problem of adolescent pregnancy appears self-evident, given the recent demographic trends. In the United States 45 percent of all female teenagers have premarital sex, an increase of 15 percent over the past decade. Most are not consistent contraceptive users. As a result, about 40 percent of all female adolescents become pregnant at least once before the age of 20, and about four-fifths of these pregnancies are unintended. Twenty percent of female adolescents bear a child, about half of these mothers are unmarried, and less than five percent give the baby up for adoption. In families headed by 15-21 year old females, more than four-fifths of children are poor; where the head of household is a young male, the proportion of poor children is about a third (1993, p. 2).

Teenagers of all ages, across race, ethnic, and socioeconomic background are represented in these demographic trends (Lawson and Rhode, 1993). Musick suggests the issue is not the phenomenon of teenage motherhood, but the issue of being a teenage mother “at this time" and “in this place” (1993, p. 7 ). She writes: “When an adolescent girl does motherhood in the ways young mothers do it today, it generally means that she is not doing other things, things that must be done in order to survive and succeed and to insure the adequate development of her children.” (1993, p. 7)

Completing an education is one of the many challenges that may not be met once a teenager is pregnant or becomes a mother. When research indicates that early childbearing is a significant antecedent to dropping out of
school (Prater, 1992; Prater, 1991; Prater, 1990; Turner et al., 1990; Hofferth and Hayes, 1987; Mott and Marsiglio, 1985; Furstenburg, 1976), this means a sizable population of students are potentially at risk of not benefiting from experiences provided in our schools.

Whether variables associated with teenage parenting cause failure and dropout or whether teenage pregnancy and parenting are the result of alienation from school can be debated. Whatever variables precede the failure of teenage mothers, the problem exists that many teenage mothers are not succeeding in school or continuing their education. While some public schools have support programs in place for this population and are discovering ways to help some individuals remain in school, schools need to continue to explore why pregnant and parenting teenage mothers are not successful learners in school and how they can be helped to remain in school to continue their education.

**Purpose of the Study**

Schools have a responsibility to respond to the growing number of students who are faced with the strain and challenges of being teenage mothers. Initially, this requires that schools have an understanding of the problems that face pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers and the conditions that allow them to continue their schooling. Many schools have made a commitment to helping this population continue their education and have designed programs to assist their needs. We can learn a lot from the young women who participate in these programs and are managing to
balance the demands of parenting and completing a high school degree. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into current conditions that exist in schools that make it possible for pregnant and parenting mothers to become successful learners in school. An additional purpose of this study is to gain insight into the difficulties pregnant and parenting mothers face that hinder their public school education.

Four research questions guide this study:

Research Question 1: What conditions in schools do teenagers report make it possible for them to be successful learners in school once they become pregnant?

Research Question 2: What conditions in school do teenage mothers report make it possible for them to become successful learners in school once they have a baby?

Research Question 3: What do teenagers report as the major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they are pregnant?

Research Question 4: What do teenage mothers report as the major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they have a baby?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are given to clarify specific terms used in this study.

A CHILDBEARING TEENAGER is a young woman between the ages of 13 - 19 who is a childbearing student in a public school.
CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING in school are planned and unplanned learning experiences that take place in the school environment. It is both the external environment conditions for learning and the student’s perceptions of these conditions. Conditions for learning refer to the interaction between the learner and the external conditions in the environment to which the student can react (Tyler, 1949). They include the physical, social, and intellectual conditions that influence the behavior of individuals (Sinclair and Ghory, 1987).

A SUCCESSFUL LEARNER is able to capitalize on educational opportunities that foster development of skills and competencies provided by the school. Being a successful learner in school implies a harmonious relationship with educational conditions that are planned to promote learning.

CONDITIONS THAT HINDER LEARNING IN SCHOOL are situations and circumstances that limit access to learning.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it addresses an “at-risk” population whose problems are of great magnitude and merit serious and sustained attention of society today. In the past decade teen pregnancy and parenting has gained national attention because of public concern and perceptions of the economic, health, social and political problems created.
Pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers remain a population at risk of dropping out of schools which suggests that public school programs are not meeting the specific needs of this population. Before curriculum can be designed to service this at-risk population of youth, schools first need to discover why teenage mothers are not successful learners in school and how they can be helped to remain in school to continue their education. In order to design curriculum in school to meet the needs of individuals, information and knowledge about the individual is imperative. Instead of focusing on the outcome of all participants in a particular program, this research can provide knowledge and information about the individual learner, in this case the pregnant and/or parenting teenage mother is the valued source of knowledge. Pregnant and parenting teenagers can provide insight on ways they utilize school programs to help them in the context of their own complex set of circumstances. Information gathered in this research will provide various perceptions of pregnant and parenting mothers on conditions in school that help them become successful learners in school and conditions in school that hinder them from being successful learners. This research will provide information and knowledge that can shed light on objectives for renewed school curriculum for this target population. Furthermore, this study is important because it examines a segment of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers who are able to overcome the odds of school failure. It is important to have an understanding of how some teenage mothers do well in school in order to gain insights as to how to help teen mothers who are not succeeding in school. Findings from this study
may help those who work with this population reframe their perceptions on the many aspects of teenage mothers’ lives.

**Delimitations of the Study**

This study rests on two underlying premises. One, schools in a democratic society have an obligation to provide quality education on equal terms to all students to insure opportunities for wide participation in society. Two, curriculum in schools can not be intelligently designed without accurate knowledge about the students. Philosophy is necessary to guide judgments about school curriculum, but certain information and knowledge about the learner provide an intelligent basis for decisions about curriculum objectives (Tyler, 1949). It is assumed that this research can provide data that can be used to reexamine existing school curriculum for this target population and add to data that may give direction for school renewal.

This study arises from a growing need to discover ways to provide services to a population of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers who are at risk of not succeeding in school. While it is important to find ways to support teenage fathers who are at risk of not succeeding in school, this study focuses on pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers who are in school. Furthermore, the major inquiry of this study is directed to the perceptions of the pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers who remain in school and the identification of those factors that contribute to, or hinder their success in learning. The participants in this study are pregnant and/or parenting teenage mothers who are currently enrolled in a public school in which there
is a program designed to assist with their needs. Thus, all the schools from which the participant pool is drawn has made a commitment to helping this population remain in school. By selecting schools in which supports are in place to facilitate success for this population, elements of specific programs may be identified as factors that hinder and/or facilitate success in learning. Caution should be taken not to generalize these findings to other school programs. Caution should also be taken not to generalize the results of this study to populations of teenage mothers, but rather, this study provides a better understanding of the diversity of life courses of these young women and how they navigate successfully through public school.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a conceptual base to support the four research questions that guide this study. To gain insight into the difficulties that teenage mothers face that hinder their public school education, one must first understand the complexity of teenage pregnancy and motherhood in this country, at this time. To this end, the review of literature is presented in three sections. The first section will be a review of literature on the social and political context of teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood. The purpose of this section is to provide insight into the problem of teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood. An attempt is made to answer the question why teenage pregnancy and childbirth which for centuries has been a normal reproductive pattern in many cultures is problematic today.

The second section explores the psychological and cognitive development, health, and social circumstances of teenage pregnancy and motherhood. The purpose of this section is to help understand the tapestry of antecedents and consequences of teenage pregnancy and motherhood.

The third section explores the concept of marginality and conditions and factors influencing success and failure in school for this specific population of teenagers. Existing school based programs for pregnant and parenting teenage mothers who are enrolled in public schools will be explored. The purpose of this section is twofold. One is to help better understand conditions that influence the success or failure of this specific
population of students in school. The second purpose is to better understand
the myriad of ways schools support this specific population of students.

The Social and Political Context of Teenage Pregnancy and Motherhood

To gain insight into the difficulties teenage mothers face that hinder
their public school education the complexity of contemporary teenage
pregnancy and teenage motherhood in this country must be understood. Our
society provides a script for teenage sexuality and childbearing. This script
varies with culture and class and there is little consensus as to what behavior
is or is not deviant. However, when the untimeliness of early pregnancy and
childbearing is judged against the white Anglo middle class standard in the
United States today, a young adolescent girl who gets pregnant and chooses to
keep her baby pays a high social and economic price (Lawson, 1993). Teenage
mothers deviate from the dominant society's norm for the ideal mother who
are according to Elise, "the right age, the right class, and mothering under the
right circumstances, which includes heterogeneous marriage." (1995, p. 56)

Teenage pregnancy is not a new social or reproductive phenomenon.
However, since the 1970's, it has been viewed as a major social problem that
warrants national attention at the state and federal level. There has been an
alarming amount of political gesturing and rhetorical initiatives to institute
social policy aimed at confronting the characterization of the problem as an
epidemic of teenage pregnancy in the United States, when in fact, there has
not been a sudden, or recent epidemic of teenagers having children. Teenage
pregnancy rates were no higher in the 1970's than the 1950's and teenage
birthrates in the United States are lower by almost fifty percent today than in
the 1950's. According to Testa, "in both absolute and proportional terms,
there were more babies born to adolescents before the so-called epidemic of
teenage pregnancy than after." (1992, p. 4) A recent report by the Center of
Disease Control and Prevention indicates teen birth rate has dropped eight
percent since 1991 (Kranz, 1996).

Historically, the frequency of teenage childbirth has varied considerably
over time and with culture in America. Current levels certainly are not
unprecedented. The furor about teenage pregnancy and childbearing in our
country today has more to do with the demographic context in which these
births occur than the rate of birth. Demographics alone do not present the
story of teenage pregnancy, but provide a backdrop for understanding why it
has become an issue of morality, fertility and poverty and is viewed as a
major social problem in our country today.

Before the 1970's, early parenthood was not considered an ethical issue
because even in the youngest of mothers, fourteen and younger, parenthood
occurred within the confines of marriage (Testa, 1992). Without regard to
how healthy a marriage might be, or the timeliness of marriage, children
were born in wedlock. However, the opportunity for alternative career paths
for women in the 1960's lead to an increase in the number of women
attending college between the ages of eighteen and nineteen, and fewer
women of that age were marrying (Testa, 1992). In the 1970's postponement
of marriage and school completion extended the teenage years and the
transition into adulthood. Public attitude against premarital sex eased and an
increase in premarital sexual activity was reported. With postponement of
marriage until later years, and an increase in premarital sex, there was an increase in premarital pregnancies (Testa, 1992). Also, according to Testa, "in 1960, about fifteen percent of all births to teenagers were to unmarried mothers. A decade later, it had doubled to thirty percent; by 1985, it had doubled again to nearly sixty percent. As of 1989, sixty-seven percent of teenage mothers were unwed when they gave birth. Out of wedlock childbearing became the model experience for teenage parents during the 1980's." (1992, p. 6) The timeliness of teenage pregnancy is out of sync with the acceptable circumstances under which a woman should have a child according to certain norms and values laid down by the dominant society.

The socio-economic background of teenage parents draws concern and attention to this population. A large proportion of teenage mothers are poor. In 1988, nearly 60 percent of women receiving AFDC (Aid To Families with Dependent Children) assistance were nineteen years old or younger at the birth of their first child (Moore, 1991) and many of these young mothers will be or are long term welfare dependents. Considering these findings, adolescent welfare recipients have become a target for reduction in welfare spending. The prevalence of poverty among teenage mothers makes teenage pregnancy an issue of poverty.

The question of whether early pregnancy is socially or developmentally appropriate varies among cultural groups, social class, and even communities within the United States. Norms and values within social groups determine when it is appropriate for a woman to have a child and thereby determine in part, a young woman's life course. The rate of teenage pregnancy and
childbirth among different racial groups and socio-economic class varies. Rhodes and Lawson summarizes these findings:

Rates of adolescent premarital sexual activity are substantially higher among blacks than among Hispanics or whites, particularly when measured among teenagers under 18. Blacks and Hispanics teenagers are also less likely than whites either to use contraception consistently or to have abortions. As a consequence, the rate of adolescent childbearing among blacks is almost two-and-a-half times higher than among whites, and among Hispanic teenagers, it is about twice as high as among whites. By the time they turn 18, about 7 percent of all whites, 14 percent of all Hispanics, and 26 percent of all black women have given birth. Substantial variations in marriage rates are also apparent: about 90 percent of blacks, 52 percent of Hispanics and 45 percent of white adolescent mothers are single at the time of childbirth. Teenagers from economically disadvantaged backgrounds have significantly higher rates of pregnancy, and early parenthood is associated with a range of poverty-related problems. (1993, P. 5)

Hamburg & Dixon (1992) suggest that among low income black adolescents, early childbearing may be functional. The social and cultural environments in which these young adolescent come of age may make early childbearing a sensible choice. Delaying marriage, completing college studies and postponing parenthood, a prescriptions for achieving prestige and status for the dominant culture becomes the normative standard by which the deviant behavior of early pregnant and motherhood are judged. For many adolescents in our society it may not be a viable life course.

The large difference between pregnancy rate among blacks and whites in the United States is summarized by Gibbs:

In 1989, black females accounted for 15.8 percent of the adolescent female population but were responsible for 30.4 percent of all teenage births. By age eighteen, 26 percent of black
females have given birth and 40 percent have a child before age twenty (Children's Defense Fund, 1988). Black teenagers also account for 39 percent of all repeat births to adolescent mothers. Black teenage birthrates are twice as high as white rates, and black teenage mothers are 60 percent more likely than their white counterparts to be unmarried (92% vs. 56%) (National Center for Health Statistics, 1991) (Gibbs, 1992, p. 72).

Gibbs suggests that the difference among birthrates between whites and blacks can not be explained solely by the rate of sexual activity, "but appears to be the result of different patterns of sexual behavior, contraceptive use and childbearing decisions." (1992, p. 72) Elise (1995) suggests that the Eurocentric view of teenage pregnancy presented in the media, academe and social policy does not provide us with the perspectives that may differ from this view. This notion has implications for designing effective sex education and pregnancy prevention programs for teenagers. Testa reminds us that, "Improved sex education and access to contraceptives and abortions are effective pregnancy prevention and birth control, but only if pregnancies are unintended." (1992, p. 15)

The problem of teenage pregnancy is viewed differently among the people of our nation. At the risk of oversimplifying the political and social persuasions of various groups, there are two dominant positions on the problem of teenage pregnancy (Pearce, 1993). One position considers inappropriate sexual behavior as the root of the problem. The second position rests on the premise that teenagers should not be having babies and promote responsible sexual behavior. Both positions carry a substantial constituency of people who view the problem of teenage pregnancy and teenage
motherhood; the issues of morality, poverty and fertility, from two different, often opposing perspectives. An overview of these two opposing perspectives show why there is a no consensus on the definition of the problem of teenage pregnancy and early motherhood, on who is responsible for the problem or on what society should do about the problem.

The first position considers inappropriate sexual behavior to be the root of the problem. The phrase *children having children* provides one powerful image of the problem of teenage pregnancy and evokes a great deal of public concern and sympathy. However, it does little to empower young mothers to become responsible adults and parents. In fact, it may work against the goal of helping young mothers become self-reliant and independent. This image is fundamental to this position on the problem of teenage pregnancy and childbearing. Those who embrace the perspective of teenage mothers having children as *children having children* do not view the teenage mother as an adult. Rather, the underlying premise of this view is that single teenagers should not be having sex because sex is an adult behavior. The issue is not about providing contraception, but preventing too early sexual activity. Adherents to this concept see the major focus of any intervention or solution to the problem as figuring out ways to prevent teenagers from becoming sexually active; action is predominantly directed toward women and their inappropriate behavior. The problem is further defined as inappropriate behavior that leads to undesirable circumstances such as single parenting, welfare dependency, and long term costs to society. The whole issue of teenage pregnancy is centered around fiscal concerns and the lack of moral standards.
The second dominant perspective rests on the premise that teenagers should not be having babies and an emphasis is placed on the promotion of responsible sexual behavior in teens. Proponents of this viewpoint suggest that teens are old enough to engage in sex, an adult behavior, but the problem, in part, is a lack of responsible adult sexual behavior. They support school based clinics because they believe they help promote responsible adult sexual behavior and responsible parenting. Emphasis is on the importance of helping teenagers make responsible choices in their lives and affirming women who choose to be sexually active and take responsibility for their actions. Concerns of health for both the young mother and her child(ren), medical risks, and developmental issues for the child are stressed. The socio-economic status and future of the young family is also a focus, with an emphasis on education.

Definition of the problem remains limited to the often narrow perspective of these two groups. Political debate over what the problem is, who is responsible, and what to do about the problem often evades the problem itself; that being, what are the needs and responsibilities of the pregnant and parenting teenagers involved?

Rhodes suggests there are layers of complexity in addressing the problem of teenage pregnancy and parenthood:

At the ideological level, the problem in formulating policy lies in cultural conflict about sexual expression, family authority, and reproductive choice. At the material level, the problem reflects an unwillingness to translate societal concerns into financial commitments and to invest in the necessary research and support structures for populations at risk. (1993, p. 316)
Regardless of the particular political and social position from which the problem of teenage pregnancy is defined, pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers remain a population at risk. After nearly two decades of effort to prevent teenage pregnancy through political and social policy, the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy and early parenthood has not gone away.

**Health, Psychological and Cognitive Development, and Social Change**

The problems associated with early childbearing and early motherhood are complex and intimately interrelated. It is often unclear what life circumstances are the result of, or consequence of early childbearing.

Adolescence is a time marked by rapid physiological growth, cognitive development and social change. It is a dynamic period in the life cycle that is often accompanied with confusion. When adolescence occurs simultaneously with parenthood, it creates a developmental challenge that may be wrought with conflict. The needs of individuals trying to master two steps of development at once; adolescence and parenthood, are often in conflict. This conflict may result in compromising one developmental stage or the other (Prater, 1995).

Each year many adolescents will make an abrupt transition into adulthood and will take on the responsibility of parenthood. While the effects of leaving adolescence prematurely for motherhood is not completely understood such an abrupt transition may result in missed adolescent experiences that are important for developmental growth.
A number of studies claim that poor self-concept is prevalent among pregnant teenagers. (Protinski, Sporakowski & Atkins, 1982; Patten, 1981; Connolly, 1975; Roberts, 1966). Patten (1981) suggests that teenagers who become pregnant have lower self-esteem and may engage in self-devaluation. Another study found that early pregnancy is often associated with a feeling of estrangement and shame (Protinski, Sporakowski & Atkins, 1982) and social isolation (Roberts, 1966). Often these young women feel they do not have control of their lives and are at the mercy of fate and circumstantial chance (Connolly, 1975).

Mothers fourteen years of age and younger may be less capable of coping with the demands of the conflicting role of an adolescent and parent (Hamburg & Dixon, 1993). The immaturity of their cognitive capabilities and their emotional vulnerability at this age make them more problem prone. There is a correlation between sexual and pregnancy behavior in adolescents and other risk behaviors such as poor school achievement, drug use and alcohol consumption (Hamburg & Dixon, 1993).

The transition from adolescent to adult is a challenge for most adolescents and may be most difficult for the young mothers. Whether early pregnancy and the transition into parenthood creates low self-concept and or whether life circumstances of these young women were factors that lead to low self-concept that resulted in early pregnancy remains inconclusive. According to Breakwell (1993), the findings of Protinski, Sporakowski & Atkins (1982), Patten (1981), Connolly (1975) and Roberts (1966) help us to better understand the precipitating factors that lead to early pregnancy, but there is less conclusive evidence on how the pregnancy actually affects self-
concept. With any developing adolescent, various interrelated factors contribute to one's overall psychological health. The personal developmental history of individuals within the context of family, social networks, peer relationships, and community institutions is an important matrix which each individual must move through as they mature into adulthood.

A sense of self-being, one's sense of self-worth, self-esteem and self-image are developed in relation to life circumstances. Musick (1993) suggests that the subjective sense of self is "constructed over the course of development through transitions between changing capacities, changing personal relationships and changing socialization experiences." (1993, p. 48) Musick points out regardless of adolescent pregnancy, early adolescence is a transitional period for the developing self that is often marked with a drop in self-esteem.

The early adolescent years are a key transitional period for the developing self. As new intellectual abilities emerge and physical transformations occur, the girl's expectations of others and their behavior toward her will change as well. In concert, these shifts act to alter the adolescent's sense of who she is and what she can and cannot do. Building on earlier self-concepts, they help to shape and reshape key facets of her self....When the girl's past and current life experiences combine to lead to a distorted or defeated sense of who she is and what she can do, the meaning she ascribes to the events of her life and the actions she takes or fails to take will reflect that distortion or defeat. The meanings are not simply the attitudes she holds; the actions are not merely spur-of-the-moment behaviors. Neither are wholly reactions to the pressures and lack of options in her environments. They have a deeper and more complex history in the development of her self and its adaptations to her environments. (Musick, 1993, p. 48-49)
There are subgroups of young mothers at greater risk of poorer outcomes because of complex interrelated socio-economic factors that influence social, physical and cognitive development. The high incidence of school failure, at-risk behaviors such as alcohol consumption and drug use, poverty and unemployment associated with teenage pregnancy has often been viewed as the consequences of early childbearing. These factors may in fact be antecedents of early childbearing (Brindis, 1993). Brindis argues that "attention needs to be paid to women's social circumstances, and to the poverty, that in fact is the major predictor of adverse life outcomes." (1993, p. 258)

Although the social and psychological consequences of early motherhood are inconclusive, the medical implications for teenage mothers and their children are better understood. Certain medical conditions are associated with teenage pregnancy such as excessive weight gain, maternal mortality, anemia, nutritional deficiencies, toxemia, prolonged or abrupt labor and Cesarean sections are all associated with teen pregnancy (Hamburg, 1986). Also cephopelvic disproportion, which may result in Cesarean section, hypertension, abruptio placentae, urinary track infection and difficult or premature labor (Hudson, Ineichen, 1991). Furthermore, the earlier young girls engage in sexual relationships, the greater the likelihood of negative medical consequences such as sexually transmitted diseases and their side effects such as cervical cancer, infertility, ectopic pregnancy and infection passed on to the unborn, AIDS being the most life threatening (Dryfoos, 1990).

There are high risk outcomes for the babies of teenage mothers which include low birth weight and prematurity. Many medical risks associated
with teen pregnancy are not the result of medical complications per se, but the socio-economic conditions that lead to poor prenatal care and nutrition, and life style behaviors such as smoking, drugs and alcohol that are known to be life threatening during pregnancy (Hudson & Ineichen, 1991).

Whether low birth rate and prematurity are due to conditions associated with the socio-demographic environment or whether the biologic immaturity of the mother is the cause is still unclear (New England Journal of Medicine, 1995). However, a recent study of mothers, ages 13 - 25, of middle class white background, indicated that young age was associated with an increase in at-risk pregnancy outcomes even when socio-demographic confounding teenage pregnancy were not contributing factors. In this study the overall incidence of low birth rate, premature infants and small-for-gestational-age infants was highest among the youngest mothers and lowest with mothers between the ages of 20-24. However, in all groups in which babies born to women who were not married, had not received adequate prenatal care and who did not have age-appropriate education, there was an increase risk of all three adverse outcomes. Since teenage pregnancy occurs in socio-economic environments that adversely affect pregnancy outcomes, the incident of low birth weight, premature infants and small-for gestational-age infants is prevalent among teenage mothers (New England Journal of Medicine, 1995).

Other abnormalities in infants born to teenagers are congenital malformations, neurological defects, perinatal mortality and childhood growth failure (Hamburg, 1986). Furthermore, babies born to teen mothers are more likely to die in their first year of life than babies born to mothers in
their twenties (Garn, Pesick, & Petzold, 1986). Babies born to teenage mothers are also more likely to have physical disadvantages such as central nervous system anomalies, circulatory/respiratory anomalies, gastrointestinal anomalies, urogenital anomalies and musculoskeletal/integumental anomalies, than baby's born to older mothers (Schmittroth, 1994; Turner et al., 1990; Wasserman et al., 1990). Many of these babies with physical and mental health problems are going home to mothers who do not have the emotionally, financially and educational resources to care for these children.

**Academic Failure and Teenage Pregnancy**

The circumstances that lead to school failure and school drop out are complex. There is no single etiology for school failure among young school aged mothers. Although it has long been thought that students drop out of school when they become pregnant, many girls drop out of school before they become pregnant. Twenty-eight percent of the women in the national High School and Beyond Study who had left school and had a baby left school before conception (Pittman, 1986, cited in Brindis, 1993, p. 258). One determinant of educational attainment of young women who become pregnant or are mothers, is whether or not they were in school at the time of pregnancy. Although early childbearing significantly reduces the likelihood of school continuation, school graduation rate of teen mothers who gave birth while they were still in school were higher than graduation rates of teen

Regardless of whether teenage pregnancy and parenting cause failure in school or whether pregnancy and parenting are the result of alienation from school, research consistently reports that pregnancy interrupts education and hinders schooling (Prater, 1992; Prater, 1991; Prater, 1990; Turner et al., 1990; Hofferth & Hayes, 1987; Mott & Marsiglio, 1985; Furstenberg, 1976). The strong correlation between teenage pregnancy and school failure indicates that a sizable portion of this population becomes marginal; they are disconnected from the conditions for learning in school which severely limits their access to an education and hinders their opportunity to succeed. Many of them are underachievers, fail, or leave before completing their high school education.

Sinclair and Ghory suggests that curriculum be conceptualized as learning environments. Curriculum then consists of both the external environmental conditions for learning; the social, intellectual and physical conditions in school that influence the behavior of individuals and the student's perceptions of those conditions (1987, p. 88). Marginality occurs when there is a mix-match between the student and the environment for learning in school. This mix-match can take place at any or all three dimensions of curriculum identified by Sinclair and Ghory (1987). It can occur at the expressed dimension of curriculum; the preplanned curriculum that includes the scope and sequence of a program, the learning objectives and assessment for learning. It can occur at the implied dimension of curriculum; the unintentional messages conveyed through programs,
policies and practices. Or the mix-match between the learner and the environment for learning can occur at the emergent dimension of curriculum; the adaptations and adjustments of these programs, policies and practices in response to the needs of the students. Marginality is a complex two-sided phenomenon created by conditions in school that are unresponsive to individual needs and the students' behavior in response to such conditions. The degree of marginality created is dynamic. Sinclair & Ghory remind us that "students can be marginal in as many ways as they can experience unproductive dimensions of an educational environment." (1987, p. 16)

Students are more likely to disengage from learning when norms and values at home and in the community are inconsistent with expectations at school. When dissonance between the culture and learning patterns at home and school exist, this creates a school environment that limits optimal student learning. When this occurs, schools mistakenly convey the message that some students can not be successful in school and they, therefore, do not belong in school. Students may also become marginal when they do not see the tasks performed in school as relevant to the ambitions and goals in their own life or they feel their own opportunities in life are restricted, and their aspirations not attainable. These conditions create frustration and students disengage with the tasks of day to day life in school.

Literature suggests that there are many interrelated variables that contribute to the marginalization of teenage mothers. One variable is the low academic achievement of individuals. In the High School and Beyond Study data indicates that in addition to the perception that school was irrelevant to
the students' needs, a principle reason for dropping out of school was the students' own poor academic achievement (Pittman, 1986 cited in Brindis, 1993). In this study white, black and Hispanic sophomores in the lowest third of the class were twice as likely to become parents by their senior year than higher academic achievers. These findings were consistent with data from the Longitudinal Survey of Youth which found that female participants in the bottom 20 percent in basic reading and math skills were five times more likely to become mothers in two years than the female students in the upper twenty percent (Pittman, 1986 cited in Brindis, 1993). Data from Rauch-Elnekave study (1994) suggests that unidentified and untreated learning difficulties may be a factor that is "common to both becoming pregnant, deciding to raise one's child and to dropping out of school." (p. 102)

Another variable that is thought to contribute to the marginalization of teenage mothers is household formation. There is a strong relationship between dropping out of school and independent household formation (Hamburg & Dixon, 1992). Teenage mothers who moved away from their parental home were three times as likely to drop out of school than those adolescent moms who remained at home. Living in parental households enable many young mothers to stay in school (Furstenberg et al., 1987; Vandanoff & Donnelly, 1990). This suggests that separation from home attenuates needed parental support and child care needs. The demands and responsibilities of setting up an independent household while trying to complete high school creates too great a challenge for many. Living with adult kin may enable young mothers to stay in school while those who live
in independent nuclear households may be more responsible for child care and have to forego education.

Race and ethnicity play a significant role in the living arrangement of young mothers. The difference among life course paths has been linked to transition and adaptation to early parenthood. Data from Hamburg's and Dixon's research (1992) indicate that Blacks were more likely to remain in the parental home and continue with their schooling and delay marriage, while Hispanic and white respondents in this study were more likely to leave the parental home, drop out of school and marry. Age is also a factor related to departure from the parental household (Goldscheider & DaVanzo, 1985; Scheirer, 1983). Younger teenage mothers are less likely to be financially and socially independent and may not have the means for establishing their own independent household.

Other variables that have been linked with an increased likelihood of school drop out across racial groups, is the educational attainment of the teenager's mother and her own educational aspirations. A teenager whose mother only had an 8th grade education or less, was more likely to leave school. Teenagers who aspired to go on to college were more likely to finish high school (Testa, 1992, p. 103).

The literature on how educational policies and practices contribute to the high rate of teenage motherhood has been limited to how dropping out affects the likelihood of a girl becoming pregnant, how pregnancy affects the probability of dropping out, and the relationship between educational aspirations and pregnancy (Moore, Simms & Betsey, 1986). As with any other school aged population, the overall social, psychological and physical
wellness of the pregnant teenager and the teenage mother and the circumstances in which pregnancy and child rearing take place contribute to the likelihood of their success or failure in school. While the literature on teenage pregnancy and school failure examines the variables and life conditions outside of school, there is a need for more understanding on how the policies and practices that create conditions for learning in school contribute to school failure for this specific population.

School Programs for Pregnant and Parenting Teenage Mothers

Some schools have established programs to address teenage pregnancy and teenage parenthood in an effort to prevent school failure for this population. The focus of many of these programs has been on pregnancy prevention. Two programmatic interventions for preventing pregnancy in sex education programs are presented in schools; abstinence or responsible and informed sexual behavior. Little attention is paid to the evaluation of these programs (Dryfoos, 1990) and for this reason understanding of what works in these programs is limited. Vital statistics and self-reports of programs have been used to measure the success of various programs, but the reliability of self-reports have been questioned. Dryfoos (1990) measured successful prevention programs using the following criteria: whether the participants were sexually active, the percent of participants using a method of contraception, reduction of unintended pregnancy, abortion and reduction in early birth (Dryfoos, 1990, p. 177).
While there are many health/sex education programs in schools designed to prevent teenage pregnancy, in this section programs that focus on support services for teenagers once they become pregnant and/or have a child will be emphasized.

There are many programs aimed at assisting pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers and their children. These school programs provide assistance that enable them to continue their education. In some communities, schools and local agencies have joined services to support this group. Such multi-component/multi agency programs designed to help pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers succeed in school vary with the services they offer, the location of the services and funding for the services.

Programs available to teenage mothers vary. In some cases, they are comprehensive and are integrated with services provided by local agencies. Others are located in the mainstream high school settings, while some programs are located in magnet schools and are off the high school campus.

In general, a survey of services available to students in different school programs for pregnant teenage students and teenage mothers who are students may include any or all of the following components:

Vocational and Marketable Skills Training/ Employment Services

Students are given the opportunity to participate in marketable skills training. This may include, but are not limited to the following, depending on the school program: career counseling and opportunities to receive training in vocations such as cosmetology, construction, teaching, criminal
justice, health occupation, computer technology, home economics, business and marketing, accounting and machine trades. In addition to vocational training, some programs offer job placement support for summer and part time employment

Support Services

Support services refer to non-academic services other than medical services that assist pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers (and fathers in some cases) so she can continue her education while pregnant and or while parenting. These services include, but may not be limited to the following:

*Child care program that may or may not be on the school campus. Child care services may include care for infants and toddlers up to age four. In some programs students are involved in child care classes and child development classes and have an opportunity to work in the child care programs under supervision.

*Transportation for teen mothers and their children to and from school. In some cases emergency taxi services for students to attend to medical needs and other emergencies.

*Counseling services for the teen mother, father and the child. On site social workers are available. This may include agency referral for other
support services. Substance abuse intervention may also be a service available.

*For young parents who are experiencing financial difficulty, in addition to government support such as AFDC and WIC, teen mothers enrolled in school can participate in the Federal free lunch program. Some school programs offer reduced or free school supplies and emergency diapers and formula on an individual basis when necessary.

Health Care Services

These services are varied, but might include any of the following assistance:

* pre-and-postnatal health services
* health instruction for parenting and for pregnancy prevention
* monitoring of immunization
* medical prescriptions
* CPR and basic first aid training.

Programmatic and Academic Support Services

Programmatic and academic support services are varied and may include any of the following assistance:

* Open enrollment throughout the year for students integrated in the mainstream high school
* Full access to all programs offered in the high school
*English-Second-Language tutoring and instruction

*Special Education which may include basic skill instruction

*Tutoring by peers, parent volunteer, specialists in school, teachers

*Post-partum home instruction (homebound programs that give time off from school (time varies) and provides a home tutor to help mothers stay on top of school work

*Summer school scholarship.

Evaluation of these services based on such outcomes as repeat pregnancy, retention in school and employment is incomplete. Situation specific conditions of participants make it difficult to determine the effectiveness of programs designed to assist teen parents and their children. However, Nickel and Delany (1985) found several common characteristics of effective teen parenting programs:

1. A full range of comprehensive services under the same roof, including education, job preparation, and parenting education.

2. Long term support

3. Assertive outreach to encourage participation

4. Involvement of significant others, such as partners and family

5. Staff that can offer strong emotional support

6. Integration of pregnancy prevention programs

(Nickel & Delany cited in Dryfoos, 1990, p. 189)

The evaluation outcome data for several promising programs has yet to be produced. However, understanding what works in successful program
models has helped guide the development of other potentially successful programs.

**Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a conceptual base to support the four research questions that guide this study. The literature suggests there are many interrelated situation specific circumstances that influence the teenagers social/emotional and physical well-being which ultimately has an impact on the success of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in school. While pregnancy and early childbearing takes place in situation specific life circumstances, there are common problems associated with teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood.

Teenage pregnancy is considered a major problem in the United States and young women are victimized by the politicization of sexual issues. When timeliness of teenage pregnancy is out of sync with the acceptable circumstances under which a woman should have a child according to certain norms and values laid down by the dominant society, she and her child pay a high social and economic price.

Teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood is viewed as a social problem because of the demographic context in which it occurs today. Since the seventies, teenage pregnancy and early childbirth has been viewed as an issue of poverty, morality and fertility. Political gesturing and rhetorical initiatives to institute social policies have been made by two dominant social persuasions. One position considers inappropriate sexual behavior as the
root of the problem. The second position rests on the premise that teenagers should not be having babies and promote responsible sexual behavior. Regardless of these persuasions, teenagers of all ages, race, ethnic group and socio-economic backgrounds continue to have children and many face economic, social/emotional and health problems that ultimate affect educational attainment.

The socio-economic circumstances in which teenage pregnancy occurs varies. However, in families headed by 15-to-20 year-old females, more than four-fifths of the children are poor (Lawson & Rhode, 1993). The cycle of poverty is prevalent among teenage mothers who come from low socio-economic backgrounds, are single and from a minority group. Brindis (1993) argues that "attention needs to be paid to women's social circumstances, and to the poverty, that in fact is the major predictor of adverse life outcomes." (p. 258)

When adolescence occurs simultaneously with parenthood, it means the individual is trying to master two developmental stages at one time. This creates a developmental challenge that may be wrought with conflict. While adolescence is a time marked with a drop in self-esteem (Musick, 1993), it is common among pregnant and parenting teenagers. The transition from adolescent to adult is a challenge for most adolescents and may be more difficult for young mothers. Whether early pregnancy and the transition into parenthood creates low self-concept and low-self esteem and/or whether life circumstances of these young women are factors that lead to low self-concept and low self-esteem which resulted in early pregnancy remains inconclusive.
However, the prevalence of low self-esteem and low self-concept may have implications for school success.

Certain medical conditions are associated with teenage pregnancy as well as high risk outcomes for the babies of teenage mothers. Many of these risks are not the result of medical complications per se, but the socio-economic conditions that lead to poor prenatal care and nutrition, and lifestyle behaviors. Many babies born to teen mothers with medical health problems are going home with mothers who do not have the financial, emotional and educational resources to care for them.

The literature on how educational policies and practices contribute to the high rate of teenage motherhood has been limited to how dropping out of school affects the likelihood of a girl becoming pregnant, how pregnancy affects the probability of dropping out, and the relationship between educational aspirations and pregnancy (Moore, Simms & Betsey, 1986). There is need for more understanding on how the policies and practices that create conditions for learning in school contribute to school failure for this specific population.

There are many school programs aimed at assisting pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers and their children. Because of the complexity of their needs, a myriad of services need to be provided in order for them to complete their schooling. Some schools provide these services.

School programs available to pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers vary. A survey of programs reveal a number of services. In general these services included, but were not limited to: vocational and marketable skills training and employment; child care for children of students and relevant
courses in human development and child care. Transportation to and from school for the mother and baby, as well as transportation to doctors was provided in many school programs. Counseling services which included but was not limited to drug and alcohol intervention. Programmatic and academic support services were also available in many of the programs. This includes open enrollment year round in a mainstream high school, English-second-language support, tutoring and instruction, special education services and post-partum home instruction. Many school programs had multi-agency health care services. These services included; pre-and-postnatal health care, health instruction for parenting and pregnancy prevention, monitoring of immunization for babies, medical prescriptions and CPR and first aid training.

Situation specific life conditions of participants make it difficult to determine the effectiveness of these programs. However, Nickel and Delany (1985) identified some common characteristics of effective teen parenting programs, one of which was a full range of comprehensive services under the same roof including education, job preparation, and parenting education.

To gain insight into the difficulties pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers face that hinder their public school education, one must first understand the complexity of teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood. Literature on school base support services indicate evidence of successful integration of educational, health and social services which hold promise for helping some pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers succeed in school.
CHAPTER 3
DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This study is an inquiry into the school life of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers who are balancing the demands of pregnancy and/or parenting while being successful learners in school. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to gain insight into current conditions that exist in school that make it possible for pregnant and parenting mothers to become successful learners in school. An additional purpose of this study is to gain insight into the difficulties pregnant and parenting mothers face that hinder their public school education.

Four research questions helped guide this study:

Research Question 1: What conditions in schools do teenagers report make it possible for them to be successful learners in school once they become pregnant?

Research Question 2: What conditions in school do teenage mothers report make it possible for them to become successful learners in school once they have a baby?

Research Question 3: What do teenagers report as the major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they are pregnant?

Research Question 4: What do teenage mothers report are major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they have a baby?

A qualitative research methodology was used to answer the research questions in this study. Patton's words on qualitative research speak clearly to the intent of this study. He writes:
(qualitative research) is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting - what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting..... The analysis strives for that depth of understanding. (Patton, 1985 quoted in Merriam, 1988)

A qualitative, multiple case study design was used to answer the four research questions in this study. This design allowed the researcher to explore the lives of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in school to provide a holistic understanding of their perceptions on the conditions in their individual's situation-specific lives that both allow them to be successful learners in school or hindered them from being successful learners in school.

This research aims to characterize events and phenomenon systematically and describe and explain them realistically. Four characteristics inherent in qualitative case study research made this an appropriate research design for this study. One; case studies are particularistic; a particular event, situation, program or phenomenon is being examined. Case studies “concentrate attention on the way particular groups of people confront specific problems, taking a holistic view of the situation. They are problem centered, small scale, entrepreneurial endeavors.” (Shaw, 1978, p. 2) Two; case studies are descriptive in nature. The end product is a rich description of the phenomenon under study. “Case studies use prose, and literary techniques to describe, elicit images, and analyze situations.... They present documentation of events, quotes, samples and artifacts.” (Wilson, 1979, p. 448)
Three; case studies are heuristic; "previously unknown relationships and variables can be expected to emerge from case studies leading to the rethinking of phenomenon being studied. Insights into how things get to be the way they are can be expected to result from case studies." (Stake, 1981, p. 47) Four; case studies are inductive; "generalizations, concepts and hypothesis emerge from an examination of the data - data grounded in the context itself." (Merriam, 1988, p. 13)

There are several characteristics of qualitative research predominant in case study design, that are present in this study. One; the researcher was interested in process and meaning; how certain things happen and how people make sense of their lives. Specifically, the researcher was interested in understanding the difficulties individual pregnant and parenting teenage mothers face and their perceptions on that hinders their public school education, as well as their perceptions on what current conditions exist in schools that make it possible for them to become successful learners. Two; outcomes and products were not the focus of this research. Narrative profiles written in the words of young mothers who are able to balance the demands of parenthood and succeed in school capture and portray the world as it is to them. Three; this study involved field work where the researcher went to school sites to interview pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers to investigate the phenomenon under investigation. Four; in a qualitative multiple case study, "The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Data are mediated through this human instrument, the researcher, rather than through some inanimate inventory, questionnaire, or machine." (Merriam, 1988, p. 19) The researcher was the
human instrument for collecting and analyzing data which is a characteristic of qualitative case study design.

**Procedures**

Procedures for answering the four research questions of this study are presented under the following subheadings: Data Sources, Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Validation and Verification.

**Data Sources: Selection of School Sites**

Participants for this study were selected from six schools from various locations across the United States. Schools A, B, C, D and E are members of the National Coalition for Equality in Learning. The researcher has an affiliation with these schools because of her work as a coalition staff member. The researcher has an affiliation with School F through her work at a nearby teacher's college. See Table 2 for school sites.

Two criteria were used to select six school sites from which participants were selected for this study. The first criterion was that all sites had support services in place for pregnant and parenting teenage mothers and were committed to helping young pregnant teenagers and young mothers continue their education. This commitment was expressed by the directors of the school site programs for this population of teenagers.

The second criterion used to select school sites for this study pertains to demographics. An attempt to provide variation in sampling was considered.
Collectively, the sites serve a demographically diverse population. With respect to this research criterion, eight demographics were considered when selecting sites for this study: age of teenager, age and number of children, race, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, marital status, and geographic location. It was the intent of the researcher to identify a diverse pool of participants to interview so that no singular profile of a participant could be formulated. See Tables 1-8 for participant demographics.

Data Sources: Selection of Participants

Participants from each school site were identified by the director of the support services for each school site. The director was informed of the intent of the research and was asked to identify five to seven participants, on a voluntary basis, who were pregnant and/or parenting teenagers enrolled in school and making progress toward high school graduation. The most important criteria for selecting participants for this study were that they must be pregnant and/or parenting and enrolled in school, making progress toward a high school graduation. The researcher recognized that the demands of pregnancy and parenting for teenagers are different, yet significant. To consider only the demands of pregnancy or parenting on students risks the possibility of overlooking helping and hindering conditions in school. While the intent of the researcher was to identify a demographically diverse pool of participants with regard to age of the participant, age of their children, number of children, race, ethnic background, socio-economic status and marital status, two variables influenced the final pool of participants for this
study. The directors identified a diverse pool of possible participants for this study. However, only those who volunteered for this study were interviewed, thus limiting the demographics to that of the volunteers. Two, more participants volunteered to be interviewed then there was time slots for interviews. It was anticipated by the directors that due to hectic school schedules, absence from school related to health problems, and various interruptions in the daily schedules of perspective participants, that some individuals would not be able to come to the interview on the day that the researcher was at the school. This proved to be the case. Thus, the availability of participants on the scheduled days for interviews, in part, determined the final participant pool. The two above mentioned variables influenced the final pool of participants interviewed for this study and thus the diversity of demographics were limited. These variables also limited, in part, the number of pregnant teenagers who were available for an interview.

Data Collection

The data collected for this study come from open-ended interviews which provide a framework within which participants expressed their own understandings in their own terms of the phenomenon under study. Patton notes:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe....We can not observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We can not observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We can not observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world-we have to ask people questions about those things.
The purpose of interviewing, then is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective (Patton, 1980 quoted in Merriam, 1988, p. 72)

Participants at six school sites, identified by the director of support services at each site, told their story of being pregnant or a parenting teenage mother while being successful in school in an interview conducted by the researcher. Procedures for conducting the interviews were discussed with each director of support services in a phone conversation before a site visit was arranged. A copy of the research proposal, including the purpose of the study, methodology, the interview tool to be used as a framework for the interviews, and the Interview Consent Form (see Appendix A). The researcher then arranged a site visit through the director of support services at each site.

Before conducting interviews at each site, Interview Consent Forms were obtained from all participants. If the participant was a minor, written consent from the parent(s) or legal guardian were also obtained. Interviews for this study were conducted on school premises in a private setting to help insure confidentiality.

The interviews conducted were partially structured. A list of possible questions with respect to the physical, social, and intellectual conditions that influence the behavior of individuals were explored with each participant. However, neither the order of questions, nor the exact wording of the questions were determined ahead of time. The researcher deleted and/or added questions, or modified them when and if the situation was appropriate. The rationale for this partially structured format was the assumption that each participant would have her own unique story to tell. This structure
allowed the participant and the researcher to respond to the individual interview situation and let participants' stories unfold in ways that were meaningful to the participant and insightful for the researcher. This structure also assured that the research questions were addressed in some manner in each interview.

The interview procedure used to gather information for this study are described with respect to each of the four research questions in Appendix B: Interview Tool. An open-ended question began the interview for each participant. The open-ended question according to Seidman "establishes the territory to be covered while allowing the participant to take any direction he or she wants. It does not presume an answer." (1991, p. 62) It also helped establish a climate whereby the researcher did less talking and more listening because of the nature of responses to the open-ended question presented at the beginning of each interview. In addition, for each research question, the researcher had identified questions to elicit different responses from the participants. Five of six types of questions identified by Patton (1980, quoted in Merriam, 1988, p. 78) were used to elicit responses from the participants at various points in the interview when deemed appropriate by the researcher. These types of questions are identified by Merriam as follows:

experience/behavior questions are "aimed at eliciting descriptions of experiences, behaviors, actions, and activities that would have been observable had the observer been present"(Patton, 1980, p. 207)

opinion value questions try to find out "what people think about the world or about a specific program. They tell us people's goals, intentions, desires, and values"(Patton, 1980, p. 207)
feeling questions are “aimed at understanding the emotional response of people to their experiences and thoughts” (Patton, 1980, p. 207)

knowledge questions find out what a respondent considers to be factual information regarding the research topic

background/demographic question “locate the respondent in relation to other people.” (Patton, 1980, p. 209) Age, grade and marital status are relevant to this research. (Merriam, 1988, pp. 78-79)

The interview tool was piloted with four participants from one site. The pilot interviews helped the researcher assess her technique of interviewing, such as helping interviewees explore their own words and ideas, or tactfully explore difficult and sensitive topics relative to the interview questions. Furthermore, the data collected from the piloted interviews were analyzed to determine the appropriateness of the interview tool in facilitating access to information related to the four research questions that guided this study. However, because of the nature of qualitative research and the open-ended nature of the interview tool used for this study, questions were spontaneously revised and reformulated throughout the process of data collection.

After all the interviews were conducted by the researcher, they were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber. The researcher reviewed the transcriptions of each interview to check for clarity of data collected. The interview transcriptions were then written as narrative profiles for each participant. See Appendix C for narrative profiles. The narrative profiles are written in the original words of the participants. Changes have been made in the text for clarity and readability only. Extensive repetitions, fillers (you
know, so, then) and hesitations ('umms') that interrupt understanding of the text were removed. Any editorial additions made to bring clarity and readability to the text are enclosed in brackets. The names of participants and their child(ren) have all been changed. The names of school professionals mentioned by the participant by their surname have been changed to Mr., Mrs., or Ms.. Names of other individuals mentioned in the interviews were changed to the initial of the first name only. The names of all special school programs for pregnant and parenting teenage students are referred to generically as Teen Pregnancy/Parenting Program or the Homebound Programs when it was appropriate. All other program names and locations mentioned by the participants in this study that might disclose their identity were deleted.

All the narrative profiles were sent to each site for the participants to review. The participant were given the option to address concerns about the content and clarity of their narrative. At that time the participant had the option of withdrawing from the study and/or making editorial changes to their profile.

Data Analysis

In a qualitative case study the researcher does not know what will be discovered in the data collected. Data collection and data analysis is a simultaneous process (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). It is an ongoing process from the moment data collection begins. The voluminous amount of data collected in this type of research is cumbersome and overwhelming if
ongoing reduction of data is not done systematically and simultaneously with data collections. The research questions provided a guide for ongoing data reduction in this study.

The taped interviews of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers' life in school provided the raw data for analysis in this study. The words of each participant provided the data for each narrative profile. In and of themselves, the narrative profiles became case studies and provide descriptive accounts of phenomenon under study. However, the researcher analyzed the data in each narrative in the following manner:

The narrative profiles were treated as individual case studies which were then used to present the data for this study. The data in each narrative profile was sorted with respect to the four research questions. After the data was sorted for each narrative profile, a cross-case analysis was conducted.

Data from each narrative profile was sorted according to what the participants reported about each research question:

Research Question 1: What conditions in school do teenagers report make it possible for them to become successful learners in school once they become pregnant?

Narrative profiles of participants were read by the researcher for conditions in schools that the pregnant teenager reported made it possible for them to become successful learners in school once they were pregnant. After all of the narrative profiles were searched for evidence of conditions in school that allowed the pregnant teenager to become a successful learner in school, the researcher looked for commonalties reported by participants.
Commonalties were sorted as themes emerge in the data related to Research Question 1.

Research Question 2: What conditions in school do teenage mothers report make if possible for them to become successful learners in school once they have a baby?

Narrative profiles of participants were read by the researcher for conditions in schools that teenage mothers report made it possible for them to become successful learners in school once they had a baby. The same process of sorting and analyzing data was used to answer Research Question 2 as for answering Research Question 1 with a shift in focus to teenage mothers.

Research Question 3: What do teenagers report as the major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they are pregnant?

Narrative profiles of participants were read by the researcher for evidence of difficulties reported by pregnant teenagers that hindered them from being successful learners in school once they were pregnant. After all of the narrative profiles were searched for evidence of difficulties reported that hinder successful learning in school, the researcher looked for any evidence of commonalties in difficulties reported by participants. Commonalties were sorted as themes emerge in the data related to Research Question 3.

Research Question 4: What do teenage mothers report as the major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they have a baby?
Narrative profiles of participants were read by the researcher for evidence of difficulties reported by teenage mothers that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they become mothers. The same process of sorting and analyzing data was used to answer Research Question 4 as for answering Research Question 3 with a shift in focus to teenage mothers.

The process for sorting data into categories was as follows: First each narrative profile was searched for data that answered one of the four research questions and sorted into four general categories that corresponded to each of the questions. At this step of the analysis an open-coding strategy (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used wherein emerging themes found under each research question, in each narrative profile, and then across profiles were examined. Data in each narrative profile were searched for “units of information” (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 344) -phrases, sentences and paragraphs that supported these themes discovered in the original four categories. Next, the themes from each case study narrative are identified for physical, intellectual and social conditions for learning.

Validation and Verification

Validation and verification were conducted during the process of data collection and analysis to counteract, as much as possible the effect of the researchers presence upon participants and bias upon data analysis.
**Member Checks.** After all the interviews were transcribed and written as narrative profiles, these profiles were checked by the participant for accuracy of content and clarity. These member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1995, Merriam, 1988), helped the researcher check for internal validity; how the researcher's narrative profiles match the participants' construction of reality. The intent of the researcher was to “capture and portray the world as it appears to the people in it.” (Walker, 1980, p. 45)

**Reliability of Themes.** The process of establishing themes in the analysis of data was both convergent and divergent in nature. First, the researcher sought to discover what data fit together into themes (convergent) and then the researcher flushed out the themes once they had been developed (divergent). The data analysis was a process that moved back and forth between description and interpretation. To determine if the set of themes were complete, the researcher follow the guidelines identified by Guba & Lincoln (quoted in Merriam, 1988, p. 135) and Merriam (1988) to ensure reliability. First, “there should be a minimum of unassignable data items, as well as relative freedom from ambiguity of classification.” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981. p.96) Second, the set of themes (categories) “should seem plausible given the data from which they emerge, causing independent researchers to agree that the categories make sense in light of the data.” (Merriam, 1988, p. 135)

Content analysis became the process of constructing themes to sort and classify the data collected in interviews. The researcher followed guidelines
offered by Holsti (quoted in Merriam, 1988, p. 136) for judging the efficacy of themes (categories) derived from content analysis:

1. The categories should reflect the purpose of the research. Sometimes one becomes committed to categories developed early on; care should be taken to ensure that categories are congruent with research goals and questions.

2. The categories should be exhaustive—that is, "all relevant items in the sample of documents under study must be capable of being placed into a category" (Holsti, 1969, p. 99).

3. The categories should be mutually exclusive—no single unit of material should be placed in more than one category.

4. The categories should be independent in that "assignment of any datum into a category [will] not affect the classification of other data" (Holsti, 1969, p. 100).

5. All categories should derive from a single classification principle.

Using these guidelines to sort and classify data, content from the narrative profiles were sorted by themes.

Judges and Validity. After the researcher sorted the data into a set of themes under each research question, the researcher's analysis of data was checked by two unbiased judges to confirm the validity of the researcher's findings. Two criteria were used to select the judges. First, the judges were familiar with qualitative data analysis. Second, the judges were knowledgeable about issues related to adolescents. The two judges selected to confirm the validity of findings in this study had experience working with adolescents in school settings. These judges met with the researcher to
explain their role as judges. They were briefed on the purpose of the study, the methodology used and their role as judges. The judges were asked to read the narrative profiles and follow the same procedure for data analysis that was used by the researcher. The judges met with the researcher three weeks later to discuss the results of their analysis of the narrative profiles. The judges analysis of data was consistent with the researcher's. Minor revisions were noted by the researcher with regard to theme names. Later, the judges were given a final copy of the researcher's data analysis after revisions were addressed to verify changes in the final document.

This investigation was conducted in an ethical manner. The participants were informed of the intent of this study which is clearly explained in the Interview Consent Form (see Appendix A). The written narrative profiles composed from the interview of each participant were checked for clarity and accuracy by each participant. The participant had the right to withhold any information in the interview or withdraw from the study. Every effort was made by the researcher to protect the identity of each participant. Participants' names and their children, names of people close to the participant, the name of the schools and specific locations were not identified in this research. The researcher only interviewed participants who signed an Interview Consent Form. The researcher recognized the participants right to privacy and the responsibility of insuring anonymity. Details for insuring anonymity for all participants in this study are included in the Interview Consent Form.

While the strengths of a qualitative case study research design out weigh its limitations, the researcher recognized the limitations in its usage.
Reliance on the researcher as a primary instrument for data collection and analysis has both strengths and limitations. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and rewritten in the quoted words of each participant. The member checks not only helped insure the 'voice' of the participant was represented accurately, but also protected against the researchers bias that may have occurred and reflected in editorial additions and/or deletions made in the narrative profiles. The two unbiased judges who used the same open-coding strategy (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) as the researcher to confirm the validity of the researchers findings also helped protect against possible researcher's bias. The theme were corroborated thus confirming that conflicting perspectives were heard and included in the analysis.

Chapter Summary

The research design for this study employed qualitative research methods to identify the conditions in school that both support and hinder successful learning once a student is pregnant and/or a mother. Data were collected from 30-45 minute open-ended interviews. Four research questions guided the interview. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and written into narrative profiles. Each profile was systematically examined for emerging themes. Using the open-ended coding strategy (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) emerging themes were identified for each research question in each narrative profile across profiles. This data analysis provides evidence to support conclusions and recommendations for further research.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Age and/or Grade Status of Participant</th>
<th>Age of Children</th>
<th># of Children</th>
<th>Pregnant/Parenting</th>
<th>Gov. Assistance</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>parenting 14 yrs old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Single unknown</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>parenting 17 yrs old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Single unknown</td>
<td>Afro/Amer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>parenting 12th grade</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Single unknown</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>parenting 16 yrs old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Single unknown</td>
<td>Afro/Amer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>parenting 18 yrs old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Single unknown</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>parenting 11th grade</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Single unknown</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>parenting 17 yrs old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Single unknown</td>
<td>Euro/Amer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>parenting 12th grade</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Single unknown</td>
<td>Euro/Amer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>parenting 16 yrs old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Married yes</td>
<td>Euro/Amer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>parenting 14 yrs old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Euro/Amer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>parenting</td>
<td>18 years old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11 months</td>
<td>White Euro/Amer</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>parenting</td>
<td>19 years old</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 years/15 mos</td>
<td>White Euro/Amer</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>parenting</td>
<td>20 years old 12th grade</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16 months</td>
<td>White Euro/Amer</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>parenting</td>
<td>20 years old 12th grade</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13 months</td>
<td>White Euro/Amer</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>pregnant</td>
<td>16 years old pregnant</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>parenting</td>
<td>17 years old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>White Euro/Amer</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>pregnant</td>
<td>11th grade pregnant</td>
<td>White Euro/Amer</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>parenting</td>
<td>17 years old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>White Euro/Amer</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>parenting</td>
<td>16 years old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19 months</td>
<td>White Euro/Amer</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>pregnant</td>
<td>17 years old pregnant</td>
<td>White Euro/Amer</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>parenting</td>
<td>17 years old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>White Euro/Amer</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Number of Participants Interviewed at School Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Alabama</th>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>New Hampshire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Taped interview not transcribable due to poor tape quality.

Table 3: Age of Participants at the Time of the Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age in Years</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Six participants did not report age at time of interview.

Table 4 Age of Participants When Child Was Born

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age in Years</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3+1*</td>
<td>4+1*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*One participant had two children and was pregnant with third child at time of interview. Three other participants were pregnant at time of interview. Five participants did not report age when child was born.
### Table 5: Age of Child(ren) of Participants at the Time of the Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age in Months</th>
<th>0-6</th>
<th>7-12</th>
<th>13-18</th>
<th>19-24</th>
<th>25-30</th>
<th>31-36</th>
<th>37-42</th>
<th>43-48</th>
<th>49-&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Three participants were pregnant
*One participant had two children.
*All other participants had one child each.

### Table 6: Race and Ethnicity of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 7: Socio-Economic Status of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Assistance</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants Living in Households Receiving Government Assistance</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants Living in Households Not Receiving Government Assistance</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known if Participants Living in Households Receiving Gov. Assist.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8: Marital Status of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Not Married</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Four participants engaged to be married.*
CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF DATA

This study describes conditions in school identified by three pregnant teenagers and eighteen teenage mothers that helped them succeed in school once they got pregnant and/or had a baby. Furthermore, this study describes the major difficulties identified by three pregnant teenagers and eighteen teenage mothers that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they became pregnant and/or had a baby. Analysis is presented in two sections, each section corresponding to two research questions that guide this study. The first section answers the first two research questions:

Research Question 1: What conditions in school do teenagers report make it possible for them to be successful learners in school once they become pregnant?

Research Question 2: What conditions in school do teenage mothers report make it possible for them to become successful learners in school once they have a baby?

The second section of the analysis answers the third and fourth research questions:

Research Question 1: What do teenagers report as the major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they are pregnant?

Research Question 2: What do teenagers report as the major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they are pregnant?

A brief description of the school sites and participants precedes the analysis.
School Sites

Participants were selected and interviewed at six school sites across the United States. School Sites A, B, and C all belong to the same city school district in Alabama. School site D is located in Texas in a suburban setting. School site E is located in a suburban setting on the outskirts of a small city in Colorado and School site F is located in a rural area in New Hampshire. All of the school sites have either a program for pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers on site or students at the school have access to services provided by the school district.

Participants

Twenty-one participants were interviewed for this study. Table 1 summarizes the number of participants interviewed at each site. From the original interview transcripts, narrative profiles (see Appendix C) were written in the original words of the participants and are quoted in this chapter. To protect the identity of the participants, their names and the names of their child(ren) have all been changed. The names of school professionals mentioned by the participant by their surname have been identified by Mr., Mrs., or Ms. only. Other individuals mentioned in the interviews have been changed to the initial of their first name only. The names of all school programs for pregnant teenagers and parenting teenagers are referred to generically as Teen Pregnancy/Parenting Program or the
Homebound Program when it is appropriate. All other program names and locations mentioned by the participants in this study that might disclose their identity were deleted.

A diverse pool of participants were selected for this study. Seven demographics were considered when selecting participants: age of teenager, age and number of children, race, ethnic background, socio-economic status, marital status. Geographic location was a demographic criterion used to select school sites only. Tables 1-8 summarize these demographics.

Since participants will be mentioned by names in the following discussion of themes, they will be briefly introduced at this point.

P#1. Theresa is fourteen and has a two month old boy named Thomas. Thomas was born the second day of school during Theresa's eighth grade year.

P#2. Dorathea is seventeen and is in the twelfth grade. Her son Rafael is two months old.

P#3. LaSaundra is in the twelfth grade. She has a baby son named Thomas who is eight weeks old.

P#4. Sandra is in the twelfth grade and has a daughter named Janeene who is six weeks old. Her daughter was premature; weighing three pounds, eight ounces at birth.

P#5. AJ is sixteen and in the tenth grade. Her baby is Jared and he is one month and five days old.

P#6. Jennifer had her daughter Diane when she was seventeen. Her daughter is three months old. Jennifer is a senior in high school.

P#7. Christina is a Junior in high school with a nine month old son named Paul.

P#8. Carole was twelve when she was pregnant with her daughter Bethany. Bethany was born when Carole was thirteen and in the
eighth grade. Carole was seventeen at the time of the interview and a senior in high school.

P#9. Maureen is 18 and had just received news she was graduating from high school the day she was interviewed. Her son is seven months old. He was born with spinal bifida and is hydrocephalic.

P#10. Laurel is sixteen and in the tenth grade. She had her daughter Katie a month after she turned fourteen while she was in the eighth grade.

P#11. Kaitlynn is eighteen. Her son Adam is eleven months old. Kaitlynn is a Junior in high school.

P#12. Barbara is nineteen. She has a son Mitchell who is three years old. She has a second son, Tevon who is fifteen months old. At the time of the interview she was eight plus months pregnant. Grade status was unclear. She has at least one more year of high school after her third child is born.

P#13. Claudia is twenty years old. She has a son named Andy who is sixteen months old. She is a Senior in high school.

P#14. Gloria is twenty years old. She has a son who is thirteen months old. Her son has had medical problems which has required several surgeries since birth. Gloria is a Senior in high school.

P#15. Joanne is twenty two weeks pregnant with twins. She is a Junior in high school.

P#16. Breanne is seventeen and she had just graduated from high school the day she was interviewed. She has a daughter Abigail who is eight and a half months old.

P#17. Tiffany was approximately six months pregnant when she was interviewed. She is a Junior in high school.

P#18. Suzanne is seventeen and is a Junior. She was sixteen when she had her daughter Sarah who is six months old.

P#19. Lorie was thirteen when she got pregnant. She has a nineteen month old son named Danny. Lorie is now sixteen and a Junior in high school.
P#20. Tracy is seventeen and a Junior in high school. She was approximately two months pregnant when she was interviewed.

P#21. Heather is seventeen and in the eleventh grade. Her daughter, Caitlin is three months old.

**Conditions That Support Learning**

In this section, themes on conditions that support learning for teenagers who are pregnant or have babies that emerged as a result of the open-coding strategy (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) that answer Research Questions #1 and #2 will be discussed.

Research Question 1: What conditions in school do teenagers report make it possible for them to be successful learners in school once they become pregnant?

Research Question 2: What conditions in school do teenage mothers report make it possible for them to become successful learners in school once they have a baby?

The researcher found that themes on conditions that support learning that emerged for Research Question #1 and #2 were the same while the particulars for these variable and each participant were varied. As a result, the researcher did not separate these two variables and therefore the themes of support that emerged that answer Research Questions #1 and #2 are discussed together.

The researcher found three themes on conditions that support learning as a result of data analysis. The first theme is identified as social and
emotional support in schools. The second theme is identified as school programs, practices and policies and the third theme is identified as characteristics of self. These themes are presented separately in the following discussion.

Conditions That Support Learning Theme 1: Social and Emotional Support in School

This theme captures the pregnant and parenting mothers feelings and perceptions about how others in the school environment support them socially and emotionally. Two groups for social and emotional support were consistently identified in the school; professional and other school staff and other pregnant and/or parenting mothers. Both pregnant and parenting teenage mothers reported the importance of social and emotional support in school as a condition that helped them succeed in school.

Many of the participants reported the importance of being supported socially and emotionally by various school staff. Nurses, teachers, principals, directors of the teen pregnancy and parenting programs, child care providers, and counselors were mentioned as support staff.

Social and emotional support was translated as "listening", "caring", and "understanding". Tiffany, who is pregnant, describes support.

Support is understanding. Support not as much a lot of answers, but to be able to listen. If they (professionals in the school) can give answers, that's fine, but just listening and understanding, that is what she (director of the Teen Pregnancy/Parenting Program) is. She, you know, she'll sit there and she's always asking you about my doctor's visits and what's going on. She just really likes to know. It is not just
like, well, I'll just make social conversation whether when wants to know, she wants to know what's going on. She really gets involved with the mothers, you know.

Support also meant that the participants felt they were listened to. Barbara describes how being listened to is helpful and supportive.

...they listen to me. I know some days I'll come in and I'll just complain. They'll listen to me and let me get it out and give me suggestions and give me their answer on what they think I should do. I'll tell them what I think and they'll tell me what they think about that. It's just, I think we listen and talk to each other....Try to be understanding and listen. Don't tell them what to do, but give suggestions. Suggestions are more helpful than telling and understanding is more helpful than lecturing.

Maureen felt it was important for teachers to listen to teenage mothers "not necessarily to give them any help, but sometimes it helps the mothers to talk to somebody because they might not have an older person to talk to. They might not have parents who agree or support them so they need the extra support from school teachers...."

Theresa made the point that she needed to feel comfortable talking to a teacher. Developing this comfort level begins with the teacher(s) making it clear that they will listen to the students. She said that teachers need to "... make it clear that if I needed them, I could come and talk to them.... It takes off a lot of pressure. A lot, when you can come in and talk to somebody, whenever you need."

For many of the mothers they felt it was important for teachers to understand their life situation, what it meant for them to be pregnant or parenting teenagers in school, "that it takes an extra effort...., that it was a big
thing for me to just to get here everyday." (Barbara). This also meant being empathetic toward them as people, "to understand their circumstances" (Claudia). Understanding also meant that teachers would be sensitive to their difficult situation and be aware that they were going to have their ups and downs. Lorie commented on this. "I think teachers need to be aware that if we are moody or something, you know, understand what we have to go through." It was also important to Lorie for teachers to know "...sometimes it is me. I have really tired days and I just need to relax..." Christina made the same comment about being over tired and mentioned how it was important for teachers to "...understand if I like come in late or if I'm tired...."

Barbara noticed that there was a difference between teachers that had children and teachers that did not have children. She suggests that teachers who have children, have a better understanding of the teen mothers' needs. Theresa describes an incident she had with a teacher who just had a baby.

One of my teachers just had a baby....She was talking about her little baby and I said," Yeah,, I know what you mean." She said, "Yeah, I forgot you had a baby and the same responsibilities that I have now.

Some participants felt the closer the teacher was to the experience of parenting a young child, the more understanding the teacher seemed to have. Breanne describes the transformation of a teacher who had a personal experience with a young mother in his own home.

....He used to think, [why can't she get up earlier] and he's like totally understanding [now]. He's really supportive. He's one of the ones that understands I have this child, but I can't seem to get to bed until 11:00 PM at night. Then she's up at 5:00 AM or 6:00 AM in the morning.
She's ready to be awake and up and mom still wants an hour to sleep. Mom wanted to go to bed at 10:00 PM, but she couldn't.

Theresa believed that the overall attitude of the teachers toward her when she returned to school after she had a child was supportive. She describes how this support helped her through her first few days back in school.

People's attitudes toward me were pretty [supportive]. I mean, it surprised me a lot too.... I just thought I was going to die my first week back. I thought it would be torture. It (the school) was very supportive. I know when I got back nobody (students) even talked to me and everybody (school personnel) they pretty much told me if you need us, you can come and talk to us. If you ever need anything, we're here. I think that is what helped me out a lot because I know when I came back it was so much I had to get off my mind. I was just, my insides are torn. I was just, I was just, like, God, everybody was right there. [They would say, "If you need to come and talk to me, we're here." And you know, they listened and gave advice.... I think that is basically what helped me out the most, when there is someone we (students) can turn to when we just have a bunch of stuff bounding at you.

Support was also identified as caring. Pregnant teenagers and the teenage mothers reported that the ways in which different professionals in the school let them know that they cared, varied. Several of the participants reported that professionals in the school let them know they cared when they inquired about their well-being and the well-being of their baby. Kaitlynn remembered the times that teachers inquired about her son Adam.

My teacher, every time she sees me she ask [about the baby] and the other teacher I had, she was pregnant. She had her baby about five months after mine and you know every time she sees Adam [she will say], "Oh, he's getting so big." Then my other teacher she doesn't know
how [I manage]. She says, "I don't know how to handle babies. I've never been around them." But she likes him. She goes, "Oh, he's so darling."

Dorathea mentioned that she noticed that most of the teachers who asked her about her baby were female teachers. "....Mostly the women teachers that I have, not too many of the men teachers (would ask about her baby)."
Although the questions teachers asked about the mothers' babies varied, it was reported that teachers asked questions such as; how old was the baby, how much did the baby weigh, how was the baby? Some teachers asked to see pictures of the baby. Heather noted that teachers asked about her well being when she was pregnant. She referred to the time when she was pregnant and how concerned her teachers seemed to be about her well-being.

They [the teachers] were a lot nicer [when I was pregnant], like [they would say], 'Are you OK? Do you need...', they would be, in the middle of talking in class and I'd just be sitting there and they were like, 'Are you OK?'

Support was also translated as a willingness to help problem-solve. Tracy pointed out, "They (the school) helps me out. They like, you know, if I need help with something, they are there. If I have a problem I can talk to them...." Carole talked about all the times the director of the Pregnant Teenager/Teen Parenting Program director helped her to sort out problems. She commented that if it wasn't for the director of the Pregnant Teenager/Parenting Program in her school, she probably would not have stayed in school.
I mean, every time I had like any sort of problems, which there has been a lot, she's always been there for me and I think it's mainly her [that has kept me in school]. If I needed help, if I had a problem with anything, she would go to whoever, I mean like straighten everything out.

Some participants mentioned having problems with other students in the school. At times they felt they were being verbally and physically harassed. They felt this harassment was directly related to them being pregnant or because they were teenage mothers. It was important that school professionals helped them deal with hostility from other students in the school building. Jennifer found she needed support dealing with other students who teased her. She felt she received that support. "I have problems with the kids cause certain ones, like they bother me and I'll say, 'they're bothering me and they'll say, 'you don't need to bother her.'"

The types of problems participants experienced varied in nature. Some were personal, while others were related to scheduling, credits and other curriculum concerns which will be discussed in section two of this chapter.

Teachers were identified as caring when their support was perceived as pushing them to achieve. The push meant the teachers had faith in their ability to succeed. Maureen stressed that it was important not to treat teenage mothers as "just another drop out." She asserts that schools need to be more supportive in this area.

[Schools need to be] more supportive, try to push them (teenage mothers) a little harder. Don't treat them like another drop out. Try to help them out. Support them, push them to do their work instead of dropping out.
Maureen recalled that both her school counselor and the director of the Teenage Pregnancy /Parenting Program in her school, "kind of pushed me along when I had problems. Kind of pushed me along, like, come on, you can do it." Jennifer also mentioned how she felt pushed along, "She (director of Teenage Pregnancy/Parenting Program) pushes us. She wants us to succeed."

Barbara concludes that teachers in school need to see pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers as individuals. They need to look beyond the pregnancy or the fact that a student is a teen mom. She commented on the need to be accepted as an individual as a teenager, as a student and not just a teen parent.

I guess as long as they listen to us like we're normal, like everybody else is and just not automatically categorize us as teen parents. We're students still, too. We're just, we just have extra responsibilities. Some of us take advantage of that and some of us do without, what we can. I think just as long as they see us as students, but that, to know that we're teen parents, but to not necessarily judge us because of it. I think maybe that would help. That would probably have to be the first thing they would have to do. Just realize, yes, they are teen parents, but that doesn't mean that they're going to act like some of the other students here who are actually childish, but then again, who knows, cause they are actually teenagers. I think it takes the realization that we're people too. We're not any different than anybody else except for that we have another being that we have to take care of while we're still in school.

In addition to the social and emotional support from school professions, social and emotional support of other pregnant teenagers and teen mothers who were also in school was important to many participants. This school population was identified as important in all the school settings except school site A, site B and site C. It is important to note here that there
was not a program that provided on-campus child care or on-site programs specific to this population. Thus there was little opportunity for this population to get together during school hours to provide support for one another.

The ways in which pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers identified social and emotional support from peers varied somewhat. Many participants commented that other pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers provided support because they now shared common life experiences. For Jennifer, being with other pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in school was like being in a big family.

[The teenage mothers are a good support for each other.] I guess you could say we are like a big family because, you know, we all know what we are going through and we are like all friends.... We help each other out. When somebody needs something we're always there for them or if someone is upset, you know, we are always there for them. We help each other out. We love each other's babies. They (teenage mothers) know what your going through....

Jennifer went on to say that since she had her baby she has two separate sets of friends at school.

I have like two different [kinds of] friends. Teen parents, the girls in there (Teen Pregnancy/Parenting Program). They are like my family, you know, we're like a big family. Here (the high school), these are just friends. I can goof off with them. I have the teen parent friends [and I can say], 'hey, this is happening to me, can you give me some advice. This is really bothering me, you know?'

The teen parents in Jennifer's school became a support group. They are empathetic and supportive of each other at a time when they felt at odds with the mainstream student population. Joanne shared her thoughts on why she
felt the pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in school stayed together. 
"....They can kind of, I don't want to say [be] sympathetic, but they know what you are going through when times are hard and stuff." Lorie felt similar to Joanne. ".....They [teen mothers] are going through the same things I'm going through. [They are teen mothers.] It's somebody to talk to cause you can tell them how you feel and they are like, I know, how you feel, I felt that the other day and I'm like, oh good."

Some pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers reported that they felt a certain degree of isolation from other peers in the school once they became pregnant and/or had a child because of their changed needs and life circumstances. Barbara mentioned that "It's hard to get to know people that aren't [mothers] because they don't understand." Furthermore, those students who identified other pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers as support in school were all enrolled in a Teen Pregnancy/Parenting Program at school. They were enrolled in special classes together and many had enrolled their child at school in the child care program. These programs were physically separate from the other high school classrooms. At school site D, the Teen Pregnancy/Parenting Program was located at a different campus than the high school. So, many of these mothers spent little time mingling with other teenagers outside this specific population. As Barbara commented, "[I have friends at school] just downstairs [in the Teen Pregnancy/Parenting Program]. I hardly talk to anybody upstairs." Further discussion on the isolation felt by teenage mothers from other peers will be discussed in Section two of this chapter.
Tiffany, who was pregnant at the time of the interview explained how helpful it was to have other teen mothers around to help prepare them for what lay ahead.

It's real nice to have them there telling me, well, this is what is going to happen or this is what is going to happen, telling me the wonderful things about labor and I almost cried. There are times where I will be in the nursery and one of the mothers will come in and say, yep, you just can't wait [for this] when I'm changing the baby's diaper and it's not a pretty sight to see.

Jennifer felt other pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in the school supported each other by sticking up for one another. She recalled a time when another student in the school threatened to kick her butt.

A lot of them (non-parenting students), like the girls, would pick on me and stuff. I had this one girl tell me that she was going to kick my butt because I was pregnant and hurt my baby. She really was going to. She was really after me. A lot of my friends, well, my new friends (parenting teens), [told her], she's pregnant, don't you mess with her. So I always had support.

This notion of sticking up for one another was also expressed by Christina who recalled a time she was called a whore by a male student in school. The support offered by her peers looked a little different, but is an example of the same sense of camaraderie and protection that was reported by Jennifer.

When I wanted to fight this boy for calling me a whore, they were like, don't worry about it, they all think that, but just ignore them and stuff. It's not worth it.
Support from teenage mothers also came in the form of inspiration. Knowing that others have lived through the strain and challenges of being a young school aged mother became an inspiration for others. This was true for Breanne.

[My supports are the] people who did it, who did graduate. My best friend's sister did it. It just made me see that I could do it. I had a while there that I was [saying], 'I can't do this anymore. It's too hard.' It was like she had started waking up through the night because she was going through a growth spurt. I was like, I'm not doing this, I can't. It's too hard for me. I'm having too many problems. I'm not getting any sleep. I'm working too much and I changed my job. I convinced my parents that there was nothing wrong with the baby going to her grandparents, even if I had the weekend off and I should be spending time with her. I needed to get my energy back. I was losing so much and I was getting really sick. I just pushed it. [I knew] people had done it. People who have totally graduated and everything, they help a lot.

The need to be with peers and the desire to belong was evident in many comments made by the participants. Many of these comments were made in the context of feeling that after they got pregnant or had a baby they no longer belonged with the rest of the student population. This sense of loneliness and rejection, albeit self-imposed at times added to the difficulty they experienced in school. This topic will be discussed in Conditions That Hinder Learning Theme 2 of this chapter. However, a few comments made by participants capture the social significance of school. Jennifer wanted to return to school as soon as possible once the baby was born. She missed her friends.

[When I was pregnant I was out for a month]. I wanted to come back cause I got tired of being at home cause I was OK, I mean, I was like, by
like the fourth day, I was already up and on the move. I was OK and I wanted to come back to school. I missed my friends. They missed me. I just missed being in school.

Heather also noted that school was important to her friends. "School isn't that bad. I don't love it either, but all my friends are here."

Social and emotional support from school professionals and parenting teenage mothers in the school was a reoccurring theme mentioned at least once by all the participants. This type of support was described as caring understanding and support with problems. Support was demonstrated when participants felt they were listened to, there was a willingness to help them with their specific problems. In addition, professionals in the school were perceived as supportive when they intervened in situations when the pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers felt threatened by other students in the school. It was important to pregnant teenagers and teen mothers that professionals in the school understood and were empathetic to their unique set of challenging life circumstances. In addition, pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers felt the social and emotional support they provided each other helped them in school. The teenage mothers in the school provided support for each other. They were empathetic and understanding of each others circumstances because they all shared a common experience. The importance of the social and emotional support provided by these two groups of people in the school became more apparent when the participants begin to share their feelings about the social isolation they felt once they become pregnant and were parenting teenagers.
Many times during the interviews, when participants began speaking about support from professionals, they spoke of examples of professionals accommodating their needs by making adaptations in scheduling and assignment requirements. These examples of support have been cited under the Conditions That Support Learning Theme 2: School Programs, Policies and Practices. It was the perception of some participants that the sensitivity and support of professionals toward this school population lead them to make changes in the school curriculum.

Both pregnant and parenting participants interviewed identified social and emotional support from these two school groups as conditions in school that made it possible for them to be successful learners. Parenting teenagers spoke of support during their pregnancy and after they had their baby. Pregnant teenagers spoke of their experience with social and emotional support from professionals as being understanding of their need to use the bathroom, eat and drink frequently. Pregnant teenagers also identified the social and emotional support of parenting peers in the school for their knowledge of what was to come. Again, both groups identified the need to be supported socially and emotionally by both the professionals in the school and parenting peers.

Conditions That Support Learning Theme 2: School Programs, Policies and Practices

This theme refers to the programs, practices and policies embedded in the tradition and culture of the school that support pregnant students and
parenting mother students become successful learners once they become pregnant and/or have a baby. Specifically, this theme refers to three dimensions of curriculum. The expressed dimension; the pre-planned curriculum that includes the scope and sequence of a program, the intended learning objectives and assessment of learning. The implied curriculum; the unintentional messages conveyed through programs, policy and practices and the students perceptions of these programs, policies and practices. And the emergent dimension of curriculum; the adaptations and adjustments of these programs, policies and practices in response to the needs of the students.

Participants from all the school sites that provided a specific program for pregnant teenagers and teen mothers remarked that the program is what kept them in school.

I know that if this program wasn't here, I probably wouldn't have stayed in school. (Joanne)

If it wasn't for the Teen Parent Program, I don't know if I still would be in school. (Christina)

I think without the program a lot of us girls would drop out of school. (Jennifer)

[This program ] definitely [helps me stay in school]. (Kaitlynn)

There were several reasons why participants felt the Teen Pregnancy/Parenting Program they attended fostered their school success. One reason was the school program gave them an opportunity to get together as a group during the school day. As mentioned in the discussion of support Conditions That Support Learning Theme 1: Social and Emotional Support in School), the young mothers felt camaraderie and support from each other.
The program gave them the time and place to get together with each other in a space that was safe and separate from other students in the school building. As Gloria put it, "This is like a [separate] school down here even though we might have classes upstairs. We spend the majority of the time down here. Yeah, we feel more comfortable [here]." Claudia referred to the program as a little haven. "It's different (Teen Pregnancy/Parenting Program), it is like a little haven..."

The facilities of the program provided a place in the school where the mothers could get together and become supports for each other. The facilities themselves were inviting. Christina remarked,"It is a beautiful room in here. It just seems so healthy and it's really nice that you can be with friends too, with other young mothers."

One of the major concerns of both the pregnant and parenting teenage students was the number of absences they incurred which set them behind in school and in many cases caused them to lose credits for the courses they were taking. Their absences were due to a host of reasons including: morning sickness, doctor's appointments, lack of transportation, pregnancy leave, their own illness and the baby's illness.

The participants reported a number of ways the school allowed them to deal with the large number of absences they all incurred. One program that helped prevent students from falling behind was the Homebound Program, a service available for all the participants at all the school sites. The Homebound Program provides a tutor that goes to the student's place of residence while she is on maternity leave. Although the number of days allowed to be missed for maternity leave varied among the schools (This
The topic will be discussed in section two of this chapter; the home tutor helped the students stay on top of their work. The Homebound Program was mentioned by participants from all the school sites as an important program that helped them succeed in school. Dorathea noted that first of all, students need to be aware that the Homebound Program exists, that "...they (pregnant students) don't need to drop out of school." Several of the participants described how the Homebound tutor came to their home and on two occasions the participant was actually visited in the hospital. AJ talked about being visited in the hospital by the Homebound tutor.

...they allow you to stay home. They bring your work that you have at school. They bring it out to your home, that way you don't get behind in none of your work. It's a good program. They come over to your, matter of fact, my home. When I was in the hospital, she even came right to the hospital. The day of my delivery, she was at the hospital. She didn't bring my homework [that day].

She went on to say having the Homebound Program helped her to stop worrying about falling behind. "...It stopped me from worrying about my grades and that I knew I was getting work and I wasn't falling behind." Participants mentioned that the Homebound Program was available for students before and after pregnancy depending on the individual's circumstances as long as a doctor's order accompanied the request for services.

Pregnant teenagers and teen mothers also mentioned other aspects of the special programs they attended that made it easier for them to attend school under their circumstances. Kaitlynn remembered being continuously hungry in school when she was pregnant. She mentioned the importance of
being able to eat during the school day and how the Teen Pregnancy/Parenting Program always had food available to nibble on. "They keep food here. Like when I was pregnant you always wanted to snack and that's why I didn't eat very good, I was sick all the time so I think that's part of it, cause they always had food here." Joanne, who was pregnant with twins at the time of the interview, mentioned how much she appreciated the little snacks that were available. "....they always have little snacks around to eat." Heather recalled being able to eat in her regular classes during the time she was pregnant. In addition, she recalled the need to use the bathroom all the time. She appreciated the teachers respecting these needs. "[The teachers found out I was first pregnant when] like when I was seven or eight months. I told some of them, plus I was eating and drinking in class, which I was allowed to do, so I had to go to the bathroom a lot more."

Information about pregnancy and parenting was provided in classes, by the school counselor, or informally, through peer sharing. This was important for pregnant teenagers and teen mothers. Joanne mentioned that the program in her school provided a nurse that answered a lot of questions as well as other students in the program who already had a baby.

Although being tired was common for all of the participants interviewed, Joanne mentioned how the program facility at her school provided a place to come and take a nap during the day. "....just sometimes, it just wears me out. [I've become more tired.] Usually I rest. I lay on the couch on my lunch hour to catch up."

Child care was a program service that was mentioned by participants at all the school sites that offered child care facilities on the premise. There were
a host of reasons why the child care facility was identified as an important component of the school program that helped them stay in school. Christina was convinced that she would not be able to attend school if there were not a child care facility. Christina lived with her boyfriend and did not have other family available to provide daycare on a consistent basis.

If it wasn't for the Teen Parent Program, I don't know if I would be in school because if I hadn't been able to have a daycare, I would have had to find a better job that pays more, make me work some more hours and pay daycare which is $100 a week and then I probably would have.... I don't know, it's just hard because I didn't have a baby-sitter. I'd have to work all day to pay the baby-sitter and probably have to stay at the same job forever because I didn't end up graduating.

In addition to being concerned about the availability of child care that was affordable, Jennifer mentioned the importance of having her baby in a safe, comfortable environment that was nearby. Jennifer felt that her baby was well cared for in the child care facility. "They take real good care of her, all of them care (in the nursery). They're really sweet to her."

Fear of missing school coupled with a limited amount of time off from school for maternity leave, participants returned to school with very young infants. Heather commented on how hard it was to leave her baby in child care the first day. However, she was grateful for a child care facility at the school which allowed her to visit her daughter during the school day.

[I use the school daycare.] I can get other daycare if I wanted to, but I mean, it's a lot easier this way and I feel a lot better cause she's with me, you know. It was hard to leave her there [when I first came back to school], I know all the people in there that take care of her and everything, it was just hard. I would go and check with her and the people that are taking care of her after every single class. I would ask to
go to the bathroom and I would run right on down here just to make sure.

Having a daycare facility on the school premises also allowed students to nurse their baby during the school day. Kaitlynn and Joanne both commented on this. Kaitlynn recalled wanting to use the school child care so she could nurse. "I wanted to come so I could nurse my baby so I could be around him" Joanne, who was pregnant with twins at the time of the interview commented on how she was planning to breast feed and the school would allow her to get out of class to feed them.

Heather saw a different benefit for having the child care on the school premises. "I'm basically with her four periods out of seven. I'm really with her. It's like I'm getting credits to be with her...." For Heather, not only was child care on the premises allowing her to be with her baby during the day which alleviated a lot of concern, but she felt the added benefit of getting credit for that time spent in the child care with her child.

Specific courses offered as part of the Teen Pregnancy/Parenting Programs at the different school sites were also mentioned by the participants enrolled in the program. Specific courses mentioned were Early Prenatal Care and Childbirth classes, Child Care classes and a course on "how to be a good mom." Also VoTech classes in cosmetology, office skills and hospitality; hotel and restaurant training. Organized support group meetings with pregnant and teen parents and counseling sessions which helped them with the challenges of being a teen parent were also mentioned. These classes were thought to be informative and relevant to their specific situation and needs as
students. Breanne reported that the relevance of these classes made it easier for her to do well in class.

It's easy for me to sit in class for parent training and listen to what they have to say and everything and I'm not like, this is stupid, I shouldn't be here, just go home and try to figure out a way to get out of it. I sit better and I listen to it and enjoy it.

In addition, some participants mentioned the VoTech training they were getting to prepare them for future employment which also counted for college credit. These courses were free until the students were twenty-one. Maureen noted a special class offered at her school that was particularly helpful for her. The class was for preschool and elementary aged students with special needs. Her baby had several physical challenges that required physical therapy, a service provided by the school.

Several participants mentioned that certain teachers acknowledged the challenging position of parenting while being a student. These teachers accommodated their needs by adapting school practices and policies to meet their needs. These teachers were perceived as flexible with assignment, due dates, course requirements and scheduling. In most incidents, when curriculum adaptations were mentioned in the interviews, it was in context to social and emotional support. Those teachers who were flexible and accommodating were considered supportive.

A variety of curriculum adaptations were mentioned by different participants. Tiffany mentioned flexibility in exam dates.

If I have a baby early, I can take some of my exams before I leave..... Some of them I can do at home after I have the baby or if I go late
enough, when the Seniors take theirs, I can probably take mine then too.

AJ remembered a time before her baby was born when she missed two weeks of school. The teachers were willing to give her an incomplete, rather than an 'F' for missing work.

OK, I was out two weeks before report cards and those two weeks that I wasn't here, I was missing out on work so I had like incompletes on my report card. They didn't give me an 'F', they just gave me an incomplete and I was able to make up the work and get my fair grade that I got. They're fair, I think they are fair....

Breanne talked about flexibility with due dates. She recalled a time when her daughter was sick and she could not get her homework done. She was thankful for the extra time her teacher gave her to make up her work.

My daughter was so sick last night. She was just so clingy last night, I don't know why she's doing it, but she wouldn't let me put her down or anything. I really wanted to finish this assignment and I couldn't even put her down. She wouldn't let my mom take her. She wouldn't let anyone help with anything. She just wanted me and it's like, the only other option I had was to have my mom write my paper and I'm not going to do that. It's my work. I want to finish it tonight.... [ I asked the teacher if it] is all right if I turn it in tomorrow, and the teachers that are like, yeah, you can turn it in tomorrow, that's fine, I understand, that's the best thing you can do [to be supportive.]

For Kaitlynn, accommodating her needs meant understanding how little time she has in a day when she has to juggle school, work and caring for her son. Kaitlynn's teacher changed an assignment for her.
This one teacher [gives projects] where she had the class go out to the same place on two different days to learn two different things. It's Communication [class] and she says you don't have time to do this, write this down instead. Write a reaction paper instead. So she cuts back a lot of my work because of my job and because of Adam, but she gives me the same credits for everything. So she gives, like when we take tests they're usually open book because you learn anyway and you've got to look the important information up and remember it somehow. So she gives me my tests to take home and she says do odd or even.

Laurel commented on how hard she was trying in school and how her teacher acknowledged her effort and worked with her to succeed.

...I had a teacher last year and I wasn't passing because I really didn't have that much time to study. I was trying my hardest you know, I was really trying and then I would study whenever I could. I told her, I said, 'I know I am going to fail this.' She said, 'Well, you know, I can see how hard your studying and I know how hard it is for you, so I'll make sure you pass.' And she made sure I passed.

Some participants also noted that if they provided documentation from their doctors when their absence was due to their illness or the baby's illness, the school acknowledged this as an excused absence and accommodations were made for students to make up work.

Although students reported that they felt the accommodations and modifications teachers made in their courses to help meet their specific needs were helpful, some participants suggested that it was important for teen mothers not to use their situation as an excuse. The importance of self-motivation and determination was identified as a key to succeeding in school by many of the participants.
A safe and caring place for the mothers and their babies was important to the participants. For pregnant mothers, the need to eat and use the bathroom throughout the day was also deemed important. A child care facility on the school ground allowed several of the students to attend school which otherwise, the cost of child care would have made attending school prohibitive. Also, child care on the school grounds allowed the mothers to spend time with their baby during the day.

Overall, the courses offered in school that were relevant to the complicated lives of the participants interviewed were identified as important to their success in school. Courses that did not directly pertain to the teen mothers' life situation were not specifically identified as helpful. However, adaptations made in these courses that were in response to their specific needs were identified as helpful. Adaptations in course assignments, due dates, scheduling and such were seen as support from specific teachers.

A real concern of all participants was absences they incurred throughout the semester. It was clear that school policies that excused absences related to medical care for the child or the mother were helpful as well as support for making the missed work up.

Conditions That Support Learning Theme 3: Characteristics of Self

This theme refers to personality traits and characteristics identified by the pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers that helped them cope with the strain of being a parent and succeeding in school. It was also the perception of some participants that these same traits were helpful to other pregnant
teenagers and teenage mothers to cope with the strain of being a parent and a student.

For some participants being pregnant or having a child provided them with the motivation to either return to school or continue school. Carole was clear on why she was in school.

Having a baby, that's more of a reason that you should stay in school because you know, if your not going to stay in school, obviously your not going to do anything, cause there are people who go back to school, but why go back to school when you can finish it now? I have known a lot of people who have dropped out of school. You don't want to raise a baby on Welfare for the rest of your life and you're young and you can get Welfare when your not in school, but to me that's the only time that you should. You know, you don't want to be thirty years old and still on Welfare when you could have solved it when you were just young.

Carole believes she can provide a better life for her child if she finishes school. She also believes an education is her ticket off Welfare.

... for someone to quit school because they have a baby, it's just, you know, it's stupid cause that's why you need to be in school for them (the baby). Yeah, the best way you can (care for them), which means to get an education and making more money and stuff like that.

For a few of the participants, getting pregnant or having a baby was motivation for returning to school. Tiffany, who was pregnant at the time of the interview had dropped out of school before she got pregnant. When she found out she was pregnant she decided to go back to school. "I was working nights, didn't have anything to do during the day. [I was] home alone, all by myself, so I decided, well, it's best [to come back to school]." Some participants commented that their grades went up after they found out they were
pregnant or were parenting. Tiffany, who returned to school once she found out she was pregnant, also reported that her grades went up.

[My grades went up [when I returned to school after I was pregnant]. I have more ambition to learn, like in other classes I like. Last year I wouldn't do my work. I would skip class and I haven't skipped class yet [since I returned]. You know, there was just no ambition, too. So I have more of a better attention span to pay attention in classes.

Breanne wanted to complete high school so she could go on to college. Her motivation is to provide a good life for herself and her daughter.

Having my daughter made me really see that I want to [go to college]. I want her to have a good life and I wanted myself to have a good life. I just thought maybe I would get lucky and not have to have a college education to do it, but now I'm getting ready to go to college and do all kinds of stuff.

Determination was identified as key to sustaining the motivation and succeeding in school. AJ talked about the challenge of parenting and being a student and the determination it takes to stay in school.

.... You know, parenting is a hard job. They (teenage mothers) just got to put their mind on going to school, which, you know, most parents drop out. You need to try. You got to stay in school. You need to try. You need to stay in school because you got a baby. I mean, you need to be trying to be successful for your child. That is what I would say, keep your mind on school. Got to have your mind on school and try to stay in school. I know it's hard, but you can try to stay in school. Prepare to be a mother, be a good, the best mother that you can be.

For the participants interviewed, to stay in school took a lot of motivation, determination and strength. Barbara noted that the strength has
to come from within. "....they (teenage mothers) have to find strength in themselves to want to come" Dorathea also remarked about the strength it took to be a student and a parent. "[You've got to] keep your head up. I mean, no matter how hard it gets, if you want it bad enough, you can achieve it. I wanted it (to continue schooling) bad enough so that's what I'm trying to do." Barbara talked about the dedication it takes for teenage mothers to come to school each day and face the challenge.

If they don't want to come, then they won't be dedicated. There is so much dedication teen parents put into coming to school everyday. You have to want more than you did ever before. It's something totally new because your not just trying to take care of yourself. You have to take care of you and one baby.... I mean that's much more responsibility than any other high school student could ever have.

Maureen agreed that it was hard work to be a parent and student, but she also was adamant about accepting the help offered by others whenever and where ever it was available.

[When teenage girls get pregnant, they should] take advantage of all the opportunities that they are given. Don't just drop out. If anybody offers to help them, take them up on it, it helps a lot. If you can't find any kind of support stick with it. It's hard to find people who support your, people who want to help you, and the few people that do, let them help you....

Ambitions and dreams were also identified as motivation for completing high school. The goals and dreams they shared were connected to creating a quality life for themselves and for their child. Some participants talked about wanting to go to college to prepare for a career. Some of the careers mentioned were nursing, an occupation in early childhood, computer
science, business management, secretarial work, paralegal, lawyer, and pediatrician. Heather explained how her goal to become a lawyer provided the drive for her to complete high school.

For me, it was easy [to settle back in school] because I had a goal, that I wanted to work to become a lawyer. You can't just, I mean, if you have a goal of what you want to do, you have to get your education. That you need, you know."

Laurel's drive for finishing high school is to go on to college to become a nurse.

[I was hoping to go to school this summer.] I was thinking about going to summer school this year and next, so I could graduate a year early and I wouldn't have to go my senior year. I really don’t like it, but I don't have a choice. [I'm determined to finish.] Well, my parents, and you know, I want to become a nurse. I want to make good of myself and her, you know, cause I couldn't get a job to support me, much less her, without a high school education. So I mean, it's all being handed to me, this program is and just, actually, I'd be a fool to drop off.

Dorathea mentioned a different motivation for finishing high school and continuing her education. She wanted to prove to her father that she could.

...Plus, my father is inspiring me more because he thought if you get pregnant and have a baby that you can't go on with your life. So that made me work hard to prove to him that I can do everything that I have always wanted to do and I'm going to... [I plan] to graduate, to maybe... go to a technical college for computer engineering and then go to a four year college and maybe take a major in mathematics and stuff because I'm really good at math...
Motivation, determination, strength and ambition were key to succeeding in school, but organization and management of time was also identified as important for success. Jennifer believes organization and time management are key to success.

[If they (teenage mothers) are going to stay in school and have a baby], they need to keep on their toes in school, you know, keep their work up, keep their work turned in, try to stay awake and pay attention.... make sure they have all their work done. If they miss a day because their baby is sick or if you need to go to the doctors because you're sick, or something, to make sure that you come back that day and get that work. They just have to keep their work up and everything, that's all.

Theresa echoes Jennifer's thoughts about time management.

[To survive in Junior High], I guess what I had to do, basically manage my time. I had to schedule. I made out my schedule of what my day was basically going to be like when I noticed how much he was sleeping and what time he slept. I had to kind of manage in this little time spot. When he sleeps, I'll clean the house. When he is sleeping, I will do my homework. [You] just have to do your best to manage your time so that your not just running around and your completely crazy. That is what a lot of people want you to do. They feel, well, when a teenager gets pregnant our life is over. I don't feel, well, when a teenager gets pregnant our life is over. I don't feel like that....

Managing time when you are a student and a teenage parent may mean catching time to do homework whenever possible. Kaitlynn explains how she managed to get her school work done when time was tight.

Most of my homework I get done, I do it all at once. I just set down cause when I miss so much school I have to catch up and I'll either do it here right before class, you know, or I'll sit down on a Sunday and just do it all at once and get it over with or sit down at work when I have extra time, which hasn't been lately...
Being pregnant and having a baby motivated some participants to return or stay school. This motivation was driven by commitment and determination. Many had to find strength within to manage the overwhelming demands of being a teenage parent and a student. Ambitions and goals helped to focus the participant and also became a source of motivation. The importance of organization and time management were also mentioned as helpful to succeeding in school. Not only was time limited for this population because of their parenting responsibilities, but many of them missed a lot of school time because of absences related to their child or their own illness during and after pregnancy, making time management and organization imperative. Time constraints and absenteeism for the participants interviewed will be discussed in detail in Conditions That Hinder Learning Theme 6 of this chapter.

**Conditions That Hinder Learning**

In this section, themes on conditions that hinder learning for teenagers who are pregnant or have babies that emerged as a result of the open-coding strategy (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) that answer Research Questions 3 and 4 will be discussed.

Research Question 3: What do teenagers report as the major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they are pregnant?

Research Question 4: What do teenage mother report are major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they have a baby?
The researcher found that themes on conditions in school that hinder learning that emerged for Research Question 3 and 4 were similar for pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers. As a result the researcher did not differentiate between these two variables and therefore the themes on conditions that hinder learning that emerged that answer Research Questions 3 and 4 are discussed together.

The researcher found six themes on conditions that hinder learning as a result of data analysis. The first three themes that emerged on conditions that hinder learning are the mirrored opposite of the first three themes found on conditions that support learning. The first theme is identified as Lack of Social and Emotional Support in School. The second theme is identified as School, Programs, Policies and Practices and the third theme of support is identified as Characteristic of Self. The first three themes pertain to conditions in school that hinder learning. As a result of data analysis, three additional themes were identified on conditions that hinder learning outside the school. Thus, the fourth theme is identified as Lack of Social and Emotional Support Outside the School Community. The fifth theme is identified as Life Circumstances Outside the School Community and the sixth theme is identified as Time. The researcher suspects the themes that emerged that hinder learning due to conditions outside of school may in fact have been the mirrored opposite for conditions outside of school that support learning. However, Research Questions #1 and #2 limited the analysis to conditions in school that support learning. Themes 1-6 on conditions that hinder learning are presented separately in the following discussion.
Conditions That Hinder Learning Theme 1: Lack of Social and Emotional Support in School

Theme one captures pregnant and parenting mothers feeling and perceptions on the lack of support they experienced in the school environment which hindered their learning. The lack of social and emotional support from school professionals and other staff and school peers was reported by pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers. Earlier in this chapter, it was discussed that both pregnant and parenting teenage mothers reported the importance of social and emotional support in the school. The flip side to this discussion is the feelings and consequences expressed when social and emotional support was lacking in the school community.

Some participants reported that they felt some of the teachers in the school had a negative attitude toward teenage pregnancy and parenting that was evident to the participant. Maureen felt that some teachers assumed teenage mothers will drop out and she felt these teachers give up trying to help them. Maureen also felt some teachers passed judgment about teenage mothers.

Some of the teachers attitudes [make if hard on teenage mother], not my teacher or anything, but some of the teachers. I've heard some other people say that they get really picked on by the teachers for being pregnant. Probably because they are teenagers. [They make a judgment about me], like they , just like, oh well... They expect all of the teenage moms to drop out. They say, oh, who cares, might as not even try with her. She's going to drop out anyway.
Suzanne asserted that some teachers "need to get an attitude adjustment" that moms "can't always be criticized." She goes on to explain that "just because we're pregnant teens or teen moms, doesn't mean we have to drop out of school, but we would really like an education..." Kaitlynn suggests that the best way to get around these negative feelings is to ignore them.

I mean, one of my teachers I had has never said anything, but I've heard things that she said to other students before. I know more the students have a problem here. I was talking to this one girl and I told them you can't think people are going to think things, but you can't worry about it.

Lorie felt people in the school judged her harshly because she was only thirteen when she had her son.

[Now] people are like, you're how old? Now I'm sixteen. How old were you when you had him? Oh, fourteen, and they look at you like, what, you were how old? I mean, like now, it's like, oh.... That means when I was thirteen it was like a big thing. A couple of teachers were like, you have a baby? They were just like, negative....

Tiffany felt her teacher was disappointed with her. She was not the type of girl the teachers thought would get pregnant.

Maybe a few [of the teachers attitudes changed when they found out I was pregnant] because they thought that I would never get pregnant, you know, but it isn't like they hate me anything. They're just sort of discouraged with me.....

Tiffany commented that she had teachers who did not mention the pregnancy or the baby to her. Her thought was that the teachers didn't want
to get involved. They were not going to get in the way, but they were also not going to get involved. She felt like some teachers just ignored her situation.

They don't [ask about the pregnancy], they haven't said anything, you know, it sort of just like, just look over it, but they are probably thinking about it.... [The teachers], they might [ask about the baby], but I think a lot of then have a tendency to sort of ignore it, just not get involved with it all. They're there, but if you have to leave class, they'll let you leave class. They understand that, but it's a lot of it is just, it's your life, and they don't want to really get into it as much...

Suzanne actually recalled a time when one of her teachers was putting down pregnant teens and moms in front of her.

I don't know exactly what he said, but he was putting down pregnant teens and teen moms. I think that he basically said that they shouldn't be happy and stuff like that and it's wrong. ...but we have our happy times and I have a lot of them. I shouldn't have to be sad, so I was very upset.

The importance of social and emotional support from professionals in the school community was evident in the words of the participants. Also evident, was the uncomfortable, sometimes defensive feelings they had when they felt judged or ignored by their teachers. Participants seemed less articulate about ways in which they were judged by their teachers, but reported they felt teachers had a negative attitude toward them because they were pregnant or were teen mothers.

Participants gave clear examples of how peers, other than pregnant and parenting teens, expressed their disdain and how the lack of social and emotional support made them feel isolated from the rest of the school.
community. They felt ostracized by the mainstream student population. They also found that their new life circumstances were so different from the mainstream student population that they separated themselves from the mainstream.

Christina commented that her social life had really changed since she had her son.

I don't go out no more. I haven't seen a movie in a long time. I usually rent a movie and stay home and watch him or hardly go to the mall....

Joanne made a similar comment.

I used to go out every night with my friends or my boy friend or what ever and now I am with my mom and we go out to dinner or shopping. It's completely different.

Laurel commented that she does not have the same amount of money to spend on herself to go out because she has "to spend it on her." She goes on to say," I don't know life has just changed. It's the way I look at [it] now, that's really important." Although some of the participants wished they could spend time with their friends, they often acknowledged that they wanted to be with their baby and that life had changed for them.

Some participants noticed a change in their peers once their own priorities shifted and they no longer were able to spend social time with their peers. Joanne noted that "A lot of my old friends don't talk to me very much any more. I think because they're out doing their own thing and I go to bed at 9:30 PM on a Saturday night because I'm so tired." Laurel reported feeling
ignored by peers because she had a baby and Breanne felt she was never invited to attend social functions. Jennifer reported that she felt that those teenagers who did not have a baby did not understand her.

The girls [in high school without children], they don't, they don't know [what it is like]. They have no idea what it's like....Some of the girls, they look down upon you. [they think], oh you've got a baby, you're this or you're that and they call you all sorts of names..

The feeling that other students in the school who were not pregnant and/or parenting lacked understanding was also captured in Claudia's comments. "...they're just like, why is that baby crying in the hall shut him up, and you know they give me dirty looks and they are just really inconsiderate."

Some participants felt they were being stereotyped. One stereotype was that pregnant teens and teen moms have no social life. Jennifer commented on this.

They think that we're this and we're that and we can't do this and we can't do that and we're friendless and they don't know how to have fun and we can't even go anywhere.

In addition to feeling like they were being stereotyped, there was the feeling of being looked down upon. Laurel felt peers looked down on her for being a teen mom.

Some of them (other students) [look down on us], you know, the ones, there are all the people who don't understand. It can happen to anybody. I didn't think it could, you know, it can even happen to the ones that are looking down on you. They just don't understand. If they had more understanding of what teenage parenting is, I think they would have a little get more respect for us.
For some, the lack of support they experienced in the school from the mainstream student population went well beyond the feeling of being stereotyped, ignored and put down. Some participants were subjected to verbal abuse. They were called "sluts" and "whores" in school. Although Barbara did not mention being personally called these derogatory terms, she explains why pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers are harassed.

They assume that if we have kids, then we have sex a lot, you know, and we're 'sluts'. It's not that way. There's girls that are down here that got pregnant by a guy that they were with for three years and then the guy dumped them or the guy is still around or whatever. It's just they never look at it that way. They can never see things from our point of view and it's really hard to get along. Some of them do [have an attitude]. I think I would rather call it a lack of understanding because they just, either they don't understand because they never talk to you, or they don't understand because they just really don't want to...

Christina thought the same as Barbara and expressed her anger toward the injustice she experienced.

There is a lot of bad stuff, like some guys think you're a whore because you have a baby, or something like that and I get mad and I want to fight them sometimes, but I try not because if you fight here your baby can't go to the daycare.

Gloria mentioned she has been called a "slut" and other names."

For Carole, the name calling was also taking place at home. She would receive phone calls at home from students in her school giving her a hard time about being pregnant.
I would get phone calls and from girls when I was in Middle School, and they were just saying these nasty things which was stupid because they were girls and all of them now are pregnant.

For Jennifer, the peer alienation was intensified because the father of her baby was still in the same school and they were no longer together. For some of the participants, the opportunity to develop peer relationships other than with pregnant and parenting mothers, was difficult, because they had changed schools. School sites D, E and F all had a teen pregnancy and parenting program that were magnet programs. Some students had to change schools to take advantage of the special services. For some participants this meant attending a new school where they did not know other students. They had no social support group upon entering the new school. Those participants returning to school after dropping out also found it difficult to develop peer relations in school. Gloria noted, "with all the young kids (high school students), I had a real problem with [coming back to school]." She was older than the other students in high school when she returned.

Safety concerns were brought up by some participants. For example, LaSandra talked about the time a student pulled a fake gun on her and her baby in the hall. Tracy talked about being knocked down in the hall. Heather talked about students picking a fight with her in the hall. Carole and Lorie talked about being moved to a different school once they found out they were pregnant because the school staff did not think their school would be a safe place for them. In these cases, verbal abuse had escalated to physical safety
concerns. This issue will be discussed in more detail in Conditions That Hinder Learning Theme 2: School Programs, Policies and Practices.

Social and emotional support from peers and professionals in the school was reported as important conditions in school that helped the participant meet the challenge of succeeding in school while pregnant or parenting. The lack of social and emotional support from peers and professionals was a source of stress and anxiety for these students. Many participants felt their peers and some professionals stereotyped them and had negative attitudes about them. They felt isolated and disconnected from the mainstream social culture of the school. This isolation was created, in part, by students who ignored them or were verbally or physically abusive and in part, by their own withdrawal from the mainstream. Many participants had reported that their lives had changed and their new responsibilities had pulled them in a different direction.

Conditions That Hinder Learning Theme 2: School Programs, Policies and Practices

This theme refers to the programs, practices and policies embedded in the tradition and culture of the school that hinder pregnant students and parenting mother students from becoming successful learners once they become pregnant and/or have a baby. Specifically, this theme refers to three dimensions of curriculum. The expressed dimension; the pre-planned curriculum that includes the scope and sequence of a program, the intended learning objectives and assessment of learning. The implied curriculum; the
unintentional messages conveyed through programs, policy and practices and the students perceptions of these programs, policies and practices. And the emergent dimension of curriculum; the adaptations and adjustments of these programs, policies and practices in response to the needs of the students.

Conditions That Support Learning Theme: 3 in this chapter discussed the ways in which the school curriculum helped the participants become successful learners in schools. One of the big concerns of all the participants was the number of absences incurred due to parenting responsibilities or health problems of the child or participant. Participants reported that school policies that excused absences for parenting responsibilities and health problems and provided opportunities to make up work were helpful. Participants also reported that even though in most cases school policies excused absences related to parenting and health problems, they still missed so much school that they fell behind in classes. Some participants missed so much school they lost credit for their courses and fell behind their graduating class. Kaitlynn was one of those participants.

[I returned to school in the Fall.] I started during the first semester. [When] I came back I was a half a year behind my graduation [class]. I should have graduated last June and then I could have graduated this year if I would have had all of my credits, but I didn't have all my credits so I will graduate this June.

In one of the school sites, AJ reported that she only had twelve days of excused absences.

They gave me ten days out [when I had a baby] and then I had to
return back to school, ten days. [My son] was born September 23rd, then Thursday, I had my baby. It was like 7:22 AM. [I went all the way to the end because you only get to miss twelve [days]. You can't miss no more than twelve days in a semester. If you do you loose your credits for that semester.

AJ goes on to explain she made it back to school in ten days, but she "was thinking about him all day." and she feels that ten days is not enough days to have a baby and get back to school.

The Homebound Program, they allow you like ten days out of school, which is really [not enough], because you're not really healed in those ten days.

She also felt that the Homebound Program should be available "where emergencies that, like your baby is sick, I would think you should be excused;"

It's really hard, you know, you can't miss no more than twelve days and then I have appointments in between that I have to go and get myself checked and he also has to go to the doctor like twice every month and either he sick. If I miss more than those twelve days, you know, my credits are gone so that's a disadvantage, too.

Christina reported that she felt Homebound helped her keep on top of her work when she was out, but "it was kind of hard because the teacher that they sent me, she didn't know how to do pre calculus [so ] I had to do that on my own."

Heather explained that she felt she had such a limited number of days she could be out of school that she went to the very end of her pregnancy.
I was even school when I was in labor. I was in school. I told people, I said, 'Well, I ain't [going to miss school]. Everybody [said], 'You have to stay out of school.' I said,' I can do it, so cause I knew I could, and I didn't want to miss. I knew I was going to miss six weeks so I just wanted to stay in. I was in school for three days while I was in labor. I went into labor on a Wednesday and I had her on a Sunday. I stayed in [school] until Friday. [The nurse (at the school)] knew, so they had me go down like every hour, like every time after class.

Lorie believes the absence policy is the same for all students and there are no exceptions for her. She believes if she goes over the allotted twenty days for excused absences, then she will have to appeal.

This year I have missed [school] a little more than I have in the past because of Danny. It's the same for everybody [when you miss school]. They don't have special things, but this year they are giving us twenty days. Last year we couldn't, this year we do, so we're lucky. That's for everybody. [If we go over the days we have to appeal.] We do it ourselves. We just say, you know, I would say, I have a son, he was sick, that's my excuse. If you don't buy it fine, but I haven't reached it (a total of twenty absences) yet, so.

Heather shared her frustration with having to appeal for her credits when she missed six weeks of school to have her baby. She is annoyed at the idea of having to "appeal" for her credits when her teachers know she was out of school because she had a baby.

[You can miss] twelve days before you loose your credits. I have to go appeal for my credits. That's why I don't like this school much any more because of that. To appeal for my credits when I was out for six weeks? All my teachers know that I was out for six weeks because I had a baby. I don't understand why I have to go appeal for them. I know I'm going to get the credits. They have to give them to me. I go to my house administrator, but if they don't give my credits, I go right to the
school board, cause I have to get them. They are guaranteed to me. I'm not going to recover in a couple of days after I have my baby.

Complaints about missing school were frequent in the discussions with the participants. The reasons for missing school were varied and are discussed later in this chapter under Conditions That Hinder Learning: Theme 5: Life Circumstances Outside of School. However, regardless of the cause of frequent absences from school, participants were caught in a bind. They did report that the number of days they were allowed to be excused from school were too few considering their need to be out of school and yet, they felt their frequent absence from school was a problem. They found themselves behind and it was a challenge for them to get caught up.

Participants at one school site mentioned parking as an issue for them. The day of the interviews at this school site, students had their cars towed because they were parked illegally on school property. Not only did the students have difficulty finding a ride to get their car after it had been towed. They also had to pay the price for towing which was a lot of money for them. One student commented that she was concerned about what her boyfriend was going to say and do when he found out the car had been towed. The problem with parking at school was that there were not enough parking spaces and students had to park a long distance from the child care facility at the school. Breanne described why parking is a real problem for the teenage mothers and her frustration with the situation.

[This school should give a break with parking.] Today we went up and talked to the office because we had felt like for a long time that we needed companion parking, somewhere we could park, whether we could park in the faculty parking lot sometimes. Because, like today, I
had to park a good four or five blocks from the school and lug my
daughter, her diaper bag, my purse and the Christmas stuff up to the
school. Four or five blocks, it's not easy and I mean, I'm lucky she's
light. She's only seventeen pounds, but lugging seventeen pounds
four or five blocks when it's wiggling and squirming and wants to
look at everything...

One serious concern that participants mentioned was safety in the
school. This was mentioned briefly in Conditions that Hinder Learning
Theme 1: Lack of Social and Emotional Support in School, verbal abuse from
peers other than those in the teen pregnancy and parenting program
sometimes escalated to physical abuse. Breanne felt that these incidents
happened often enough that "[Schools should have something] where if the
other kids are harassing people and starting fights or whatever, something
should be done about those kids."

The problems with physical safety in the school building were not
always directed at the participants, but were just a part of high school culture.
For example, Claudia talked about the number of bomb threats in the school.

    We've had a lot of bomb threats here and it really makes me
    mad because they know that there is a nursery full of kids down
    here and we have to go sit outside for five hours with the babies.
    That's not good. The [high school] kids, they just don't care, you
    know.

Claudia, who had a gun pulled on her and her baby describes how unaware
the rest of the student population is about having young children in the high
school setting.
...Actually, last year some guy, I guess it wasn't a guy it was some stupid kid wanted to be really smart and pulled a gun on me and my baby when we were coming down[stairs]. We were walking down the stairs and he thought it was a fake gun, but it looked real though. He thought it would be cool to scare me with it and so he pulled it at me and my son and was really saying things that were really bad and the police came and everything. The police had their guns out because they thought it was a real gun too. So people; are just real jerky here (non parenting students).

Claudia goes on to say that other incidents that pose a safety threat for the young children go on in other places in the school building too.

They don't know what your going through, what it means to be a parent. [When you eat lunch upstairs] that's when you notice attitudes. [One] time they threw water balloons at the babies. Some stupid kids were throwing water balloons and decided to hit a bunch of babies.

Tracy deals with safety by taking one day at a time. She gives some words of advice for teen parents to help them be safe in the hallways.

[If someone else were going through this experience, I would tell her to] handle it day by day. Maybe, I don't know, be cautious of people. There is always people in the hall ready to knock you down and hurt you. There is always fights in these halls. I just walk away....

Tracy acknowledges that her behavior in the hallway changed once she became pregnant.

...I don't want to get into it . I use to be the type of person that would stand in the middle and try and push away from each other, but I'm not going to endanger my baby for someone else.
Although physical danger was not always directed at the participants interviewed, the question of overall safety of pregnant students and young children in the school building was a concern for participants.

Conditions That Hinder Learning Theme 3: Characteristics of Self

This theme refers to characteristics of self identified by the pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in this study that hinder them from being successful learners in school. While being pregnant and having a baby was a motivating factor for returning to school or staying in school for many participants, participants felt that having a baby was also an excuse for dropping out of school. Theresa talked about teen mothers using their baby as an excuse not to get their work done.

....A lot of people use that (having a baby) for an excuse and I don't want to stay home. 'I have a baby so I can't do my homework last night because he was crying....' A lot of kids wouldn't [do their homework]. You don't have to do your homework tonight cause you can just say the baby was crying and maybe you'll get an extra day. I really don't know. [if the school would give me an extra day to do homework]. I wouldn't try Some of them, I know probably would....

While having a baby motivated some participants to return or stay in school, some participants also felt that having a baby can be an excuse for leaving school. Gloria certainly felt this way. "A lot of girls used their babies as an excuse. That's not cool when you do that. A lot of girls just don't want to come (to school).

The lack of drive and determination needed to succeed in school as identified by participants and discussed in Conditions That Support Learning
Theme 3: Characteristics of Self hindered students from succeeding in school according to some of the participants. Sandra believes that there is nothing a school can do to keep a pregnant teen or a teen mother in school if she doesn't want to be there.

[I don't think there are things the school can do to help.] No, I don't think so. I think if your going to do it, your going to do it (stay in school). If your not going to do it, your not, your not, regardless of who tell you this or who tell you that. Your going to do what you want to do, so I don't think so.

Claudia made a similar comment about the need for personal drive and determination in school. "you can talk to them until you are blue in the face, but they're going to do what they're going to do...." When referring to other teenage mothers who had dropped out of school, DORATHEA suggests that they "don't care", and that teachers are "doing their all, and they (students) like [need to] give back."

Participants were clear that motivation and determination, drive and commitment were self characteristics that were key to succeeding in school, without these characteristics, some participants interviewed felt pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers would not be able to meet the challenge of parenting and succeeding in school.

While participants articulated major difficulties in school that hindered their success in school once they were pregnant or had a child, there were many factors outside school that made succeeding in school a challenge. The following themes that emerged in the interview describe the major challenges outside school that hinder participants success in school.
Conditions That Hinder Learning Theme 4: Lack of Social and Emotional Support Outside the School Community

This theme focuses on the lack of social and emotional support that participants describe that made life difficult for them outside of school and thus interfered with their success in school. Treatment by family and peers, and community attitudes that created stress in the participants life will be discussed.

In many of the interviews participants identified family members and friends that gave them support outside the school that made it possible for them to continue their schooling once they became pregnant and had a child. Likewise, participants talked about people in their lives outside of school who were not supportive and made life difficult for them.

Many of the participants spoke about the reaction of family members, peers and community members to their pregnancy. Shock, disappointment, embarrassment and anger were some of the feeling described by participants. For some, the family and father of the baby wanted the participant to give up the baby for adoption or have an abortion.

Joanne's family and the father of her baby wanted her to have an abortion. Joanne recalls the stressful battle she had with her family and boyfriend when she refused to have an abortion.

At first my family and the father wanted me to have an abortion and that battle went on for, like a month. Then they found out I was having twins, so it just got even worse. Then I finally told them, I'm not giving up these babies so, they decided, OK, this is what she's going to do. We can't kick her out on the street...
Upon reflection, she realized that if she had gone to school when she first found out she was pregnant, she would not have been very successful.

When I first came here (to the school with the Teen Pregnancy /Parenting Program) my parents were starting to settle down with it (accepting her pregnancy) so it wasn't that hard, but I know that if I would have gone to school right when I found out that I was pregnant I probably wouldn't have gone to a lot of classes.

Some of the participants hid their pregnancy because they were afraid of the reaction of family members. Carole was six and a half months along before anyone knew she was pregnant. When her parents found out she was pregnant they put her in a place "where you live and give up your child for adoption and that's not what I want to do." She felt powerless because she was only thirteen at the time "and that's what they (parents) wanted." After staying in the home for a month she came home and worked with an adoption agency that allowed her to live at home. It was then that she learned about the program for pregnant students at the school. She enrolled in the program where she finished out her pregnancy. Still, against her wishes, her parents insisted she give the baby up for adoption. When the parents of the father of the baby would not sign the adoption papers, Carole had the choice of keeping the baby or giving custody of the baby to the father's parents. The final custody court date was not until the baby was four months old. Carole spent that whole time worrying whether or not she was going to be able to keep her daughter.
I didn't have a choice [about putting her up for adoption], because my parents, that's what they wanted. I mean, I was just thirteen and I couldn't really say. His mom (the baby's fathers' mother) wouldn't let him sign, so they took us to court and it was my decision to keep her or bring her home cause when I had her in the hospital, the rules of the agency were that she was going to go straight home with that family, but I told them all that I'm not leaving here without her.... It was hard because the court date was not until she was almost four months old. I was like, I was crying everyday, just thinking that when it comes, what if they didn't show up for court then I would have to give her up.

Breanne also kept her pregnancy a secret because she felt her parents would want her to have an abortion.

I didn't tell any of the teachers that I was pregnant. I was trying to keep it a secret from my parents for as long as I could. I didn't want an abortion. I wanted to wait until I was pretty sure I couldn't have an abortion before I said anything to them.

When Breanne finally told her parents, "they took it very bad" Her parents also wanted her to give up the baby. "If they helped me take care of myself, while I was pregnant [then] I would give her away, but I couldn't do that. Breanne recalled her parents being "totally, totally against my having my daughter." She went on to report that her parents do not communicate much with her because of the baby. "They don't really talk to me anymore since I've had my baby."

Because may of the participants kept their pregnancy a secret, they did not go to the doctors until they were way into the pregnancy. For example, Barbara was six months pregnant before she saw a doctor, AJ didn't see a doctor until after she was sure she could not have an abortion and Carole was
six and a half months along before she saw a doctor. Some participants did not see a doctor until they were well into their pregnancy because they claimed they did not know they were pregnant. Christina was seven months along before she discovered she was pregnant:

[When I first got pregnant] mom thought I had a thyroid problem cause I had lost a lot of weight. I had lost twenty pounds. She kept taking me to the doctors and they didn't know what was wrong with me. My sixth month, my mom, she didn't notice me getting bigger, so she took me to a thyroid specialist and they just took that test and they said, yea, that I was pregnant and that was what was causing all my problems and stuff. I didn't have morning sickness. I just once or twice, I would feel real hot like I was going to faint and then I threw up phlegm, it was just spit, but I was so hot. [I didn't know I was pregnant]. I thought something [was wrong], because I had two periods, so I didn't know. My mom said since I had been in basketball, she said that athletes have different periods. She wasn't worried about it. I didn't really worry about it cause I thought that was just it cause I had two [periods].

When Christina finally discovered she was pregnant her mom was not happy when she first found out.

... I called her at work and I told her and she didn't feel upset at first and then she came home crying and she locked me in my room and yelled at me for about thirty minutes and then that's about it.

Christina's boyfriend did not want her to tell her mom because he was afraid of her mother's reaction.

...when I found out, my boyfriend didn't want me to tell her. He was scared of her. He's scared of my mom so he got scared. No way, never. He got real upset cause I told her, but he was scared.
Heather described being "scared" to tell her parents and her father's reaction as being "mad". Tracy commented that her dad "wouldn't even look at me." when he found out she was pregnant.

Kaitlynn believes "[To stay in school while you are pregnant or having a baby] just depends if she (teen mother) can or can't work and how her parents react." Many of the participants had to deal with mixed, often passionate reactions toward their pregnancy. Although some of the participants were still with the father of the baby, some reported that the father left before the baby was born.

Although it was not mentioned as often, some participants reported that the fathers of their babies were not supportive. Claudia felt the lack of support from the father of her baby placed a big financial burden on her.

Another reason why I'm on Welfare [is because] Andy's dad is a complete loser and won't even help support Andy. I'm not saying he has to support me, but at least give me child support. When you sign up for Welfare they ask you where the father is and this and that. I told them, I don't' know because he told me if I were to get him in trouble with the law that he'd kill my family and kill me and kidnap Andy. So I don't even want to deal with him, you know, because he's pretty crazy. I know where he's at, I know everything about him, but he said that if he ever got in trouble you know...

In Claudia's case, her boyfriend made threats on her and her family if she attempted to seek any kind of support from him.

Joanne, who was pregnant with twins at the time of the interview reported that the father of her babies was "in and out." "The father is like
back and forth. He doesn't know what he is going to do so I can't really depend on him."

The importance of support from family members and peers outside the school helped the participant deal with everyday life so that they could concentrate on school when they were there. Breanne felt schools needed to be cognizant of the individual life situations pregnant teenagers and young mothers were experiencing. She suggests that schools need to be supportive of young women who are trying to parent and go to school, especially those students who do not receive the support at home. She commented that "the teachers and everybody in the school need to be so supportive with so many girls here that don't get support at home." She goes on to say that many of these mothers are living with their boyfriend and can't make it; "I mean since I started helping down here (nursery) there have been ten girls that have dropped out just because they were living with their boyfriends and they couldn't make it. Her closing remarks suggests that those students with supportive families are the ones that are successful in school. "Some other people with supportive parents, they are the ones that do it (continue in school)."

Even when parents were supportive, there was often conflict in the home. Maureen talked about her parents being "real bossy and over protective" of her and her son. She felt her mother wanted to mother her son and that created tension between them.

Boy, does she ever [want to mother him.] She keeps telling me that he's going to call her mommy instead of me...I'm not so worried about it, cause I know he knows who his mother is and his grandmother is and everything. It upsets me sometimes when she say things like, that she tries to act like, you know, it's
her son.

Breanne also felt like her parents threaten to take away her son if she is not a good mother.

They keep saying that they're going to take him away from me and everything and I'm like, no he's mine. They keep saying, if I don't do well enough, they'll get a lawyer and take him away from me and everything. I want to be the best mother I can for him.

In addition to the stress created when family and peers did not support participants, they also felt they were the recipients of the negative attitudes society has about teenage mothers. Barbara recalled an incident in school that made her think about what people in the community think about her. Following an incident in school when she had to leave early from class to go to the nursery, Barbara reported that a teacher made the remark, "Maybe you need to listen to someone that is older than you." Barbara felt the comment was contemptuous. She felt it was a put down because she was a teenage mother.

You know, like we're so young we really can't possibly know what we're doing." ..... I mean, I don't think that's just at school. I think that is anywhere. I think that there are people that are just outside of school, like at the grocery store, or anything, just people, because they're older, think that there is not a way that a teenager can possibly know how to raise a child.

Claudia felt she was judged by others when she went to the grocery store and used food stamps.
People have a problem with Welfare and I can understand. If I was sitting on my butt collecting Welfare checks, but I'm not doing that. I'm working really hard to get off of Welfare and you now, I get food stamps too and so people in the grocery line they just look at me. They are just like, that lady's lazy, whatever, but you know, I'm going to school and I'm working hard to not keep using [Welfare] I think people need to be more understanding.....

Joanne suggests, that it may not be a negative attitude about teenage pregnancy that causes people to react the way they do to her, "they just 'don't know what to say." She shared the reaction of some of her mother's friends at a Christmas party.

People that, like mom's friends, we went to a Christmas party. Some of them I didn't know, were pretty shocked at first. They didn't really know what to say, either congratulations to me or I'm sorry to my mom. So I think they kind of have a reaction. They don't know what to say....

Claudia is discouraged with people's thoughts about her on Welfare. She wishes people understood just how hard it is to be a teenage mother trying to complete school. "I guess you can't really understand how hard of a day it is unless you actually walk in our shoes cause it's very tiring and very hard...."
Conditions That Hinder Learning Theme 5: Life Circumstances Outside the School Community

This theme focuses on what participants reported were sources of stress distraction and school absences in their lives outside the school. Included in this discussion is the physical well being of the participant and their baby, financial concerns, child care concerns and transportation concerns.

In addition to the stress and distraction created when conflict existed between the participant and family members and/or peers outside of school, participants reported other life circumstances that distracted them from doing well in school. Several of the participants reported an increase in absences in school related to their physical well being and/or their baby's physical well being.

Some participants reported that they had difficult pregnancies and difficult deliveries that caused them to miss school or struggle through school days exhausted. Morning sickness caused some of the participants to miss school. Heather reported that she had morning sickness so much she had to "drop out of school." Heather dropped out of school for the last three months of the spring semester and lost some of her course credits.

It wasn't morning sickness, it was all day sickness and all night so I couldn't sit in class....I dropped like the last three months of the year, I couldn't handle it.
Maureen was working in the kitchen in a hotel as a part of her assignment for the Hospitality Center, a VoTech class. She lost three credits because she also had to leave because of morning sickness.

[I had a lot of morning sickness.] I couldn't open the refrigerator, oh God, grocery stores, oh God. I had morning sickness so bad that I couldn't stay there cause the smell of food. I just kept running to the bathroom and everything.

In addition to having morning sickness Maureen also had a C-section which took time to heal and her son was born with spinal bifida and other physical complications.

Tracy and LaSandra also talked about having morning sickness in school. Kaitlynn had a difficult pregnancy and had to go to the hospital because of complications and ended up on bed rest.

It was about the fifth or sixth month that I was pregnant and I started having problems. I was out of school at least once a week. Then it just got to the point where I would have to go to the hospital. I would have to go to the doctor's and finally, I remember last Halloween I was on my way [to school]. [I] got ready for school and I ended up going to the hospital for contractions. After that I got put on bed rest.

Kaitlynn continued to have health problems after giving birth to her son. She reported that she is anemic and also has bouts with kidney stones off and on. Sandra ended up in the hospital on bed rest before she had her daughter. She had a ruptured placenta.

I had to go into the hospital cause I had a ruptured placenta. I had to stay two weeks before I had the baby, in the hospital. But,
I did some school work [when I was in the hospital]. I was just on complete bed rest. I wasn't in labor or anything. My water bag just broke. I wasn't in pain. I was just in the hospital lying in bed.

Her daughter was born premature and was in the hospital for four weeks on a respirator.

Joanne was pregnant with twins when she was interviewed. Her doctors were not convinced she was going to carry to term. It was conceivable that she would go into labor up to three months early. During the last three months of her pregnancy, she was advised to take it easy and was planning not to return to school after the new year. She was planning to have a home tutor during those months. Joanne was worried that her babies would be delivered too early.

[I'm due in ] April, but I'll probably deliver in February or March. They want me to be able to carry as long as I can. In order to do that, I need to rest a lot. [I could deliver early because they are twins] and because I'm younger....They said if I make it to twenty-eight weeks, I'm good still, but if I don't make it to twenty-eight weeks, there is nothing they can do. When they tell me that I get really nervous because if the babies are born before twenty-eight weeks, they don't do very well and it's tough saving them, but after twenty-eight weeks, they have a much better chance.

Dorathea talked about staying out of school to rest and recover from her delivery. Her doctor wrote the school a note so she could stay home "because of the fact that I had stitches and I was anemic and she (the doctor) just didn't want me to take time in school tearing my stitches or anything like
that. Claudia reported that she had toxemia at the time of birth which is not uncommon for young mothers.

Regardless of whether the participants reported a difficult pregnancy and/or delivery, all of them commented that being pregnant or parenting made them physically exhausted. Many of their remarks captured how worn out they felt. Theresa remembered how exhausted she felt when she first returned to school and how she has slowly gotten used to having little sleep and being tired.

...When I finally got back [to school] it was pretty hard, but I managed to keep my eyes open. Now I'm starting to get used to it.... [Now that I have the baby], I average about six hours of sleep in a night. It usually wouldn't be enough, but I guess I have kind of gotten used to it now and so everything is fine. When I first came back to school, I was completely worn out. I had no energy at all. I guess I'm kind of getting accustomed to it now, so it's working out a little bit better.

Christina, LaSandra and Breanne all had similar experiences.

[When I first had the baby], at first if they turned out the lights [in the classroom] I would go to sleep. I got out [of the hospital a week after I had him]. After I delivered him I started hemorrhaging. I lost a lot of blood so I was weak for a long time and I was still anemic and it was hard for me to carry my butt and walk up and down. (Christina)

[Nothing changed in school for me since I had the baby], everything is about the same except, I'm tired.... I don't get much sleep, that is one of the changes I have noticed [since I had the baby.] [I feel tired in school], but I kind of live without sleep because I have to graduate. (LaSandra)

[When I first got pregnant] I kind of quit going to class often. I was in VoTech from noon on and I only had a first period class
and a second period class. I was so tired when I got home, I
couldn't get up cause I was working and being pregnant. So I quit
going to class. (Breanne)

Not only did participants report that they missed school because of
their health, but also because their baby was sick. Maureen's son David, was
born with spinal bifida and is hydrocephalic. Maureen talked about all of the
time he has been in and out of the hospital and all of the doctor's
appointments he has. He also receives physical therapy. On many occasions
Maureen has to miss school to take care of David.

We had lots of doctor's appointments during the week and there has
been neurosurgeons, pediatrics, the family practice, the urologist, and
everything, a whole bunch of x-rays and ultrasounds and on his
kidneys and shunts to make sure everything was working fine.

After several trips to the hospital over the summer, Maureen returned to
school, however David was sick during her first semester back.

I missed quite a bit of days cause David was hospitalized twice
during the school semester. The first time he had a urinary track
infection and they thought he had some kind of a virus and he
was hospitalized for four days. They didn't find anything else so
they let us out and everything and I missed two days cause he
still wasn't doing well. I came back and made those days up and
about a couple of months ago, he was hospitalized for five days
or six days cause they thought they were going to have to
re-operate on his shunt and redo it again cause his head was
getting full, but it turned out he was really backed up on his
bowel movements. He had to stay there until they could clean
the system out and that was basically [what] was wrong with
him. So I missed a whole lot of days there and plus he had
gotten quite a bit of colds and stuff and I didn't want then to get
too far along cause he would end up in the hospital again.
Claudia missed three weeks of school because her child had the "basic" kid sickness.

...You know basic, kids get sick a lot, especially in the winter. I was gone for three weeks because, first my son was sick and in the hospital and then I. Then he got pink eye and then he got this and then I got sick and had an infection and so I was gone a lot for three weeks.

Kaitlynn also missed a lot of school because either she was sick or her baby was sick.

I've missed a lot of school. I've missed probably half of this year so far because either Chris has been really sick or I've been sick and you know my car or one thing or another.

Heather told a story of rushing her daughter to the hospital because of a high fever caused by a virus.

She just got out of the hospital, actually Tuesday, because she had the virus that was going around. She was like wheezing and she was like coughing really bad. She would choke herself and she would stop breathing and W had to give her CPR. He took health occupations and had to do CPR on her. He got her breathing and we brought her to the emergency room. We had to keep her there from Tuesday after school until Friday night and I missed all of that from school. I stayed over night. He went to work, but I stayed out of school cause we can't afford the four days of missing work.

Gloria's son has had a lot of problems since birth. He had to have surgery for a medical problem at birth. The operation cost $50,000 which was
not covered by insurance. Gloria and her fiancee were battling with the insurance company for coverage.

Breanne told a story about her daughter having the croup and how fearful she was that her daughter was going to stop breathing.

...She is having a lot of trouble breathing. I went to bed that night and I laid awake for most of the night just listening to her cause she would stop breathing and then she would suck in air again, finally, and start coughing and I was so worried that if I didn't lay awake and listen, one time she wouldn't suck in the air again and I would miss it.

Breanne noted that she also had a fear of losing her baby. She recalled friends who had lost their baby.

We had a friend this year, a very good friend of mine, who lost her baby. They buried her the day that she would have been three months old. Last year, while I was pregnant, I had a friend who was induced at seven and a half months for____ (medical problem) and she lost him. He lived fifteen minutes and it was just really hard. We have another friend who's baby had meningitis a little while ago. She was walking. She is a year, a little over a year old. She was walking and everything and [now] she has to learn to crawl.

Sandra spent a lot of time going back and forth to the hospital because her daughter was born two months premature and weighed three pounds, eight ounces when she was born. She stayed in the hospital for four weeks on a respirator. Christina told about the time her baby was in the hospital because of an upper respiratory infection and he wouldn't eat. Suzanne used most of the twenty absences allotted a semester. "I've been sick, I've gotten up late, doctor's appointments, and the welfare case." Suzanne and her
boyfriend had been reported to the Department of Social Services because of suspicion of child abuse.

The stories of poor health and sickness were varied and numerous, yet filled with worry and concern. It was so apparent that they were exhausted by the pace and intensity of their lives. Those who spoke about their babies being sick and their own sickness, worried about missing school. Some were behind in classes, some were worried about passing grades and others were repeating classes because they had missed too many days and had lost credits for the courses they were taking.

Financial concerns were also mentioned by some participants. Some participants were balancing school and employment. Christina believed that this is the reason why many young mothers have to leave school.

[They have to give up school] if they're baby has a lot of health problems or if they just give up trying to go to school and they can't handle [it]. You know, some have to work all the time so they can't handle working and going to school and they get tired all the time so they have to give up one or the other and they usually give up school so they can support their baby.

At the time of the interview Maureen was looking for a part time job "so I can still learn and make a little bit of money to help us out." She doesn't have to work full time because her parents help support her and her husband financially.

Kaitlynn works twenty plus hours a week to help make ends meet. With what her husband makes, plus a small income from her father who is disabled and financial assistance from the state, "we're just making [ends meet.]"
At least twelve participants reported that they were receiving some kind of financial assistance. Maureen was concerned about finding adequate health insurance.

I didn't have a chance to go to the doctor's office cause I don't have health insurance. First of all, I just have a gold card from the county and if I want to go to the hospital, it takes a long time. They make you sit there and wait so long and I have a lot of other things to do and I don't like to take David to the hospital and take a chance of him getting sick. I don't have anyone to watch him if I go to the hospital.

Maureen does not have health insurance for herself and she is worried that if anything were to happen to her she would not have anyone to look after her son David.

Child care concerns were discussed in some of the interviews with the participants. All of the teen mothers interviewed had arranged child care for their child. Children were either in the child care facility at the school or were at home with a family member. Some participants talked about the difficulty they had leaving their baby in child care. Their reasons varied.

Jennifer mentioned that it was "hard getting back into the schedule. It was hard leaving Diane, she went right to the nursery. It was hard, but I got over it." Sandra talked about trusting a child care provider.

She's not going to any day care [if I work]. She's not going cause I don't trust people that much. She can stay at my father's house or with one of my aunts. I wouldn't leave her here [if they had a daycare at the school] either. When she can talk and when she can tell me things then she can go and let me know what is going on, but other than that, my mother is watching my daughter. Nobody but my family. I really didn't trust those people in the hospital with her. I knew she had to stay, but I didn't have no choice.
AJ also talked about trusting the child care provider. "when your trying to go to school and you got to have somebody to keep your baby, someone you trust." Tracy was pregnant at the time of the interview and talked about her plans for day care after the baby was born. She was hoping not to use the school child care.

If it's necessary [the baby will come here for child care, yes, but I rather it not. It's a good program and everything, just some of the people here, I don't get along with and I don't want them taking it out on my baby.

Breanne talked about how difficult it was to leave her son at child care when he did not want her to leave.

....He was going through that, don't leave mommy, you know. So I have to go to class all upset cause I just had to hear him scream..... Yeah, [it was hard for me when he was crying.] I was just like, not for a couple of weeks, I couldn't even really work on anything. I was just like, I can't leave my little kid down there. It left a strange urge and people are like, he cried all day. I was like, oh jeez, I felt wicked bad. It was like he was always happy to see me and I was like, I'm sorry.

Transportation also posed a problem for some of the participants. Kaitlynn lives about twenty miles from school. She usually drives to school except when her car is broken down. She has to depend on her grandmother. If something happens to her grandmother, she will not have a ride to school.

It's at least a twenty minute drive [to school]. twenty miles up here and twenty miles back. [I drove to school] usually except when my car broke down so my grandmother has been bringing
me. It's eighty miles for her because she comes here drops me off and goes home comes back and picks me up later and then we go home, but usually I've got my own car now....

Barbara had to depend on her boyfriend and others to give her a ride to school. With two children and pregnant with her third, the thought of riding on the school bus was too much. She still had not taken Driver's Education yet. She was going to take it but "I was pregnant and didn't want anything to happen."

It was clear from the participants words that being pregnant and having the responsibility of being a parent made it difficult at times for them to attend to school. Participants had frequent absences from school due to their health and/or their baby's health. When they were not physically absent from school, their minds were often elsewhere thinking about their child or solving other life challenges. Theresa commented how she daydreamed about her son during school;

[I daydreamed about him] a lot of times. When I have spare time, if I finish class, if I finish my work early. I sit there [in school] and think: Is he crying right now? Is he OK? Is he changed? Is he fed? It's a lot of things that I'm worrying about. My aunt, I know she takes good care of him. I'm always going to worry. A lot of times I will just get so mad because I can't be there with him to be there [with the baby] and I'll get so upset, sometimes [so] that my head hurts. I want to be there with the baby, but I can't go. Sometimes, I'll just want to run upstairs and go to the pay phone....

They worried about their children's health and how they were going to pay for medical bills, or if they were going to be covered by insurance. Some
participants had to work to help pay bills. These participants were juggling the demands of work, school and parenting. Daycare was on the minds of some participants. They worried about trusting people in the child care setting and some struggled with leaving their baby in the nursery. Transportation to and from school, as well as to doctor's appointments often involved logistics that were time consuming and complicated. All of these life circumstances were a source of stress and distraction from school and caused school absences. Breanne clearly articulated how life circumstances outside of school interfered with her schooling.

I had too much other stuff I had to focus on. You know I needed to focus on my doctor's appointments. I needed to focus on, you know, what I was going to do about the fight I had with my parents. I quit really working on school stuff...I couldn't remember every thing. I had some many other things twirling through my head. when information was given me , I couldn't remember it I didn't retain it all.

Conditions That Hinder Learning Theme 6: Time

This theme pertains to the time involved in being a teenager mother and a student as reported by the participants. While pregnant teenagers reported they had less time for school because they were often sick during pregnancy, this theme pertains to parenting mothers. Each participant was asked to describe a typical school day from the moment they woke up in the morning until they went to bed at night. The accounts of their typical school day are described in their profiles (see Appendix C). The descriptions of their daily schedule make it apparent that many participants had very little time
for themselves. Their days were packed with responsibilities related to parenting, for some, work and school. When Suzanne recalled a typical day, she sighed and remarked; "That's a day. It's very long." Christina's day was also long. She found a little extra time to sleep on the bus. "I'm tired, so I go to sleep on the bus until I get to the house." Laurel's days are long, and she is up a lot in the night so she is always tired. "She wakes up about five or six times a night."

The participants often started their day early in the morning and did not go to bed until 10:00-11:00 PM at night. Many of the participants remarked that they had to get up in the night with their child.

There seemed to be little time for homework throughout the day. As was commented earlier in the chapter in Conditions That Support Learning Theme 3: Characteristics of Self, homework was squeezed in whenever possible. A guaranteed time to work was never certain. Heather talked about how difficult it was to read for school because she was too tired.

....I had a book review due and I haven't even done it yet. It was due Monday and I told him, I just don't have time to sit and read a book because [by] the time she goes to sleep, it is like 11:00 PM at night. I mean, she sleeps through the night, but it's 11:00 PM at night. I can't sit and read. I probably read like a paragraph and then I fall asleep. My boy friend brings me to work. I can bring it and read then, but that's all of five minutes.

The time factor is related to all of the life circumstances discussed in Conditions That Hinder Learning Theme 5: Life Circumstances Outside the School Community. These participants lives had changed once they became pregnant and especially once they became parents. Parenting responsibilities
varied among participants, but all the teen moms had parenting responsibilities. Life circumstances caused long days. Extended periods of exhaustion made it difficult for many of the participants to function to the best of their abilities in school. A typical school day described by each participant provided a glimpse of their daily reality.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the themes that emerged as a result of open-coding system (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The researcher found that the themes that emerged for pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers were the same for both conditions that support and hinder learning. Although the themes were the same, the particulars varied among individuals, for both pregnant and parenting teenager. Because there were only three participants that were pregnant at the time of the interview, in contrast to seventeen participants who were mothers, the data supporting the research questions for pregnant teenagers was limited. In addition, when parenting teenage mothers discussed their school experience with the researcher, they did not separate the experience of pregnancy and parenting in school, but rather, identified the experience as a continuum from pregnancy through the present parenting experience. Thus, the researcher combined these two variables when discussing the themes in the analysis. However, the researcher identified particulars under each theme, specific to these variables, when they were identified by the participant.
In summary, the researcher found three themes that emerged on conditions that support learning. In addition, the researcher found six themes on conditions that hinder learning. In the analysis, first themes on conditions that support learning that answer Research Questions #1 and #2 were discussed. Second, themes on conditions that hinder learning that answer Research Questions #3 and #4 were discussed.

Three themes emerged on conditions that support learning that answer Research Questions #1 and #2. The first theme identified was Social and Emotional Support in the School. The second theme identified was School Programs, Policies and Practices and the third theme identified was Characteristics of Self.

The researcher found that both pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers shared similar experiences in school. While the pregnant teenagers did not have the added responsibility of parenting, they reported that schools supported them in similar ways that teenage mothers reported school supported them.

Participants in this study identified ways in which school helps them succeed. Social and Emotional Support in the School (Conditions that Support Learning Theme 1) refers to the participants feelings and perceptions about how others in the school environment support them socially and emotionally. Two groups were identified that provide social and emotional support in the school. It was reported that professionals and other school staff provided support for pregnant and parenting teenage mothers at all of the school sites. At school sites where there was a teen pregnancy and parenting program, pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in the program were
identified as a support group in school. While there were variations in ways participants felt supported by professionals and their peers, the social and emotional support helped them succeed in school.

Sinclair and Ghory (1987) suggest that curriculum be conceptualized as environments for learning. Curriculum then consists of both the external environmental conditions for learning; "the social, intellectual and physical conditions in school that influence the behavior and the students perceptions of these conditions." (p. 88) In doing so, when educators examine the ways in which school support student learning, they look at the particulars of the social, intellectual and physical conditions in individual school. The perceptions of the participants in this study were that the social/emotional support from professionals and peers was important to their success in school.

School Programs, Policies and Practices (Conditions That Support Learning Theme: 2) refers to the programs, practices and policies embedded in the tradition and culture of the school that pregnant students and parenting students identified as helpful to their school success. Participants' stories of how schools support their learning suggest that all three dimensions of curriculum are important to their school success. These dimensions (Sinclair & Ghory, 1987) are the expressed dimension; the preplanned curriculum that includes the scope and sequence of their program of study, the intended learning objectives and assessment of learning; the implied curriculum; the unintentional messages conveyed through programs, policy and practices and the participants perceptions of these programs, policies and practices; and the emergent dimension of curriculum; the adaptations and adjustments of these
programs, policies and practices in response to their needs. Embedded in this theme are several references to all three dimensions of the curriculum. These findings support the notion that students feel supported in the classroom and school when they receive messages that they are welcome. These messages are "conveyed by the rules and traditions embedded as regularities in the life of a school and in its classrooms" (1987, p.90) and with the ongoing adaptations that are made in these rules and traditions to accommodate the uniqueness of individuals.

The Characteristics of Self (Conditions That Support Learning Theme 3) refers to the personal characteristics of the individual that helped them to succeed in school. Participants identified specific characteristics of self that helped them and others succeed in school. Finding strength within oneself, unyielding motivation, ambition and determination were among the characteristics of self that were identified by the participants that helped them to cope with their life situation. Setting goals like completing high school, and for some setting their sights on college provided motivation. In addition, time management and organization were characteristics and skills they felt they needed to develop to be successful in school.

We know that a sense of being, one's sense of self-worth, self-esteem and self-image are constructed over time and greatly influenced by life circumstances (Misick, 1993). While some literature (Protinski, Sporakowski & Atkins, 1982; Patten, 1981; Connolly, 1975; Roberts, 1966) suggests that poor self-concepts is prevalent among teenagers, Musick cautioned that adolescence is a transitional period for the developing self. She points out
that regardless of adolescent pregnancy, early adolescence is a transitional period that is often marked with a drop in self-esteem:

The early adolescent years are a key transitional period for the developing self. As new intellectual abilities emerge and physical transformations occur, the girl's expectations of others and their behavior toward her will change as well. In concert, these shifts act to alter the adolescent's sense of who she is and what she can and cannot do. Building on earlier self-concepts, they help to shape and reshape key facets of her self. When the girl's past and current life experiences combine to lead to a distorted or defeated sense of who she is and what she can do, the meaning she ascribes to the events of her life and the actions she takes or fails to take will reflect that distortion or defeat. The meanings are not simply the attitudes she holds; the actions are not merely spur-of-the-moment behaviors. Neither are wholly reactions to the pressures and lack of options in her environments. They have a deeper and more complex history in the development of her self and its adaptations to her environments. (Musick, 1993, p. 48-49)

Thus, the researcher questions how closely related the characteristics of self are to the self-esteem and sense-of-self of each participants, and how these are related to their early pregnancy and parenting experience. The researcher suggests a correlation between these variables exist, however no conclusion can be drawn from the data collected for this study.

One particular identified in the Theme 3 Conditions That Support Learning: Characteristics of Self was the educational aspirations of some participants. Some participants identified ambitions and aspirations as key to their success in school. This is a variable that is linked with an increased likelihood of continuing schooling. Testa contends that teenagers who aspired to go on to college were more likely to finish high school (1992, p.103). Sinclair and Ghory (1987) also suggests that these ambitions and aspirations
are fueled when students see the tasks performed in school as relevant to their ambitions and goals in their own life or they feel their own opportunities in life are obtainable.

The researcher found six themes on conditions that hinder learning as a result of data analysis. The first three themes that emerged on conditions that hinder learning are the mirrored opposite of the first three themes found on conditions that support learning. The first theme is identified as Lack of Social and Emotional Support in School. The second theme is identified as School, Programs, Policies and Practices and the third theme of support is identified as Characteristic of Self. The first three themes pertain to conditions in school that hinder learning. As a result of data analysis, three additional themes were identified on conditions that hinder learning outside the school. Thus, the fourth theme is identified as Lack of Social and Emotional Support Outside the School Community. The fifth theme is identified as Life Circumstances Outside the School Community and the sixth theme is identified as Time. The researcher suspects the themes that emerged that hinder learning due to conditions outside of school may in fact have been the mirrored opposite for conditions outside of school that support learning. However, Research Questions #1 and #2 limited the analysis to conditions in school that support learning. Themes 1-6 on conditions that hinder learning are presented separately in the following discussion.

The researcher found that both pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers shared similar experiences in school. While the pregnant teenagers did not have the added responsibility of parenting, they reported difficulties that hindered them from being successful learners in school. Thus, the
The researcher combined data for these two variables and themes that emerged for Research Questions #3 and #4 were discussed together in the analysis.

**Conditions That Hinder Learning Theme 1: Lack of Social and Emotional Support in the School** captured pregnant and parenting mothers' feelings and perceptions on the lack of support they experienced in the school environment which hindered their learning. While pregnant and parenting teenage mothers reported the importance of social and emotional support in the school, when social and emotional support was lacking in the school community made it difficult for participants in school. Participants felt they were stereotyped. They felt professionals in the school buildings as well as other students had negative attitudes toward them because they were pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers. Some participants were the recipients of verbal and physical abuse in the school. In addition, participants felt isolated from the rest of the school community; in part because they felt ostracized by other students and because they had changed.

**School Programs, Policies and Practices** (Conditions That Hinder Learning Theme: 2) refers to the programs, practices and policies embedded in the tradition and culture of the school that pregnant students and parenting students felt hindered them from being successful learners in school. While participants reported ways that schools support their learning and specific examples were cited that fall under the three dimensions of curriculum, stories of major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school suggest that all three dimensions of curriculum can create barriers to learning in school.
Participants reported that when pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers did not possess the characteristics identified as helpful to school success, they had a more difficult time in school. Having a baby motivated some participants to return to school or remain in school. Participants felt that for some pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers, having a baby was an excuse for leaving school. Some participants believed the lack of certain self-characteristics in individuals hindered their success in school (Conditions that Hinder Learning Theme 3).

It is not surprising that the lack of conditions that support learning (Conditions That Support Learning Themes 1-3)) in school, hinder learning. For whatever reason learning is hindered, students are at risk of becoming marginal. Marginallity occurs when there is a mix-match between the student and the environment for learning. This mix-match can take place at all three dimensions of curriculum identified by Sinclair and Ghory (1987). This potential for marginality was evident in the first three themes on conditions that hinder learning in school.

Participants identified major difficulties in school that hindered their success. They also identified major difficulties in their lives outside of school that interfered with learning in school. The lack of social and emotional support (Conditions that Hinder Learning Theme: 4) from family, peers and community outside of school was a source of stress for participants and was reported to be one of the major difficulties they experienced outside of school that hindered their learning. This finding is not shocking when one considers the social climate for teenage pregnancy in our nation. In many instances, when a teenagers gets pregnant and chooses to have a baby she pays
a high social and economic price (Lawson, 1993). This lack of support at a
critical transition time in the lives of these young people may hinder their
ability to succeed in school. Evaluation of school programs that were effective
suggest that social/emotional support for this group of students is important.
Nickel & Delany (1990) identify involvement of others, such as partners and
family, and strong emotional support were common characteristics of
effective teen parenting programs

Life circumstances outside the school community (Conditions That
Hinder Learning Theme 5) that produced stress, distracted the participant and
caused absenteeism created barriers to success in school. The physical well
being of the participant and their baby, financial concerns, daycare problems
and lack of transportation were most often mentioned by participants as
challenges that interfered with school.

The life circumstances that many pregnant teenagers and teenage
mothers faced in this study are consistent with the literature. There are
numerous medical problems that are associated with teenage pregnancy
(Hudson, Ineichen, 1991; Dryfoos, 1990; Hamburg, 1986). Many of the medical
problems cited in the literature were also conditions experienced by
participants, such as; toxemia, kidney problems, anemia, nutritional
deficiencies and Cesarean sections. The physical well being of the student
affects their ability to succeed in school. Those who suffer from ill health
miss school and find themselves behind.

There are also high risk outcomes for babies of teenage mothers
(Schmittroth, 1994; Turner et al., 1990; Wasserman et al., 1990, Garn, Pesick &
Petzoid, 1986) Some of the participants babies experienced medical problems
cited in the literature as common problems for babies of teenage mothers. These problems include; spinal bifida, meningitis, respiratory infection, low birth rate and prematurity. These babies required additional care and attention, thus taking more time and attention away from school for the mother.

The financial concerns that plagued participants are associated with the the common socio-economic condition of many pregnant and parenting teenagers. Brindis reminds us that, "attention needs to be paid to women's social circumstances, and to the poverty, that is the major predictor of adverse life outcomes." (Brindis, 1993, p. 258) Whether these life circumstances are the antecedent or consequence of teenage pregnancy and early parenting, they are often conditions that hinder school success. The life circumstances of the participants in this study are common among this young population of females in our nation.

Lack of time (Conditions That Hinder Learning Theme 6) was always a challenge for the participants. While pregnant teenagers reported they had less time for school because they were often sick during pregnancy, this theme emerged for parenting mothers over and over. Parenting responsibilities varied among participants, but all the teen moms had parenting responsibilities. Life circumstances caused them to have long and busy days. Extended periods of exhaustion made it difficult for many of the participants to function to the best of their abilities in school.

As with any other school aged population, the overall social, psychological, and physical wellness of the pregnant teenagers and the teenage mothers, and the circumstances in which pregnancy and child rearing
take place, contribute to the likelihood of their success or failure in school. The data analyzed in this chapter provide insight into the conditions in school that support learning once participants became pregnant or had a child. Data from this study also provided additional insight into the major difficulties participants experience that hindered their learning in school once they become pregnant or had a baby. Data analyzed in this chapter provide the foundation from which to draw conclusions about ways to help pregnant and parenting teenage mothers succeed in school.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS

This chapter is divided into four parts. First, a summary of the present research is presented. Second, conclusions concerning ways to support pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers so that they may be successful in school are presented. Third, implications for changing school environments to improve learning for this population of students. Fourth, ways to strengthen the present study are presented and fifth, implications for future research are suggested.

Summary of the Study

The United States “has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy and childbirth among Western industrialized nations” (Lawson and Rhodes, 1993, p. 1.). More than one million teenage girls in the United States become pregnant each year, just over 400,000 teenagers obtain abortions, and nearly 470,000 give birth (Hayes, 1987).

Early childbearing is a significant antecedent to dropping out of school (Prater, 1992; Prater, 1991; Prater 1990; Turner et al., 1990; Hofferth and Hayes, 1987; Mott and Marsiglio, 1985; Waite and Moore, 1979; Trussell, 1976). Both alienation from school and environmental conditions associated with teenage parenting cause failure and dropout. That a sizable population of teenage mothers are not succeeding in school or continuing their education is a problem. Some schools have designed support programs to assist this
school population and continue working to discover ways to help individuals succeed in school. This requires an understanding of the problems facing pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers that hinder their education and an understanding of current conditions in schools that make it possible for them to become successful learners.

Meaningful curriculum can be designed when the social, physical and intellectual conditions for learning as well as the student's perceptions of these conditions are harmonious. To design curriculum in schools that meets the needs of individuals, information and knowledge about the individual is essential. Pregnant and parenting teenage mothers who are succeeding in school can provide insight on ways they utilize school programs to help them in the context of their own complex set of circumstances. Their perceptions of conditions in school that help or hinder them become successful learners in school help us to better understand how they are able to overcome the odds of school failure. This knowledge provides insights for helping other teenage mothers who are not succeeding in school.

This study is an inquiry into the school life of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers who are balancing the demands of pregnancy and/or parenting while in school. The purpose of the study is to gain insight into current conditions that exist in schools that make it possible for pregnant and parenting mothers to be successful learners in school. Another purpose of this study is to gain insight into the difficulties pregnant and parenting mothers face that hinder their success in public education.
The study was carried out in the following manner. First, participants for this study were selected from six schools from various locations across the United States. Five of the schools were members of the National Coalition for Equality in Learning. Each school had varying degrees of services for pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers. The sites chosen serve a demographically diverse population with regard to age of teenager, age and number of children of teenage mothers, race, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, marital status, and geographic location. Directors of the school programs for teen mothers at each school invited to participate in this study were asked to identify a demographically diverse pool of participants who became pregnant and/or a parent between the ages of thirteen and nineteen. Twenty-one participants were selected for this study. Interviews were conducted at the participant's school.

A current literature review was conducted to better understand the complexity of teenage pregnancy and motherhood in this country today. A review of the social and political context of teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood provided insight into the problem of teenage pregnancy and motherhood. The review of the psychological and cognitive development, health, and social circumstances of teenage pregnancy and motherhood helped provide an understand of antecedents and consequences of teenage pregnancy and motherhood and the impact on success in school. The concept of marginality and conditions influencing success and failure in school for this specific population of teenagers was explored along with existing school-based programs for pregnant and parenting teenage mothers.
The data collected for this study came from open-ended interviews which provided a framework within which participants expressed their own perceptions and understanding of how schools both helped and hindered their learning. After all the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed verbatim and then rewritten as narrative profiles; descriptive accounts of school experiences in the words of the participant. The profiles were treated as individual case studies. Each profile was searched for data that answered one of the four research questions and the data were sorted into four general categories that corresponded to each of the questions. An open-coding strategy (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) was used wherein emerging themes found under each research question, in each narrative profile, and then across profiles were examined. Analysis continued for six months after data collection was completed. Analysis allowed for several conclusions to be drawn concerning conditions in school that hinder learning for pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers and conditions that supported their learning.

Conclusions

Perceptions of pregnant and parenting mothers toward conditions in school that help or hinder them becoming successful learners in school are provided in the information collected for this study. Reports of conditions in individual’s situation-specific lives give a better understanding of the struggles pregnant and parenting teenage mothers have with learning in school. They provide helpful information on how they have organized their lives and the meaning they attach to what goes on in school.
Reports of the challenges and support individual school settings create are complex because of the many variables that effect how the individual and the learning environment interact. However, striking diversity, as well as common perceptions, were evident in the findings. The common perceptions of conditions in school that both support and hinder successful learning were identified and lead to several conclusions about how the participants in this study met the challenge of pregnancy and/or parenting and being a student.

Conclusion #1

Flexibility and a willingness to adapt school programs, policies and practices were identified as helpful. Changes in homework assignments, extensions on due dates, releasing students early from class so they could pick up their child in daycare were a few supportive adaptations identified by participants. When schools recognized and affirmed the needs of individuals and their life circumstances, participants felt reasonable accommodations were made so that they could be successful in school. Accommodations were made without compromising the integrity of the program. For example, students could get an excused absence with documentation from their doctor when their absence was related to personal illness or their baby's illness. The school accepted these excused absences and accommodations were made so that students could make up their work. Likewise, when schools were not flexible and willing to adapt certain program practices and polices to meet the needs of individuals, the curriculum became a barrier to learning in school.
Conclusion #2

The social and emotional challenges of being a pregnant student or a school aged mother is extremely challenging. Adolescence is a time marked by rapid physiological growth, cognitive development as well as social change. It is a dynamic period in life that is often accompanied with confusion. When adolescence occurs concurrently with parenthood, it creates a developmental challenge that may be wrought with conflict that presents additional challenges for this population (Prater, 1995).

Participants identified social and emotional support from peers and professionals in the school as important to success in school. Social and emotional support was described in different ways. It was described as an understanding of the participants' basic needs, such as having to use the bathroom and to eat and drink frequently when pregnant. Social and emotional support was also identified as having an understanding individuals' life situations and circumstances, such as being physical exhausted, having to attend to their child's medical problems, child care problems, lack of transportation or unreliable transportation to and from school, financial problems and family problems. Adaptations in course assignments, extensions on due dates, scheduling and such, were viewed as acts of support from teachers.

Social and emotional support from pregnant and parenting peers in the school was important. They shared common school experiences and understood each others social status in school. They identified themselves as
different from the rest of their school aged peers because of their experience with pregnancy and parenting while in school.

Likewise, the lack of social and emotional support from peers and professionals was a source of stress and anxiety. Many participants felt their peers and some professionals stereotyped them and displayed a negative attitude toward them. Because of this attitude they felt isolated and disconnected from the social culture of the mainstream. This isolation was created, in part, by peers who ignored them or were verbally or physically abusive and in part self imposed by choosing to withdraw from the mainstream. Many participants reported their life had changed and their new responsibilities had pulled them in a different direction.

Conclusion #3

Participants were concerned with physical safety in the high school environment. A safe and caring place for the mothers and their babies was important. Fear of physical harm and danger to the mother and their babies were cited. Although physical danger was not always directed at the participants interviewed, the question of overall safety of pregnant and parenting students and their young children in the school building was a concern.

Conclusion #4

Overall, the courses and special services offered in school that were relevant to the lives of the students and addressed some of their immediate
needs were identified as important to their school success. This included on-site child care facilities. Free child care facilities on the school grounds allowed several of the students to attend school. The cost of child care would have otherwise been prohibitive, making it impossible to attend school. Also, daycare on the school grounds allowed the mothers to spend time with their baby during the school day.

Relevant courses were identified as helpful. These included courses on parenting skills, child development, career training and career planning. Courses that did not directly pertain to the teen mothers' life situation were not identified as helpful. However, adaptations made in these courses that were in response to their specific needs were identified as helpful to completing course work for degree requirements.

Conclusion #5

Participants identified self-characteristics which helped them and other teenage mothers cope with the strain of being a parent and succeeding in school. Being pregnant and having a baby was a motivating factor for returning or staying in school for many participants. This motivation was driven by commitment and determination. Many had to find strength within themselves to manage the overwhelming demands of being a teenage parent and student. Many of the participants mentioned their ambitions and goals after high school which also became a source of motivation. These findings are consistent with the literature. Testa (1992) found that teenagers who aspired to go on to college were more likely to finish high school.
In addition to the self-characteristics identified that helped participants cope with school, the skills involved in organization and time management were mentioned as helpful. Not only was time limited for this population because of their parenting responsibilities and in some cases employment, many of them missed a lot of school because of absences related to illness or their child’s illness making time management and organization imperative.

Although students felt the accommodations teachers made in courses to meet their specific needs were helpful, some participants also commented on the importance of maintaining academic standards for teen mothers. Participants used adjectives such as motivation, determination, commitment, time management and organization to describe self-characteristics that were key to school success. Without these characteristics, some participants felt pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers would be unable to meet the challenge of parenting and succeeding in school.

Conclusion #6

While participants articulated major difficulties in school that hindered their academic success once they were pregnant or had a child, there were many factors outside school that made succeeding in school a challenge. Participants felt a lack of social and emotional support from family, peers and community outside school hindered their success in school. Many participants believed supportive family members and friends made it possible for them to continue their schooling once they became pregnant and had a child. Likewise, participants talked about people in their lives outside of school who
were not supportive and made life difficult for them. Frequently the families' reaction to the participant's pregnancy was described as one of shock, anger, and disappointment. The lack of support from family and peers outside the school added to the stress of parenting and continuing their schooling.

**Conclusion #7**

In addition to the stress and distraction created when conflict existed between the participant and family members and/or peers outside of school, participants reported other life circumstances that distracted them from doing well in school. The physical well being of the participant and their baby, financial concerns, daycare concerns and transportation concerns were often challenging and interfered with school success. Complaints about missing school were frequent. Participants reported that the number of days they were allowed to be excused from school were too few considering their need to be out of school, and yet they felt their frequent absence from school was a problem. They were often behind in their school work and it was a difficult challenge to get caught up in classes.

Being pregnant and having the responsibility of being a parent made it difficult at times for them to attend to school. Frequent absences from school due to poor health and/or their baby's poor health was a common problem. Even when not physically absent from school, they were distracted and disconnected from school. They often daydreamed about their child or solving other life problems. They worried about their child's health, how they were going to pay for medical bills, or if their medical bills were covered by insurance. Some participants had to work to pay bills. These participants
were juggling the responsibility of work, school and parenting. Daycare was on the minds of some participants. They worried about trusting people in the daycare setting and some struggled emotionally with leaving their baby in the nursery. Transportation to and from school, as well as to doctor's appointments, often were time consuming and complicated logistics. All of these life circumstances were a source of stress and distraction from school and caused school absences.

Conclusion #8

The sheer time factor of being a teen mother and a student challenges the potential for success in school. Participants described their daily schedule. It was apparent that they had very little time for school or themselves. Their days were packed with responsibilities related to parenting. These participants' lives had changed once they became pregnant and especially once they became parents. While the amount of time each teen spent caring for their child varied, depending on their living situation, their life circumstances caused long days and extended periods of physical exhaustion. Thus, it was difficult for many of the participants to function at the best of their abilities in school. The typical school day described by each participant offered a glimpse of their school day reality.

Implications

Two sets of implications are raised from the conclusions of this study; implications that directly relate to conditions in school environments that
influence student success and life circumstances outside of school that influence students' success in school. The implications presented here do not reflect all of the implications that can be drawn from data in this study are not complete. Rather they reflect the perspective and concerns of the researcher.

Implications for the School Environment

The first set of implications include considerations for building learning environments that serve pregnant and parenting teenage mothers. These implications include: social and emotional support for learning, adaptation in school programs, policy and practices in school curriculum and characteristics of self.

Implications for Building Learning Communities for Pregnant and Parenting Teenage Students. Public schools have a responsibility to provide quality education for all young people. While programs are being designed to address the needs of pregnant and parenting teen mothers, many of these young people continue to leave before completing high school. Learning conditions in school are such that these young mothers are unable to meet the challenge of parenting and continue their education. Data from this study provides situation-specific insights that indicate there are common challenges that face pregnant teenage and teenage mothers in school as well as ways schools support their learning. These challenges and supports lie in the many layers of the multi-dimensional school curriculum known as environments for learning. This study suggests that the school needs of this
specific population are embedded in the interaction of people, ideas and resources in the individual school and individual student. Data from this study indicates that the strained relations between the student and the learning environment are not necessarily intellectual, but are related to the social, emotional and physical well-being of the individual student.

While common themes on conditions that support learning and conditions that hinder learning emerged, it was clear that differences among individuals and how they held together their complex lives and utilized school programs varied. To address the needs of these students, educators must look at both the commonalities and differences among learners of this population. The challenge is to avoid the tendency to construct a singular profile of teenage mothers with one program of service. Rather, ways must be found to fit the individual with conditions in school that meet their needs. Educators working with this school population must, therefore, look at the life stories of individuals and not presume that pregnancy and motherhood define their life course when designing school programs that accommodate their needs. This requires that those who work with this population are knowledgeable and sensitive to the challenges and stresses that young individuals face as they try to continue with their schooling while pregnant and/or parenting.

Implications for Social and Emotional Support and Learning. Data from this study indicate that parenting and pregnant teenagers need the social and emotional support of school professionals and peers to help them meet the challenge of schools. To create an atmosphere of support professionals
must convey to students a sensitivity and understanding to the situation-specific needs of individuals. This will depend, in part, on developing trusting relationships and mutual respect. For these relationships to develop, educators must be cognizant of their perceptions and presumptions about this population. In addition, they must understand home and school conditions that contribute to the challenge of going to school while pregnant and/or parenting and they must understand the individual's developmental and intellectual needs as a student. Furthermore, educators need to reach out to students and demonstrate their support by actively supporting and encouraging these young women to stay in school and realize their potential.

**Implications for Adaptations in School Programs, Policies and Practices**

This study indicates that certain school practices and policies make it difficult for students to succeed in school while pregnant or parenting. It is essential that educators who work directly with this special group of students be aware of the difficulty these school practices and policies present and the stress they must create for them.

Some school policies and practices can be easily adapted without compromising the integrity of the school program. For instance, allowing students with a legitimate reason related to their specific situation be late to class or negotiating due dates for assignments to be sensitive to the demands on the students at a particular time. Helping students work within given limitations may be helpful in some instances, such as providing coping strategies, study skills and time management skills, all of which are essential to their school success. Changing other school practices and policies to
support the needs of this group may require additional advocacy for this population including educating other professionals in the school building to better understand the situation-specific needs of these students. The stress and disconnection created by practices and policies in school should not be ignored. School personnel should be alert to signs of stress and disconnection, acknowledge the student's feelings, and attempt to alleviate these conditions by taking supportive action.

Data from this study indicate that absenteeism is a major concern for this population. Policies regulating the number of absences allowed per semester before course credit is lost may need to be examined. Many students miss school while pregnant because of morning sickness and other medical complications related to their pregnancy. Additional causes of absenteeism occur after the student has a baby. Complications at delivery and other medical problems related to early pregnancy, as well as medical problems of the baby, may cause the student to be away from school for extended periods of time. Accommodations in absentee policy should be made to support these students' efforts to remain in school rather than to penalize them for situations they can not prevent.

Implications of Individual Student Characteristics that Enhance Success. Data suggest that self-characteristics of individual students contribute to school success. It is a highly motivated group of students who take on the challenge of parenting and school at the same time. These students recognize that their success, in part, is related to their own motivation and determination to do well in school and graduate. In
addition, discipline, organization and time management were recognized as key to school success. These findings suggest that students are aware of the shared responsibility of the school and the student for successful learning. Students who do not possess these self-characteristics may have a more difficult time in school. While schools can teach organization skills and time management, motivation and determination of students comes when students begin to see the value of school in their own life. This means that conditions in school must be meaningful and relevant to the lives of those who are pregnant and are struggling to parent while moving through the tumultuous stage of adolescence. They need to see the tasks performed in school as relevant to their own ambitions and goals and feel that their own opportunities in life are not restricted and that their aspirations are attainable.

Implications Beyond the School Setting

There are many situation specific circumstances in the lives of pregnant and parenting teenage mothers that interfere with learning in school. While the life story of each individual differs, there are common challenges and needs of pregnant and or parenting teenager that interfere with learning in school. Changes in school curriculum alone will not provide the myriad of needs of this population. Schools must reach out to non school setting such as families, peer groups, and communities for support, as well as to other youth serving agencies.
Implications for Family and Community Support. This study suggests that community support along with family and peer support helps participants succeed in school. This support was identified as actions that encourage, support, and motivate students to continue in school. Lacking this support, students found the challenge of school more difficult. In addition, when needs of the teenage mother and her child were not met outside of school, students found it difficult to meet the demands of school. Financial circumstances for some pregnant and parenting students are such that they must be employed. Child care provisions are not always reliable or alternative child care provisions are not available when the child is sick. Medical needs of the mother and the baby require time and attention away from school. Transportation to and from school can be a problem for some young mothers. For students to participate in magnet schools with special programs, they have to drive a long distance and in unreliable transportation; for younger students, they are not even old enough to be licensed. Schools need to recognize the complexity of life for this population and work with other youth serving agencies to develop a multi-service approach to support students in school. Educators need to recognize that for some pregnant teenagers and/or parenting mothers, attending school is not possible because of the obstacles inherent in their complex lives, especially for those students who do not receive the support and encouragement at home to continue school.

Implications For Teacher Education. Teacher education programs are responsible for preparing teachers for the social and ethical responsibilities of
helping all students learn. Individual schools can be a powerful place for constructive change. Sinclair and Ghory suggests "to turn schools around, to make further progress toward the ideals of quality and equality, will ultimately depend upon the leadership of teachers that grows from their effectiveness and skills in creating classrooms where all children learn." (Sinclair & Ghory, 1987, p. 7).

Teacher education programs should be preparing teachers for the responsibility of ensuring that all students have equal access to a quality education. This means that teachers preparing to work with adolescents should know the possible array of needs and challenges many pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers face. We know that teachers, who are closest to the learner, are in a position to effect changes in student learning. While the quality of instruction is important to effective teaching, the teacher's attitudes and perceptions of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers will ultimately affect their ability to develop a mutually respectful and trusting relationship to help them learn.

Considerations for Strengthening the Present Study

The researcher recognizes that there are ways to strengthen the present research. The researcher organized the interview questions around the four research questions that guide this study. In doing so, questions about pregnancy were asked of pregnant students and questions about parenting were asked of parenting students. The researcher found that themes on conditions that support learning that emerged for Research Question #1
(What conditions in school do teenagers report make it possible for them to be successful learners in school once they become pregnant?) were the same as the themes that emerged for Research Question #2 (What conditions in school do teenage mothers report make it possible for them to become successful learners in school once they have a baby?) while the particulars varied for the pregnancy and parenting participants and among all participants were varied. The researcher also found that themes on conditions that hinder learning that emerged for Research Question #3 (What do teenagers report as the major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they are pregnant?) were the same as themes that emerged for Research Question #4 (What do teenage mothers report as the major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they have a baby?), while the particulars for the pregnancy and parenting participants, and among participants varied.

Consequently the researcher combined Research Questions #1 and #2, and Research Questions #3 and #4 in the analysis. It is the belief of the researcher that the pregnancy and parenting variable could be explored in more depth. Because there were only three pregnant participants in contrast to seventeen parenting participants, the data for pregnant participants was limited. In addition, when parenting teenage mothers discussed their experience in school with the researcher, they did not separated the experience of pregnancy and parenting in school, but rather, identified with the experience as a continuum from pregnancy through the present parenting experience. Restructuring the interview tool to include questions that search for data related to these variables would be a reasonable starting place.
A second way to strengthen the present research is to reconsider the length of each interview and its structure. The data collected in this study was rich with insight on ways schools both help and hinder successful learning for pregnant and parenting students. However, the themes that emerged on conditions that help and hinder successful learning in school as a result of analysis could be explored in more depth. The researcher suggests that this might be achieved with additional time spent with each participant. This would mean reconsidering the interview structure. The researcher believes that a series of interviews over a period of time might achieve this goal.

Further Research

The present study contributes to research about teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood. It provides perceptions of pregnant and parenting teenage mothers toward conditions in school that help them succeed in school. Further, it provides perceptions about ways conditions in school and outside of school hinder their success. Following are considerations for future research that may add to our understanding of ways to help pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers succeed in school.

**Home-School Partnerships.** In the present study the participant pool was demographically diverse with regard to age, marital status, number of children, age of the children of teenage mothers, racial and ethnic identify, socio-economic background and geographic location. The intent of the
researcher was to identify a demographic pool that reflects the diverse population of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers who are succeeding in school. The researcher found common themes of conditions that support learning and common themes of conditions that hinder learning for all of the participants. However, diverse life stories suggest it is important to understand the lives of individuals. Their family and cultural backgrounds would provide a better understanding of these students. Furthermore, this study indicates that life circumstances outside the school have an impact on school success. Obviously, schools need to find a way to develop and strengthen home-school-community partnerships whose combined efforts provide more opportunities for pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers to attend school. Strengthening these partnerships would also create a productive learning environment that is more likely to increase student learning in school. The present study is a starting point for understanding the conditions in and out of school that support and hinder learning in school. An additional study that examines partnerships between home, school, and community can provide insights on ways to blend efforts to strengthen meaningful support services in and out of school for pregnant and parenting mothers.

Perceptions of Teachers and Other Support Professionals in the School. The current study focused on the perceptions of pregnant and parenting teenage mothers on conditions in school that both help and hinder their success in school. Some participants felt that teachers and other professionals in the school stereotyped them and expressed a negative attitude toward them
while other teachers were perceived as being supportive. An additional study that focuses on how teachers and other professionals in the school view their role in supporting pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers may deepen our understanding of attitudes toward and support for this deserving student population in school.

**A Larger Sample and Inquiry into the Influence of Specific Demographics.** This study examines the perceptions of seventeen teenage mothers and three pregnant teenagers on conditions in school that support their learning and conditions in and out of school that hinder their learning. The participant pool was demographically diverse with regard to age of the participant, age and number of children of the participant, race, ethnic background, socio-economic status, marital status and geographic location. However, data from this study came from a small sample so that no conclusions on the influence these demographics have on the participants' perceptions on conditions that both support and hinder their learning could be drawn. A future study that examines the influence of these demographics on the perceptions of conditions in schools that support learning and conditions in and outside of school that hinder learning would lead to a deeper understanding of the ways schools can support this diverse population of needy students.
Closing

Completing a high school education is one of the many challenges that may not be met once a teenager is pregnant or becomes a mother. Given the fact that early childbearing is a significant antecedent to dropping out of school (Prater, 1992; Prater, 1991; Prater, 1990; Turner et al., 1990; Hofferth and Hayes, 1987; Mott and Marsiglio, 1985; Waite and Moore, 1979; Trussell, 1976) and that one girl out of ten will give birth to a child before her eighteenth birthday (Foster, 1988, p. 1), it is clear that a sizable population of students are potentially at risk of not benefiting from experiences provided in our schools.

The circumstances that lead to school failure and school drop out are complex. There is no single etiology for school failure among young school aged mothers. However, schools are an integral part of a multi-faceted intervention network that provides relevant educational services for pregnant and parenting teens that are responsive to individual needs.

The pregnant and parenting teenage mothers in this study who are succeeding in school provide insight into ways they utilize school programs to help them in the context of their own complex set of life circumstances. We have learned from them how they overcame the odds of school failure and found ways to navigate their way through school. It is the responsibility of schools to utilize these perceptions in ways that help us develop comprehensive multi-agency school programs that provide for these students.
To ensure access to a quality education for pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers will take the leadership of those individuals in schools, specifically teachers and others who work directly with these students. Careful consideration must first be given to understanding the challenges that pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers face before action can be taken to bring about meaningful change in school that will make a difference in their lives. Initially, this means that teachers need to consider their perceptions and examine their attitudes about pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers. Too often the tendency is to construct a singular profile for this population and not identify with the individual behind the label. A change in attitudes and perceptions will ultimately affect their interactions with these students and their view of these students as learners.

Furthermore, the school community must examine its own programs, policies, and practices that create barriers to successful learning. In the words of one participant in this study, "there is so much dedication teen parents put into coming to school everyday. You have to want more than you did ever before." (P#19 Lorie). What may seem like minor adaptations in school practices, for many students may mean the difference between continuing school and dropping out. Schools need to find ways to create flexible educational options such as reorganizing curricular units to accommodate irregular attendance of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers.

Because of the multiple problems often faced by pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers, schools alone can not provide all the necessary support services needed to meet the challenge of continuing their education, nor should they. However, schools must continue to find ways to reach out to
youth serving agencies, families, and communities so as to continue collaborative efforts for student support. An approach that includes a myriad of agency services is only helpful if pregnant teenager and teenage mothers gain access to and utilize these services. This, in part, will depend on school, family and community support, the perceived and realistic accessibility of agency services for individuals and the people who provide the services. The utilization of holistic programs by pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers requires the support of trusting individuals who can advocate for these students to help guide them through complex rules and regulations that can create barriers to attaining much needed services.

Those caring educators who work with pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in schools can take leadership in becoming the critical link between the school and other crucial agency services. Educators, of all people, are in a position to better understand the flexibility needed to attend to the needs of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers whose lives are further complicated by being a student.
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM
INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

I. I, Deborah Black, am a doctoral student at the School of Education, University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts. I am conducting a study on teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood for my dissertation. My study is focused on the conditions in school that pregnant and parenting teenage mothers report make it possible for them to become successful learners in school and the conditions in school that pregnant and parenting teenage mothers report hinder them from being successful learners in school.

II. You are being asked to be a voluntary participant in this doctoral study because you are a pregnant and/or parenting teenager who is a successful learner in school. I will be conducting a 45 minute to one hour interview with you. The purpose of the interview is to learn how the school helps make it possible for you to be a successful learner in school while you are pregnant and/or while you are parenting. I also want to learn about the conditions in school that make it difficult for you to be a successful learner in school. I may ask for a second interview if I am unclear about some of the information you presented in the first interview.

III. The interview will be audio taped and later transcribed verbatim by me and/or a secretary. The transcription will be rewritten as a personal profile. You will have a chance to check the personal profile for accuracy before any materials from the profile are used. You will be one of approximately 20-25 people interviewed. My goal is to analyze the materials from the interviews/personal profiles for:
   a. my dissertation
   b. a possible journal article
   c. presentations to groups interested in providing quality education programs for pregnant and parenting teenage mothers

In all written materials and oral presentations in which I will use materials from your interview I will seek to protect your identity. I will use neither your name, names of people close to you, nor the name of your school. Transcripts and descriptive profiles will be typed with initials for all proper names. Although these precautions will be taken to protect your identity, by participating in this study you are taking a risk of
being identified.

IV. You are being asked to be a voluntary participant in this study. You are free to participate in this study or not without any prejudice. If you choose to participate in this study you may withdraw from the actual interview process at any time.

V. You may also withdraw your consent to have specific excerpts from your interviews used in any printed materials or oral presentations if you notify me when you review your personal profile.

VI. If I were to use materials from this interview in any other way not consistent with IV and V, I would contact you to get your additional consent.

At your request, I will be happy to supply you with audio taped copies of your interview(s) and the descriptive profile composed from the interview.

I____________________, have read the above statement and agree to participate as an interviewee under the conditions stated above.

Signature of Participant

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian

Signature of the Interviewer

Date
INTERVIEW TOOL

Research Question #1 What conditions in school do teenagers report make it possible for them to be successful learners in school once they have a baby.

To answer research question #1 the investigator will ask the participant to reconstruct a day in their school life. If students identify conditions in school or variables related to pregnancy that hinder their success as learners in school, the investigator will follow-up on statements made by the participant after the participant finishes reconstructing a school day. Subsequent questions that ask the participant to clarify statements made in reconstructing the events that take place in a typical school day may illuminate the difficulties that participants are having in school. The investigator may ask the participant: What is it like for you to be a pregnant student in the school? Possible clarifying questions that the investigator has prepared are as follows:

Have things changed for you in school now that you are pregnant?
What were some of the difficulties you experience in school now that you are pregnant?
Can you tell me why school has become more difficult for you?
How do you feel about school now that you are pregnant?
What advice would you give a friend to prepare her for being a pregnant student attending school?

Research Question #2 What conditions in school do teenage mothers report make it possible for them to become successful learners in school once they have a baby?

To answer research question #2 the investigator will ask the participant
to reconstruct a day in their school life. If students identify conditions in school or variables related to being a mother that hinder their success as learners in school, the investigator will follow-up on statements made by the participant after the participant finishes reconstructing a school day. Subsequent questions that ask the participant to clarify statements made in reconstructing the events that take place in a typical school day may illuminate the difficulties that participants are having in school. The investigator may ask the participant: What is it like for you to be a mother while being a student in the school? Possible clarifying questions that the investigator has prepared are as follows:

What were some of the difficulties you experienced in school now that you are a mother?

How do you feel about school now that you are a mother?

What advice would you give a friend about being a mother while attending school?

Research Question #3 What do teenagers report as the major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they are pregnant?
To answer research question #3 the investigator will ask the participant:

Earlier in the interview you identified what was difficult for you in school now that you are pregnant, do you feel the school supports you with overcoming some of these difficulties?

How does the school help you overcome some of these difficulties?

Can you be specific and tell me who or what the school does to help you overcome these difficulties?

How do feel about the support the school provides you with overcoming
some of the difficulties of being pregnant while being a student in school?

Now that you are pregnant what do you need to be a successful student in school?

If you found out your friend was pregnant in your school, how would you advice her to get support from the school to overcome some of the difficulties she might have in school once she becomes pregnant?

Research Question #4 What do teenage mothers report as the major difficulties that hinder them from being successful learners in school once they have a baby?
To answer research question #4 the investigator will ask the participant:

Earlier in the interview you identified what was difficult for you in school, now that you are a mother, do you feel the school helps you with overcoming some of these difficulties?

How does the school help you overcome some of these difficulties?

Can you be specific and tell me who or what the school does to help you overcome these difficulties?

How do feel about the support the school provides you with overcoming some of the difficulties of being a mother and a student in school?

Now that you are mother what do you need to be a successful student in school?

If your friend had a baby, what advice would you give her to get support from the school to overcome some of the difficulties she might have now that she is a mother?
Profile: 1

I had one [baby] the second day of school. I spent four weeks at home, then I came back [to school] after four weeks. They (teachers) were so happy to see me back and I didn’t have any problems. I guess that made it a lot easier on me cause they were happy to see me back. [They were saying], "You made a mistake, but that’s OK, nobody cares. We want you to keep going and kind of block out some of the ignorant students there."

[People’s attitudes toward me were pretty supportive.] I mean, it surprised me a lot, too. I just thought I was going to die my first week back. I thought it would be torture. It (the school) was very supportive. I know when I got back nobody (students) even talked to me, and everybody (school personnel), they pretty much told me if you need us, you can come and talk to us. If you ever need anything, we’re here. I think that is what helped me out a lot, because I know when I came back it was so much I had to get off my mind. I was just, my insides were torn. I was just, I was just, like, God, everybody was right there. [They would say], “If you need to, come and talk to me. We’re here. And you know, they listened and gave me advice. She (the guidance counselor) is very supportive. I think that is basically what helped me out the most, when there is someone we [students] can turn to when we just have a bunch of stuff pounding at you. I have never had anyone turn to me negatively and say anything. One of my teachers just had a baby. She was talking about her little baby and I said, “Yeah, I know what you mean.” She said, “Yeah, I forgot you had a baby and the same responsibilities that I have now.” She did it in a joking way and I liked that. My teachers, they feel free to talk to me and I feel I can talk to them. They ask me, “How are you doing and what does he look like and is he growing?” They are really supportive. I think they help me out a lot. I think if I was anywhere else and I had to put up with moaners and this other stuff, I would probably move away. They are basically very supportive.

When I left [school], one certain person, she talked about it (sex) and talked about it and talked about it at the end of school and that’s when I first got pregnant. She talked about it and talked about it and when I came back I expected to hear a whole bunch of myths about was she bad, but she ended up flunking out so she wasn’t here [at school] and I didn’t have no problems at all when I got back. [Some students would say], "I’m glad to see you back. How’s the baby?" They were pretty nice. I didn’t have any problems when I came back. I expected everybody to talk and talk and whisper [about me]. That’s what I expected, but no, everybody pretty much [minded their business]. I guess that’s what I like about here. Usually somebody wants to
ask you something. A lot of kids came up [and asked], “Did you really have a baby?” I didn't mind those [questions]. They would ask, “How is the baby doing?” They just basically wanted to know.

My mom, she was very supportive [about me having the baby]. She said, “you just have to do what you have to and I'll stand behind you. If you decide to keep it (the baby) that's fine. I'm going to stick behind you 100%.” I know a lot of girls that usually the father of the baby just leaves and says it is not mine, it's not mine. They want to deny it, but luckily my baby’s father, he's there. He comes and gets him on the weekends. He buys him Pampers. He helps. He's there and that's something that I'm grateful for, that I don't have to raise the baby on my own. He's very dependable and that is one thing I am very thankful for. I'm glad he wasn't just one of those dogs that runs off [saying], “the baby is not mine,” and doesn't want to take responsibility.

My father, he was shocked, “My daughter is going to have a baby?” He was shocked, but he was there (supportive). He was just like my mom. "If you need anything I'll stand by you. Don’t feel like you can’t come to us. Just because you made a little mistake don’t feel like we’re not there. They (parents) helped a lot. He’s (father) still saying, “I know that this is going to make it a little bit harder for you to finish school, just hang in there and finish school and keep making grades. Even if you don’t end up with a scholarship, I'll just pay for everything. If you just hang in there and do.” I guess that's making more to keep going, even more because I know if I finish he has already told me, “If you finish [high school], your college will be paid for and you won’t have to worry about anything else once you graduate.” I already made up my mind. I refuse to drop out of school and it’s a no-no and I know I’m going to college. I feel like nothing can ever get too hard to make me drop out of school.

[Now that I have the baby], I average about six hours of sleep in a night. It usually wouldn’t be enough, but I guess I have kind of gotten used to it now and so everything is fine. When I first came back to school, I was completely worn out. I had no energy at all. I guess I'm kind of getting accustomed to it now so it's working out a little bit better. And now he's sleeping a little bit more. I don’t have to get up as often as I used to. [Still], he usually gets me up around 4:00 AM or 5:00 AM.

We do not have to waste time with the alarm clock. [When] he wakes I usually have to change him and he eats and by the time he finishes eating and gets back to sleep that’s what time I leave to come to school. I’m here (in school) at 7:00 AM. I get some of my stuff around 2:45 PM and then when I get home its probably about 3:30 PM and he’s there and I play with him, like
from, I guess from maybe 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM, that’s when he usually goes back to sleep. That’s when I get the chance to do my homework and get everything done for school. He will wake up again about 11:30 PM and that is when he wants to eat. Then he goes back to sleep about 12:00 AM and then he wakes up again around 4:00 AM.

[I’m tired in school a lot.] I’m used to making pretty good grades, decent grades, and I don’t feel like they need to know (I’m tired). My sister, she had my nephew when she was 16. She went to college and she got on with her life. I don’t think there should be any piece meal for me to sleep in class or whatever. When I finally got back [to school] it was pretty hard, but I managed to keep my eyes open. Now, I’m starting to get used to it.

[I daydream about him] a lot of times. When I have spare time, if I finish class, if I finish my work early, I will sit there [in school] and think: Is he crying right now? Is he OK? Is he changed? Is he being fed? It’s a lot of things that I’m worried about. My aunt, I know she takes good care of him. I’m always going to worry. A lot of times I will just get so mad because I can’t be there with him and I’ll get so upset, sometimes [so] that my head hurts. I want to be there [with the baby], but I can’t go. Sometimes, I’ll just want to run upstairs and go to the pay phone and call my aunt. A lot of times I call and my aunt will go, “Girl, he is fine.” I call every hour on the hour. I just want to keep an eye on him and make sure everything is OK with him.

My mom [said], “I kind of expected your grades to just drop dramatically. I thought you were just going to quit.” That’s what a lot of teachers were saying, “Oh my God, we are so proud of her work. Look at her. It doesn’t even seem like she has had a child. You just look at her grades compared to last year because they are the same.” I’m just happy about that I just didn’t have a nervous breakdown or anything. My mom said, “You know, it is going to be hard, you didn’t believe me.” I’m glad I really wasn’t that way. When I got back, I kind of got into the flow of things pretty quick. It was no big deal.

I guess they [my parents] were kind of surprised my grades didn’t drop any. They were really surprised. They were both pretty proud of me because, you know, I stuck in there and did it and didn’t just completely drop like a lot of girls do. A lot of girls once they get pregnant they [think] high school is nothing. It’s part of them (their attitude), but a lot of them, their parents don’t care [or] even if their parents do have something to say about it, they just, they lose hope for their kids after they get pregnant. I guess that was a big thing with my mom, I think that was the one thing that I’m glad that she didn’t do, completely say, “OK, you can’t go to college anymore.” Like your
brain just flushed down the toilet. She just kept telling me, "Look you can still do anything you want to do. You'll just have to work a little bit harder because you have a child."

I stay with my aunt now and she watches the baby, usually until I get home because she has to be at work at 4:00 PM. So once I get there at 3:30 PM, that's when she leaves for work. You know, she watches him while I'm here at school. I'm trying to get him into day care so they can come and pick him up and bring him back home and I'll know he'll be watched until I get home. So, until I get him into daycare, my aunt watches him, but she helps out when I need.

I would feel more comfortable if they had a child care program where the baby could be here while I'm here in school. I feel better with him being as close to me as possible, but that, that's really the only thing I could think of that could have been better [at school]. It's a lot that the school is doing. I don't feel like it is anything that they're not doing that they should be doing besides the child care. I would just tell them (the teachers) to make it clear that if I needed them I could come and talk to them. Basically, tell them [the teacher] if they have any students that, you know, they have children, make it so that they can come and talk to them. It takes off a lot of pressure. A lot, when you can come in and talk to somebody, whenever you need.

I do [child care] outside of school. It is a child care program for if you are going to school or if you're working. They pay for the child's baby-sitter. The one I am trying to get now she comes and picks him up and she brings him back home. The state pays her for keeping the child while I'm in school, so that makes it a lot easier. All the girls that get pregnant, they come in (government program) and they find them a social worker. The social worker is the person that they talk to about child care and everything. They give you numbers you can call for child care [so] you can call a good baby-sitter and stuff like that. I have to make all the phone calls and fill out all the applications and everything. It is not anything that is hard-hard. It's complicated a lot of times. You have so many forms to fill out and so many phone calls to make. A lot of times you get mixed up. "Who have I called and who haven't I called?" It's a big responsibility, but I have kind of a handle on things.

Before I got pregnant, usually I left school and I got off at my stop. A lot of times I would walk home with one of my friends and just call my mom and I would say, "I'm over to such and such house and I'll be at home at five," or whatever, and I could do that, but now, once I get off the bus, I have to go and see about my baby. That's the biggest change out of everything. It's
a lot of things that I would have done before like going to the mall on the weekends and going out to the movies. These are things that I could do before that I can't do now especially with him (the baby). It's now a big deal. I wasn't really a party animal anyway, it's like every once in a while I'll go somewhere. Now if I go I have to take him with me and it's too cold now and I want to keep him in the house as much as possible. That's the biggest change because I'm at home a lot and I'm in the house all the time. Now last year I was hardly ever there, that's the biggest change out of everything.

I don't do anything after school. I mean I wanted to get a job if I qualified. Once he gets maybe a year older maybe six or seven months, maybe I can do other things. I don't really want to [do other things now] because I need to be there more for him, now more than ever. When he gets a little bit older and you don't have to worry about finding someone to. When he's walking and he's playing around you don't really have to worry about somebody. Right now he (the baby) knows it's school and no after school things.

[To survive in junior high] I guess what I had to do, basically, manage my time. I had to schedule. I made out my schedule of what my day was basically going to be like when I noticed how much he was sleeping and what time he slept. I had to kind of manage in this little time spot. When he sleeps I'll clean up the house. When he is sleeping I will do my homework. [You] just have to do your best to manage your time so that you're not just running around and you're completely crazy. That is what a lot of people want you to do. They feel, well, when a teenager gets pregnant our life is over. I don't feel like that. I just look at it as I made a mistake and I know not to do it again. My life keeps going, it's just that I have a little addition to it. So, it is no big deal. I was basically just trying not to give up. I just figure, OK, I have to get rid of it (the baby) or I have to do something with it (the baby) because I just can't live with a baby in my life.

If I do have to stay home (because the baby is sick) my mom lives right around the corner, so I might just make sure she comes and gets my homework to make sure I don't miss anything. I don't want to (miss school). A lot of people use that for an excuse and I don't want to stay home. "I have a baby so I can't do my homework last night because he was crying." I don't want to be like everyone else. I had a lot of dreams before I got pregnant and I still have them. I still plan to go to college and get a good job. A lot of kids wouldn't [do their homework]. You don't have to do your homework tonight cause you can just say the baby was crying and maybe you'll get an extra day. I really don't know [if the school would give me an extra day to do my homework]. I wouldn't try. Some of them I know probably would but
others. Some of the teachers are like, that is no excuse. I wouldn’t use it as an excuse. I just have it where if he has serious illness, I’ll stay at home with him and my mom will come and pick up my homework. I’ll just have her drop it off so I can keep up.

My baby, he has asthma symptoms, a little bit. I know if he gets sick, maybe it will be very hard for me. He has been in the hospital for a week already and that was hard, but I’ve got my mom to come and get my homework. I was doing homework in the hospital. He is doing fine now, but I know in the long run, if he gets sick, then it is going to be bad, that I foresee as my major challenge. I’ll just have to do the same thing I did last time and do homework in the hospital and still keep up with everything.
[I'm seventeen years old and I have a two month old baby.] [When I had the baby] she (Homebound teacher) came to my home like every other day and gave me the work [homework]. The work that I did, she brought it back to the school and they graded it, or whatever they had to do with it. Some of the teachers just didn't send tests home, so I had to take them and make them up [when I got back].

[My day begins when] my mother wakes me around, about, I'd say 8:00 AM. From there I clean myself up first, get ready. Then I have to clean the baby up, feed him, do whatever I got to do with him, so that I can take him to the other girl's mother's house. After that me and my sister come to school. [We] go through the school day. We get out at 3:10 PM. After I get out of school my boyfriend comes to get me. He takes me to get the baby. I go and get my little sister, take them home, drop them off, and I have to go back and pick him (boyfriend) up from work. By that time I'm back from picking him up from work, I go back home and do my homework. [I] do what I got to do for that night, my housework and stuff. [I] clean up, clean the baby up again and feed him, put him to sleep and he sleeps through the night. He sleeps through the night, because he eats round about 10:00 PM, he nods out for the rest of the night. So I feed him and I be ready to go to sleep and get up for the next day. I do schoolwork between classes if I'm not doing anything or while I'm waiting on him (boyfriend) to get off of work. I might do it in between then or if I don't have no housework to do because my sisters help me a lot too, then I do my schoolwork. So mostly I'm caught up. The only thing to do at night is the work that they assign every day.

I don't go out as much as I used to, but not too much changed because of the fact that I had my mom and my sisters and his mom, too. I live with my mom [and my sisters]. They keep the baby, baby-sit or whatever. Much didn't change because my mom, she wants to keep the baby all the time, so whatever I need to do, she keeps the baby so I can do it. So [not] too much of my regular life [changed]. Really, nothing hasn't changed besides the fact that he's there and my school, that's about it.

No, [since I had the baby, I did not notice any changes in the teachers] because the teachers that I had this year I didn't have last year except for maybe I had one [of] the same teachers this year and she didn't change. Actually she was nice about it. She was like, "How is your baby doing?" They didn't act different towards me or nothing. They were all the same. They just gave me the work I needed to take so I could get my grades up so I can
graduate. So all that was taken care of. My mom made sure that I got on the Homebound Program. All my work was done, I turned it in so I can graduate. So I'm looking forward to [that].

Some of them do [ask me about my baby], mostly the women teachers that I have, not too many of the men teachers. They ask: How old is he; how much did he weigh; when he was born? They are really good about it (asking about the baby). There is no discrimination about either I had a baby.

I have a lot of friends that have children. Most of my friends have graduated so they [are] like nineteen, twenty years old. They had children when they was younger so their children are much older than mine, but they are really good about it (supporting me) because all of them graduated on time.

Yes, [they are an aspiration for me]. Plus my father is inspiring me more because he thought if you get pregnant and have a baby that you can't go on with your life. So that made me work hard to prove to him that I can do everything that I have always wanted to do and I'm going to. [I plan] to graduate, to maybe go to a technological college for computer engineering and then go to a four year college and maybe take [a] major in mathematics and stuff because I'm really good at math. So I'll go to a four year college and do all of that or [I] might just do it all at one time and just go to a four year college and get the computers and all that at one time, so, and then I [can] get a job [and] settle down.

They (the school) send home brochures and different stuff like that or they have little pamphlets in the guidance office that you can go by the office and get. Some of them, if you want to know anything, you can go to them and talk to them and they'll get you what you need and send it back to you, so that helps a lot. So all you have to do is write to the college that you want to attend or write to the colleges for more information. My mom helps me with that too, because she went to [college]. She graduated from ____ College last June. She helps me with all that. I don't have too much to worry about.

[My grades were] about the same. Everything [the same]. Nothing has changed [in school since I had the baby]. The grades I had been making in Math, I still make. Nothing changed because the work that they sent home I did it and took it back and got the grades for it. They (school work) were up to what they are supposed to be. They weren't too much different. [I expect them to stay the same]. I do my homework and my mom would take the baby so I don't have to worry about him when I'm doing my homework. [I have
time to do my homework]. I can do it in between, whenever I get the chance to do it. Then I do it all. It will get done before morning.

[You've got to] keep your head up. I mean, no matter how hard it gets, if you want it bad enough, you can achieve it. I wanted it [to continue schooling] bad enough so that's what I'm trying to do. So I mean it's not [impossible]. Everybody thinks it's hard, but it's not hard to the point where about you can't. It's not that hard because if you want it, you can do it. [So many high schools students end up leaving when they get pregnant or have a baby] because they get pregnant. They say it's so hard, I ain't going to be able to do this. I ain't going to be able to do that. Many of those girls think about where they used to be going out and stuff like that, partying. They know when they get a baby they're not going to be able to do all that. Most of them drop out because they only thinking about what they used to do, so, you know, I don't know.

What has changed the most [for me is] my time. I don't have as much time as I used to, to do things. I had to do everything else. I have to come home and do my homework, change clothes, and I'm out the door. But now I have to clean him and make sure that he is OK. Then if you want to do something, you do that afterwards, after he's taken care of.

[My boyfriend] is very, very, very [helpful] because of the fact that he's not the father, but we had been together for seven months, so he understands. Plus, he has a child, so he helps. He's a big help. He feeds the baby or I mean, he do everything. He do everything that my mom do. He buy milk, he change the pampers, he change clothes, he wash clothes, he does it all. So [he's] a big help. The father, he help out too. He take the baby over the weekends and stuff. He do what he supposed to. I have a lot of support. So much that the baby he don't have to want for nothing because he has everything. My daddy made sure of that, so anything he wants he has.

[The baby] is very healthy. When he was born he weighed six pounds, four ounces and when I took him back in for his two weeks check up he was already seven pounds. At two months he's already thirteen pounds, so he gained a lot. He was twenty and a half inches long when he was born and he is twenty-two [inches] now.

[I would go to the] new school nurse [if I needed help at school]. Because, she's not the same one from last year, I didn't know about none of the nurses here. I didn't know [her], but she introduced herself to me and she seemed open then. She seemed like a person that I would most likely want to talk to. She is real down to earth. She came to me [in school], that's
why I said what I said about her. She seems real nice. [I would go to my regular teacher if I was having problems in classes.] I have always done that because if I don't understand something or I need something, I go to my teachers. They help me out a lot. [If] I don't understand, I have to go [see them]. I must graduate.

[To help me stay in school], well, they came to me with the Homebound and did that. Mainly I think they need to go to the students and talk to them and make them want to stay in school. You got to make them want to, and work. They need to hear most of all [about] the Homebound cause they don't need to drop out [of school]. The Homebound helps a lot. But they don't need to miss too many days because if you miss too many days you don't get all your credit. That's another problem. If they know everybody that got pregnant or had a baby and stayed up to date with them folks, then a lot of them would still be here in school now.

[They don't know there is help in the school.] Most of them have an attitude that they don't care. Not all they (school) need to do this. We need to do too. But some of them just don't care. Most girls go out to get pregnant to get pregnant just to prove to be like their friends. So it's now always the teachers [responsibility]. Most of them just doing it (getting pregnant) to be doing it. The teachers doing there all and they (students) like [need to] give back. You can't force them [to come to school]. I can talk to them so that they realize that they need to do this (graduate from school), but some of them just don't realize it.

Before I got pregnant I had already had children because I baby-sit for them (my friends) and do for them. So I knew what it was like already, but we get together every once in awhile, but we don't do it as much as we used to because they got their own life. They got their school work, I got my school work. So we talk in the halls or talk on the phone because we do what we can.

When I got pregnant I didn't find out until I was six months pregnant, so by that time I was already out of school (summer time). I got pregnant in November. We (got) out of school the 1st of June so I didn't find out till July. I found out in the middle of July. I wasn't big at all. Most of my friends didn't believe I was pregnant because I wasn't showing. Everything was normal, that was why I didn't assume that [I was pregnant], but my mom had that intuition and she took me to the doctors.

My mom waited until my sister got ready to come back to school and she did the things that she was supposed [to do]. [She] sent them (the school)
a note letting them know that I had a baby and I would not be ready for school cause I had my baby August 5th and school started on the 28th, so I couldn't come back to school. She sent the papers with my sister letting them know that I would be out, so they started Homebound. They thought I would only be out two weeks, but the doctor said I needed to stay home for a little while longer to make sure that if I did miss anything that I would be excused and I would have my work so I could graduate. They have ten days [you can miss] and [then] you miss your credits.

[Homebound is when] the teachers send the work [home]. The Homebound teacher, she brings it to you. She helps you with whatever you need help with. After you finish it you bring it back to her and she brings it back to school. They grade [it] and they don't give you more homework until you finish the homework that they already gave [you]. After you do that, they send home more so that you won't fail. From what I know, it's for those who are pregnant now and on doctor's restriction not to come to school. That they (are) so far along that [they can't come to school]. Mine (leave of absence) was because of the fact that I had stitches and I was anemic and she just didn't want me to take time in school tearing my stitches or anything like that. They do it for that [reason too], cause they did it for me. For that (staying home after delivering the baby), I just sent in a note from my baby's doctor and told my mom let them know what was going on and both would be excused (extended amount of time at home after delivery). [I'm healthy now] since I stayed out, I feel good. I don't have no pains or anything. It took a lot to get it back [my energy]. [I felt sluggish] and weak and slow.

I look forward to graduating. I was able to get caught up on all my work and was able to do what I didn't [get done on Homebound] while I was here [at school when I returned].
I'm a senior and I don't have no doubts I'll be graduating in May. On a typical day he (my baby) gets up about 5:00 AM. I'm up and I feed him and get him dressed, and my boyfriend, he come pick us up, and his mother keeps the baby, so he take me and drop me off at school. In the afternoon, when I get home, when he gets out of work, he brings the baby back home. Usually when he bring him [home] he is asleep from riding in the car. I feed him about 10:00 PM and give him a bath and he'll sleep maybe between 1:00 AM and 3:00 AM. He wakes up about two or three times out of the [night] [Then] I'm up at 5:00 AM. [I don't get much sleep, that is one of the changes I have noticed since I had the baby.] [I feel tired in school], but I kind of live without sleep because I have to graduate.

My pregnancy, it was all right. I didn't have no problems. For a month [I had] morning sickness when I was first pregnant. [I was able to stay in school while I was pregnant.] [After ] I went to the [family planning] they let the school know I was pregnant. I never talked to the school nurse until I came back [after I had the baby] cause the one from last year, she's not here now and I only came to school the first week of school and when I had my baby. The nurse this year she started the Homebound papers so I could get more work. I knew about the Homebound program [because I have friends in school that have children].

When I had the baby, I was out for three weeks. [I did the Homebound program.] This woman, she came out [to my house] about my work and helped me out with things. She came and about twice a week and bring the work and take back the work that I had done. [Three weeks was enough time, I was ready to come back] I was full of it.

Coming back to school was about the same as when I left. [I daydream about my son], I just think about him all the time, [but] not when I'm doing my work. I know that my mother will take care of him, so I don't worry about him. [He is in good care.] My boyfriend and his friends [support me.] [At school], my teacher last year she worries about me.

Nothing has changed in school for me since I had the baby], everything is about the same except I'm tired [The teachers all know I have a baby.] Some of them ask about the baby, [but they never ask if I am tired]. [I see the guidance counselor] just about graduating and stuff like that [I am able to keep up my grades.] [They are the same as they were before.] I talk to the
nurse about my baby.] I talked to her yesterday. [She is helpful.] [I ask her about my baby's health] and standard things that I should know.

[To succeed in school and raise a child at the same time, I would tell a friend] you just have to be alert because I have to graduate and the key is to just get your work done. I go home and do my work so I'll be able to graduate, but I got it easy with help.

[To help teenage mothers, schools should] let them (teen mothers) know that they care cause I have teachers they make me know they care. They try. If I'm not going to finish some of my work, they give me more time to finish and I really [think that] help[s].

[When I graduate] I want to go to the school in ____. It's a Junior College. I'm not sure which school I want to go to, but I'm [going]. I've started to send stuff in the mail, financial aid and all that. I might go to a two year college. I want to be a computer scientist.
My name is Sandra. My baby's name is Janeene. She just turned six weeks Tuesday. I am in the 12th grade. [I was in 11th grade when I got pregnant.] I was in and out of the hospital all the time. She was a premature baby. She's not supposed to be here now. She came two months early. She's fine, she's fine [now]. Now she's at 6 pounds and 13 ounces. She was born at 3 pounds and 8 ounces. She gained like a pound every week. She's healthy. [I'm] real healthy, both of us [are].

[I had a rough pregnancy.] Oh yeah, this was over the summer. I went to summer school to try and get ahead of my classes cause I knew I was going to be out. I didn't know if the school was going to have a home schooling like they did last year and I missed a couple of days, but they excused it. Then when I was in the hospital, I came to school for two days after school had started, then I had to go into the hospital cause I had a ruptured placenta. I had to stay two weeks before I had the baby, in the hospital. But I did some school work [when I was in the hospital]. I was just on complete bed rest. I wasn't in labor or anything. My water bag just broke. I wasn't in pain. I was just in the hospital laying in bed.

[Then my daughter came.] When she came home, I went back to school. When she came home on a Thursday, I went back to school. I came back on a Monday and she came home on Thursday. [She] stayed in the hospital four weeks on the respirator. She's real healthy, real fat [now].

[On the Homebound Program] I do my work and then they (teachers) grade it. If I needed anything or any of that stuff she told me to tell her and then she would come over anytime I needed anything. It sounded like [help on] anything, that's what it sounded like to me.

I didn't know [about the program] until that day, that Tuesday [I left for the hospital], and I didn't come back to school any more. I had went in the office to change my schedule and she (Homebound teacher) told me about it. She let me sign-up for it cause I didn't know they had it. I was just going back to my teachers and getting all my work. The school told her [about me]. I had to fill out some forms and then she filed them and then she came to the hospital. [After the summer], I came back for two days, the first two days of school, and Monday, last Monday (October 16) was my first day coming back.
It feels all right [to be back in school]. I was real anxious about going to school at first, but now, it's all right. I kind of would rather be at home, with the baby, but it's OK.

Nothing [changed in school since I had the baby]. It seems the same to me. [The teachers treat me] just the same. They treat me the same way. [Same expectations, same amount of work.] [More work], it's more because, like, I had two computer classes, so I have to do more work in there than the other classes. My other teachers [are] just sending me work home, but computer classes, you couldn't. I have a computer at home, but it's not the same type and it doesn't have all the stuff on it, so I had to do more work, but I'm caught up on all my work.

[Classes?] They're great. I should have "As" and "Bs". I think I should have "As". [My grades were] "As", "Bs" and "Cs" [before]. [I'm a] pretty strong [student]. I'm going to college for one year [when I finish high school]. I haven't decided what I'm going to do. I was going to call him (the counselor) and talk to him. I took the ACT's. I took the SAT too, [my junior year].

What I do all through the day is get up and I fix my breakfast. Then I leave. I get up about 7:00 AM. Then I come to school and go to school all day, [then] go home. Then I be with the baby and do my homework, talk on the phone a little. Then I give her a bath, fix her bottles, get her stuff out for the next day, take me a bath, get myself ready for the next day, and then I go to bed. Then, this be I get into bed, but I don't go to sleep cause my momma keeps the baby during the night cause I have to go to school. On weekends, I keep her through the night.

[My mom will get up with the baby at night.] She sleeps in my momma's room so I have it easy. I have it pretty easy. Some mornings when I get up, my momma have the baby, or my grandma, so I really have it easy. [Mom and grandma and my uncle], they're real, real big help.

[My mom stays with the baby while I am here at school.] My mom works at night. She works second shift from 3:00 PM to 11:00 PM. That's fifteen minutes, either my grandma or my uncle will keep the baby until I get home. She (the baby) don't go anywhere. She went outside when she went to the doctor's yesterday and then she went outside and stayed out for a little while today for the first time since I brought her home.

[I call home] all the time. [The first day I came back to school], well it felt like normal cause I had to leave her at the hospital anyway. I would go up there all day, I mean, as much as I could, but I have to leave her up there (the
hospital). I felt badly because she was at home, but it felt the same to me. When I was in the hospital I didn't want to leave her, but I turned around and went back up there at night. I went right back every day as much as I could. I could hold her. I couldn't hold her at first, about three days later I could hold her, but you know, you can stick your hand through the door. She wasn't that little. She was just a small child. She looked like she weighed about five pounds. I wish I had my pictures here to show you, but she looked like she weighed about five pounds. She didn't look that small to me, but you could hold her in one hand. [When I heard she weighed three pounds], I was thinking like that too (she is small), but then she looked so big over the other babies. She didn't look that small to me, but I guess she was, but she didn't look it.

[I was real happy to bring her home], real happy. I had to spend the night, two nights. Well I was supposed to spend the night, one night at the hospital and then bring her home. They said she had a fever, so I spent the night and me and my mother came that Saturday morning. I had to come here to take a test so I stayed at the hospital that night and I had to take a test and the next night my mother stayed at the hospital.

[Teachers don't ask me about my baby.] One teacher did, that was all. The counselor did and she checks all the time, that's it. They know [I have a baby] cause they had to send me my work. Other teachers that I had never had and know me, they ask me about the baby. None of my teachers [that I have this year] did. It doesn't bother me. I mean, if they concerned they acting like themselves, that's my baby. They can worry about they own baby and I worry about mine.

Friends, I don't have any friends. I be by myself. I'm on my own. I mean, I talk to somebody every now and then I talk to people, but I don't have any friends. I stay at home all day and all night. This was before I even got pregnant, but I was a majorette last year. I used to go to the game and come home and that was it, stay at home. I like home. I love my house. I know like my cousins and stuff, they have babies and stuff, but [not friends].

[If a girl I knew got pregnant I would tell them] to finish school. Stay in school and finish. That's all I could tell them. It might be hard. It's not hard for me cause I have a lot of help. Other people, I don't know, cause I know some people don't have help. They are on their own so it might be hard for them, but try to stay in school. [I don't think there are things the school can do to help.] No, I don't think so. I think if you're going to do it, you're going to do it. If you're not, you're not, regardless of who tell you this or who tell you that. You're going to do what you want to do, so I don't think so.
I will finish high school and get a good job so I can get out on my own, take care of my child and myself and stop depending on my momma. I told her the other day, I said, "I'm going to look for a job," cause I used to work and then I got pregnant and I stopped cause I was having so many problems. I told her I was going out to find me a job and she told me, no, you can just wait cause then you have to find somebody to keep the baby all the time. I told her, "Well, I hate to keep asking my mom. I want to make my own money and take care of myself." I try to be [independent].

Some of them (teenage mothers) are so lazy. Sometime I think, I don't feel like going [to school], so then I wonder if she's (other teen mothers) doing that on purpose. [I think], I just can't be getting up every morning then I would be up all night with her and I say, "OK, I'm exhausted." I be tired from 3:00 AM to 12:00 PM. I be tired and I just lay there, but I sleep when she sleep. I try to sleep whenever she sleeps. I try [to get caught up on sleep on the weekend], if I feel like, I try.

Twelve [absences] each class, not the semester, for the whole year [I can miss before I loose credits]. Well, myself, I've missed a couple of days, but if they wouldn't, I mean, if they would, I would stay out the whole time [my baby is sick]. Whether they would, I would stay out a couple of days and let my mom take over cause she really be with my momma more than I do. She would be taking care of her during the day. [I'm] real lucky [mom's around]. [I get along with my mom] very much.

[I'm graduating.] It's definite. I feel like it is. There shouldn't be, I don't see why I wouldn't, but you never know what might happen. Always determined.

My aunt, my grandma had eleven children so, [the baby's] father is over there now. [They all help me.] [The baby's father is around to help], all the time, everyday and every night. [He helps me] financially and he come and sit the baby, like when I'm busy, and give her a bath and do this and do that. If I have to do my homework, he will sit with her. [Not everyone has support at home.] They don't, I know they don't.

I could [talk to other young mothers], but some people don't like to talk, so. I mean I could talk to them, but I really, not really. [I learn how to take care of the baby from my mom] and that we used to keep my cousin's baby because last year I got out of school and I didn't have to be to work, well, most of the time, until 4:00 PM. I used to keep her (cousin's baby) in the mornings. [She] literally came to live with us and he was three. They don't live there
now. She was waiting until they were remodeling their house so she stayed with us. I mean, we used to take turns getting up at night. She'd get up one night, I'd get up the next night to help out because I knew she was tired. When she went on to work, my mom baby-sat everyday. [I've been around babies] all my life, all of my life.

[I'm taking] English, Computer Technology, Typing II, Child Development and Math. At the end of school I'm going to get Co-op so I can get out early so I can work. Business is where you work in the office. Marketing is when you work for everybody else, [like a] drug store. If you take it (Co-op) for the whole year you get credits for it. I'll get half credits cause I'll just be taking it for a semester.

I'm not going to any day care [if I work]. She's (the baby) not going cause I don't trust people that much. She can stay at my father's house or with one of my aunts. I wouldn't leave her here (at school) [if they had child care] either. When she can walk and when she can talk and tell me things, then she can go and let me know what is going on. But, other than that, my mother is watching my daughter. Nobody, but my family. I really didn't trust those people in the hospital with her. I knew she had to stay, but I didn't have no choice.

If I asked her (Homebound teacher) [she would come to my house], but I don't need her help. I try to do all I can while I'm here at school, all my homework and stuff while I'm in school. Some teachers, they'll make you do your homework before class is over cause they know you have other classes, so they'll do that sometimes. I try to [use my time well in school]. [I do my homework] whenever I can.
My name is AJ and I'm sixteen years old. I'm in the 10th grade here at high school. My baby's name is Jared. He is a month and five days now, that's it. [He stays with] my sister. [She's] keeping him right now, but soon my mom is going to keep him. [My mom and my sister do not live together.] My sister moved out. She has her own place. My sister's twenty-four. She has two [children]. One is five and the other one is seven.

They gave me ten days out [when I had a baby] and then I had to return back to school, ten days. [My son] was born September 23rd. The day I went [to the hospital] I was in school that Wednesday, and then Thursday, I had my baby. It was like 7:22 AM. [I went all the way to the end] because you only get to miss, like, twelve [days]. [I call home from school] just about every day. You know, all during the day, he is on my mind. I wonder what he's doing.

You can't miss no more than twelve days in a semester. If you do, you lose your credits for that semester. [I left him home with my sister when he was ten days old.] I knew that she was going to take care of him, so I really wasn't too concerned about that. I was thinking about him [all day]. I called home at lunch time. He was asleep but most of the day. Now he's young. He has his bottle and he goes right back to sleep, so all she really had to do is change his Pampers and feed him and he goes back to sleep. [He is real healthy.] When he was born, he was seven pounds and eight ounces and he's now nine pounds five ounces. He usually sleeps through the night. I'm teaching him, you know, time to sleep. My mother, she was up all night, so, what I do, like when I get home in the afternoon, I spend like an hour or so with him and he'll go back to sleep, or I give him [a pacifier] and if he wakes up my mother, she has to change him. So I feed [him] and then get school clothes ready and everything and I take care of him. I keep him awake until about 10:00 PM and then he starts his bottle. He sleeps about five, maybe six [hours], which I have to get up anyway to get prepared for school. My mother, she wakes during the night.

[My day is long.] About 5:30 AM he be awake. He sucks his bottle. I give him his bottle, takes about 10 minutes, I'd say. Then, if my sister is there, or my aunt, somebody is always there with me. So I let them hold him for a minute. I get in the shower, take my shower, get out of the shower. You know, [I] get dressed for school and everything, get myself ready for school. By that time my mother, she works at night, so, she'd be home about seven. So to pick me up or catch the bus from the sisters or she takes him over to my sister's house. Then my mother, she has to go back to work in the morning.
She has to be to work about eight. OK, so I'm at school about 8:30 AM. I call in and check and make sure everything is going fine. Then I say about 3:15 PM my mother or my sister is here to pick me up from school. She picks me up from school. We get to the house and I spend about an hour or two with him, give him his bottle and all that. Then I'd say about 4:30 - 5:00 PM I'm doing homework and it takes me about... If it's about 5:00 PM when I start doing homework, maybe I get done about 8:30 PM or 10:30 PM, just depends on how much homework I have. Then right about that time, I take me a bath or whatever. He's still asleep now. I go take a bath, get out of the tub, iron my school clothes, wake him up, spend a little time with him, maybe, sometimes, it all depends on him. He has different sleeping habits. I'd say about 9:30 PM I'm through doing all these. He's wide awake and he'll be up till about 10:30 - 11:00 PM and I [sleep] when he goes to sleep. I go right on to bed and I start another day again.

He sleeps in my room. I get up with him at night, but very seldom do he wake up and if he do wake up, he'll go right back, [drink] two or three ounces and he's right back to sleep. He was fussy when he first came home. He was up back and forth during the night so my mother she just told me stop letting him sleep so much during the day time. You need to wake him up so he'll be tired so he'll sleep more during the night. It's working out pretty good now.

For one thing [that changed once I had a baby], you like, you used to go out, go this place and that place. You can't do that. You can't do that, so you know it takes away a whole lot of your free time. My friends, there still the same [after I had a baby.] They'll come over in the afternoons. I barely get a chance to hold him myself. If my friends don't have him, my mother has him.

Teachers? Well, my teacher, when I came back to school, they were happy to see me, you know. I get along with all my teachers, but I was happy to be back in school also because I was getting behind in all my work, you know. The Homebound Program, they allow you, like, ten days out of school, which is really [not enough], because you're not really healed in those ten days. But, you do some healing at home in those ten days, they allow you to stay at home. They bring your work that you have at school. They bring it out to your home, that way you won't get behind in none of your work. It's a good program. They come out to you, matter of fact, my home. When I was in the hospital, she even came right to the hospital. The day of my delivery, she was at the hospital. She didn't bring my homework [that day]. I asked her to bring it out, like two days after he was born, and your teachers, you know, they don't jot it all down. They're like, you can catch up one by one and the day you come back to school, you know, you're still catching up on it. They
allow you to catch up on it. I'm about caught up. I'm still like, OK, I was out two weeks before report cards and those two weeks that I wasn't here, I was missing out on work. So I had like incomplete on my report card. They didn't give me an "F" they just gave me an incomplete and I was able to make up the work and get my fair grade that I got. They're fair, I think they are fair. It's better than not, you know, just being out missing those days, you know, unexcused and all. Its better than that. I was worried a whole lot, you know. It stopped me from worrying about my grades and that I knew I was getting work and I wasn't falling behind. [It wasn't hard for me to do all my work in ten days] because it was like, all the baby wants to do is sleep all through the day. All during the day my baby stayed asleep from about 2:00 AM in the morning. He would wake up me and suck the bottle constantly.

It's really hard, you can't miss no more than twelve days and then I have appointments in between that I have to go and get myself checked and he also has to go to the doctor like twice every month and either he sick. If I miss more than those twelve days my credits are gone so that's a disadvantage, too. My homebound teacher told me, if, you know, if I was having any problems, to go see my counselor, but I really didn't see. I don't know, I have never tried to go to him.

Basically what we have here is a problem. The Homebound, you know, the ten days out, when you can be excused, where emergencies that, like, your baby is sick, I would think you should be excused. I think you need it when your trying to go to school and you got to have somebody to keep your baby, someone you can trust. [You need to give teenage mothers] advice, hook them going to the program. There is a program now where you take your baby to the baby-sitter, but they pay for it, just so the mother can do something for herself. I was going to try and do extra activities at school, but I don't know how it's going to work out because I'm going to be trying to work and go to school and then go home and tend to my baby. It's a hard job.

I would like to go [to a school that has a day care]. I wish more schools, you know, their homebound is kind of encouraging you, helping you out with, really helping you staying in school. It helps you out a lot though, it really does. Some schools, you know, some schools can't help you out totally, a daycare would really would be nice.

I have my sister's [baby]. She was away in the service. Her baby was down here so I was kind of used to it, keeping a baby. Her baby is seven months. She just came home last month. I have been keeping her baby since that baby was a month, for six months. Mom, she knows she was working extra, putting in these extra hours, and she used to come home tired, but you
know, I'm kind of used to it now. I'm used to it now.

He (the baby's father) helps out a lot too, but, he works too during the day time. You know, he's been working two jobs out at the ____ and the restaurant and so he doesn't pretty much take the baby. If I wasn't here he would try to help. My sister helps a lot. My mother helps me during the day time. My sister is there with her baby and mine, which really is no problem because, like I say, he sleeps most of the time.

Like I say, when you become the parent, all your going out all the time, and all that, you got to realize that you going to lose someone (a friend). So it's a hard job. You know, parenting is a hard job. They (teenage mothers) just got to put their mind on going to school, which you know, most parents drop out. You need to try. You got to stay in school. You need to try. You need to stay in school because you got a baby. I mean, you need to be trying to be successful for your child. That is what I would say, keep your mind on school. Got to have your mind on school and try to stay in school. I know it's hard, but you can try to stay into school. Prepare to be a mother, be as good, the best mother that you can be.

[Before I had the baby, I knew I was going to finish high school.] That was a promise that I made to myself a long time ago. I'm no dropping out of school. I'm not dropping out of school. I made this promise to myself, but you know, who are you going to get to keep your baby? I really didn't know then, but you know, things work out. Sometimes things all fit in place, but I did not want to drop out of school. I do not want to drop out and I'm not, you know, I'm not. In two years [I graduate.] I came this far, why should I drop out now? I am determined. You're going to get discouraged, just to forget it, that's what you say sometimes, but then I have to go off by myself and think it over, and I realize I'm not going to drop out. I'll finish school. I want to go on. My mother, she's a registered nurse and you know, I want to go and be a registered nurse. My mother, she encourages me and stuff. Sometimes when I'm feeling down, sort of like, I can't do it, you know, I go and talk to her. Sometimes she kind of picks me back up. I know it will be really hard. My girlfriend, she's in nursing school now, and she's trying to work. She's going to school and it's hard for her now and I can just imagine how it's going to be with a baby, school, and work, but you know, I'm going to try.
I live at home [with my mom] and that's it. I clean the house at night time. I have to keep the house clean. I clean the whole apartment and I clean my room every day. It is an everyday routine and I take care of mom's dog every day.

I usually go to bed about, I wait for my mom to get home, she gets home at 10:30 PM. [She works at night] so she gets home at 10:30 PM, so I wait for her. I get my homework done [after I clean the apartment and before my mom gets home]. She can watch Dianne on weekends. [I will not have a job] till after high school, [then] I want to be a teacher. [I hope to graduate at the end of the year], hopefully.

[My daughter], she's three months. I went to school when I was pregnant, all the way until a week before I had her. I had her on a Tuesday. I got out of school [the] Friday [before]. [She was born] September 12th. They (the school) wanted me out of school early because I kept having false alarms and I kept getting contractions and I would always be out of class and I'd never go to class cause I was always hurting and uncomfortable. They finally approved it (a release) that Friday and then I had her that Tuesday. They were like, yes, thank God, cause they were thinking I was going to have her in school. I was out of school for like a month. I came back a week before my birthday. My birthday is October 31st, I came back a week before my birthday. I was seventeen when [I had] Dianne. I'm eighteen now.

Well I went into labor at 3:30 AM in the morning, but I didn't go to the hospital until like 10:00 PM. I went (said), "Mom, I'm in labor." "Oh, you are not, go back to bed." I said,"Yes, I am." Then she told me to lay down with her and everything would be all right. So I said, "Mom, ain't nothing going to be all right." You know, I was all mad at her and everything. "Momma get up, Momma get up," and I went to the hospital and they put me under OB observation. That's before you go into the labor room. OB observation is when you go down on this bed and they put this strap around you and they hook you up to this monitor and you get to monitor your contractions. I didn't want to look at it because I thought if I looked at it my pain would be worse than it really was. Then [they] check to see how far you are dilated. First they said I was dilated to two - three centimeter, but I really was dilated to one centimeter and they gave me this shot in my butt and they are like, "Are you OK?", and I'm like, "yeah." I'm going to the bathroom and they had to clean me up, and everything, and it was, oh, I was all scared. I was crying, "Mom, what if I die, what then?" They sent me up to my delivery
room and I had my baby there, so I was in labor for about eighteen hours. I
dilated at 1:00 AM and then I stopped. I stopped dilating and dilated once in
like an hour or two so they had to induce it. Then I got it to like three and I
stopped and they had to induce me more and then I hit about five. They
asked me, "Do you want to do an epidermal?" I said, "Un-huh," because I
hadn't taken any medication up until then. I was taking the pain. I was
crying, hurting, screaming, yelling, I was cussing, it was awful. Then they
gave me an epidermal and they rolled me over and they rolled me back over.
"I'm going to throw up!" She rolled me back over and I threw up all over the
nurse. I hadn't eaten anything that day so I just had stomach acid. Then I
couldn't feel my legs. Then I couldn't feel any pain. Then I was OK. Then I
was laughing. I can't feel nothing. My mom and my aunt were in the
delivery room with me. Finally at 9:07 AM, I started pushing like at 8:30 AM.
I had her at 9:07 AM. I had her Tuesday. I left on Wednesday. They put me
in a wheelchair. I was ready to go home. My mom she had to [stay home
with me the first month].

I got pregnant last year, probably early December, about this time last
year. It was OK at first. I was still going with the father. I was still dating the
father at first and we were still going out, but then we started, like, having so
many problems. We would like fight about everything. We argued. He
would try to hit me and I would get mad and I would retaliate and I would
beat him up. I mean, it was bad, so we broke up during the summer, which
was better. It was hard though after we broke up cause I had to do everything
by myself and he still wanted to be with me, but he couldn't. He still wants to
be with me now, but. [He is still around.] He goes to this school which makes
it even more difficult because we see each other and I have a new boyfriend.
He's really sweet to me and everything.

[The man] that stopped in this morning (while waiting for the bus to go
to the daycare center), that's my boyfriend. He comes in every morning
looking for me and if I'm not at school or we're an hour late, he goes to my
best friend and says, "I'm really worried, Jennifer is not in school." Then he
saw me in the hallway he thinks, but she doesn't have Dianne, what's the
matter with Dianne? He calls her his daughter.

Last year when I found out I was pregnant I went to talk with this girl,
her son is T. We had a class last year and me and her are like, really good
friends, you know, and I told her I was pregnant and she told me to go call
Ms. ____ (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program). She brought
[her] to me and she set me up to get in that class. She helped me, so I got in
that class and then Ms. ____ (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting
Program) kept in touch all summer. She has this waiting list she showed me
and she like cut the list to the very bottom so I just made it. Anybody else, they couldn't get in [because they don't have space and a lot of girls need to be there.]

[I knew a few girls before I got into the program.] I knew A because that's K's mother. I knew G because we had a group together last year, and I knew E, you know, cause I met her through one of my friends. Those were the only ones I knew, all the rest of them (teenage mothers in the teen parenting program) I met this year.

[The teenage mothers are a good support for each other.] I guess you could say we're kind of like a big family because, you know, we all know what we're going through and we're like all friends. T gives me baby clothes cause her baby is a little bigger than mine so what her baby out grows and she gives me. You know we help each other out. When somebody needs something we're always there for them or if someone is upset, you know, [we are] always there for them. We help each other out. We love each other's babies. They [teenage mothers] know what your going through. The girls here [in high school without children], they don't know.

They don't know [what it is like]. They have no idea what it's like. Some of the girls, they look down upon you. [They think], oh you've got a baby, you're this or you're that and they call you all sorts of names. We [teenage mothers] have to learn to stick up for ourselves. When I got pregnant I thought a lot of people would start hating me. They have this stereotype of pregnant girls that once you get pregnant you loose all your friends, nobody likes you. It is not true. I have more friends than I ever had, you know.

[It changed my life ] because a lot of people become closer to me and are real supportive of me. If Dianne gets sick, everyone is like all upset and they can't believe she's sick. You know everyone is like, how is Dianne? How is Dianne? Everyone is always asking about her and I have to tell them how she is and everybody always wants pictures of her. It's not true that you can't ever find another guy. You know a lot of pregnant girls or teen moms think that they could never find another man for as long as they live, it's not true. Some of the girls they still have the fathers of their babies with them like E, P's mother. She still has her [father of the baby]. K still has hers and I think S does, too, so that's a few. And there's this girl B, she doesn't come that often. She's married so she's still [with her husband.] C is still with her husband, with the father of her baby. There is a lot of us that the fathers just up and leave and a lot of us have new boyfriends.
[There is a lot of stereotyping about teenage mothers.] They think that we're this and we're that and we can't do this and we can't do that and we're friendless and they don't know how to have fun and we can't even go anywhere. It's hard for me to find a baby-sitter, but I still hang out with my friends. You know I don't ever not avoid them, I talk to them. I'm still a teenager when Dianne is asleep or if she's crying, I tell them I have to call them back.

My mom gives me the most support. She is always there for me and there is my sister too. My little sister, she's like everything. She's a sophomore here. She's fifteen. She helps me with Dianne. She's always asking me if I'm OK. She comes to see me everyday at lunch, sees if I'm OK. She's always there for me.

[The school] supports me. They are really good with it. I mean, all the teachers always asking me how Dianne is and if I'm OK. The principal, there are two principals, there is Mr. ___ and Ms. ___ and they just, I mean they love me to death. They are real supportive of me. They help me out, you know. If I have a problem, they are always there for me or anything like that. I have trouble with the kids cause certain ones, like, they bother me and I'll say, "they're bothering me," and they'll say, "You don't need to bother her." They are real supportive of me. The teachers understand cause I'm absent a lot, but it's because Dianne is sick so they understand.

[If I am absent because] I'm taking her to the doctor, I get a doctor's note, but if she's not feeling good and I'm not feeling good, my mom calls the school up and tells [the school]. [I think I get] probably three or four, up to five days. [When I was pregnant I was out for] a month. [After a month] I wanted to come back cause I got tired of being at home cause I was OK. I mean, by like the fourth day, I was already up and on the move. I was OK and I wanted to come back to school. I missed my friends. They missed me. I just missed being in school.

So I came back. It was my first day back. It was hard getting back into the schedule. It was hard leaving Dianne. She went right to nursery. It was hard, but I got over it, so I was OK. They take real good care of her all of them over there (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program). They're really sweet to her and I like Ms. ___ (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program). [The first day back in school I brought her. I rode the bus with her and everything. I was exhausted.]

Ms. ___ (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program), she really cares. I mean, she cares a lot. She pushes us. She wants us to succeed.
They treat the kids really well. I like the staff over there. They know your name. They don’t just say, hey you, they call your name. When you come to school they’re, "hi Rickie, hi Dianne." They use your name and I like that, like singing together in circle this morning.

I have had friends tell me that they want to become pregnant and I’ve told them it’s not as easy as it looks. I had to worry about doctor bills and do they have enough money. I got lucky, I got on Medicaid and they pay for everything and I had my family, my dad, my mom, they support me. I got lucky, but some kids [won’t be.] Will their parents support them? If they’re parents help them out, is the father going to help out? Dianne’s father doesn’t help me out at all, no money at all. He takes all his money and gives it to his new girlfriend. One day it’s his (the baby) and one day it’s not. I’d asked them if they thought that if the father was going to stay with them are they sure this is what they want?

[If they are going to stay in school and have a baby,] they need to keep on their toes in school. You know keep their work up, keep their work turned in, try to stay awake and pay attention. If they find out they’re pregnant you should find out if they have talked to Ms. ___ (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program). Ask them if they have gotten into the program. There is a girl, she comes in here, she sits over there, she’s like seven months pregnant. She’s not in Ms. ___’s program. There is another program here. Ms. ___ (counselor) she helps out with Ms. ___ (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) and everything so they’re all connected and she’s in our group and I asked her was she going to get into Ms. ___’s class? She said, No," but I [would] ask all the girls that you (they) know.

[To make it easier for the teen moms to succeed in school], make sure they have all their work done. If they miss a day because they’re baby is sick or if you need to go to the doctor because you’re sick or something, to make sure that you come back that day and get that work. They just have to keep their work up and everything, that’s all.

I think without the program a lot of us girls would drop out of school. I could ask my grandma to watch Dianne everyday and not take her into Ms. ___’s program, but I chose Ms. ___’s program because I don’t want to burden my grandmother. I didn’t want my grandparents to watch her every single day. I mean they’ve got stuff they’ve got to do. In fact it was a lot easier for me to go without the program, but a lot of us would drop out of school if I didn’t have my grandparents to watch her. I would just have to drop out of school, forget school. I mean my baby is more important and a lot of girls
have that aspect, you know, "well, my baby is more important, you know I can't finish school", they can. There are a lot of parents (teenage mother's parents), they don't support [the mothers]. I mean some parents do, some parents just don't support them at all. They just don't care.

[To help me in school], I would want them to provide the day care. They need to have counselors and stuff to help because they need to set up groups. They have to set up groups for the girls to go to because when I got pregnant I was in Ms. _____'s group and that's good. It was just a bunch of girls who had a baby or are pregnant and you sit around and you talk. You need support groups. You need support groups with other teen moms because we all know what we're going through and we can say, hey we're angry because of this and you can't deal with it. You just want to say, hey, I got this same problem. [They] pat you on your back. It's OK, we can give you a hug. It will be OK. That's the kind of thing they need, a lot of support.

You always feel like you're the only teen mom. I always feel like I'm the only teen mom in the school. I feel so isolated. I always wonder, there is a lot of times when I wonder what it would be like if I didn't have Dianne. I always have that, you know, would it be different? You know, would people think different about me? Would I still be with the father of my baby if I didn't get pregnant?

When my boyfriend and I broke up I lost his friends, but then I went and made new friends and some of my friendships got better. Like, I talked to this girl last year, we were friends, but this year it seems like we've become better friends cause she's there for me. I made a lot of new friends too cause they just started talking to me. They thought it was fascinating cause I had a baby and they wanted to hear all about it. A lot of them, like the girls, would pick on me and stuff. I had this one girl tell me that she was going to kick my butt because I was pregnant and hurt my baby. She really was going to. She was really after me. A lot of my friends, well my new friends, [told her], she's pregnant, don't you mess with her. So I always had [support].

I have a lot of good friends and there. It's different, you know. I have a lot of good friends. I have like two different [kinds of] friends. Teen parents, the girls in there (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program). They are like my family, you know, we're like a big family. Here (in the high school - a different building), these are just friends. I can goof off with them. I have the teen parent friends [and I can say], hey, this is happening to me, can you give me some advice. This is really bothering me, you know.
[When I started the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program] all I knew was K and E, but I also had to learn the names and make friends with everybody. It took awhile and there are new people all the time and there will be more (next) semester, [but] I'm graduating. I had my doubts [about graduating]. It could be an absence, or you know, you get worried, but I'm pretty sure I will. I'm doing my reviews and everything, so. [I feel strong about my final.]

I've had a cold here and there and I've had an upset stomach. I had a real bad migraine headache one day and it's like I got stuck in my bed. I couldn't even move and Dianne was crying and, like, piercing my ears and I was so glad I got her to sleep cause I slept all the way through the night when I finally got her to sleep like five and like I went to bed right after I got her to sleep. [Nobody is home when I get home] so I have to take care of her, even if I'm sick. [It is a challenge] because you can't just say, well, I don't feel good, so I'm not going to take care of you. You can't do that. I have to always be there for her, no matter if I'm sick, or not.

[After high school] I have to get a job first. I will stay with my mom at first, until, my boyfriend is a Junior, so he is going to move in with me. I don't know if it's going to work with Dianne and everything, so I'll stay with my mom and get a job and work. Then I'll go to college and that will probably take about two years and then go to a big university and get a degree.

[I get WIC] and Medicaid. Medicaid pays for my doctor's bills and when I was pregnant, my doctor's bills and my hospital bills. I'm off Medicaid right now. I need to get back on it, but Dianne is on Medicaid. It pays for her medication and her doctor bills and everything and WIC pays for food. Everybody here (teen parenting program) says [for] two years they get food, cheese, eggs, milk, beans, tuna, carrots, juice and cereal. We go to an office for Medicaid. We go to this office and fill out these forms, and everything, and you got to wait all day. It's an all day thing, [even on a school day.] WIC, I can go after school because they changed it. You used to wait all day to get your cards, but everyone was complaining because you had to wait all day just to get ten, twelve, twenty cards, that's ridiculous. They changed it and they gave us this little card thing. They take your card and they scan it through a machine. You take it every week and they scan it through the machine and you get, this is all the stuff you get (a list of food is printed on the back of the WIC card). [You go there] every month. You go to the WIC office to get all this stuff and then you go to the grocery store. To find a grocery store [that] accepts WIC, which is like Kruegor's, Kruegor's is like the main one that accepts it I think. You get all this stuff. [Some stuff] is for breastfeeding moms, so I don't get that any more. I used to breast feed but I don't any more.
I just go down on my own. I go to the grocery store on my own. I sign it on my own. I grocery shop by myself, most of the time. I'm very independent. My mom works Monday - Friday from 2:00 PM to 10:30 PM so... I'm very independent. I cook my own dinners and I keep the house. It's like I'm single. No one tells me what to do. I mean, I have a baby, I'm 18, I can take care of myself. I goof off, yeah, I act immature once in awhile, but that's fun. But, there are times when I act very, very mature, a little too mature, you know. I have my own car. I would have to depend on my grandma or someone else to take me if I need to go, but I like to do it with my own car so I can.
I got pregnant my Junior year, the summer before my Junior year. My son is nine months now and I did Homebound [for] about a month before I had him. I had to do all that [school] work [when I was out]. It was kind of hard because the teacher that they sent me, she didn't know how to do pre calculus, [so] I had to do that on my own.

[They have a Homebound program] and I ended up passing all my classes. Then this year, my husband helped, so I wasn't absent very much and my teachers are aware that I do have a son so they know that if I am absent it's probably due [to him].

They understand if I, like, come in late or if I'm tired, they understand, but they don't like it if I slack off. Sometimes teachers might give an extension. Its like [for] a day. We're only allowed eight days a semester to miss, but if we bring a doctor's notes our teacher can... If they try to take our credits away, she'll (director of Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) get all our doctor's notes and take it to the attendance board and she'll sit there and try to fight for us to get credit saying that we had to be absent because of an illness or our babies were sick.

[I can get to the doctor's.] Usually the doctor I go to, they have a taxi service and you can call there, the doctor's office, and they'll have, I guess, some taxi that works for the hospital. They have it come either to the day care at school and then drop me off and all. You give them a voucher or the doctor will give you one and that's how I get back and forth.

[I live with] with mom and my boyfriend lives with his parents. He's there every day and when I go to work, he takes care of him. [I've been with my boyfriend] for two years and a month. [This is] my engagement ring. [I'm getting married] next October. I'll probably move in [with him] right when I start college during the summer. I'm going to try to work nights so if he works until 3:00 PM... I'm probably going to get two jobs so he can take care of him and I can raise enough money to move out on my own and then find a better job. I'm taking computer skill classes [at school] and trying to get better skills to get a better job.

[When I first had the baby in school] at first if they turned out the lights [in the classroom] I would go to sleep. I got out [of the hospital] a week after I had him. After I delivered him I started hemorrhaging. I lost a lot of blood so I was weak for a long time and I was still anemic and it was hard for me to
carry my butt and walk up and down and I couldn't eat breakfast cause I always had to wake him up and change him and stuff. I didn't eat breakfast or anything and then I ended up getting a kidney infection and was out for about a week cause I couldn't walk, it was so bad. I couldn't walk and it was hard to try and take care of him and have my kidney infection, so I took him to his dad. He took care of him while I was sick. I was allowed six weeks [after I had him], but I think I came back on my fifth week. You're allowed [six weeks] on Homebound after you deliver. You can be homebound for awhile and then you have [to have] a doctor's permission saying that you can go to school. [Things changed a lot for me after I had the baby]. There is a lot of bad stuff, like some guys think you're a whore because you have a baby or something like that and I get mad and I want to fight them sometimes, but I try not to fight because if you fight here, your baby can't go to the day care.

You make a lot of friends here (child care facility at school), like other teen parents. You get along with them and you get more mature. Then the kids around here (those students who are not teen parents) start annoying me cause they're so childish. I take things more seriously now. Some people joke around by saying, "I'm going to hit your baby," or something like that, well not that, but they'll say like, "Your baby is a punk," and I get real sick cause they're talking about my baby. I really protect her from others.

[My friendships] got better [after I had the baby]. A lot of people, they want to see my baby and stuff and ask me how I'm doing. My teachers, they're all pretty good. It's hard having a baby and going to school cause, I don't know. A lot of people judge you by the clothes you're wearing and stuff and I usually get a $100 a month from my mother to get clothes, but my baby grows out of clothes so fast. I buy all for him so I hardly have any new clothes and everyone says those shoes are old and I'm like, I don't care. When my baby needs something I get it for him. I used to hang out with a lot of people that went out all the time. Now I hang out with these people that stay home with their kids and stuff.

[The girls in the program], they are supportive. When I wanted to fight this boy for calling me a whore, they were like, don't worry about it, they all think that, but just ignore them and stuff. It's not worth it. They know that you're with your man, so.

[His father] doesn't go to school. He works for Toyota and he works from 5:30 AM to 3:30 PM. He works during the day and then he comes over and plays with the baby until about 9:00 PM. Everyday until Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, he keeps him because I have to go to work. [I work at] Potato Patch. It's a restaurant. I'm a hostess. I work at least twenty-five
hours a week. [The manager], he understands I have a baby and he lets me work after school instead of working [all day] so I just work seven days.

[My social life has changed.] I don't go out no more. I haven't seen a movie in a long time. I usually rent a movie and stay home and watch him or [I] hardly go to the mall. I just take him with me some times. No parties. I can't take him with me to parties and stuff like that. I really don't care, cause I love my baby and you know, I'd rather stay with him than going out and partying and stuff.

[To help us] the teachers can understand if we come in a little tired [to class] or they need to set up a certain space in the school. If they don't have the program [for teenage mothers and their babies] in this school, then they need to have a space like we have. We just got a room where we can stay there during the day. I mean during the morning, whenever they come pick us up, but they need to have... We didn't have a place to where we can go sit in the mornings. We're not allowed to go get breakfast [in school]. We're not allowed to go here because there are too many people, like if somebody could bring us our breakfast in the morning like a little errand boy. Like if we give them money they go get us our breakfast and we could eat it in the room. Cause usually none of us eat breakfast. We all just get ready and go. Our teachers should understand if we're absent, like, how we're going to make up our work? [They should] give us a certain time limit, you know, a little extra time limit to get our work done because if our baby is still sick it's going to be harder on us to do our homework and deal with it and be able to take care of ourselves. There are a couple (students) that just think we're something else, just because we have a baby. [Teachers need] to understand that we get upset if somebody says anything and to have a talk with them and let them find out how hard it is on us and how some of us still have our boyfriends. We're not whores and stuff. They're mostly the boys [who make fun of us.] Some girls do. Like some people be jealous. Some girls get jealous cause we're still with our boyfriends and stuff or just get jealous of us cause we're popular or something, but they try to say mean stuff about us. That, I can't understand why.

As long as I make it through high school I can get some sort of job. Your baby is all that really matters. You stay in school because you want him to grow up. You know, you not being able to support him and you might have to give him up for adoption if you can't support him, or you know, he'll grow up in a real bad neighborhood or something and you know, something might happen to him. Mostly your child's health and his care [is what] makes you want to go further in school so you can get a better job to support him.
My mom, his other grandmother, his dad, my sister, she takes care of him a lot, and my teacher Mr. ____ [are my supports]. Mr. ____ (teacher), he's real nice. He understood when I was pregnant and how you know, he told me not to worry about my work you know he gave me a little bit at a time and he supported me and helps like whenever there is a girl that is pregnant in his class, he'll help [her] like me. [He knows] we got it kind of hard, but you can still do it.

If it wasn't for the [Teen Parent Program] I don't know if I still would be in school because if I hadn't been able to have a day care I would have had to find a better job that pays more, makes me work some more hours and pay day care which is a $100 a week and then I probably would have... I don't know, it's just hard because I didn't have a baby-sitter. I'd have to work all day to pay the baby-sitter and probably have to stay at the same job forever because I didn't end up graduating from school, but if I have the day care, then I'm able to still come to school and I don't have to worry about paying it and it's helped me a lot.

[I found out about the program (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) because] this girl that had a baby told me. [She] told me that they had a program and I talked to my counselors about it and they said, "Sign up," so I signed up and they told me I could be in. It's a beautiful room in here (daycare center). It just seems so healthy and it's really nice that you can be with friends, too, with other young mothers.

[You have to give up school] if they're baby has a lot of health problems or if they just give up trying to go to school and they can't handle [it]. You know, some have to work all the time so they can't handle working and going to school and they get tired all the time so they have to give up one or the other and they usually give up school so they can support their baby.

If he gets sick before fourth period they usually call my principal and they tell me to ride the next [commute] bus so I'll ride back there (Teen Parenting Program Center) to their school and usually if I have to go home, I'll call my boyfriend just to come, to take a break and drive me home, or call his mother to bring us home.

My father died so I get a social security check. That's a $100 a month and then, now that I work, I get a paycheck every Friday. My mother, sometimes she helps me out with, like, the diapers or the milk, the formula. I don't pay rent, [I live with my mom], else I would really be in trouble.
Let's see I get up at 5:00 AM. I get his clothes ready. I put it on him. I put my clothes on. I brush my teeth. I have to make sure everything is packed before 6:30 AM because that is when my bus comes. I'm packing three bottles, diapers, an extra change of clothes, a little towel. I usually [pack] his jacket and shoes just in case it gets cold and I have to carry his car seat, and then at 6:30 AM the bus comes and picks me up. From the bus I go to the high school. I come into the room and usually let him crawl around everywhere, but he always gets into a lot of stuff, so I have to watch him. Then we ride the bus back to the day care center (located at a different school). We (all of the teenage mothers) sit there and let him play for a little bit. We change their diapers and I make sure his medication is written down so they can give it to him and I kiss him good bye and I go to class and then ride the bus back to the high school. The rest of the day I just do my work and go back to the day care center and I'm tired. It's hard to carry all my stuff when I'm tired, so I go to sleep on the bus till I get to the house. Then I get to my house and he is hungry and so I feed him. Then, when I'm trying to do my homework, he comes and walks all over my books and, like, along the couch and messes up all my papers and sometimes spills everything on them. It's hard to do homework when [I'm] there. We have a big TV and he'll clobber the TV and hit the screen and [I'm] trying to do my homework and keep him out of stuff. He usually stays awake until 9:30 PM. We go to sleep about 9:30 or 10:00 PM. Then he will wake up around 12:00 AM, cause he's hungry. I'll feed him and sometimes he will want to play for about an hour or two and by then I'm all tired and I have to hardly wake up. [I usually get] five or six [hours of sleep a night.] I used to sleep great [before I had him]. I used to sleep, [wake up] around 6:30 - 7:00 AM and I used to go to bed around 8:00 PM, so about nine eight or nine hours of sleep. I used to [catch up on weekends], but now I have to go to work, so it's hard for me to get up and stuff when I have to go to work. I hardly get a chance to catch up on my sleep. [My mom helps out sometimes] she, like, sometimes when I have to do my homework, she'll take him for a little while if she's not tired or she'll take him out for a walk when I'm trying to finish or clean my room or something like that.

When I was pregnant right after I had him my grades slipped, like, to a "B", low "B", and now they're "As". All "As" one "B". The first couple months that he was born it was hard for me to get my grades up.

He was born in March. [I took a month off before he was born] cause I had dilated two centimeters a month early and they thought I was going to have him any day. They sent me [to] Homebound and I didn't have him until they sent me home, February 4th and I didn't have him until March 1st. My delivery, it was hard. It wasn't long. It was three hours, but I hemorrhaged a lot and they were about to put more blood in me cause I had
let out a lot of blood and they gave me injections to try to slow down my blood and I was sore for a while. [I ripped.] His head was very big and they had to vacuum him out and they told me my hips [were too small]. They said it would be a long time before they get back to the normal because his head was so big. [He weighed] eight pounds, three ounces. He was mostly head, he had a big head.

[Once he starts walking] I'm going to have to put him in a playpen for a little while so I can get my homework done. He runs all over everything now by crawling around. [He] puts everything in his mouth and so I'll probably stick him in the play pen. [I really have to watch him]. He'll pick up anything. He'll go to the plants and start digging into the plants and stuff and it's hard, or if he sees somebody walking, he'll follow them all the way to where they're going and I don't even know where they're going so I have to follow him.

He shares [a bed] with me and he doesn't like his crib. He's scared of the bars or something cause when I lay him down he'll fall asleep, but he touches the bars, I think, like, half way open, and he realizes that he's behind bars, or something, and he gets up real quick and starts screaming, so he has to sleep on my bed. I want to get him a toddler bed real quick. I'm tired of him sleeping with me cause I kind of roll over on my bed. Sometimes when it's real cold he'll cuddle right up to me, so I'll try to scoot over a little bit and he cuddle up some more and then I'm almost on the edge of the bed, so I guess I just have to get him a little bed of his own.

I was anemic three years before I had him and I was still anemic, even when I took my iron pills when I was pregnant, I was still anemic. I took three a day and the only thing I really had was a kidney infection and that's it.

[The parenting course is] so easy. I mean, it's stuff we know. Now that you have a baby it's real easy to find out the stuff. It's real easy. It's hard to fail, everyone gets like a ninety-eight. There is a waiting list [to get into the program]. You have to have your names on the book early cause they only allow [a] certain amount of babies into the program, so you have to sign up kind of early. There was a waiting list when I got on it, but I signed up. About as soon as I found out I was pregnant I signed up for that program.

[When I first got pregnant] mom thought I had a thyroid problem cause I had lost a lot of weight. I had lost 20 pounds. She kept taking me to the doctor and they didn't know what was wrong with me. My 6th month, my mom, she didn't notice me getting bigger, so she took me to a thyroid specialist and they just took that test and they said, yeah, that I was pregnant

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and that was what was causing all my problems and stuff. I didn't have morning sickness. I just once or twice, I would feel real hot like I was going to faint and then I threw up phlegm. It was just spit, but I was so hot. [I didn't know I was pregnant]. I thought something because I had two periods, so I didn't know. My mom said since I had been in basketball that athletes have different periods. She wasn't worried about it. I didn't really worry about it cause I thought that was just it cause I had two [periods].

They called me [the doctors] and they said your pregnancy test came out positive and asked me if I wanted to call my mom or should they tell my mom and I said I'll call her. So I called her at work and I told her and she didn't feel upset at first and then she came home crying and she locked me in my room and yelled at me for about 30 minutes and then that's about it. See, when I found out, my boyfriend didn't want me to tell her. He was scared of her. He's scared of my mom. So he got scared, "no way, never" [should I tell her]. He got real upset cause I told her, but he was scared. That's the one thing my mom said. She was relieved that it was half way over.

[I had him] my Junior year. But he's real friendly. He gets along with everybody and he's not afraid to going, like, to anybody. Like if I hand him to somebody he doesn't know, he'll just smile at them and play with them for a little while and he's real friendly. He's real outgoing.

[He has been] pretty much [healthy]. The only thing he's really had is, like, an upper respiratory infection and that's all he had. They put him in the hospital cause he wouldn't eat when he had that and so they put him on an IV and he did pretty good on that. He only stayed in the hospital for three days and he came out and ever since then he's just had a little cough. Like, now that the cold weather is coming he's had a real bad cough, but I've been giving him medicine and he's doing OK on that.

[After I had him I came back to school after] five weeks. It was like the beginning of the 5th week. It was hard leaving him the first day in daycare. When I had him we had to take him to the nursery and I started crying cause I didn't want him to leave and they told me the next day that he had a heart murmur and I didn't know what that was. So they said it was common in babies, that I shouldn't worry, but I was crying. I didn't sleep that night. I watched him. When I woke, well, I didn't wake up, but like, when everybody woke up they were looking at me cause my eyes were so swollen. It looked like somebody had beat me up because of all the crying and stuff.
I maybe want to be a court reporter or maybe a secretary paralegal [when I finish high school]. They have certain programs at ____ (school) that I can do and become a paralegal.
My name is Carole and my daughter is four years old. I'm seventeen. I had her when I was thirteen. She goes to see her father every weekend cause they took us to court for visitation rights, but nobody in his family pays child support and he broke up with me when my parents found out I was pregnant, so that was hard. I was in the 8th grade when I had her.

I was six and a half months [along before anyone found out I was pregnant.] I was so little. [I knew I was pregnant.] I told this one girl that [I was pregnant]. I didn't start showing when I was pregnant, so that following year my parents, well, first they put me in ___. It's a place where you live and give up your child for adoption and that's not what I wanted to do. So I lived there for a month and that was, like, horrible. I mean, it seemed like so long. So then I finally I called and asked, “I don't want to stay here any more”, and they came and got me and I lived back home. We talked to another adoption agency. They had this program where you could live at home and do everything with me being at home. That lady told me about the program at ___ school. I would have never known, so she told me where you can go to school at ___. I went there when I was pregnant. You go there for a semester that you're pregnant and [then] I had her. They told me if I, because my parents still wanted me to place her for adoption, if I wanted to, I could keep my baby. They had daycare there and they told me everything about the program. So a bus took me to the school and everything was just fine. So his (the father) family didn't sign the adoption papers. They wouldn't sign them, so that's how I got to keep her.

I didn't have a choice [about putting her up for adoption], because my parents, that's what they wanted. I mean, I was just 13 and I couldn't really say. His mom (the baby's father's mother) wouldn't let him sign, so they took us to court and it was my decision to keep her or give her to them. When I had her, they were more like, “we're going to bring her home” cause when I had her in the hospital, the rules of the agency were that she was going to go straight home with that family, but I told them all that I'm not leaving here without her. When they saw her, the baby, they didn't want to do that either, so I got to bring her home. It was hard because the court date wasn't until she was almost four months old. I was like, I was just crying everyday, just thinking when it comes, what if they didn't show up for court, then I would have to give her up.

I just stayed out for about three weeks. [I'm healthy now.] [I was anemic] when I was pregnant, but they gave me all these pills. I finished up that
semester that ended in December and then I started school at a different school because my school, they had like a meeting, they said it would be better if I went to a different school because of all the ... everybody knew that I was pregnant and everything. My dad took me [to school] everyday. He took me to school. Everything turned out right. They had a bus that I took to class in the morning. [I had] two periods out at ____ (day care center) so after it was over they had a bus for everybody cause there was a bunch of vocational classes for the high schoolers to take. So after that was over, I rode the bus with everybody else to the high school, but then that class was over in the middle of the semester, my dad winded up taking me to ____ (school).

[The baby's father takes her on the weekend.] It's really his mother. I mean we try to get back together like a year later, after I had her. Her name is Bethany. He wanted to get back together and I wanted to get back together and at that time I couldn't forgive him. I always regret that. Now, I kind of don't because he just is irresponsible. I mean he is 18, going to be 19. He's still only a sophomore so... he just doesn't care.

I think, well, Ms. ____ , if it wasn't for her (director of Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program), every time I had, like, any sort of problems, which there has been a lot, she's always been there for me and I think it's mainly her [that has kept me in school]. If I needed help, if I had a problem with anything, she would go to whoever, I mean, like straighten everything out. So, mainly, just her, because she was just, like, a big help. Any teachers that I have pulled to the side and told them, you know I'm having a hard time, I have a baby and everything, they would say, "gosh, OK." I never needed, like, extra time, but they just would say, "OK", like, when I went to summer school, cause I went to summer school over the summer, and my teacher was like "what's going on here, you have a job or something?" and I was like, "no, I have a three year old." She was like, "OK", so she gave me a break for sure.

I think it's like nine [days you can miss before you lose your credits] a semester. Like, if I go over where I've been, they'll look at it because it's not only me getting sick, it's her [too.] So they, if that's the case, they would help me if I had all the documents and everything.

Everybody [in school] is OK with me now, now that everybody is older, but I mean I would get phone calls and from girls when I was in Middle School, and they were just saying these nasty things which was stupid because they were girls and all of them now are pregnant. One last year, a girl, told me that she was one of the girls that called me up and she was pregnant and this year another girl is pregnant, another one of the girls that called me up, so that is just, like, you got what you deserved, you know.
I got in to a fight cause, this girl, she was mad at one of my friends, that she was calling me a slut and she said I was married. At the time I was married, we're separated now. I was telling her, "How can I be a slut I'm married?" She said, "Well, how old were you when you had your baby?" Then I punched her. But everyone pretty much leaves me alone because there are so many that are pregnant now.

Having a baby, that's more of a reason that you should stay in school because you know, if you're not going to stay in school, obviously you're not going to do anything cause there are people who go back to school, but why go back to school when you can finish it now. I have known a lot of people who have dropped out of school. You don't want to raise a baby on welfare for the rest of your life and you're young and you can get welfare when you're not in school, but to me that's the only time that you should. You know, you don't want to be 30 years old and still on welfare when you could have solved it when you were just young.

[If a girl is pregnant in school], she should tell somebody. I mean I always tell them about Ms. ____ (director of Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program). Cause if it hadn't been for her there is no way that I would be able to stay in school. I would recommend a course [that would] help [teach] them how to be a good mom and stuff like that, and counseling for themselves too. So, like, basically what they offer here. [Extra academic help] would be helpful.

I've calmed down a lot so I don't really care about being social. I didn't really care then, but just it hurt my feelings you know. Things are pretty smooth. I have my friends [at school] and I leave it at that. I mean, I don't really care to [do things socially outside of school]. I used to a lot, when I was younger, and I had the time, you know, on the weekends when Bethany is at her dad's. I'd rather stay at home with her and now she's four and she's easy. She's fun now. I just want to treasure every time I can have with her cause she's already grown up too fast. She goes to nursery, a different nursery than they have here cause she's too old to be at (this program), so it's a good nursery.

[On a typical day], I wake up at 6:30 AM cause I'm always late, wherever I go and I get ready. I take a shower and everything and then I dress Bethany, but sometimes my mom helps me dress her and I brush her hair. She's got long hair down to her back. She has long hair so I have to brush her hair and get all the tangles out and I usually put it in a pony tail and then get all my books and pile it all into the car and take her to her daycare. Then I rush over
here and then I go to school and I get on the bus cause I go to cosmetology first. So I usually stay there [vocational school] for three classes. I ride over here [high school] and then I have Economics and then I have English and I have Government. After that on Mondays we have Cosmetology around 5:00 PM and then after I go and I pick her up and come home. I usually lay down for a while and she watches cartoons or a movie, she's got like tons of movies. Then I wake up and I'll fix her something to eat and I give her a bath around 7:00 PM and then I dress her and everything. Then we just kind of play or do whatever and then I usually get her into bed. We get to bed around 10:00 PM, which is late because she won't go to bed. She sleeps with me, so whenever she goes to bed I have to go to bed too. So we brush our teeth and we go to bed. Usually I get [my homework] done whenever. If it's really important then I'll come home and do it before I go to sleep. Either that, or I do it when she's playing because if I wait until she goes to sleep, sometimes [I think], Oh, I'll do it when she goes to sleep, I'm too tired. I go to sleep too.

When I first had her I did everything and she had colic, so she woke up every two hours. I tried to have her sleep in her room, but I was scared of that thing, that SIDS thing, so even when she would go to sleep I would kind of listen and be watching her. I didn't have any sleep then, but my mom, she decided, my mom doesn't work, she would help me wake during the night with her if she needed it. So she would wake up like once a night.

[I only missed] three weeks [of school when I had her]. [My delivery] was fine. I watched for about three hours. I was fine until this lady came in the next room and she was screaming really loud and I just got scared. I was like, "oh no", how bad is this going to hurt or just what. My nurse was really cool, she was like, you're not going to do this Carole, I know you're already strong. I lost all my weight [quickly], everything was fine. I was exercising the whole time [I was pregnant], watching the Jane Fonda video, so I was in a lot better shape then, than I am now. I just wanted to be healthy. I wanted to be strong, you know. They also told me that the better shape you're in the better delivery your going to have and the better it is for your baby, and everything, so I just wanted everything to be right.

I was more mature than everybody else [when I had my baby], I mean, I was more mature. I think now that if I was to have a baby , I don't think I would have the patience that I had then its just like...I don't know.

[I got married when I was 16.] That was a disaster basically. He was a beater. I think he's 23 now. He was 22 last year. I left him in February last year. I had started going to school [that] year and everybody knew I was married, so everybody was like, "oh, how's your husband." It was just like,
he's all right, but then I went to summer school to make up for what I missed.

Well, of course, my parents [are supportive] and probably Ms. ____ (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) because everything, I mean, she is right about everything. I don't know, like, my sister was 21 [when I had my baby. She was like, she was really embarrassed that I was pregnant. She was more harmful, but she feels bad now. My parents were embarrassed too because I was too young and you know... If it hadn't been for Bethany, just that's the only thing that keeps me going.

If I didn't care... for someone to quit school because they have a baby, its just, it's stupid cause that's why you need to be in school for them (the baby). Yeah, the best way you can (care for them), which means to get an education and making more money and stuff like that.

[I'm taking an exam to get ] a license to be a hairdresser and cosmetologist. There are jobs everywhere, but you have to get your clientele and that takes up to a year and starting out you might not even make minimum wage. If you're good at what you do and then you can make a lot. Then [after] five years for working in a salon you can be a teacher. So if for some reason I don't go to college and do everything I can teach it.

Once a year we go to middle schools and we talk to the 7th graders or the 8th graders about being a parent and everything. Some of them take it seriously and the rest of them are like, well you shouldn't have had sex. At least that's what they say.

She's (Bethany), like, really smart. I mean, everybody that talks to her [or spends] time with her can just tell she's so smart. She knows how to count to ten. She can find anything and she hears everything and she knows exactly what you're talking about. She's like this wonderful girl and she's just so smart and she's funny. She's got this sense of humor. She's normal height. She's kind of skinny, but she's not too skiny, but she's not like chubby. She gets sick, but even when she's sick, she doesn't act sick.

I've come through a lot of puddles, but they just seem like it was meant to happen, you know, everything was meant to happen.
[I'm graduating] Friday with lots of help. When I got pregnant I was enrolled in the Hospitality Center from school at the ___ Hotel. I thought I would get teased when I was pregnant, but it didn't happen. [I had a lot of morning sickness.] I couldn't open the refrigerator, oh God, grocery stores, oh God. I had morning sickness so bad that I couldn't stay there cause the smell of the food. I just kept running to the bathroom and everything and my teacher suggested that I get into the TLC program, the teen parenting program where pregnant teenagers go. I got into that and we just went to school from 8:00 AM until 12:00 PM. [We did] book work and book work, you know, no lectures or anything, [just] a whole bunch of work sheets and reading books. I went into that class, I think it was September, and then the day before Thanksgiving I found out that my baby had spinal bifida. The day after Thanksgiving I went to take some high level ultra-sounds and they found out that it was in his lower back and they didn't know how he was going to come out. They told me that he might be retarded, might be brain damaged, might be paralyzed. He might have severe deformations and everything and they told me that I could have the pregnancy terminated or keep the baby.

I was four months, four and a half, something like that [when I found out] and I talked it over with my husband and he didn't want to keep the baby, but I did. We talked it over and we ended up deciding to keep the baby. I didn't want to terminate him and so I just kept coming to school and I missed a lot of days because I had really bad morning sickness. I couldn't stand the smell of anything and I couldn't even drink water, that was how bad it was. I was just running to the bathroom and we got through that and I had to go on Homebound in February or March cause I couldn't stand on my feet too long. My back was hurting and my feet were really hurting too. So I went on Homebound and I finished. The teacher would come to my house with book work and she would test me over the material and leave me homework and I would do it and she would come back the next week. After I had David, he turned out pretty well, things weren't as bad as they had made it seem. He was born with (a birth defect) so for two [to] three days after he was born he had his first operation to close his back and that went fine. They couldn't repair anything because everything was already damaged, so on the fifth day after he was born he had a "BP" for the Hydrocephalus [to drain the fluid].

He was in the hospital for 13 or 14 days after he was born. They wouldn't give him to me because they thought that I wasn't going to love him because I was scared to touch him. I wouldn't hold him for too long because the day
after I had him, he was born by C-section. I couldn't see him much. The first day they showed him to me briefly and when he was born they took him away and they really drugged me up. I wasn't awake most of the time so I couldn't get to see him. Then the next day after I had him, which was a Saturday, they took me to see him and I guess his head hurt so bad because [it] was full of water, it was really big and he was just screaming and hollering and I didn't know what to do. I was scared of hurting him and I thought I was doing something to hurt him so I didn't want to pick him up. I would just like touch his face and his fingers and they thought that it meant that I didn't love him and I didn't want him. Most of the time when we went to see him, cause I couldn't stay there at night because of my C-section and everything, they told me to go home and get some rest and every time it was either my husband or my mother that picked him up. I was still so scared cause that day really had an impact on me. I was still so afraid that he was going to do it again. I didn't know how to react and they would pick him up and stuff and I would change his diaper, but real carefully. I was afraid of hurting him and they took that as a bad sign. So about a week and a half, no a week, after he was born I started staying there nights. They told me that I had to stay in order for them to see that I could take care of him. So I had to get up every two hours, sleep in the waiting area and get up every two hours and feed him and stuff. He wasn't eating very well at night. He had to be drinking 3 cc's and he was only drinking two or something, I don't remember, something like [that]. He wasn't eating too well and he would fall asleep all the time on the bottle so they were concerned about that too. When I was there he was eating well. He would eat with me and they saw that I was taking care of him. I was getting to know him, basically. He wouldn't holler any more or scream when I picked him up. I was getting more comfortable with him and they finally let me take him home and then from then on it got better between us. [Then] he had another operation. I kept going to school during that time. After we got him home, the teacher would come over and I was doing Homebound. She would come over and give me the work and stuff and I would still do it. We had lots of doctor's appointments during the week and there has been neurosurgeons, pediatrics, the family practice, the urologist and everything, a whole bunch of x-rays and ultrasounds on his kidneys to make sure everything was working fine. So I got through that and finally summer came.

[I was in school that whole time.] They were coming to my house. The teacher would come and give me the work and I would have to do it. I was taking some computer classes from her also. I wanted to learn a little bit about computers cause I couldn't get into my computer at home cause I didn't know anything about it. She was teaching me that and finally the end of the
year came and I finished that semester. During the summer we still went to more doctor's appointments and more doctor's appointments.

I was supposed to graduate [when I had him], but since I had to get out of the hospitality service, I lost three credits there. [I was a senior.] They took one of my classes out [of my transcript] so they said I would have to come back this year if I wanted to graduate and do hospitality again. I decided to do that and one time, it was in June, David had to be hospitalized again because he had to get the shunt replaced. It got clogged and he was doing real bad again. He was hospitalized for five days so I had to stay there and miss school. I had to stay there with him. It's not the funniest thing in the world. It was boring and he was real little and the nurses wouldn't take care of him so I had to stay there 24 hours a day. He got through that and I came back to school and I missed a lot of days, but when I could, I would come twice a day and make it up cause my teacher has morning classes and afternoon classes. I would come to the afternoon classes, but on the days I could, I would come in the morning and the afternoon to make up for the absences. I missed quite a bit of days cause David was hospitalized twice during the school semester. The first time he had a urinary tract infection and they thought he had some kind of a virus and he was hospitalized for four days. They didn't find anything else so they let us out and I missed two days cause he still wasn't doing too well. I came back and made those days up and about a couple months ago he was hospitalized for five days or six days cause they thought they were going to have to re-operate cause his head was getting full, but it turned out that he was really backed up on his bowel movements. We had to stay there until they could clear the system out and that was basically [what] was wrong [with] him. So, I missed a whole lot of days there and plus he had gotten quite a bit of colds and stuff and I didn't want them to get too far along cause he would end up in the hospital again. I had to miss days there and my mom, she watched him while I went to the hotel and sometimes I would have trouble getting her to watch him cause she would complain cause she works nights. She had to get up and watch him for me and she complained so I would have to stay home and watch David. Cause my husband works and basically all day, lately, he's been working from 9:00 AM until 10:00 PM, so he hasn't been able to watch him so much. With all that help I have gotten here to graduation finally.

He's seven months [old now]. He was born April 28th [so I had the pregnancy all through the school year.] The first couple of days [after I found out he was going to have problems], I just cried and cried. I couldn't stop crying and crying and crying and crying. Nobody wanted me to [cry]. I wanted to be alone and everybody kept coming in my room cause I wasn't living with my parents. Me and my husband had our own place and they kept coming
over early in the morning and my husband would go to work and they would come and get me, even if I was in pajamas and they would take me to their house cause they didn't want me to stay home by myself cause all I did was cry. I didn't want to do anything, even at Thanksgiving. I cooked dinner, but that was it. I didn't enjoy it. Christmas wasn't that great either.

[My husband is supportive.] More than I thought he would be. I thought he would regret having David with all the doctor's appointments and everything. So far he has no regrets. He's glad that I insisted on keeping him. [I have been married] a year in November, in October it turned a year. Most of the time [he has been a good support.] We have our ups and downs, but he's been there. He loves that baby more than anything. I tell him he's a daddy's boy cause as soon as he sees daddy, he's just smiling and laughing.

David is in the program here at the school. They help him with his motor skills cause he's a little behind on his motor skills, [but] not too much. He's just behind because his muscles are unbalanced and his hips, he still can't sit that well. He sometimes falls backwards or forwards. He still can't hold himself up that well, but he's getting better and they are helping him with that and learning how to crawl and everything. He's getting the hang of it. He gets to play with other kids, he loves that.

I also take him to therapy every Tuesday at the Children's Hospital where they work on his muscles and his joints, and everything, to see how well he's doing. I think they are going to put braces on him now because he's starting to push up on his feet instead of on his knees to crawl. He goes on his feet. He puts his butt up and goes on tippy toes. He will do that and I'm getting concerned about that because he has no feeling in his feet. His muscles are real weak in his lower legs and they are going to put [on] braces. It's sad when he starts pushing on his feet.

It is hard to cope with all this during school], real hard, with everything else in my life, being concerned about David all the time not getting sick, trying to keep healthy so he can, hoping no other problems will come and take him to all his doctors appointments. It's hard to stay focused on school. It made it easier to me [to be in the Hotel/Hospitality training]. It really didn't seem like school, more like job training cause there are no books or anything. I just go to a hotel and work in the kitchen and stuff. It didn't seem much like I was learning anything, but I was. I'm hoping to get a job at the hotel. I want to be a culinary chef, but it doesn't seem like I'll be going to college or culinary school [or] anything because it will be real hard. All the good culinary schools are out of state and I don't want to move David to another state. He's doing so well here at the hospital and everything, so.
They've (the school) been great. The Teen Parenting [Program], I've met some of the girls in the class and everything and I can talk to them and they offer child care which I couldn't take because of the situation that David was in, but they offer it. That was a big help cause sometimes we came here to class and I would bring David to class with me. They let me have him in class with me and watch him while I was in class, so that helped out a lot because otherwise I would had to stay home and miss another day. It has been real helpful, the teachers are understanding, more understanding than I thought they would be. Most people, oh this is just another teenage dropout, another teenage mother. [A lot of people have that attitude.] I find that a lot. I like, don't care anymore. They, oh well, she screwed up.

I don't have very many friends since we moved here to Texas three years ago. All my friends are in California and they, I wasn't really too social here. I guess I was depressed cause my parents decided to move here. I was sixteen. Life just seems so fun in California and here it seems so boring. I couldn't relate to people here and me and my sister looked different. People wouldn't talk to us, or I don't know, some people, but I keep them at a distance cause I have so much going on in my life right now. Basically I go out with my sister and her friends.

I live with my parents, with my husband and my sister. They have a four bedroom house so my sister has her own room and my son has his own room, although he won't sleep in there now. [He sleeps with us.] We just got a water bed and he seems to love that bed so much. [I think it is soothing] cause he won't fall asleep in my parent's bed anymore. Soon as he hits the pillow on my bed he's asleep. I take it he likes it, probably the warmth or the movement of the water comforts him.

[When teenage girls get pregnant, they should] take advantage of all the opportunities that they are given. Don't just drop out. If anybody offers to help them, take them up on it, it helps a lot. If you can't find any kind of support, stick with it. It's hard to find people who support you, people who want to help you, and the few people that do, let them help you. I wouldn't say that they really come to me (people to help), it's just that, I guess, I've gotten to know people and they've gotten to know me, so [they] try to help me out in whatever way they can.

Some of the teachers attitudes [make it hard on teenage mothers], not my teacher or anything, but some of the teachers. I've heard some other people that they get really picked on by the teachers for being pregnant. Probably because they are teenagers. [They make a judgment about me], like they just
like, oh well. They expect all the teenage moms to drop out. They say, oh, who cares, might as not even try with her. She's going to drop out anyway.

[I decided to stay in school] basically cause my mom was willing to help me take care of David, otherwise I wouldn't be able to do it. I had support from my parents and my husband and when he could, he would watch him. I could come to class and everything and I really wanted to stay in school, not only for me now, but for David, so I could make something better of myself to support him and give him everything he needed. I don't just think about myself anymore. I always think about the two of us. Who knows, one day my husband and I might separate or divorce and I would have to have some way to support myself, not just working at McDonalds or anything, so.

[Schools need to be] more supportive, try to push them (teenage mothers) a little harder. Don't treat them like just another drop-out. Try to help them out. Support them, push them to do their work instead of dropping out. Try to listen. If they have problems, offer to listen to them, not necessarily to give them any help, but sometimes it helps the mothers to talk to somebody because they might not have an older person to talk to. They might not have parents who agree or support them so they need the extra support from school teachers.

Ms. ___ (director of Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) and my counselor Ms. ____, they've been great with me, kind of pushed me along when I had problems. Kind of pushed me along, like, come on, you can do it. Ms. ___ (director) has always been there to listen to me. She also has helped me out with offering suggestions and everything. They've basically been my support group for keeping me here in school. [Ms. ___ (counselor) is] from Hospitality. She's really not called a teacher, she's called coordinator cause she doesn't really teach anything. She's just there to organize the group and take attendance and stuff. We take her as much more than that.

[We need financial help for David.] We're trying to get social security for him and I am supposed to have that in by the 22nd of this month, but I haven't been able to get everything together yet. I am going to see if I can get an extension on that, cause my husband's job, we don't pay rent, but my mom's helpful. We have to pay our bills and everything and we don't have a lot of money, so we have to pay that off and we have to get a new car in June cause our car that we had, the transmission broke and it cost us more to get it repaired than a brand new one. So now we have car payments on that and plus the bills and everything. We don't have much money left so I'm trying to see if I can get a part time job at the hotel so I can still learn and make a little bit of money to help us out. My parents have been real
supportive on that part and letting us move back in cause I didn't want to move back in. I was happy on my own.

My parents are real bossy and overprotective of me especially, not so much with my sister, but with me and after I had my freedom, I want to go back to that. Boy, are they ever [protective of David]. They don't even want to let me take him to the store with me or anything. If I'm driving, they start having cows, and this and that. It is [hard]. I mean, they don't, they over do it, especially my mom. She's like, he's a sick baby and I'm like, he's not a sick baby, he's just fine. He may have this problem, but he's not a sick baby. Don't treat him like he's going to break or anything. If you do anything to him, he'll get sick. It's not true, [you've] got to treat him like a regular baby or else he's going to learn that that's the way he's going to be treated. He's going to be spoiled the rest of his life, want breaks in life, just cause he's different, so. Boy, does she ever [want to mother him]. She keeps telling me that he's going to call her mommy instead of me. He (the baby) says da-da and ma-ma. He still can't say mama, he says na-na. I take it that's what he's trying to say, but he doesn't really direct it to anybody. He just says it over and over again, so I'm not too worried about it, cause I know, he knows, who his mother is and his grandmother is and everything. It upsets me sometimes when she says things like, that she tries to act like, you know, it's her son. They keep saying that their going to take him away from me and everything and I'm like, no, he's mine. They keep saying, if I don't do well enough, they'll go get a lawyer and take him away from me and everything. I want to be the best mother I can for him

He has Medicaid. [We have high medical bills] because my husband didn't want to get health insurance from his job because they might not accept them. First of all, cause of the special conditions, and that they know he has to go to the doctor's every so often and they have to pay a lot of money. That's one of my major concerns, that he'll be turned down for that and if he gets health insurance, they will have to pay some part of it, and we just financially, right now, can't do that, so. [Medicaid pays for it now.] The social worker at the hospital told me that I could apply for “CIDC” that goes along with Medicaid and they pay for some additional bills that Medicaid doesn't pay for cause David has to be catheterized, supposedly three times a day, but I don't do it that often cause I don't think he needs it, really. [He is catheterized for] his bladder. I do it every once in awhile, maybe once a week or something, just to make for him to get used to it, so it won't hurt later on, if he needs it. I don't think he needs it at all right now. They're telling me he has to. If I don't want to do it three times a day, at least do once in awhile so he's used to it. So that's what I'm doing cause I don't like to do it unless he needs it.
[For me a typical day], it starts at six in the morning, every morning. David wakes up and I have to get up and make a bottle and he wants to play at that time so I have to sit up and play with him and things. He'll pull my hair like crazy to wake me up if I don't wake up at the same time he does cause he sleeps with me in my bed. He pulls my hair so I wake up and then about 7:00 AM he starts getting sleepy and we watch TV in the morning, mostly he wants his bottle. My mom comes home about 8:00 AM, then she takes him to lay down with her and he usually falls asleep with her during that time. I go in and take a shower and get ready for school so by the time I'm ready, which is about 9:00 AM, he's already awake. She gives him to me and she goes back to sleep and I take care of him. I try to make breakfast for myself and try to feed him something, cause I'm trying to get him to eat food. Baby food, he won't do it. I'll sit there and play with him on the floor with the train around the Christmas tree. I'll change his diaper and everything that needs to be done. About 10:00 AM, I usually let my dog in so we can play with him a little bit, cause my son likes the dog. He tries to grab his ears and everything and I want him to get used to my dog. So I let him in every once in a while and we play for a little bit and I let the dog back out and we go and lay on my bed and sit there. I finish getting ready, usually brush my hair or whatever and finish doing my makeup. At 10:45 AM I go and wake up my mom so she can be up so I can leave. I make sure he has a clean diaper and make sure all the bottles are ready so she just has to put the powder in there. I fill them up with the water and leave them in the refrigerator so all she has to do is put the powder in them and make sure he's all got clean clothes and everything, so she won't have any problem with that. I give him to her and I leave the house about 11:00 AM, sometimes a little bit later depending on what David needs to have done before I leave. It takes about 25 minutes from my house to the hotel. I take my mom's car and I get there and I go to the hotel and first, we go to Ms.'s (counselor) office and let her know that we're in. We go and get changed and go to our stations and I go to the kitchen and help whatever they need help with, cutting vegetables or putting bacon on trays or whatever. Then about 1:40 PM we get out of there and I go and get my keys and stuff from my locker and go back home. I'm usually home by 2:10 - 2:15 PM. [When] I get home, usually most of the time, David has fallen asleep. By the time I get home and I get changed out of my work clothes, he is usually asleep again. I have to make sure he's got a clean diaper, make sure he's been fed, check with my mom how he has been and everything, and I play with him for a little bit. If he hasn't had his nap I kind of put him to sleep about 3:00 PM. Usually by that time he's asleep and I take time for myself. If I have paper work to do or phone calls to make for his social security, I make them at that time, or appointments, or whatever, I make them at that time. [I] take advantage of his sleeping and if not, I'll just
take a little nap myself because by that time I'm tired. Then at 4:00 PM, he's usually awake again. I have to start making dinner cause I usually make dinner and my mom rests, she watches David and plays with him while I make dinner. Sometimes she'll start cleaning up outside and picking up all the dog's mess and everything. My dog likes to tear things up, so she has to go around picking up the back yard before my stepdad gets home and I have to watch David and try to make dinner. I sit David in the high chair and give him a couple of cookies and put him between the kitchen and the dining room so I can keep an eye on him too, or I'll put him in the playpen in the garage cause he likes to be outside. I put him in the garage from the garage door, keep the door so open he can watch my mom. [I] give him a cookie to chew on. About 5:00 PM I start clearing the table and everything. We set the table for dinner and we eat dinner by 5:30 - 6:00 PM. Usually my parents take him to sleep with them and he goes and takes a nap. That time, if I have to do his laundry or put away his laundry, I usually do it then or I go and clean up my room and pick up all his stuff, all the toys around. Usually by 7:45 PM, he's already awake, so sometimes we sit and watch TV, or I'll take advantage and give him a bath. He gets a nightly bath, every night, most of the nights, unless he falls asleep early. Then after he has his bath, he plays for a little bit and he drinks his bottle and goes to sleep for the rest of the night. I usually stay up and watch a little bit of TV or finish doing laundry. If I have to wash bottles I do it after he goes to sleep at night and clean up the kitchen, put away the dishes and everything and I usually get to bed about 10:30 - 11:00 PM every night. [I'm] exhausted.

[I've been pretty healthy.] I've had a couple of problems lately. I've been getting really bad stomach aches a lot. First, a couple of months ago I started every once in awhile, like once a week. I would get stomach aches and they wouldn't go away with Alka Seltzer or Pepto Bismol, or anything. They just kept coming, so I thought maybe it was something I ate. But, then a couple a weeks ago I was getting them every day and last week I missed a couple days of school because I kept getting them three four times a day. I didn't have a chance to go to the doctors office cause I don't have health insurance. First of all, I just have a gold card from the county and if I want to go to the hospital it takes a long time. They make you sit there and wait so long and I have a lot of other things to do and I don't like to take David to the hospital and take a chance of him getting sick. I don't have anyone to watch him if I go to the hospital. The only time is if my mom goes, cause my mom works nights at the hospital. I can go with her, but I haven't been able to since my husband has to get up early and go to work. I can't leave him at night and try to take care of him so I didn't get a chance to do that. But, yesterday and today, I haven't had stomach aches, so I'm hoping they went away. I'm hoping cause I was really starting to get worried.
[I had a C-section when he was born.] It wasn't as bad as most people said a C-section was going to be, but, yeah, it hurt and everything, but not as bad as people made it seem. The first couple of nights I couldn't sleep much, not only because [of the C-section], I kept calling the hospital every two hours to check on how David was doing and everything. I couldn't sleep and to sit up, it would hurt a little, but I got through it real quick. I think it helped that the nurses kind of got me up the next day and made me walk around and everything. They taught me how to get up carefully and how to lay back down in the bed.

I have times that I can't sleep at night just sitting there thinking about things over and over again. I'm hoping he'll be a normal kid. That he'll be able to walk. They say he'll be able to walk and I'm hoping he'll do well at that and I won't have to take too much care of him more than he needs. I'm hoping he'll be able to take care of himself at one point. [Mentally], he's perfectly normal. I think he's too smart sometimes. He's been real smart ever since he was three months old. He could hold his own bottle. He waves bye-bye so I think he's just fine.

[I'm going to graduation.] I wasn't planning on it (graduation), but this is something I would like to do for myself.
Well, I wake up at 5:30 AM [on a typical school day] and take a shower and get ready to go to school. Together there are just me and Katie because everyone else is gone. Then my brother or my fiancé, one of them, who ever is there, takes me to school. Then I drop her off (the baby) at the day care and I take a class here. Then I go to the high school and I ride the bus back here and get her. Then I get my stuff, go home, and play with her. Sometimes we go to a friend's house or at my parent's house or, you know, we'll just sit at home. Then she goes to bed about 9:00 PM and I go to bed about 10:00 PM. She wakes up about five or six times a night. [I'm] very tired.

Katie is one. She'll be two December 18th. [I had her] a month after I turned fourteen. [I was in] eighth [grade]. [I'm in] tenth [grade now]. [I did not take time off from school] because I had her the day after we got out for Christmas vacation so that gave me two weeks with her and I came back as soon as Christmas vacation.

Everything [changed for me], you know. I couldn't go out with my friends anymore and I still can't. Sometimes my mom will watch her so I can do something. I'm not worried about things, that I used to do, and what I used to be like, what I'm wearing, and you know, it doesn't matter to me now. I don't have all the money that I used to have, that I could spend on myself. I have to spend it on her now, and, I don't know, life has just changed. It's the way I look at [it] now, that's really important.

[My relationship with friends has changed.] Some of them, quit talking to me. There are a couple of them that were really there for me and they still are and everything. Now that I've moved out of my mom's house, I just kind of keep to myself except for the one or two friends.

[I live with my fiancé (not the baby's father)] and my brother. I had him move in to help us pay for the rent and it's going a lot better. [We expect to get married] next spring break. We lived with my mom for a year, me, Katie and him. We lived in our own apartment for six months now. [I like being independent] very much. I don't know, it's better for me, all around, like this.

When I found out I was pregnant I was in middle school and I went and talked to my counselor there and she told me that I had a choice, that I could either come here (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) or I could stay there (middle school) and so me and my mom decided that we would look into it, cause it had the TLC program for the pregnant girls and I just decided that I
was going back. [This is my second year in the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program.] I was here the last semester of eighth grade and I was still here all of ninth grade and this is my tenth grade here. So yeah, I have been here two years. [I might have to end at the end of this year.] Well, it depends on how old the toddlers will be next year, cause if she is too old for the toddlers that they are gonna have in the next year, she won't be able to come here. But, Ms. (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) told me that most likely she is going to come here at least another year.

[The high school hasn't helped me], not really, any at all. I mean most of the people here (high school) don't know I have a baby. Some of them do and some of them don't. The ones that do, don't think really highly of you when you do, so I don't get any special attention or anything. [There is an attitude.] [The high school students know I have a baby.] It (the attitude toward teenage mother) depends on the way they can take it. Some of them treat me normally, and some, it's a real big thing, you know. "You have a baby? Oh my God", and I just kind of ignore it.

Some of them (the teachers) do [help you out]. Like, I had a teacher last year and I wasn't passing because I really didn't have that much time to study. I was trying my hardest you know I was really trying and then I would study whenever I could. I told her, I said, "I know I'm going to fail this." She said, "Well, you know, I can see how hard you're studying and I know how hard it is for you, so I'll make sure you pass." And, she made sure I passed.

[My grades have been] pretty good, except in geometry. I've been failing geometry, but the rest of them are "As" and "Bs". [I study] when I'm at school, you know, some of it's real easy. I don't even have to study for it. It's just, you know, it's easy, but geometry, I have a big problem with. I don't like math at all.

She's (Katie) been doing pretty good (healthy). She has had a cold now, but she was a month premature, so she was sick all the time. She had bronchitis when she was two months old and she gets a lot of ear infections now, but she is doing good now. [I missed] a lot [of school in the beginning because she was sick.] If I miss too much, I mean, if you miss, you know, you have to have doctor's notes and they'll review it with a committee. If they think its reasonable enough, they'll let you. If it's stupid reasons and your gone a lot, absolutely way too many days, then they'll know and they won't excuse your absences.

I was thinking about going to summer school this year and next, so I could graduate a year early and I wouldn't have to go my senior year. I really
don't like it, but I don't have a choice. [I'm determined to finish.] Well, my parents, and you know, I want to become a nurse. I want to make good for myself and her, you know, cause I couldn't get a job to support me, much less her, without a high school education. So, I mean, it's all being handed to me, this program is and just, actually, I'd be a fool to drop off.

[This program has really made a difference.] The day care and, just all the, I don't know, everyone, you know. Stay in school where it's all positive and all that.

I would tell [other pregnant teens], they really needed to know there is a lot of help out there that they could get. It's like, so important. I don't think that most them understand, like those that are living with their parents. I don't think they understand how hard it is, those that support themselves and a baby. You're not going to be able to do that without an education. I think that's one thing they must listen to. [A lot of mothers drop out] cause they don't, I think, they believe they can't. They feel like they can't do it with a baby. I think, if they really tried, they would understand that they could, cause I thought I couldn't, that I had nothing to do this for. You have to get used to it and I've gotten used to it. [You have to get used to being tired all the time] and sleeping when you have a chance.

[To help mothers stay in school], I would, like, make the teachers be more cooperative with them. I've seen them not give them any special privileges, you know, it's our fault and we don't need special attention. Just asking for more help, because I think we might need more. Other girls have time to go home and study or other kids, I think we might need it more, so just a little bit more help and understanding.

Some of them (other students) [look down on us]. You know the ones, there are all the people who don't understand. It can happen to anybody. I didn't think it could, you know, it can even happen to the ones that are looking down on you. They just don't understand. If they had more understanding of what teenage parenting is, I think they would have a little bit more respect for us.

I think it may be a little bit harder [when I graduate], but there is nothing I can't do. I don't think it can be harder than geometry.

[She (Katie) is more difficult now.] She always wants to be held and she's not too safety aware. She doesn't know everybody and she doesn't want to have anything to do with them. She wants everything she sees. She throws a fit when she can't have it.
I am not married because of financial reasons. I have an income and once I get married it will be cut off so we can't get married until June, at least next June. I have an income from the state because my dad is considered disabled, so I get that, but I'm also working and right now, during school, I usually don't work, but maybe twenty hours a week. But I set up my schedule this year so I could work like from 1:00 PM until 8:00 PM, so I'd have more hours for Christmas and for his birthday.

[My boyfriend] works just during the day. He has a part time job, but he works about thirty hours a week. He drives a truck for ____ (company). It's just a little paint firm.

I live in ____ (location). It's at least a twenty minute drive to school, twenty miles up here and twenty miles back. I drive to school usually, except when my cars broke down, so my grandmother has been bringing me. It's eighty miles for her because she comes here, drops me off and goes home, comes back and picks me up later and then we go home, but usually I've got my own car now. Last year I took the bus. I got dropped off at one of the girl's houses and I took the bus up here and I wanted to come so I could nurse my baby, so I could be around him. The school, down by where I live, they don't offer the program (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) that's here and I think that none of them does. That's a little bit closer (the school), but it's not a good school at all. There are too many gangs and things, drugs and everything over there, so I had dropped out of school before I got pregnant. After I found out that I was pregnant I thought I need to do something. I didn't know any places. I looked at all different kinds of schools, like even accelerated. They either cost too much or, you know, because I was pregnant, I couldn't go, and I don't have anybody to watch him while I'm at school, so I thought, I'll just figure something out. My sister was in a foster home and the other girl was coming here and so I kind of worked it out so I could come too and it's been great. There are a lot of nice people.

I dropped out before I was pregnant just because I didn't feel like doing any more. I was tired of it. I had gone from my middle school, then I went to a private Christian school. Because of the people, I couldn't deal with it. It was just too many problems. Those people [at school] were so judgmental, they had favorites. They said, "We don't have favorites," but they had favorites and I was there two and a half years and I was just fed up with it. So I went to ____ High School, which isn't very far. I went there for a month and my sister had her baby. I dropped out, so I was helping her and then I just
started getting in with the wrong people. I met T and it was kind of, I liked him, but you know. I had everything else was going on and then we kind of got together and I got pregnant probably three weeks after we met each other, maybe a little bit longer after we met each other. We started seeing each other [and] I was pregnant right away, but you know, he stuck around. We've had our problems and you know, our fights, but we've worked at everything and you know, we're still together, which surprises a lot of people. You know, three weeks and your still with her?

[I came back to school when I had the baby.] I dropped out in February because my niece was born and I just quit going to school and then I got pregnant at the end of April and after that it was when I decided I needed to come back. [When Adam was born] he weighed just under six pounds and fourteen ounces, but we were scared because of the weight. I mean, I lost thirteen pounds and then I gained that back and only twelve on top of that, so we thought there was going to be something wrong. I mean, not the doctors, but me and T. Adam was fine when he was born. He was healthy and everything was good.

[I returned to school in the Fall.] I started during the first semester. [When] I came back I was a half a year behind my graduation [class]. I should have graduated last June and then I could have graduated this year if I would have had all of my credits, but I didn't have all my credits so I will graduate this June. [When I came back, I came back to this program and] I've been here ever since.

I think most of them (teachers) did [know I was pregnant] because when I first started I was OK, but the second month, it was about the fifth or sixth month that I was pregnant and I started having problems. I was out of school at least once a week. Then it just got to the point where I would have to go to the hospital. I would have to go to the doctor's and finally, I remember last Halloween, I was on my way [to school]. [I] got ready for school and I ended up going to the hospital for contractions. After that I got put on bed rest. I passed all my classes with an "AB", "A", or "B". [I had one teacher], she did a lot of the Homebound kids. She wasn't supposed to go out of her county, but my grandmother lived in county and she said, "I don't know why they said that?" and she came to my house and got my work and she came and picked it up. She would come from (city) down to my house to stay for one minute to pick up my work and all my teachers were really great. When I came back, after I had Adam, everybody was really happy and I passed all my classes and everything. All the teachers have pretty much been really good about it.
My grades have pretty much stayed the same. I haven't got a "D" or an "F" or anything. All my grades have been a lot better than before cause I didn't do anything [in school]. T, he's my boyfriend, he's so proud of me. He [tells me] I'm going to graduate and he keeps telling me how proud he is and how good I'm doing in school and everything. I'm doing pretty good. I've missed a lot of school. I've missed probably half of this school year so far because either Adam has been really sick or I've been sick, and you know, my car or one thing or another. I just have one [class] right now this semester. I have one class, other than down here (parenting classes), and she (the teacher) is just giving me things to make it up, you know, do this, do that so.

I'm not sure [how many days the school will let me miss] because last year I missed a lot of days and I still passed. This year, I guess as long as I get my work [done] and I haven't been unexcused for any absences yet, so I guess they're kind of working with it. Adam, he's been sick a lot and I can't bring him into the nursery [when he is sick] and I don't have anybody to watch him, cause when I work my grandmother watches him for three to four hours. She's seventy-six years old and it just tires her out, so in order for me to go to work, I have to stay home from school and right now I need to get to work and my teachers have been working with me for school stuff.

[I have to work.] I have the money coming in, but it's not enough to buy diapers and to do everything. So because what his dad makes is just paying rent and bills, and you know, and gas and stuff like that and I get a little bit more money than he does, but not much, and it goes for diapers and whatever Adam needs. We have WIC, so all his formula is paid for, so you know, that helps a lot. Other than that, it's just, you know, we're making [ends meet.]

[On a typical school day], let me see, [we] get up about, probably 6:30 AM and usually I end up taking Adam out of his crib. Sometimes he's crying, sometimes he's not, but I take him out because he takes a shower with me. I put his little seat down on the bottom and he sits there while I'm taking a shower and then I'll sit down with him and I'll wash him. So we take a shower and while I'm getting ready I usually wake his dad up in time and get him ready. Let's see, when I have my car it's a lot easier cause when I'm ready to go I take and put him in the car, drive up here and go through classes and usually leave about, no later than 11:30 AM because I have to be to work at 1:00 PM. I go down [to baby's great grandmother] and sometimes I can have time to go to my house. I have to go and grab my clothes and then I take Adam to my grandmother's and she lives about six blocks away. Then I drive to work and I work in a portrait studio, so I take pictures of kids and families for seven hours and then, you know, I do everything at work. I come home.
Sometimes I stop by the grocery store if we need something, then I go home and sit down and watch TV and eat dinner for a while and go to bed. That's for a school day, that's pretty [busy].

When I go to bed] depends what time I get off work. We're supposed to be done and out by 8:00 PM and there are nights when I'm not done until 9:30 PM. I mean, it's just so busy and so it just varies. I'm usually in bed between 9:00 PM and 11:00 PM, depending on how late I work. So when I'm really tired I go home and don't even eat dinner or anything. I just go straight to bed.

Adam, I never see him at night. When I do get to put him to bed I hold him until he falls asleep and his dad usually just puts him in his crib until he falls asleep because he's afraid he's going to wake him up [when he puts him down]. I hold him [and] put him to bed. I love being able to put him to bed, but I don't do it very often because of the work schedule. He's usually in bed by 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM, which I'm not even home, so.

[To stay in school while you are pregnant or having a baby] just depends if she can or can't work and how her parents reacted. One of my friends, she's pregnant, but she got married and her husband is in the Navy. I think he's down in Texas, but she came up here. She's never finished school and you know, like, I told her, this is the best example I can tell, because, I told her, you know, you should finish school. I mean, it doesn't matter what school that she goes to, as long as she finishes. If she can't go to a school that has a program like this, then if she has somebody to watch the baby or do night school or something because that was my other option. I [could] go to night school, which I have been thinking about, cause I would have more time with Adam and that just depends on my job. Just to finish school to do what you can because it will, in the long run, bring you more money, which now a days, it's a lot. It's one of the only things people think about, but that's for a reason because without [money] your kind of stuck and with a baby it's a lot harder.

[You can find help in school.] The people down here (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) mostly. I guess I'm not sure how a public high school does (work). [They probably have] counselors or, you know, somebody that can help you, that you feel comfortable talking to. Go find somebody, you know, if you have problems because I know it's so hard. To be with people that can help support you or somebody you trust. It's just, I know that there is everybody here that I can talk to about my problems, this or that, while Adam is sick and this is going on and that is going on.
My teachers, every time she sees me, she asks [about the baby] and the other teacher I had, she was pregnant, she had her baby about five months after mine and you know, every time she sees Adam [she will say] "Oh, he's getting so big." Then my other teacher, she doesn't know how [I manage]. She says, "I don't know how to handle babies. I've never been around them," but she likes him. She goes, "Oh, he's darling."

All of the teachers I've had have been really nice about it (having a baby). I mean one of my teachers I had has never said anything, but I've heard things that she said to other students before. I know more of the students have a problem there. I was talking to this one girl and I told them, you can't think people are going to think things, but you can't worry about it. Adam, I don't want to change him, you know. Him and T have saved me from what I was getting into and I'd never go back. I never say, I don't want this anymore, because I wouldn't know what to do. Me and T have gotten to the point where he was going to leave. We've gotten there a few times and I could live, but I don't how I would deal with it because I have just gotten so used to him being there and see him when I wake up in the morning. See him when I get home every night. I talk to him when he calls me during the day and it's just part of my routine, you know, so.

Right now where I'm working it's not the most promising prominent job or anything, but they are opening three studios. We have three studios in ____ (city) [and] they will open three more. They are opening three more of the children's stores, so I'm hoping, I want to try and become a manager. So that's one thing I'm trying to look forward to, working to do that. I'm trying to show everybody that, whatever, I'll be able to do it and if not, I'm getting training. I guess at Vo Tech (Vocational Technical Program), so I'm not even sure. The counselor just said this is what we're going to have you do. I haven't gone back to the center since the beginning of the year. Some kind of receptionist training, so I'll have a job somewhere, maybe stay out of town, but stay in the general area, around here.

[So many girls drop out] because they don't have somebody there to help them. I think that's why. Like with my grandma, she's just a blessing. I mean, T's mom is Adam's real grandmother, his first grandma, but my grandma is Adam's great grandma. She's twenty years older than his mom. She (Adam's grandmother) won't watch him. It's OK for her to see him everyday. You know, T goes over there everyday when I'm at work, or whenever, but she won't watch him. We want to go out at night, she won't watch him. Once in awhile and I think that's [like] a lot of people, a lot of parents work. They don't have the money for day care. They'll help support
the baby, but they can't spend $300 a month on day care so they can go to school.

I just think that, I don't think that they want to finish school (high school students). They don't want the people dropping out. You can look at what the world, everything is going around, and I think that is a lot of it. Kids think, I'll do whatever I want and, you know, they think it's not fun anymore (school). I think they want people to finish school, but not all school districts can afford to put in a daycare. If they don't have any alternatives for them they can't do anything for them

[This program (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program)] definitely [helps me stay in school] because if we didn't [have this program] we wouldn't have somebody to watch Adam all the time. The nursery of course [is important for helping mothers stay in school] and people that care about what they're (teenage mothers) doing. I mean most everybody here (in the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) cares about the babies, cares about the mothers. If anything happened, everybody is right there. If the mothers, if there is a conflict, everybody, they try to solve it. If the nurseries are not filled with toys and filled with everything, but they have what they (the babies) need and have people there that care, that's the most important thing. To let the girls finish school, and I wouldn't have, if it wasn't for this [program]. I can't afford going to a private school. I think it's better having an environment where you can relate with everyone, not just moms because for me that would be kind of, it's nice to know people that aren't parents, as well as parents. Have people in the same situation [supporting each other] so everybody can finish school and make something better for themselves.

[My social life really changed when I had a baby.] I don't have one. Like T, he has like his Saturday nights and we fight about this all the time. He has Saturdays, that's his night. He goes out and of course I'm stuck at home with Adam, which you know, big deal, but I really don't like to stay home by myself. I don't feel safe. We fight about it. When do I have a night to go out, Friday night? There are times I have one friend and she takes care of Adam sometimes, too, and to me, she's great. If we decided to go somewhere, if there's a country [dance] when they have family night, we've taken Adam a few times. We have a blast. But she'll (friend) come over. She'll stay the night and then we'll go to a movie, dance country place, you know, everybody takes turns with Adam and me and T can dance together or whatever, but that's once in a while. Before I used to not do anything either, about the same that I do now. I mean, you just can't get up and go like I used to cause you'd have to pack the diaper bag, get Adam on his coat, or whatever, and get in the car and make sure he's buckled in his car seat. Like this
morning, Adam was playing with something, so I turned around to see what it was and my grandma had put him in, but the car seat hadn't locked so he was just sliding down playing with the bar that's across the car seat. I'm like, Adam you can't do that. So you just got to check to make sure the thing is locked. It's not much different than it was before.

Since I've had Adam, off and on I've got kidney stones. We were like in a meeting and my back started hurting and I thought, oh it will go away. It just kept getting worse, and worse, and worse, so finally they rushed me to the hospital. I don't eat like I should because I'm so busy and I'm tired all the time, it seems like. I think that's because I've always been anemic and that's hard. I have them (iron pills), I don't ever remember to take them. I've got to do this. It's the last thing on my mind, I don't know, my weight keeps going down and down since I had Adam. I stopped [breast feeding] when he got his bottom teeth and he just didn't really want to do it any more. I'm OK, but I have my days where I could stay in bed all day and sleep. I mean there is one day, one night on Halloween, [I] stayed up and made a costume. I stayed up till 12:30 AM. I got up at 6:30 AM the next day. I was so tired all day, went home and went to bed at 6:30 PM and didn't get up till 7:00 AM the next morning. I slept all the way through and I felt so bad because it was the first Halloween and we didn't even see any other trick or treaters or anything, but there are days like that when I could just stay in bed all day.

Most of my homework I get done, I do it all at once. I just sit down cause when I miss so much school I have to catch up and I'll either do it here, right before class, you know, or I'll sit down on a Sunday and just do it all at once and get it over with, or sit down at work when I have extra time, which hasn't been lately because of Christmas time. We have just been swamped, but you know, I'll sit down because you just have to get it done when you can. This one teacher [gives projects] where she had the class go out to the same place on two different days to learn two different things. It's Communication [class] and she says you don't have time to do this, write this down instead. Write a reaction paper instead. So she cuts back a lot of my work because of my job and because of Adam, but she gives me the same credits for everything. Like when we take tests, they're usually open book because you learn anyway and you've got to look the information up and remember it somehow. So she gives me my tests to take home and she says do odd or even.

[School is not hard for me], not right now. Next semester it will be because the way we talked about my schedule. If I miss many days it will be hard to catch up. I hear they're OK (teachers), but you know, if you miss a
day, you miss the important stuff. So if Adam is sick or something happens to my car, I going to have a hard time.

[There are lots of reason why I miss school], my car, the weather. I don't live like five minutes away like some people do or ten minutes. Everybody says, "Why do you want to drive from down there and come up here?", spending approximately an hour's drive [and only] spend three hours here. At first it was just so I could be around Adam, so I could nurse him and get back in school. [The highlight] of everything [is] the people here. That I can relate and everybody can relate with each other and they do. They keep food here. Like, when I was pregnant, you always wanted to snack and that's why I didn't eat very good, I was sick all the time. I think that's part of it cause they always had food here.
I'm nineteen years old and my son Mitchell is three and my youngest is fifteen months and I'm due in, I guess, two to four weeks. The way I got involved in the program (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) was actually through my sister. My sister went through this program before I did and I was here when I just had Mitchell (first son). Mitchell was two months old and then I dropped out for a year. I just came back at the beginning of this year. Oh, [when my second son was born], I guess I dropped out for two years. I'm nineteen now. I was sixteen when I was in here before. Actually, I have one year [left] from this January. I started in the middle of my Junior year. [I think] I'm going to make it.

Actually, I've had probably the easiest pregnancies in my whole teen parenting [class]. Because, I just, people that I know, a lot of the girls have had like two day labors, and I mean, like with Mitchell, my labor was only ten minutes short of eight hours. I know I had it easier than a lot of the girls.

I live with my boyfriend and his family is really supportive of me. The only person in my family that I talk to is my sister. Like I said, she went through the program (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program at the high school) too and she got a certificate. She's got two little kids. My boyfriend helps me. If he knows I'm tired, he watches the kids so I can sleep and watches them while I'm doing my homework. His family will watch them if I'm like, really stressed out, and we need to get away. They'll watch them for a few hours so we can take a break and get together and reestablish for a while.

At school, my teacher at Vo-Tech, she's really understanding and I've gotten to know a few of the girls here and they're really good people, I guess, if you get to know them. It's hard to get to know people that aren't [mothers] because they don't understand. Some of them don't, but some of them do and a lot of them are really understanding and they try to help us out any way they can.

I was very shocked [when I found out I was pregnant with Mitchell (first child) and Mitchell's dad had left me. I ended up moving back in with my friend's family and I did not tell them until I was six months pregnant. I was very nervous. When they did find out, and it kind of, I don't know exactly how to say this, it was a very tense time because they finally found out and I hadn't gone to the doctor's at all. I'm glad he's as healthy as he is. It just was
a very big shock because I remember saying when I was younger, I'll never get
pregnant and then I wasn't ready to and I did, so that shattered that dream.

Well, I wasn't in school [when I had Mitchell]. I didn't come here when I
was pregnant with Mitchell at all. I was already out of school when I got
pregnant. [I left] my sophomore year, (at) the beginning. I started there and
then I dropped out in November. Then I got pregnant a month later, so I was
already five months. Then I went back the next September, but I didn't come
here, I went to another school. Then I had him and then I came here. I was
pregnant from December until October and I worked from December to the
end of January. I just stayed out of school and out of work. Then from
February until the beginning of September I had a job. Then in September, I
was in school. Then I went back after I had him. [I went] two weeks to the
alternative school and then I dropped out. My sister talked me into going to a
presentation that the group had at the middle school and I started talking
with Ms. ____ (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) and I
decided to come here in December of 1994.

It's changed since I went here before, changed a lot. I think people used
to be a lot more trusting when I came here before. Now it's, I don't know,
now it's kind of like some of the girls [think], well, I'm just going to take care
of me and that's it. I'm going to take care of me and my baby, forget
everybody else. I mean, even though I have two kids, I just try to do as much
for everybody else as I can. I don't know, its kind of, I try to help everybody
else.

I don't have friends personally in this school. They kind of, it's like a
different world going from a teen parenting section to upstairs (high school).
I think partly because the fact, just because they look at you in a different way
than we do. They assume that if we have kids, then we have sex a lot, you
know, and we're sluts. It's not that way. There's girls that are down here that
got pregnant by a guy that they were with for three years and then the guy
dumped them or the guy is still around or whatever. It's just they never look
at it that way. They can never see things from our point of view and it's
really hard to get along. Some of them do [have an attitude]. I don't think I'd
really call it an attitude. I think I would rather call it a lack of understanding,
because they just, either they don't understand because they never talk to you,
or they don't understand because they just really don't want to. It's like
there's girls up there that would rather have an abortion than take care of
their responsibilities and most of us down here just don't see it like that. It's
just, I think it's just two different worlds completely.
It (the teacher's attitude) depends on who the teacher is because when I went here before I went upstairs all day long and I don't know how they are now, but I had some of my teachers who are really understanding. They understood, you know, that it was a big thing for me to just get here everyday. When we have assembly now and we went down one day to take the kids to see and watch because we have to leave here in the middle of a class period to make it to Vo-Tech. And one of the teachers just got angry with me and I said, "Well you know, it's not my fault." She said, "Nobody said it was your fault, but you know, we try to explain to you what we have to do and you don't listen, so obviously you don't want to. If you have that problem maybe you need to go talk to the person down stairs. Maybe you need to listen to somebody that's older than you." You know, like because we're so young we really can't possibly know what we're doing. I mean, I don't think that's just at school, I think that's anywhere. I think that there are people that are just outside of the school, like at the grocery store, or anything, just people, because they're older, think that there is not a way that a teenager can possibly know how to raise a child.

[I have two children.] Having a third one, I'm not really worried. My first took to my second son and the hospital gave me all kinds of booklets on sharing time. I brought him home from the hospital and he (the first son) automatically bonded to him (new son). I don't think I'm as worried as everybody around here is. Actually, they think I need, like a day care for when I'm home with this baby. I just, I would rather have both of the boys stay home with me and bond with the baby at the same time, at the same time my boyfriend does. That it's not like there's separate bonds, all one bond together instead five different bonds.

[On a typical school day], well I actually wake up two hours before the bus gets to our house. I give the boys a bath every day, which probably not everybody does. Then I get them dressed and get them ready and that probably takes about, it doesn't honestly take as long as people make it sound. I can probably get both of those guys bathed and dressed in forty-five minutes and we get here at about 8:30 AM. Then I stay in there and play with them for the first hour of the day and do my nursery time. Then I have to go to Economy class and that's an hour. We get out of there and we go eat lunch and I feed them. We rush through lunch, it takes about a half hour. [Then] we go from there (lunch time) and they come back down here and I think they lay down at about 11:30 AM. I leave here at 11:00 AM to go to Vo-Tech and I get out class at Vo-Tech at about 2:15 PM and get back here at 2:30 PM. I get them ready to go for the bus at 3:00 PM. [I] get home at 3:30 PM. We do laundry, grocery shopping. There is something to do every night, no matter what you do there is. You have homework or laundry or grocery shopping.
Then dinner at 5:00 PM and Tevon (second child) goes to bed at 7:30 to 8:30 PM and Mitchell (first child) goes to bed at 9:30 PM. It's just a repeated schedule almost every day. At 9:30 PM I take a shower and relax, just try and figure out what I have to do the next day and just relax for awhile. Sometimes I read a little bit. I think I read, like one book every three months, so it's just a little quiet time for me, or for me and my boyfriend. Sometimes we'll stay up really late and watch a movie together, depending what we have to do that morning. Sometimes the boys will stay up with us or they'll end up going to bed earlier, it all depends on what we have to do that night.

The nursery workers, they're the only ones I really interact with [at school] because when I'm not in class, I'm in there, but they listen to me. I know some days I'll come in and I'll just complain. They'll listen to me and let me get it out and give me suggestions and give me their answer on what they think I should do. I'll tell them what I think and they'll tell me what they think about that. It's just, I think we listen and talk to each other. I don't know, I haven't talked to Ms. ___ (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) in a long time. [I] mostly interact with the nursery workers.

My teacher (in the certification class) she knows that I'm due and I take my two kids in there. She's just, I'll tell her the problems I'm having and she's like, trying to be really understanding and help me pass because I may not be back after Christmas. She's trying to help me so I can pass. It's a computer class, so she's, I think, she's really understanding. She's the same teacher my sister had and she's down to earth. She's really nice, [she] tries to help as much as she can, so.

I don't know [how many absences I can have before I loose my credits]. I heard it was three unexcused absences. We have to call in our own absences. I know I've missed at least thirteen days of school and I made sure that I called in everyday. I miss because, it's just, I really want to get this done, so I can get a good job and take care of my kids. [I think I will be done] next January. [I think it will be possible with the new baby.] I'll be driving so it won't [be bad]. It gets a lot harder to ride the bus than it is to drive. To get all the kids on the bus would be just horrendous. Trying to get three kids on one bus, its like you have to follow their time schedule, so if you're late, your late and then...

I've gotten to the point of, I know kids, not kids, but teenagers, really don't like to be told what to do. I know how I feel when people will tell me what to do. I really don't like it, and it just makes me think that they don't think I know what I'm doing. So if they (teenage mothers) would ask me for
advice [on staying in school], I would talk to them and I would tell them that there are teen parenting programs all over. Like, if you want to go down there (teen parenting program) I'll go with you. I know what it's like. It's hard. It's really hard, especially, I was scared at the beginning of this year to come back to what people would think. You know, she's got two kids and a baby. I wasn't really worried about the people upstairs (regular academic program), but the people down here. What are they going to think? Then I just got to the point of that I really don't care any more. I just want to get my high school diploma and my certificate and get out of here. I know it would be hard for those people and I think I would just tell them they have to find the strength in themselves to want to come. If they don't want to come then they won't be dedicated. There is so much dedication teen parents put into coming to school everyday. You have to want more than you did ever before. It's something totally new because your not just trying to take of yourself. You have to take care of you and one baby or, there is one girl who is going to have twins, two babies. I mean that's much more responsibility than any other high school student could ever have.

I think it (having children) gives more of a reason to [come to school] because we want to be able to take care of our kids. I mean, I'm on AFDC and I want to get a good job so I can get off of it, so I can take care of my kids. I mean, I take care of them, but I want to have the full financial (responsibility) for everything so I can say that I bought this for them with the money that I made from my job. I just think it would feel good to say that. I mean, I've had a job before and it was nice when I said that before and I miss, I like the feelings I get, when I can say, I did this for my kids.

I've been emancipated since I was fifteen, so I mean I've dealt with social services. My sister was in foster homes from the time she was twelve and I'm three years younger than her so I was nine years old. It was like, I've gone through since I was nine years old. For ten years, I just had paper work to fill out and I know a lot of the legal system. I take law classes whenever I can. I just think its really educational, especially for teen parents because we have a lot more [responsibility]. My sister helped me and for a while, my mom was trying to be helpful, but she does more harm than helps, so I think, it's just a lot of understanding and a lot of learning. I filled out paper work before I went to school here. I've taken one law class here, but the rest of the classes I've taken myself, so it's what I learned outside of this school.

[If schools want to help teenage mothers], I think I would probably tell them, if they have kids, they probably have some kind of understanding. [They need] to just realize it takes an extra effort. I know there are girls here who their parents will get their kids dressed for them. I don't have that.
luxury. I don't have that. I think maybe if they realized that it takes that extra twenty to thirty minutes every morning, it's just, it wears us down. It does, even though it seems like such a short time, it wears us down. It makes us just want to stay home. There's days when I really just want to stay home and I think if I stay home today, I'm going to have to go again. I think I would tell them, just try to be understanding and listen. Don't tell them what to do, but give suggestions. Suggestions are more helpful than telling and understanding is more helpful than lecturing. I think that as long as they try to have understanding, that we always get along better. I think that's how it is.

I guess as long as they listen to us like we're normal, like everybody else is and just not automatically categorize us as teen parents. We're students still too. We're just, we just have extra responsibilities. Some of us take advantage of that and some of us do without what we can. I think just as long as they see us as students, but that, to know that we're teen parents, but to not necessarily judge us because of it. I think maybe that would help. That would probably have to be the first thing they would have to do. Just realize, yes, they are teen parents, but that doesn't mean that they're going to act like some of the other students here who are actually childish, but then again, who knows, cause they are actually teenagers. I think it takes the realization that we're people too. We're not any different than anybody else except for that we have another being that we have to take care of while we're still in school.

It's changed a lot [since I had a baby]. I didn't go to parties a lot, but I remember going to the mall every weekend and going over to friend's house whenever I wanted to and meeting people and going out. Now if something isn't planned, it's just a pain in the butt. If it's not already planned the day before, it's just a big problem, basically.

[I have friends at school] just downstairs (in the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program). I hardly talk to anybody upstairs. There are a few girls here that, we'll call each other and we'll talk for awhile. I mean, I don't think I really get close to anybody, like as close as the people who are best friends get. I just, I think I focus on other responsibilities more than people that I don't live with. I think I have maybe ten friends down here and that's about as far as it goes. I try to stay by my boundaries.

Some of us do [help each other in school work]. It just depends on what kind of classes we're taking. Me and one of the other girls are both in the same class and I help her out and she helps me out in other parts. It's really nice to have somebody else in the same class. It makes me feel good that I can
help her out because her mom's an accountant and I'm taking accounting and she asks me for help. When she has a question, it feels really nice to think, I have something I can do for somebody. I can help them out. I think we all try [to] help each other out a little bit as much as possible.

[I've been healthy], unfortunately too healthy. I have been gaining too much weight, but that's the only problem. [I've got Medicare.] We're all covered through the state.

I have a car. I don't have a license, but my boyfriend does, so we each have a car my mom lets us borrow. We decided to buy it. My permit just expired, so when we have to go anywhere, he drives. I mean, we kind of work around each other's schedule. It's a give and take relationship.

[He will be there for the birth of my third child. He has no experience.] This is his first child. He was actually married before and his wife had three miscarriages, so this is like his first. Actual, he's been to births, but this is his first own child's birth which will be very interesting to see how he reacts. He tries to act like he's cool. When I told him how I started crying at my [son's] birth. Oh, I'll be calm and I just...I don't know, I've seen quite a few people at their children's being born. I think it will be pretty interesting to see how he reacts.

I think it is just because it's my third time [trying to graduate], I think that's what makes me [determined]. I want to get it over with cause I've seen how many times I've quit. I just think about it and I think about how naive I had to have been to listen to the people who told me, you don't need it (high school diploma), you can get a job without a high school diploma. There are even people who say you can get a job with a GED. Well, how far can you get? I mean, you can't even go in the Army with a GED. I mean, I don't want to do that, but there is so much more you can do with just a high school diploma than you can with a GED. It just makes me think, why did I even listen to these people? Why didn't I just listen to what I was saying to myself instead of what they were telling me. I've gotten to the point, you know, I'm just going to listen to me. I'll listen to them, but not always do what they say.

I don't want to sound really selfish or anything, but I've always had good grades. It's just, I mean, when I first entered high school, I think my grades were really bad but I didn't really want to be there. I have As in all my classes right now and like before, I just, I think I can be a good student. I just think it depends on how much determination you have. I can do the work really good or I can just do the work. Now I try to do the work really good because I want to get things done and get out of here. That's why I try so hard.
Yeah, I think I've realized that if I do the work I can get out of here faster than my sister. [She] was a senior for four years which I can't even imagine. I was supposed to graduate two years ago, so I'm like, I just want to get it done and get out of here, do the best I can do. I mean, there are things that I want to get that I can't afford now and I think about if I get this job and make this much I can do this and it all adds up and sounds [like a] really nice future. It just, it works out for, I think, for a very good ending.

I think we will [stay together for the birth]. This is actually the first relationship where it feels really odd for me because both of the fathers left. When I got pregnant with Mitchell, he left by choice and when I got pregnant with Tevon, the person was really abusive towards Mitchell and I had just found out just before I found out I was pregnant. I told him I was leaving him, so this is like, this is the first time that I have had the father go through with the whole pregnancy with me. It's just definitely something new cause we're total opposites and we never fight. It's really odd. I mean it's a new experience. I hear girls say that I'll never get a guy now that I have a kid and I have to say I'm living proof. I think you can because he just, he calls my kids his kids. We've only known each other [just] over a year, but we've only gone out. March 4th will be our one year anniversary.
I am 20 right now and my baby is sixteen months. His name is Andy. I wasn't in school when I got pregnant cause I dropped out, but I should have been, I think. I got pregnant when I was eighteen. I had already dropped out of school [when] I got pregnant. [I came back to school to get my diploma] because what can you do without it? If it wasn't for this program (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program at the high school), then I couldn't come back. I have a lot of family support, but I have a little brother that is the same age as my son and so it would have been real hard. I think that my family would pull together and help me, you know, but who knows. So I think, you know, this program really helps.

My dad was pretty [mad]. At first I said, "I'm not going to back to school." There was no way. First of all, I didn't want to go back to school, high school? My dad brought me here kicking and screaming, not really, but I mean. So he was like, your going to school, and so you know, so here I am and now I love it. Now I'm having a good time. When I was in high school I hated it. Well, because I never went and I was too busy having fun and going out with my friends and ditching school, but I really like school now and I know I'm having a good time. I think things happen for a reason.

[I dropped out as a senior]. That was pretty stupid, but it started when I was a junior cause my freshman year I had a blast. In my freshman and sophomore year, but I was doing really good. In fact, my freshman year of high school was probably the best and so it started when I was a junior. It started because, I think because when we moved from San Diego to here I hated it, and I think I was rebelling and I met the wrong people and so I think that was what it was. I think it started in my Junior year.

[Teens who don't have children in school], some of them are really nice and some of them [treat] you mean in the school. I mean they're just like, why is that baby crying in the hall, shut him up, and you know, they give me dirty looks and they are just really inconsiderate. We've had a lot of bomb threats here and it really makes me mad because they know that there is a nursery full of kids down here and we have to go sit outside for five hours with the babies. That's not good. The [high school] kids, they just don't care, you know.

It's different (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program). It's like a little haven. Upstairs (regular education curriculum) is completely chaos, I think. Actually, last year some guy, I guess it wasn't a guy, it was some stupid kid,
wanted to be really smart and pulled a gun on me and my baby when we were coming down [to the program]. We were walking down the stairs and he [had] a fake gun, but it looked real though and he thought it would be cool to scare me with it and so he pulled it at me and my son and was really saying things that were really bad and the police came and everything. The police had their guns out because they thought it was a real gun, too. So people are just real jerky here (non-parenting teenagers). They don't know what you're going through, what it means to be a parent. [When you eat lunch upstairs], that's when you start noticing attitudes. [One] time they threw water balloons at the babies. Some stupid kids were throwing water balloons and decided to hit a bunch of babies.

I have one teacher, they (teachers in the school) are excellent. I have [one teacher], he is wonderful. He is so cool. He is always sticking up for us and when we're late or something he is totally understanding and just a great guy, sticking up for us. But I have heard some stories [about] how teachers are real jerks to the teen parents.

[On a typical school day] I get up about 7:00 AM. He (the baby) is really good. He sleeps through the night, now. I get up about 7:00 AM and then we take a bath together cause it's just easier to do it that way. I feed him breakfast and then I get him dressed and we go to school and we're here, you know, until about 11:30 AM or 12:00 PM and then we go home. I put him to sleep in the car. I put him to sleep in the car so when I get home he sleeps for about an hour and a half to two hours and then I can get some things done that I need to get done and just rest. He wakes up and we play and go to the park or I do laundry and do whatever I have to do. Well, right now I don't have school work because I only have one class and we don't have homework, but last semester I had a lot of homework and I have to wait until he [is asleep]. He's a really active little boy and so I have to do it when he goes to bed. He goes to bed about 8:30 PM and so when he goes to bed that's when I can do my homework, which is kind of late, but that's the only time I really have. Then I will probably stay up for a couple of hours after he goes to bed and kind of relax because during the day it tires me to chase after him all the time.

Me and Andy have our own apartment and we live about five to ten minutes away from my parents. [They are very supportive] of him. My dad pays my rent and clothes that Andy needs and Christmas. Well actually I pay for a lot of his Christmas presents, but my dad has done the most of it. I don't know what I would do without my dad. He's really supportive. [I don't have a job.]
I mean it sounds really like, I guess you can't really understand how hard of the day it is, unless you actually walk in our shoes cause it's very tiring and very hard. My brother is always saying, "Why don't you just get a job like a person?" I'm like, well J, you know, I wish I could, you know, because it...I mean I'm going to school. That's why I'm going to school, so I can get a good job, you know, and when I finish school I won't have to worry about school. I'll just worry about my work, you know, so, but there is just no time for a job so.

A lot of girls [that are here in this program] don't care. They go get high and leave their kids in there (daycare center at school). I think the advice I would give somebody that was going to leave [school] is to think about your baby, but people have to do what they want to do because you can talk to them until your blue in the face, but they're going to do what they're going to do, but I think, I'd say be a good role model.

[To help teenage mothers in school], tell the teachers, you know, to be supportive. [I've heard] sad stories that they've done to the girls. Just to understand their circumstances, but on the other hand, a teen parent can't take advantage of that either, you know, but I'd say, support from the teachers [is important].

[We miss school a lot], you know, basic, kids get sick a lot, especially in the winter. I was gone for three weeks because, first my son was sick and in the hospital and then I was. Then he got another, he got pink eye, and then he got this, and then I got sick and had an infection, and so I was gone for three weeks. That's a long time, but my teacher, he was so supportive, you know. He was like, we'll figure out something for you to make all this up. He goes, "Don't worry about it." That was what he said to me, you know.

[I don't think they (teachers) lower the standards], not necessarily, but we don't really know. My teacher, if we had a nursery meeting or something, he would let us go like fifteen minutes early and we're late [to his class], like I said, he doesn't really mind. We kind of luck out with the teachers because a lot of the girls down here (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program), and I don't know if they're taking advantage of their teachers or what, for their teachers to be like that, but I have heard that the teachers aren't nice to them, but I don't know their circumstances, so. They give us so much. They don't just watch our kids, I mean, they give us counseling. If we need a tutor and I mean, also love and they give our kids love. They give us love and they're willing to help out with anything that we need and they should just be really caring and they really show it, too. [My biggest supports are] my dad,
definitely, my dad, and people here (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) and the program.

I got toxemia, which is not too healthy, but other than that I was pretty healthy [when I had the baby]. [I'm healthy now.] Well, I have to get surgery on my ear because I can't hear out of it, but I have had a lot of problems with my ears, but other than that, I'm a pretty healthy person. I have Medicaid for him too. I don't know what I would do without Medicaid. Andy and myself have had Medicaid cause Andy was in the hospital for three days, you know. That was, that would have been so much.

People have a problem with welfare and I can understand. If I was sitting on my butt collecting welfare checks, but I'm not doing that. I'm working really hard to get off of welfare and, you know, I get food stamps, too, and so people in the grocery line they just look at me. They are just like, that lady is lazy, whatever, but you know, I wish I could say, I'm not lazy. I wish I could hold up this sign, you know, I'm going to school and I'm working hard to not keep using [welfare]. I think people need to be more understanding. I mean, a lot of people do [abuse welfare]. I'm probably saying that more than half of the people take advantage of the system, but people like me...

Another reason why I'm on welfare [is] because Andy's dad is a complete loser and he won't even help support Andy. I'm not saying he has to support me, but at least give me child support. When you sign up for welfare they ask you where the father is, and this and that, and I told them I don't know because he told me, if I were to get him in trouble with the law that he'd kill my family and kill me and kidnap Andy. So I don't even want to deal with him, you know, because he's pretty crazy. I know where he's at. I know everything about him, but he said that if he ever got in trouble, you know....
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I'm 20 and I wasn't in school when I got pregnant. I dropped out and then when I got pregnant, I decided to come back to high school and get my diploma, because what can you do without it? Make maybe $4.75 at a Taco Bell the rest of my life? I don't think so.

I had known about it (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program at the high school) through a neighbor who was in the program when I was something like fifteen years old. I watched the bus pick her up and take her to school, everyday with her baby, and the people that she was staying with, we [were] friends of the family, you know. They told me about it. I wasn't pregnant then. We just talked about it, and everything, and then when I got pregnant, the first thing that crossed my mind was that I have to get back to school and there is [a program] called Genesis, which I got in touch with. They [got in touch with] this girl who is the director of this program (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) and she showed me around the school. She was like, "Let's get you signed up," and I said, "All right, let's do it." I was four months pregnant when I signed up. I was going to [go back to school right away] but I went into pre-term labor, not really pre-term labor, I was having really bad contractions and then, I should have come in, but I was having trouble with the baby, so I waited. I was so big and so I waited until I had the baby and I came back. [My baby is] thirteen months.

With all the young kids (high school kids), I had a real problem with [coming back to school]. [Before I dropped out], I never went to class. My parents would drop me off and I would go right out the back door. You know, this might be a bad thing to say, but I had a blast my high school years, even though I didn't go to school. The social piece of it and what happened was that I actually dropped out when I was a Senior. I had all my credits because my freshman year I was really fooling around and not getting any credits and then I decided I was going to be with my dad and he said I know you are smart. I know you can do it, but I got my grades up and everything and I moved back in my Senior year and I was going to graduate and then I came and met new friends and cause I actually picked a high school where I didn't know anyone, so I could finish and just get it over with, but I just fooled around and dropped out.

Some of [the high school students who are not teenage mothers] are jerks. This is like a [separate] school down here (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program), even though we might have classes upstairs. We spend the majority of the time down here. Yeah, we feel more comfortable [here].
eat upstairs.] There is one big cafeteria where we all eat lunch and [that's when you start noticing attitudes], big time attitudes. They'll be running a hundred miles an hour through the cafeteria, you know. Sometimes the kids are out running around [with] no respect at all. They call us sluts. I've been called a slut before and you know, other names.

[On a typical school day] he gets up when my fiancée gets up. My fiancé, I don't know, it must be a guy thing, [they] get up and they blow their nose and they hack a little bit, you know, and that wakes him up and then, you know, M (fiancé) goes and gets the baby and brings him in and we take a bath. Then I feed him breakfast here and then I leave. Actually, I stay all day ,but I get done with my classes about 10:30 AM and then we go to lunch. I help out in the nursery. I volunteer. Then we go home and we play or we take a walk. We have a park by our house and we go to the park a lot. My fiancé gets home, we play with Timmy together and then, you know, we wind him down and put him to sleep. [I live with my fiancé], just the two of us. [My mom], she actually lives only about a mile away, which is really nice. [She does some baby-sitting], she's great. [I] don't have no time [for a job]. There are not enough hours in the day to get a job.

A lot of the girls that are here (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) [don't care about school.] You know, don't give a crap. They come here to get together with their friends and go out and get stoned. There are about five of them in there, right now, and that just makes me so, you know, you don't realize how mad that makes me. I just want to get up and go. [The advice I would give to mothers who want to stay in school is] to be a good role model, I guess. Show them what you can do, and maybe that will influence them.

The thing is that we also get some college [credit] in one of the programs. The community college program. So while we're still in school and we're under twenty-one, we get everything for free and that's why we haven't graduated. We could have graduated last year, I could have. I dropped it (Government class) last semester. I dropped it last semester when I realized I was going to do Vo Tech (Vocational Technical Program) and not graduate until next year. I had ninety [credits] last year and I just decided I was going to drop it and take it next year.

[It is important for schools to] have a day care and to have a program [to help teenage mothers]. [I think some teachers lower their standards for us.] We're really kind of favored, I mean, but its kind of bad, the other kids don't like it, but we are, big time.
A lot of the girls use their babies as an excuse. That's not cool when you do that. A lot of girls just don't want to come and I think that everyone in the program should actually sign a contract saying that you're going to go to school so many hours a week, unless you know.

We have a nurse, we have tutors if you need help [here]. [I have been healthy.] I just had, you know, a cold, but I feel really good. My son has been sick. He's had surgery. He's had a lot of problems, but other than that. It is especially [stressful] right now. I'm dealing with insurance because in September he had a surgery that cost $50,000 and so they dropped us from the insurance, which they covered that. I'm using Medicaid right now, but so they dropped us, now and we have no insurance. The other problems, I'm working with my [social worker] and chances are he'll get on special needs insurance, which is totally different. You know what they did? First of all, we didn't get a letter and then I didn't receive my card for the month of October, I think it was October. And so you know, my baby needed medicine, so I went and got it and they said that, sorry, Medicaid has dropped you, that will be how much money. I said, I don't have that kind of money and so I finally, I didn't get a hold of my Medicaid lady directly, but M got a hold of her. [She] said, "Well, we dropped her because after a year you shouldn't need it.

People call [Medicaid] welfare. [People have an attitude about people being on welfare.] People need to be more understanding, even the government sometimes. But the government lets them (people who abuse the welfare system) get away with it. I know my friend, she deserves to be on welfare. She's working really hard. OK, you know, they give her $240 a month of food stamps, that's how much she gets. OK, its just her and her little girl. They cannot use $240 a month in food stamps, give me a break. She complains about pain in her back so she gets $240 in food stamps and $320 in AFDC. She gets more than the average.

My fiancé is really a good person and my family and people here in the program [are all my supports]. [My dad is] in Missouri now, [but my mom] and my step-dad and my brothers and sisters [are here]. I don't know [when we are getting married]. It depends on insurance, cause I'm covered under my parent's insurance plan and when you get married, you're dropped and right now we can't afford it. [My fiancé is] an apprentice for an electrician and he's going to school, too.

[People don't really understand us.] We need a panel of teen parents. I mean, I don't know, like me and you [should] go on the talk show and tell them how it really is. You know, actually my cousin's best friend is married
to Montel Williams. I just found this out about six months ago and he might help.
I'm 16 and I'm a Junior here. I got pregnant July 23rd actually, which is my birthday. I'm twenty-two weeks along.] That (pregnancy) kind of came as a surprise to me. I went to a different school before I came here. I know that if this program (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program at the high school) wasn't here, I probably wouldn't have stayed in school.

At first my family and the father wanted me to have an abortion and that battle went on for like a month. Then they finally found out that I was having twins, so it just got even worse. Then I just told them, I'm not giving up these babies, so they decided, OK, this is what she's going to do. We can't kick her out on the street. Then my mom was like, are you going to go to school? We came and we registered.

I started the first day of school here. It just worked out so that I could register and start school here instead of back there. A lot of my friends knew [I was pregnant] that went to my old school. I'm sure everybody knows now.

[I did not have a chance to make friends outside of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program.] Not close friends, I mean acquaintances and stuff, not real close friends. I just think that being a new person in a [school], I don't know, I'm kind of shy when I'm around new people anyway, so they might think I have a little attitude problem.

[My teachers have been] good. They are real understanding. I'm taking a Junior English class, Geometry, and a Global Science, which is like ecology. Then I have a Parenting class, which is taught down here. [I am doing] good [in these classes.] In another semester I'm going to start doing home-school cause my doctor wants me to stay off my feet, basically, so I'm going to have a tutor that comes to my house.

[I'm due in] April, but I'll probably deliver in February or March. They want me to be able to carry as long as I can. In order to do that I need to rest a lot. [I could deliver early because they are twins] and because I'm younger. [I'm going to have] boys. They don't know yet (if the twins will be identical). There is no test that they can do, a blood test, but they have to get their blood and the long needle [in] the baby. I'll just wait till they're born.

[I noticed changes in my peers once I became pregnant.] A lot of my old friends don't talk to me very much any more. I think because they're out doing their own thing and I go to bed at 9:30 PM on a Saturday night because
I'm so tired. They're out at parties and stuff. Some of them call and see how I'm doing and we go out to lunch or something.

I live with my mom and my brother, who is ten, and my step-dad. Then my dad and my step-mom live, like, two miles away, so we all live close. [I get] more [support] at my mom's house than at my dad's house cause my step mom, she wanted to have a baby. My step mom wanted a baby and my dad didn't want another one and then they found out I was pregnant and I think she kind of reacted to that.

When I first came here my parents were starting to settle down with it (accepting her pregnancy) so it wasn't that hard, but I know that if I would have gone to school right when I found out that I was pregnant, I probably wouldn't have gone to a lot of classes.

[I found out I was pregnant when I went to the doctors to get on birth control and they told me that I was pregnant, then it was a little late. They didn't tell me at the doctor's office. They had called me back on different tests that I had taken and then they also told me [I was] six weeks pregnant. I heard I was pregnant and right then I was like, oh boy, and then I hung up the phone. My mom was right there and she was like, why is your doctor calling you? I just went and sat on the couch and she was like, are you pregnant? I said sure, like she already knew. And I didn't say anything. I just looked at her cause I knew that she was like, oh my gosh.

[If a friend of mine was pregnant and wanted to stay in school I would tell her] I don't know, just try to find the program like this. [This program offers] a lot of support and they teach you a lot of different things here. There is other teen moms here which helps a lot. They can kind of, I don't want to say [be] sympathetic, but they know what you are going through when times are hard and stuff. [I've made friends down here.]

[When I have the babies] during the day my grandma will probably be there because my mom is going to be at work and then at night my mom is going to help me. The father is like back and forth. He doesn't know what he's going to do, so I can't really depend on him. [I'm sort of in and out with him.] His dad lives in the Dakotas and he doesn't even know. His mom, when we told her, we were at a restaurant. She had already known because his brother had told her, I think. She was really cool about it. She was a teen mom and that was the last I ever heard from her. She never called me to see how things were going or anything.
[I don't know how the school will help me when I am home.] I've had a lot of people tell me to give them a call or if you need to talk. [The Homebound program is] where I can basically do school at home and I have a tutor that comes and helps me with assignments and stuff. I'll be doing that for next semester. Tomorrow is my last day here, but then either depending on when they are born and how healthy they are, I might come back at the end of this year or wait till next year. [I don't know when the Homebound Program will end.] It could be, it could go either way. They could be born premature and be in the hospital for a long time or I could carry for eight months and by then it will be March and there is only two months of school left after that. So it all depends on how it works.

[When I come back, both babies will be here in school.] Right now I don't [have a car.] My parents have said that they are going to buy me a car cause, like, I need a car. [My parents will help me financially.] After the babies are born I can get [them] on WIC and AFDC for the children. I can't get on it cause my household makes too much money. [Both of my parents are employed] and I can get money from them for food and diapers and stuff.

[When I come back to school after the babies are born I will] probably [carry a full load]. I'll take four, or maybe five classes, cause I want to breast feed and that takes a lot of time. [They will let me come down out of class to feed them.] If one of them is hungry and screaming his head off and I'm in class, they'll call me out of class.

They (the teachers) are pretty understanding. Some of them are kind of shocked at first, but I think that's just a natural reaction to other people, especially from the older generation. People just are amazed. [They know I am having twins.]

I went in for an internal and I could even tell. I'm the one that asked how come there's two? [My pregnancy has been fine. I have not had any morning sickness. I have not had to miss much school.] I had a sinus infection a long time ago, but just, sometimes it just wears me out. [I've become more tired] Usually I rest. I lay on the couch on my lunch hour to catch up.

[My social life has changed since I got pregnant.] I used to go out every night with my friends or my boyfriend or whatever and now I am with my mom and we go out to dinner or shopping. It's completely different. Sometimes I do go out with my friends, friends from before. They call and ask how am I doing and if I want to go do something. We just talk about names and things like that.
On a typical school day] my bus picks me up about 8:00 AM in the morning so I usually get up about 7:15 AM and hop in the shower and get ready, eat breakfast and then come to school and go to my classes. I lounge from 11:30 AM to about 12:00 PM and come down and rest. Then I go to the rest of my classes and I go home. I eat a snack and then do my homework and relax a little and watch TV.

While I am pregnant, this program offers just support. They answer lots of questions and they always have little snacks around to eat. [They don't provide medical services here.] They have a nurse there. This is her office, but she can't give out prescriptions or anything like that. She can just answer questions and check to see if the baby has an ear infection. [I have] a regular doctor that takes care of all that (prenatal). I have real low blood pressure. It's like eighty eight over sixty so they're really worrying. I've always had a low blood pressure, but it's gone way down.

Most people do not have an attitude about me now because I am a pregnant teenager.] Like mom's friends, we went to a Christmas party, some of them, I didn't know, were pretty shocked at first. They didn't really know what to say, either congratulations to me or I'm so sorry, to my mom. So I think they kind of have a reaction. They don't know what to say. I don't think people judge me though.

I don't know, I'm kind of scared, but I'm also very excited [about being pregnant]. [I think about it a lot.] Sometimes it is [hard to focus on school], but usually I just go to classes and do my work.

My mom is very supportive.] She comes and pats my stomach and tells me [to] eat this, eat this, so I had these jeans of hers that were bigger than my usual size and she was like, you can't wear them anymore cause they are too tight and you'll squish my babies.

My younger brother is ten.] He understands. I don't think he's curious, but he doesn't [know] what exactly. One thing I know, he is real jealous. Before I got pregnant I went to live with my dad for two years and my brother got used to it being just A, which is his name. Now it's A and myself, plus two more, so he's having to sort of compromise and deal with that. My room is in the basement, which is where all his toys were at, so we moved all his toys upstairs so I could have the basement cause I need the space. He's dealing with it though.
I had a choice of who I wanted to stay with and I chose my mom because she was more supportive. She understands more of what I'm going through because my dad and step mom talk to me more about abortion or adoption and it makes me mad. I don't want to hear that.

I'm not sure [what I am going to need from the school once I have the babies.] They will probably need patience with me because I will probably be real tired and crabby. [The other girls] tell me it's so hard with just one, "I don't know how your going to do with two." But I've been around babies a lot in my life. My brother, I took care of my brother a lot, helped my mom out. I worked in a daycare for a year with toddlers and a lot of my family have new babies and stuff and I baby-sit.

I don't know [how the babies' dad is going to react to the babies.] He seems, one day he seems real excited about having two sons and the other day he tells me he quit his job or got fired. I heard from the grapevine from his brother, and we're talking, [that] he got fired again. He just says, I don't see where the money comes into the picture. I don't see why I should have to come over and help. You should be able to take care of it. You know, well I don't know, my mom thinks he'll stick around. Once they're born he'll be around for awhile and then he'll just slip away. I want the babies to know their father, but in a way, if he treats the situation like, when its convenient for me then I'll come see them and I'll help you, that's not the right kind of father I think they need, so he's in and out.

[The doctors] don't think I will [carry to term] at all, but I can deliver anywhere between January and April. I will be twenty-eight weeks at the end of January, so that would be my sixth month and they said if I make till twenty-eight weeks, I'm good still, but if I don't make it till twenty-eight weeks, there is nothing they can do. When they tell me that, I get real nervous because if babies are born before twenty-eight weeks they don't do very well and it's tough saving them. But after twenty-eight weeks they have a much better chance. So I don't think I'll deliver in January.

She (the doctor) told me, like, if I go Christmas shopping at the mall I have to go in a wheelchair cause they don't want me walking around. I did that last weekend. It was pretty interesting because, you know, when you go shopping and it's really packed, people just bump right into you and they don't care what they do, but when I was in the wheelchair, they were like, I'm sorry, excuse me. [People] looked at me like, why is she in a wheelchair, cause usually you can see [something] physically wrong with them, but as I get bigger. [I have pretty good mobility.] It's harder to put my shoes on and stuff like that [now]. I've gained twenty-five pounds so far and it's only been four
and a half months. I'm like, OK, great, but they are real happy. They want me to gain like 50 pounds.

[I feel pretty healthy.] I'm under her (my mom's) health care until I'm eighteen and she pays for herself, my brother, my stepfather and I and that's the maximum of dependencies she can have. So my kids can go on her medical insurance with no charge at all for as long as they need to be. I'm only on the insurance until I'm eighteen, but they can be on it.

[My mom works for] ___. I don't know if you've ever heard of it. It's like, they drive, like, other handicapped people to doctor's appointments and senior groups and stuff like that. She works there. She takes in all the donations and all the fares and she does the money that comes in. [My step dad] sells cars, he's like a manager. My dad owns a construction business and my stepmother is an accountant.

[After the babies are born], I'll probably be back next September. Most likely [I'll have the whole summer to] get used to it and get them sleeping through the night.

I do want to go to college. I do want to do two years really bad, to do like medical studies. I want to be like a pediatrician or a nurse or something, but I don't know how that's going to work out. I'll probably go to like a community college and then transfer.
I'm seventeen and a half. I'll be eighteen in March. I graduated yesterday. My daughter is eight months old, almost eight and a half months old. Her name is Abagail. I was a Junior when I had her and finished my senior year over the summer. [I was in school when I had her.] I enrolled in a private school and it was year round and that's why I managed to [get all] my credits. [The private school was in Colorado.]

[When I first got pregnant] I kind of quit going to class often. I was in Vo Tech (Vocational Technical Program) from noon on and I only had a first period class and a second period class and I couldn't, I was so tired when I got home, I couldn't get up, cause I was working and being pregnant. So I quit going to class. I ended up being put in a private school where I could work at my own pace whenever I wanted. You never had classes. It's just, you get a packet of stuff, you work on it at your own pace and you're supposed to have it done by the end of the week, but if you don't, you don't. You just keep working on it and you still get another packet the next week. [They] allowed a lot of working from home if I wasn't feeling up to coming in. It kind of gave me a momentum to stay and I knew if I stayed in the regular school system I wasn't going to be able to do it, but that's just because of how I am. I can't sit and listen to a teacher forever. It bothers [me]. I just, I have no interest. My dad has decided that my IQ is just high enough. People bore me when they try to teach me things that I may need to learn, but they're trying to teach me on a level lower than where I'm at. People think that's what it is. I don't know about that. I think I just never really respected it the right way. Its easy for me to sit in class for parent training and listen to what they have to say and everything and I'm not like, this is stupid, I shouldn't be here, just go home and try to figure out a way to get out of it. I sit better and I listen to it and I enjoy it.

I wasn't sure I wanted to go to college but wasn't sure whether I was going to do it (finish high school) or not. Having my daughter made me really see that I want to [go to college]. I want her to have a good life and I wanted myself to have a good life. I just thought maybe I would get lucky and not have to have a college education to do it, but now I'm getting ready to go to college and do all kinds of stuff. Now, one of the things I might want to go into, I might take that field further or start up another field altogether and work in two different fields. I want to be a nurse and my mother is suggesting that I go into maternity, OB-GYN. I'm not sure if I'm ready to go to all this school for that. I think I could handle going to be a nurse first and then if I wanted to go back [I could] finish. Otherwise, I'm going to go into
communication and computers, if I don't go on to become an OB-GYN. I'll still be an OB first and then I'll go to computers and communications. [I have a lot of goals], high ones.

[Things are different now that I have a kid.] It's almost like when you have a kid you can't go out and party and stuff. We could have really good friends here, but we don't get invited. In class, or whatever, you walk in the halls with your head down and you just want to hide. Down here we have really good friends. It just makes you feel bad cause they didn't invite you. I spend a lot of time trying to see if there is a way to get around that and be able to go to the parties. I kind of lost interest in high school parties because I had my boyfriend. He is much older than high school (students). I don't know, partying to me is not like going out with hundreds of high school kids and a big house with loud music and getting drunk. Partying for me and my best friend is going to a hotel with our boyfriends and getting some alcohol and watching some TV and just hang out and having fun, the four of us. Everybody goes to bed and that's it.

[My friend dropped out of school]. She wasn't pregnant or anything. She just dropped out of school. She couldn't hack it. She kept telling me, it's so hard, its so hard. When you go back you won't finish. I know you won't finish and here I graduated yesterday, so it's like I almost want to smack her in the face and say, "Look what I did. I had a baby and I graduated and now I'm going to college. You didn't graduate. You dropped out. You still haven't gotten your GED and it's getting close to being a year since you dropped out. You're working 40 hours a week for nothing. Your whole life is basically going no where right now." She still would never go back to school. If she had it all to do again, she would drop out earlier.

I still saw most of my friends [after I got pregnant. Not much changed.] Most of my friends don't go here anyway. I still hung out with my friends and they were all cool while I was pregnant. After I had my daughter, towards the end, I would go to a party, just to be at the party and be with my friends. I was watching everybody else getting drunk and stuff and the next weekend would roll around and there would be another party and they were like, we don't know if you should come because you always get so tired and you always want to go to bed early. I'd fight to keep myself awake just so that I was up, so that I could get invited to the next one cause I didn't want to be left behind. I didn't want to have to stay at home with my parents all the time.

My parents were totally, totally against me having my daughter. They don't really talk to me any more since I've had my baby. Like, occasionally
they will come up and say hi. I do have friends that will come and talk to me for hours or go somewhere and I'll end up being late for work. They'll be like, "Hey, what's up? How is the baby? Do you have any pictures?" They're just totally understanding and you know, they are like, well if you and the baby want to go out or anything or if you just want to go out and you can't find a sitter, call me. We'll do something. We need to spend some time together again. You know I'm lucky that her father spends [time with her], even though I'm not with him any more. He really loves her as much as they do. They will take her occasionally. They will take her for a whole weekend over the summer. They had her all week [once] and I hardly saw her. It was hard on me, but it allowed me to catch up on credits that I missed. After I had her I was only here (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program). I didn't go to school. Then I was supposed to be doing it, but they told me that they preferred that I was here with my daughter. [They thought that was better] than going down there and having to become a problem or me freaking out cause I was so far away from her and wanting to come back [home].

I didn't tell any of the teachers here that I was pregnant. I was trying to keep it secret from my parents for as long as I could. I didn't want an abortion. I wanted to wait until I was pretty sure I couldn't have an abortion before I said anything to them. So when I started school here I started at the beginning of the year, last year, and I didn't say anything to them. I did talk to a couple of my friends down here who said something to Ms. ____ (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) about me being pregnant. I helped around here, both my sophomore and my freshman year. I was always down here helping with the babies and she called me in and asked me if I wanted to [enroll]. I was like, well, I can't really tell my parents yet and I didn't have a doctor. I hadn't seen a doctor since I found out I was pregnant. I didn't tell any of my doctors cause my mother was always there, and I got threatened with, because I wasn't taking care of my child by not going to the doctor, so I called [the doctor]. I told my mother and they (parents) took it very bad. But they did get me into a doctor and they did set me up with a doctor and let me go in and take care of the child. They decided that if I was having this baby maybe they would get lucky. If they helped me take care of myself while I was pregnant [then] I would give her away, but I couldn't do it.

My health teacher found out I was pregnant. She told me I looked really different when I came back. I had taken classes with her before and I was like really? [I said], "Well I had a lot of changes this summer." She was like, "Yeah." She kept kind of like watching me and after while any time anything got mentioned about pregnancy or STD's or contraception, she would kind of glance at me. I was kind of like, why is she doing that? She had found out
that I was pregnant. I don't know how, but she [knew who] my first period teacher [was]. A lot of the people in the class knew I was pregnant. I think he knew I was pregnant for a long time before I even told him that I was. I just didn't say anything to him. He had a two year old daughter and him and his wife were expecting another one. He was really like, "I don't know how [you do it]." He was like, "I know your papers don't come in with good grades on them and I know you're capable of more because in class discussions you always come up with this huge [idea]. You totally understand what I'm saying. You're like the only one in the class that gets it." But with papers, I was just like, forget it and I didn't try very hard. I was like, I had too much other stuff I had to focus on. You know, I needed to focus on my doctor's appointments. I needed to focus on, you know, what I was going to do about the fight I had with my parents. I quit really working on school stuff. [He] told me that I actually do think you're trying really hard and on some things I would do the best I could with it. I couldn't remember everything. I had so many other things twirling through my head. When information was given me, I couldn't remember it. I didn't retain it all.

[My supports are the] people who did do it, who did graduate. My best friends' sister did it. It just made me see that, I could do it. I had a while there that I was [saying], "I can't do this. I can't do this anymore. It's too hard." It was like she had started waking up through the night because she was going through a growth spurt. I was like, I'm not doing this, I can't. It's too hard for me. I'm having too many problems. I'm not getting any sleep. I'm working too much and I changed my job. I convinced my parents that there was nothing wrong with the baby going to her grandparents, even if I had the weekend off and I should be spending time with her. I needed to get my energy back. I was losing so much and I was getting really sick. I just pushed it. [I knew] people had done it. People who have totally graduated and everything, they help a lot.

The teachers at the private school, they are great. It's a little school so its just the owner, his stepdaughter, his son and another teacher, that they brought in right now. He's great. They are all great. There was a girl there [who] was fifteen, just turned sixteen. They just had a little girl a while back, maybe about four days ago. He's telling me, he's like, "I don't know how you do it? She has such a hard time getting out of bed in the morning and getting motivated to go to school and like you do it." [He] used to say (think) [why can't you] come for a half a day and she shows up for maybe an hour and then she's gone. [He used to think] why can't she get up earlier and he's like, I totally understand [now]. He's really supportive. He's one of the ones that understands I have this child, but I can't seem to get to bed until 11:00 PM at night. Then she's up at 5:00 or 6:00 AM in the morning. She's ready to be
awake and up and mom still wants an hour to sleep. Mom wanted to go to sleep at 10:00 PM, but she couldn't.

[Right now] she pretty much sleeps through the night, unless she's not feeling well. When she's not feeling well and if she's having a lot of trouble breathing, she'll wake up every couple of hours. I like it because then I know she is OK and I'm not hovering over her all night, waiting for her to stop breathing. She had croup and the first night she was home she went to her grandparents. [When] she came home my mom totally said she sounded really bad. I had been working. She got home, she sounds really bad. She is having a lot of trouble breathing. I went to bed that night and I laid awake for most of the night just listening to her cause she would stop breathing and then she would suck in air again, finally, and start coughing and I was so worried that if I didn't lay awake and listen, one time she wouldn't suck in the air again and I would miss it. We had a friend this year, a very good friend of mine, who lost her baby. They buried her the day that she would have been three months. Last year while I was still pregnant I had a friend who was induced at seven and a half months for (medical problem) and she lost him. He lived fifteen minutes and it was just really hard. We have another friend who's baby had meningitis a little while ago. She was walking. She is a year, a little over a year old. She was walking and everything and [now] she has to learn to crawl again.

It's kind of rare when I get to go out and we have another friend that gets to go out just about every weekend. I went out with her last weekend cause her birthday was last week. [I] went to her house just trying to figure out what we were going to do and I had to be home because my mother was watching my daughter for me. Still, it was so nice to get out and it was really nice to get out with her because it was somebody who had a baby and knew what I was kind of talking about. Its easier [to get together with friends that have babies] cause your just like, all right, nobody mentions names of our kids tonight. If you need to call the baby-sitter and make sure they are all right just go and make a quick phone call and do it and [don't talk about the kids].

My insurance company was nice enough to take on my daughter, well my father's insurance company and his job. He just got hired on by the company that he was consulting to and his insurance changes at the first of the year. As soon as the judge looks at the paper work, she'll be temporarily theirs, not really, cause they're not real big about that. She is my responsibility and I'm the one taking care of her, but it's going to get harder once they do that. Its not going to cost them anything for insurance, but its cost me for formula cause she's not in my custody and I pay for diapers and my mom pays for baby food for me. I know that it isn't really a lot and that's
partly why they do it. They buy a lot of her clothes just because my mom cannot walk in the store without buying her something. If there is something cute she walks through the baby section and she gets something for my aunt's brand new little son. She has to get something for my daughter cause she is in the baby section. If they go shopping and she throws a fit, she buys her a toy so she is fairly spoiled because of it. She will be covered under the insurance if the judge doesn't have a problem with the temporary custody thing. We're leaving on a trip next week. If there is a court date, it has to be before I leave, it has to be.

It's just me and my daughter [going on the trip]. We're going to visit my boyfriend and she actually identifies with him more as her dad than her (biological) father. It was just kind of strange because he's been gone for a month and a half because she was like seven months when he left to move out of state. She was four months when her father went to prison. We're going to go see him (boyfriend) possibly to see if all three of us click well enough. If things seem to be going really good, I'm going to move up and his dad is going to give him one of the apartments in the complex and I can go to school and stuff, at least that's what he's saying. More than likely we're going to stay in an apartment because it will be cheaper for both of us and we can pool our money together and make his car payments and make insurance and everything. It will be just super for us in the long run and I'll be able to afford daycare if I need it. I'm thinking maybe his step mom will watch her. She's the one that's at the house all the time, so.

The teachers and everybody in the school need to be so supportive with so many girls here that don't get support at home. They are living with their boyfriends and we have had a couple of girls drop out. I mean, since I started helping down here (in the nursery), there have been ten girls that have dropped out just because they were living with their boyfriends and they couldn't make it. They should be working and they're all working, or they're not working and they're home taking care of their kid and they're having more kids. Even though my parents still aren't [supportive], they're trying to be more supportive, but they're really not super supportive. Some other people with supportive parents, they are the ones that do it (continue in school). There is a lot of ones (teenage mothers) that do it just because their parents are just like, look you give me your baby, you go out, you spend the whole weekend out. I'll even get you the hotel room. You and some friends stay out all weekend and give me the baby. You need time away. I get it every once in awhile cause sometimes I'm a mess. [I need] to catch up with everything.
[Schools should have something], where if the other kids are harassing people and starting fights or whatever, something should be done about those kids. That happens quite a bit. I mean you get a lot of people that are, like, you're just a whore cause you're a teen mom, and that's not true.

[The school should give us a break with parking.] Today we went up and talked to the office because we had felt like for a long time that we needed companion park. Somewhere we could park, whether we could park in the faculty parking lot, something. Because, like today, I had to park a good four or five blocks from the school and lug my daughter, her diaper bag, my purse and the Christmas stuff up to the school. Four or five blocks, its not easy and I mean, I'm lucky cause she's light. She's only seventeen pounds, but lugging seventeen pounds four or five blocks when its wriggling and squirming and wants to look at everything. You want to get inside put them down. Even in the summer, [I] have her dressed nice and cool and carry her four or five blocks. I'm sweating by the time I get inside cause she's wriggling so much. [I'm] carrying that weight and having to constantly shift it, so it doesn't make it easy.

[The small details are really important.] Like an easy place for us to park. It's like, you can pull your car up here and drop the kid off and get in your car and move it. Just parking close to the building. I think that there are quite a few more of us that do have cars, or you know, we have friends with cars or something and they give us rides home. It's hard. The girls that ride the bus even have a hard time cause they have to take these children up the steep ramps. They're hard to walk up and then you have to wait with this kid in his coat, bundled up, except if it's hot. If the bus isn't ready and it's kind of, I think, the buses even come before 3:00 PM, they're supposed [to]. The buses get stuck behind the other buses and then they get out behind the other traffic. It might just be the way it's all set up and that why it's hard with parking and everything. I know they are rebuilding something on one side of the school and I've heard that they're expanding our nursery. Making it (the parking lot) a little bit bigger so that the teachers can park there and some of us, I mean, even if there is only eight more parking spaces for us we could make it work. We all know each other. If someone was to park up here they could give us a ride down to our car.

The more supportive teachers [need to know certain things about us]. My daughter was so sick last night. She was just so clingy last night, I don't know why she's doing it, but she wouldn't let me put her down or anything. I really wanted to finish this assignment and I couldn't even put her down. She wouldn't let my mom take her. She wouldn't let anyone help with anything. She just wanted me and its like the only other option I had was to
I started out breast feeding her and she's strictly a bottle baby now. She turned away from me and didn't want me very much at all. We were here and then we left before school got out to go on vacation so family could see her. I tried to breast feed her then and she stopped breast feeding altogether. [She] would not eat, if it had to be me and I started giving her bottles. She still gets bottles and she doesn't even try to eat off of me any more. It used to be if we were taking a bath and she was hungry she come straight to me. She tried to eat off me, but she doesn't anymore, at all. I still, when I feed her, I still hold her real close cause I can't breast feed her. I like being close. I mean, I miss breast feeding cause I couldn't be close to her, but I liked it when I wasn't, because as soon as I stopped breast feeding and was strictly bottle she could go stay with her grandparents and they didn't have problems with her so.
I live with my parents and the father’s involved with everything. We're getting married in August. They're [teenager's parents] real supportive. I actually hadn’t come back to school before I got pregnant. I was going to move out on my own and then as soon as I found out I was pregnant, it was like, I really need my education. I really have to go back to school. So I came back to school for second quarter. My grades have improved so much since I've known this [that she was pregnant]. I was a "C" - "D" student last year and I got all straight "As" this year.

I was all psyched, but I have just noticed this isn't the best thing in the world, to be pregnant, but it's fully improved everything between my parents and between me and school. I just seem to have a better attention span because I know what I'm doing this for, you know. I'm doing it for the baby, and myself also, but just knowing that I have to have my education.

I didn't come back at the beginning of the school year because I didn't think I was getting the credits from some of my classes last year because I was doing so poorly. So I says, well the heck with it, I'll just get my GED and you know, I'll just work. As soon as I found out I was pregnant, well, I will just go back to school. I was working nights, didn't have anything to do during the day. [I was] home alone, all by myself, so I decided, well, it's the best [to come back to school].

My grades went up [when I returned to school after I was pregnant]. I have more ambition to learn. Last year I wouldn't do my work. I would skip out of class and I haven't skipped a class yet. You know, there was just no ambition, too. So I have more of a better attention span to pay attention in classes.

I was lucky I didn't get morning sickness. I ended up with bronchitis for a week, but, you know, when I get sick, I get sick, and that whole week was just the worst. But other than that, I've been fine, being the weight that I should and luckily, I just didn't have the morning sickness. Usually it's an excused absence if your parents call in [when you are sick]. So, if I had been out, then my parents would have called in and it would have been fine. I just would have had to make up my work, but if they don't call in and I don't have a note, then I end up with unexcused [absences] and then can only have so many of them before you don't pass. I'm glad I don't have to deal with it. [I was discouraged before because I missed so much. I was afraid I was not going to get my credits.] Mr. [principal] let me back in so that I would
get quarter credits instead of full credits now. So, if I missed first quarter, I
won't get that credit, but I will get second, third, and fourth quarter credits.
I'm real excited about that.

Mrs. ____ [director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program] gives a
lot of good support because, you know, she started this program. I mean, you
can actually go to school [when you have a baby]. I've noticed that a lot of the
teachers are real supportive because they want to see you stay in school and
not drop out like they (pregnant teens) used to. My mom dropped out when
she was pregnant with me, so, I mean, I wish that she had been able to do
what I can do. I think a lot of the teachers are understanding any how. They
may not like it, but they really do understand. Mrs. ____ [director of the
Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program] is just wonderful as far as with the
babies and with the program.

Maybe a few [of the teacher's attitudes changed when they found out I
was pregnant] because they thought that I would never get pregnant, you
know, but it isn't like they hate me or anything. They're just sort of
discouraged with me. They haven't said anything to me, it's just sort of the
looks that you get walking down the hallway and they all of a sudden look at
your belly. It's like, haven't you ever seen a belly before? Even the students
do that though, it's like, OK. They don't [ask about the pregnancy], they
haven't said anything, you know, it's sort of just like, just look over it, but
they're probably thinking about it.

A lot of my friends are supportive. There are a few friends that are like,
you know, your life is going to end and you're never going to get through
your education. I'm going to make sure that I do and they're like, you're
never going to be what you wanted to be. I mean, if I wanted to get my LPN,
I'll get my LPN, you know. I want a life for my child that I really didn't get
because my parents really started out in a slump and are finally up there. But
most of them are real supportive. A lot of them, I just really, they're
concerned about what's going to happen with me and they just don't want to
see me go down hill. They're not like, "you were stupid" and all this other
stuff, but they're just, they'll say what they want to say and I don't mind it [if]
that's their opinion and they can tell me.

I know most of them [teen parents in the school] before hand because
they're mostly in my grade, but I did meet one or two that were new. It's real
nice to have them there telling me, well, this is what is going to happen or
this is what is going to happen, telling me the wonderful things about labor
and I almost cried. We have group every Thursday and once a month we
meet together, the moms and the pregnant moms. We get a chance to all talk
together. There are times where I'll be in the nursery and one of the mothers will come in and say, yep, you just can't wait [for this] when I'm changing the baby's diaper and it's not a pretty sight to see.

We have group with HCS [health care services]. We meet with them, usually every Thursday. They're there to mostly give us information, be supportive. Then with the mothers, I think the mother group is more just to be supportive with each other on how their baby's growing and all of that. But [our group], it's more of a support, because, you know, sometimes we don't know what we're going to be going through and they do because they are the doctors. We go to them about concerns because it may be that we don't have another appointment for another month. We'll talk to them about it if it's not that drastic and they are just really, really, helpful and the group is really, really, helpful.

[I don't get distracted from my school work thinking about the baby], not right now. It probably will come April, May, when all of a sudden this baby just wants to come. I'm going to have to leave two weeks before finals so I'm going to be taking my finals either early or at home. [My due date is May 30th], so it's, I don't know, I didn't really think about it that I was pregnant, until I started showing. This baby is actually kicking and it's like, OK, there really is something in there. We're getting all ready, and everything, and my parents are just all excited.

I'm going to be living at home and when me and W [the baby's father] get married in August we're going to move into my house because my parents want us to be able to save for our schooling and not have to pay rent, plus all the stuff for the baby. Cause that would leave us with like 10 bucks a week, or something. She wants us to be able to save up for our schooling, get our feet on the ground, and... but they love W anyway, so it doesn't matter.

W goes to home schooling in Christian home schooling and he works up at ____ [grocery wholesale] at night, so I don't see much of him lately, but at least it's a job and at least the baby we'll have insurance cause that starts the 20th of April. That's the most thing that we worried about because my mom's insurance covers me through my delivery and everything and the baby, 30 days after, but it won't cover it afterwards when it has to get all of it's shots and I was like, great, we're going to go into debt. [The baby will be covered] since the baby will be under his name and everything.

I have next year left to go [and then I graduate from high school]. After that I'm going to go to C or B [school sites]. After I see how much that is, to get my LPN. That's what I really, really, want to do. Hopefully, either I can
get a scholarship or save enough money to go, maybe even take out a loan, but there is just no place for paying back at some point you know.

[The baby] can come to school during the day and the students take care of it well, plus we have a [helper]. I don’t know if you’ve talked to her, she’s in there so the students do real well with the kids. You know, it doesn’t bother me that the baby will be in there. At least I don’t have to pay for a sitter outside the school and take all of my paycheck. [The baby will be close] so I can, if I need to, go and see the baby and everything.

[The teachers], they might [ask about the baby], but I think a lot of them have a tendency to sort of not ignore it, just not get involved with it all. They’re there, but if you have to leave class, they’ll let you leave class. They understand that, but it’s, a lot of it is just, it’s your life, and they don’t want to really get into it as much. I mean, most of the teachers don’t even have kids when I come to think about it. So I know a lot of my teachers don’t have kids, but for a teenager to have a kid before they do.

[If I have the baby early], I can take some of my exams before I leave. Like Mrs. ____ [director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program] will let me take hers whenever. Actually, I’m ready to, but some of them, I can do at home after I have the baby, or if I go late enough, when the seniors take theirs, I can probably take mine then, too. But, I only have four classes, so I go half days this year and I’ll go half days next year, too. I’m only going to need three or three and a half credits next year to graduate so I’ll be taking more than that, which is no big deal, so I’ll be able to graduate, finally. I would have been able to graduate this year, but since I didn’t come back on time, I sort of didn’t.

[When I found out I was pregnant], I didn’t decide right off [that I would return to school] because when I found out I was working nights and then I just sat at home and I couldn’t do anything, absolutely nothing. I don’t have my own vehicle, so I can’t go any where. I just really decided that I missed my friends and I missed going to school. I knew that an education would be better because I would be able to give my child more than what, you know, than what some people can give their children. So I told my mom that I wanted to go back to school and so we worked out a deal with Mr. ____ [principal] about coming back to school and [I] came back. My mom, my mom is real supportive. She’s is wonderful.

[When I came back to school], Mrs. ____, my guidance counselor, said it would be a good idea to take Child Care [a course at the school] which I wanted to take before, but didn’t have room in my schedule. I just wanted to
be able to do the class and so she talked with Mrs. ____ [director of Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program] and that's how I got into her class. She's been really wonderful, really supportive. Actually, I think she's one of the best teachers in the school, but I mean she's not like a normal teacher. She's more like a best friend, you know. You can talk to her about anything. I mean, she's wonderful.

[Support means] understanding. Support [is] not as much a lot of answers, but to be able to listen. If they can give answers, that's fine, but just listening and understanding, that's what she [director of Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program] is. She, you know, she'll sit there and she's always asking you about my doctor's visits and what's going on. She just really likes to know. It's not just like, well, I'll just make social conversation whether she wants to know. She wants to know what's going on. She really gets involved with the mothers you know.

I think the only time that she [director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program] probably intervenes [with other teachers in the school] is if it had to do with the baby. If the baby got sick and we were getting out of class too much and the teacher was complaining about it, Mrs. ____ [director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program] would probably say, wait a minute, you know the baby is sick. She can't do much about it, but most of the time, she doesn't have to intervene with our teachers. She is great. She's so energetic.
I'm in the 11th grade. I live at C. Homes, which is low income housing. It's privately owned. What it does is, it bases your rent on how much you make a week and right now S (baby's dad) is paying for the rent because my income isn't counted. I live with him (the baby's dad). He graduated last year and I'm very proud of that. I'm going to graduate next year, hopefully. I used to live with my dad. I moved out in July and I moved out because our house was too small. My sisters and me didn't get along and I was spending most of my time at S's (baby's father) anyway. His mom was moving up to ___ (town) and we wanted to stay in ____ (town), so we took over her apartment and kept up the payments. My mom is dead, so she isn't even in the picture, but my dad is and his ex-girlfriend and his new girlfriend and my sisters are involved with the baby. They're very good about that. I work twenty hours a week, maybe, so its not that much, but its enough to get me exhausted.

I had her (baby) August 13th. She'll be six months on February 13th. She's a month younger than T (another baby in child care at school). I couldn't believe that. Everybody calls them boyfriend and girlfriend because they always play together and it's so cute. They hold hands. They talk to each other and they calm each other down and its so cute.

When I get up, I get myself ready and then I wake Sarah up. I get up at 6:30 AM and she gets up around 6:45 - 7:00 AM. A friend of mine brings me in [to school] and we don't leave until 7:10 AM. We usually get there with five minutes to spare before the bell and then after I wake her up. I get her dressed [and] her food ready. If she needs formula here at school, I bring a can of powdered formula. I make her bottles here. After I make her bottles, I write down any instructions that are new that need to be done. Like lately, she's having yeast infections, so I write down when to put her cream on and all of that stuff. Then I go to class. I have two two period classes. I go to Child Care first and second and then social studies third and fourth. At 10:50 AM I go get my lunch and come down to the cafeteria. I have lunch with her, feed her, try to eat, change her, do anything else that needs to be done, write down anything that needs to be told to her next session. Then I go to Art and I come back at about 1:15 PM, get her and go home. I have study halls on Thursday, but they don't take attendance in study hall and I see no point in it. My best friend has campus, and that's basically like another study hall, so we just leave cause there is no sense in us being here. We have never gotten in trouble for it. Mr. ____ (vice principal) knows that we do it because we're both under the same person. Four periods is considered a day and we're here six, so we're probably here a day. Then about 5:00 PM, well, she takes a nap.
from 1 - 1:30 PM to usually 4:00 or 5:00 PM and that gives me time to get a little bit of sleep, get ready for work, do a little bit of homework, watch a little bit of a movie, maybe get something to eat, cause I usually don't get a chance to eat at lunch. Then I go to work, usually either between 4:00 PM and 8:00 PM or 5 - 5:30 PM and 8:00 PM. It all depends on what they need at work. Then depending on what time, I get out, I'll go get her, then go home, do a little bit more homework, put her to bed because she goes to bed between 7-8:30 PM. Then I go to bed between 9:00 PM and 11:00 PM. When S gets out, cause he closes at ___ (fast food restaurant), cause he's a manager, depending on what he has to do for work, depends on what time I go to bed. If he doesn't have to close, we'll go to the store, get whatever we need, and then go home or get a movie, then go home, cause we don't have cable and then that's it. That's a day. It's very long.

She used to [sleep through the night], but she's teething and she had an ear infection and her yeast infection. She started getting up in the middle of the night, again. So, we're trying to get her to sleep through the night. She's been doing really good. If she's hungry, well, if she wakes up, we usually give her a bottle and seeing how she can hold her bottle, we just let her hold it and go back to bed. When she's asleep, she'll go like this (drops her arms) with her arms and the bottle will fall out. Unless it's the middle of the night, I usually go in and take the bottle out of the crib and then she's done with it. But, if it's in the middle of the night, I usually go back to bed and I'll take care of it in the morning. Other than that, she usually will sleep through the night. She started sleeping through the night at a month and a half cause I had to go back to school at that time.

[Sometimes I'm tired in school and sometimes I am not], it depends on how much sleep I get. Her dad has been helping me out lately, thank God. He used to just sleep through her crying. Lately he's been getting up cause he's been sick, too. So, he gets up and helps me out with her and then we both go back to sleep or he'll just get up and take care of her and go back to sleep. That way I get more sleep. I have naps in the afternoon, they help.

I was a sophomore [when I got pregnant]. I had just turned sixteen. First we really didn't know that I was pregnant. I had missed a period and with my mom dying last October, I thought the stress and everything caused that. So, we went and got a pregnancy test, the EPT, and I did it and it said that I was pregnant. Then I was like, oh, maybe we're not, so we went over to ____ (S's workplace) that night and we talked with all them. Then I went down to Florida to visit my mom's family and while I was there, I started bleeding a little bit, so I figured I wasn't pregnant. I came back and I thought I had an ulcer because it hurt in my stomach. It hurt to eat and with everything going
on, I figured it would be an ulcer. Doctor was the one that did my pregnancy test and he comes back and says, "You don't have an ulcer, you're pregnant and congratulations." I think, cause he's good friends of the family, so that's what he said. We went and told S's mom and then, like two weeks later, we told my dad. My friends knew because I couldn't hide it from them and Doctor's nurse told the school and they got me hooked up in a teen parent group.

The nurse [at my doctor's] called the nurse here at school. Then the nurse here at school got me a permission slip, basically, for the group. I had my dad sign it after I told him. I don't remember [if I told my teachers] I think I told them, but I'm not really sure. I know that when I started to show, they all knew.

Some of my teachers were still very supportive of me [after they found out I was pregnant]. A lot of them were already supportive of me because of my mom's death and everything, so they just saw it as another tragedy. But my teachers that had me last year are really proud of me for staying in school and keeping up everything. They're really happy to see me every once in awhile. They never had an attitude change toward me.

Some of them (friends) had a change [toward me when they found out I was pregnant], but not all of them. I know my sisters definitely changed. They thought I was some dumb, basically, which I don't blame them. They are younger, fifteen months younger. Well, one is two and a half years and the other is fifteen months and they thought I was stupid and everything. The youngest one kept telling me I couldn't lay on my stomach. I couldn't wear jeans. I couldn't do this, I couldn't do that, cause I would squish the baby and I tried to tell them that the baby is fine. There is nothing wrong with it.

[My friends here at school], they supported me. They helped me. My best friend, C, she gives me a ride to and from school. She watches the baby for me. She came to visit me in the hospital. A lot of my friends did. I think that when someone dies and when your pregnant, that's when you really know who your friends are. Your friends, because if they are going to support you, then they're your friends. If they're not, then forget it, just like family members.

[Kids in the hallway,] they are very critical. They think very critically and I think that's wrong. A couple days ago me and C were walking from (a parking area) here, where we parked, and we had two guys walking behind us swearing. Every other word was a swear. I don't think they had one word
that wasn't a swear. I go, "Like, excuse me, do you mind not swearing? I have a five month old daughter in front of you and I really don't want her hearing that." Me and her father swear, but we don't swear that bad, and I just didn't think there was any reason for it. They kept swearing, and then I go, "I have no respect for people who don't respect others." Then one of the kids said," I don't have any respect for people who copulate the world," or something like that. I was like, excuse me. There was another teacher, (a) Spanish teacher. He said, I don't remember exactly what he said, but he was putting down pregnant teens and teen moms. I think that he basically said that they shouldn't be happy and stuff like that and it's wrong. He's thirty years old, has a son of his own, and it is very frustrating, but we have our happy times and I have a lot of them. I shouldn't have to be sad, so I was very upset.

[Some teachers ask me about my baby.] My art teacher does. She's always asking about her. Mrs. ____ (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program), she's actively involved with the baby because she is the director of the Child Care Program. We've had some problems. Welfare (Department of Social Services) was called on me because she fell off the changing table and she had a bruise on the side of her face and the way it faded it looked like someone had slapped her and that didn't happen at all. It was just the way it faded. Welfare was called and my case is almost closed, thank God. So she's (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) has been involved in that. She's involved in making sure things for the parents and for the students, who take care of the kids, [go well]. She's involved in teaching the kids how to take care of kids and stuff like that. My American Studies teachers, they don't really ask about her, unless I'm out sick. That's the only time they ask about her. They go, "oh, the baby's sick, oh, the baby kept you up late."

We get twenty days a year [that we can be absent before we start loosing credit], but I almost done my twenty because she's been sick. I've been sick. I've gotten up late, doctor's appointments, and the Welfare case and all, that it's kept me out fifteen days already or close to twenty. It's hard, but it's not hard because I've got good grades in all my classes. I can appeal for my credit and get my credits with no problem. My assistant principal Mr. ____ is helping me out with that and I meet with his wife every week cause she's with the Mother Care Program and she's my mother/care person.

[My grades have changed since I had a baby.] They used to be like "Bs", "Cs" and "Ds", and now there all "Bs", so far. So I'm really happy about that. I didn't think I would be able to do that because even before I couldn't do it. I didn't think I had the time to get everything in, but my classes are really easy
this year, too, except for American Studies, that's the hardest one, and even that I'm passing. Yes and no [having a baby has helped my grades] because I'm still very lazy, but I am doing the work that needs to be done. American Studies I've done extra credit to help my grade because there are some things I can't pass in, so I've been able to do that kind of stuff and pass.

If [one of my friends were having a baby and] they are close to having their baby, I'd tell them to get a tutor while they are out of school cause that helped me a lot. I would tell them to do their best, sleep when the baby sleeps, stay up when the baby is up and get the boyfriend to help if they are still with the boyfriend. Get support. Join any support group that there is, like Pregnant Teens and Teen Mom group. I joined that and that's helped me. I would tell them to do that. The same if they just found out that they were pregnant, I would say join the pregnant teen group, try and keep yourself happy and stay in school to do work. What everybody else says doesn't matter. Yes it may get you upset, but it doesn't matter and just try to do your best, basically.

[If schools want to help teenage mothers], I would tell them that we need a bigger nursery, which we definitely do. The nursery is not big enough for five babies. One is in a walker, the other, mine, T is in a walker, Sarah is getting to a walker, so I'd tell them that we need a bigger space because there are more teen moms. That we would really like to stay in school. We would like to better ourselves for our children, but they need to be more understanding with the moms. If they miss a day or two and if they're up to their limit, they have to be understanding about that and help the mom's get their credit because we do have children to take care of and the father's can't always stay out of work to take care of the babies. That's, basically, what I would tell them.

Some teachers need to get an attitude adjustment, but mom's can't always be criticized. Yes, they get pregnant, but they're mistakes. Usually, they're not meant to happen. I know Sarah was definitely a mistake, but I love her to death. That, just because we're pregnant teens or teen moms, doesn't mean we have to drop out of school, but we would really like to get our education. If there is not enough room in the nursery for us, we can't really afford to pay a baby-sitter, at least I can't. I don't know who else can, really. That we need the room and that's the only way we're going to be able to stay in school cause even home tutoring doesn't help enough to be able to help you get your credits.

We've (father of the baby) been together for almost two years now. We don't really have a father's group. We're getting that together right now. I'm
trying to get him to do that, but seeing how he has to usually close on Mondays, he has to work 5:00 PM to close and even the 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM time slot doesn't really work. I've got to see if he can come join one of our groups during the day cause that would help him out, too. I mean, he said last year he would like to be part of a dad's group, but he doesn't have the time to, anymore, cause he's, right now, he's a chef manager and he's training to be an assistant manager. That means that he can move up in the company a lot more and that means he's going to have less and less time, so we're just trying to figure things.

[My life] really is not that much different [since I had a baby], just that I have her to take care of now and I don't live at home. There are only two big changes, everything else is pretty much the same.

I never really had a good relationship with my friends. I mean, as soon as my mom died and my best friend moved to the other side of town, I basically stopped seeing her every day like I used to. I saw her maybe once or twice a month, except for in school and that's nothing unusual anymore. I see her to and from school, but she loves the baby. I'll go over there and hang out at my dad's girlfriend's house and sometimes ex-girlfriend's house. Sometimes I hang out with my dad and his girlfriend and my sisters, but not very often. I don't like going over there because everybody smokes over there, and Sarah and I had infections and I want to kind of cut that out. But other than that, my life is basically the same.

[When someone is supportive] they listen to you. They answer any questions that you have. They try to give you advice, even though you may not want any. They give it to you and they are there for you and that's basically it.

My support group? Mr. ____ (vice principal) and his wife, my bosses, well, the two big bosses, E and J, Ms. ____ (director of Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) and I think that's it. And my dad, kind of, because he's always giving me support. He's always telling me what a good job we're doing and so that helps out a lot, but my sisters, they are on the back burner. I don't really like them because they always rag on me, so I don't really pay attention to them.

I'm able to keep it (homework) here most of the time, but if I have any homework, it's usually American Studies. Right now we have a book that we have to read, but they are giving us like a week to read each part of the book. In the book it has different books. They're like chapters, big chapters, but they have little chapters inside. We have to read one book in it each
week. I have a paper that is over due, but that's nothing. I'm almost done with it. That's about it, if we have any homework at all.
Profile: 19

I was 14 [when I got pregnant]. It was 1994 and I had just started 8th grade. My boyfriend was really not supportive at first. They kind of like, turned their back and stuff. Then they started, you know, they were like, you just can't turn your back, and so they started helping out. I was living in ___ (town) and after the whole school (middle school) found out, they (administration) took me to the high school. That was where I finished my school [year], at the high school. [I was living with] my parents. He's nineteen months now. [I live with my mom and dad, they are real supportive.] We (my boyfriend and I) might be living together next year.

[I'm a Junior now.] I think I will be able to [graduate in a year and a half]. I'm not sure yet [what courses I have left to take]. I'm going to talk to my guidance counselor because I would like to graduate next year. I'm hoping that I have enough credits so she's going to go over, with me, to look at the requirements. I need to graduate and hopefully I can fit them all in.

[When I first got pregnant] I had known a bunch of friends that I usually told things about. So I went to tell them and I think that one of our friends was sitting right outside. The next day I was eating lunch and had a few people come up and say, "Oh, I heard you were pregnant." I was like, "No, I'm not." I was like, denying it all, like, no, no, no, I'm not. They were like, someone told me this, and I was like, great. So, I got them all together and I said, "Whoever told, thanks a lot." I didn't want anybody to know. Once they knew, the guidance counselors were like, I hear your pregnant. I was like, shoot, how am I going to get out of this one? I told her, yes, and she was like, you can't stay here. We don't think that. This is not a very safe environment. We need to get you somewhere else. [I was] at the middle school and I was like, I do, I have to [leave]? She was like, yeah, because we don't think you'll be safe here. I was just like, well fine, you know, so I was sent out to the high school. I really didn't want to go and I ended up not going for two weeks. I kind of decided not to go cause I didn't really want to and I tried to explain that to them, but they were, you know, you have to go. I started going and I met some friends.

[When they sent me to the high school I came to the] Child Care Program. I had to stay all day. I was like, OK, so, I can be finished, get me through, cause I'm supposed to be a sophomore, but I'm a junior. So it was kind of good in a way, cause I didn't want to stay too long with Danny (baby)
in school. Some [of my teachers] didn't even know [I was pregnant]. I asked them (guidance counselors) if I should ask them or tell them and she said, "Oh yeah," and none of them, none them knew.

[When I found out I was pregnant], I had to wait two months [before I could come to the high school] because, I guess, they have semesters in here and it was almost the end of the semester. They just wanted me to wait till I finished then and I could start new.

[When my friends found out I was pregnant], they were kind of mixed [about their feelings]. They were kind of like, oh, I'm so happy. They were like, you are not having a good time, and I was like, no kidding, but I told them I was not going to get an abortion, I'm keeping this one. They were like, OK. They were kind of mad that I had to leave. They were, oh that's too bad, and I never really saw them after that because I had a whole new life and I had to back away from them.

[No one had negative attitude toward me], not my friends, but other people in school, oh yeah, they were like, get out of town. But I didn't really care because I just, that's your opinion, keep it to your self, don't tell me, but people like, stared, at me. I wore big baggy clothes. I tried to hide it. People thought I was fat [with] big baggy clothes, but when I came here I said, whatever, and I started wearing clothes that showed. Really, after I got here, I really didn't care after a while. [I was] four months [pregnant when I came here to the high school].

[I didn't' show much at four months], but I was in here the whole year so people would look at me. Some of the clothes that I wore were kind of tight so they could see something, you know. I would tell everybody in my class why I was here, cause they would ask, "why are you here?", cause I'm in the 8th grade. They were like no, no, no. I waited until I started showing more and they were like, realizing now. They (the teachers) were nice. They didn't have any negative thoughts or anything. They were all nice.

[My baby was born] July 4th, 1994. I was so happy that I did have him in the summer cause I didn't want to miss too much school and I wanted to have time with him. I was so happy, course it was hot, but.

[I never thought I was going to leave school.] My parents and me decided that it was a good thing. This school did have a program because I would not be in school cause there is no one, no way to watch [him].
[Now] people are like, you're how old? Now I'm sixteen. How old were you when you had him? Oh fourteen, and they look at you like, "What, You were how old?" That means, when I was thirteen it was like a big thing. A couple of teachers were like, "You have a baby?" They were just like, negative. I'm like, "Yeah." Some of them don't (are not negative). [They're, sorry to hear that.]

[They don't ask about my baby.] One of them (teacher), sometimes she does. When she first gave me the attitude, I kind of like, not talk to her that much, but the other ones (teachers), oh yeah, I show pictures and they are like, oh, he's so cute, you know, so I don't mind.

I guess I didn't understand it, but, I guess, I was thirteen when I got pregnant. I turned fourteen after two months, but I guess the nurses and doctors were watching me carefully. I really didn't find out till later that it was because I was so young. I was like, oh, cause they always called and they were wondering how it was going and stuff.

[He was] six pounds and seven ounces [when he was born]. I was glad he was not bigger cause I was like, I told my boyfriend, I'm having a baby. He was like, you're too small, you cannot have a baby, you can't. There is no way, you have no room for one. I always thought, oh, you know, I was small and tiny. Everyone was like, you can't have one, you're too small, but I guess I fooled them.

[On a typical school day], I get up at 6:00 AM and I get ready [for school]. At 6:30 AM I wake Danny (baby) up and I get him dressed and then I have to catch the bus at 7:00 AM. So I get him all bundled up and I get on the bus. My boyfriend is hoping to get his license and a car and he has already told me that next year I would be riding in his car cause this year has been so cold and I feel so bad taking him out in the cold. We sit up front and it's OK (heat wise), I just wish we didn't have to ride it.

We come to school and I drop him off at the nursery, the toddler room. They have seat belts [on the bus for Danny]. Then we get here. I get him all undressed and then I write down notes in my notebook and then people come in and I leave for my first period. Then I go through three more periods and then I have 5th period and I eat with him. Then [I] go to another two period class and then I pick him up at 1:55 PM and then I go on the bus to
go home. I get home and if he is sleeping, he takes about an hour and a half nap. If he is awake, I play with him and give him his snacks. Then about 5:30 - 6:00 PM, he has supper and by seven he gets in the tub and by nine, he's asleep.

I don't have homework. I've been real lucky about that, so, [I go to bed about] nine, when he goes. I usually stay up an extra half hour just to make sure he really is sleeping, sometimes, but, [He sleeps through the night.]

Sometimes [I come to school tired]. I think it's the school itself. Sometimes it's like, I don't know why I bother, but I know I'm doing it for Danny, but I mean, I have a class and I'm having a lot of problems and it just brings me down when I come here to school to have to go to that class. But when I go and see Danny, I'm like all happy again. [Sometimes I get discouraged to the point where I wonder if I will finish]. Yeah, I just, like I said, some days I'm just too tired and I just want to go to sleep.

This year I have missed [school] a little more than I have in the past [because of Danny]. It's the same for everybody [when you miss school]. They don't have special things, but this year they are giving us twenty days. Last year we couldn't, this year we do, so we're lucky. That's for everybody. [If we go over the days, we have to appeal.] We do it ourselves. We just say, you know, I would say, I have a son, he was sick, that's my excuse. If you don't buy it, fine, but I haven't reached it (a total of twenty absences) yet, so.

They (the teachers) all know sometimes it's me. I have really tired days and I just need to relax and they know that. [If I don't come to school], Danny can't. It's actually better to do that cause I can have fun and I'm not all stressed. He's the easiest kid I have ever saw.

My grandma [is home when I am home]. I help her. He (the baby) helps her. It's not like when I was sick I had always helped her, it's because, you know, I'm sick, but I'm not having to sit in school. If I need the sleep, I can sleep. I still play with David even though I might be suffering, but you know, I have to do it.

I don't kind of like it (having a baby while trying to go to school) cause I don't really function with school things. I just kind of have my friends and that's it. My friends like school functions. They're like, cheerleaders and stuff. They don't have to involve a kid. So I mean, if I didn't have Danny I would probably do some things with my friends, but not as often. So I met
new friends and they are going through the same things I'm going through. [They are teen mothers.] It's somebody to talk to cause you can tell them how you feel and they are like, I know how you feel. I felt that the other day and I'm like, oh good.

[When I got pregnant and they moved me to the high school, it was either, stay back (at the middle school) and do my work, but I never saw them again [after I left]. [I was] just going to school. [The friends I left] are Sophomores now (at the high school). Most of my classes are with sophomores, so I get to see some of them, not all of them, but some of them. I'm still friends with them, but I'm not like the friend, not the friend they used to have cause now I have new ones. If I have a problem I call them up.

[If a friend got pregnant], I would tell her that there is a daycare here and you can, you know, it works good and you can still finish school and you can still see your baby. I would strongly stress staying in school if you want to do good for you and your kid.

[When I am down], I have Danny and my friends. I tell them how I feel. They are just like, oh, you know, they feel things. They tell me how they manage it. You look at your son and you say, now I know why [I am in school], cause there is not much you can do if you don't have much.

By providing the day care [at school], that helps a lot. I think teachers need to be aware that if we are moody or something, you know, understand what we have to go through. Sometimes if you could just back it off. You're not like everybody [else]. Some of them don't have kids, so I think they should just realize that we do need help and to give us opportunities that we can work with. I know Mrs. ___ (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) is trying to get money for her daycare and they are not funding it right now. So all the teen moms have decided that we are going to get businesses to help raise money for us cause she needs a lot of money. Hopefully, we'll start [fund raising] in March cause I guess there is another board [meeting] coming up and March is when we'll know. We only have two places that are willing to help us fund.

I stayed home with him and did everything [when he was first born]. I was kind of upset about that. I had those feelings like, get out and go, but you can't. [The] beginning of this year was kind of hard. He was going through that, don't leave mommy, you know. So I have to go to class all upset cause I just had to hear him scream. Then when two months went by he finally realized that this is where I gotta go and I can leave him now and he'll say
bye, and have no problem. Yeah, [it was hard for me when he was crying]. I was just like, not for a couple of weeks, I couldn't even really work on anything. I was just like, I can't leave my little kid down there. It left a strange urge and people are like, he cried all day. I was like, oh geeze, I felt wicked bad. It was like, he was always happy to see me and I was like, I'm sorry.

My boyfriend and C (teen mother) and M (teen mother) and P (teen mom group leader) [are my supports]. [P is] our teen mom support group [leader] that we have here in school. I guess C, she's another teen mom and that's it. I mean, cause they know what I'm going through. I have my friend S, she's OK, but I just think, just the teen moms. I guess it's a lot easier

I was the youngest [teen mother]. It's kind of hard. I have to say that my son, out of all of them, has done the best. I had a big problem and the other ones are like, I don't know how you do it. It just sounds so funny to me, like how can you stand it [they will say] and they're like, have you ever done that and I was like, not with Danny. He was the calmest baby. I have to run around now, but I don't mind running around. It was just different, so yeah, how do you deal with a crying baby? I don't know. When David cried, he wanted me or he wanted his bottle.
I'm seventeen. I'm a junior at ___ High [School]. I got pregnant around November, so they estimated around the 23rd. I'm due somewhere around September 4th. They said around September 4th, but my mom thinks around August. I live with my mom and after I graduate I'm going to live with my boyfriend. I work at ___ right now.

[When I found out I was pregnant] I told them (school personnel). I told my teachers. I told my administrator because what I want to do when school starts is they can assign a home tutor from this school to my house so I can stay caught up. Me and my boyfriend, we went and told all our family. My dad didn't take it well, but everybody else did. My dad won't even look at me. [My mom and dad], they are divorced. He's remarried.

Everybody was pretty much happy [about the news] except for my guidance counselor. She was kind of shocked. She thought I would be the smart one. When I talked to the teacher Mrs. ___ (guidance counselor) she's not here today, but, she said we had to talk about, I don't remember it (the conversation with the counselor), about me getting pregnant, me and the smart one, and using protection, but I did, and it didn't work. Mrs. ___ (the counselor) seems more moody towards a lot of people. That's OK, cause I have my mood swings too, and she does, too, I guess.

I missed one day, that was the day that I went to find if I was [pregnant] or not. I had my blood test. Nope, I missed two [days], because the day I had my pap smear, the first day when they told me how far along they thought I was, but I have been pretty much healthy except in November, that was when I had my morning sickness, but I thought I had the flu. I missed like a week cause I had it pretty bad. I had a fever and everything, so my mom thought I had the flu [during] November and December. [The school gives us] twenty days excused. I think five unexcused, but all mine are excused. I have maybe seven or eight more, but I decided to make all appointments, if it's possible, after school, so I don't miss anything. You can appeal if you think, if you have all your work made up and you think your doing really good in that classroom, you can appeal. If you miss twenty days from a certain class you fail for the semester, if not for the quarter in that class. But I'm doing pretty good. I've had "As" and "Bs" this whole year.

I'm staying in school [and] staying at work [while I am pregnant]. I can work up to thirty eight and a half hours, I think they said, but because we have inventory, I have thirteen hours this week. Usually I have like
eighteen to twenty four hours, so it's not that bad. I'm going to stay until I'm pretty much due.

The program (Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) that I need to sign up for is Early Prenatal Care and Childbirth classes or something like that, and Lamaze classes. There is another one I can take, but I don't remember the name of it. There is one through the hospital that I can take. [At school] they watch us to make sure that we're OK and stay healthy and give us advice. If we have a problem or we don't feel good, they notice if something is on our minds. They always notice and they try to help us.

We can't come back to school for six weeks after we have the baby. That's why I'll have the home tutor. Then I come back to school and my boyfriend stays home during the day and works at night. It's (the baby) going to stay with him and then when he's working at night it'll be with me. If I have to work, it will be with my mom. My mom [will] love it. Everyone wants me to have a girl, so I'll probably have a boy.

In the beginning you get to have six weeks off. Weird, I don't know, my friends said it's like being an outcast. She felt weird when she first came back cause she hadn't been here. She had her baby, I think, August and she was out the first couple of weeks too. She said it was really weird coming into classes that everybody had been in and she hadn't been in yet.

If it's necessary [the baby will come here for child care], yes, but I rather it not. It's a good program and everything, just some of the people here, I don't get along with and I don't want them taking it out on my baby. [I will keep the baby at home] where it will be safe. [My mom or my boyfriend will take care of the baby.] He works from 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM and then during the summer he works from 4:00 PM - 10:00 PM, he works at a restaurant. He is getting a second job to help us or a better one anyway. He's going to take time off for all my classes (Lamaze) and my appointments and everything.

[My friends], they all support me. Some of them, I don't know if it's my friends mostly, some people they don't believe me. There have been so many rumors going around that I've been pregnant and never once has it been true, but someone was starting them, so they don't believe me. I used to be square board and toned up and everything and I have this bubble there, now. They don't all believe me, but I'm sure when it pops out in seven months they'll know.

They (friends) don't have a negative attitude [about me being pregnant]. I just think they don't believe me, that I'm pregnant. There is a girl in there, I
think you might have interviewed her today. She is really my best friend and we're still friends. She has a baby and she's helping me, and a girl that you are going to interview on next Monday. She's said, if I need help [she is there]. We used to be very close and then we ended up as enemies for something that happened and then, now, I guess we are close again, but we're not really friends, we're just there for each other. You can never break us up, we're just two people together.

They (the school) help me out. They like, you know, if I need help with something, they are there. If I have a problem I can talk to them. They understand there is a lot of pregnant teenagers in this school and a lot that have had kids. My friends, yeah, most of my friends, [who have had babies or are pregnant], I talk to C (friend) a lot, she's been through it.

Last year I had a lot of problems. I didn't think I was going to finish school cause my head was really messed up. I wasn't crazy or anything, I had a lot of stuff going through my head that I needed to think about. I almost didn't finish, but I stayed in school and I plan on graduating. Besides, if I don't, my boyfriend will kick my butt. Last year I had "Cs", "Bs", "Ds", "Fs", and this year I have "As", "Bs", and I had a "C". Last year it (my mind) was on just boys. Not! It's on getting set for the baby and doing my work and keeping a job.

I think I've grown up a little bit [since I got pregnant]. I have mood swings, but they get better. [When the baby is born], I don't know, I'll have a little more financial support and I'll probably be worrying about it all the time, even though I know it will be OK with its father, but I don't know.

I had a really weird nightmare last night and they told me I would. Yeah, sometimes when I dream about him during the day, but I don't know, it's just like, go off in this little world and everything, but [I'm] hoping that it comes out healthy. My boyfriend has a son with his ex-girlfriend and they thought that he was going to have Down's Syndrome, so he is always worried now cause of that. He always worries. He's always watching out for me, you know. He doesn't want me walking on ice. He was afraid I would fall and like, everyday, when I leave for school, he's like, you best be careful and behave yourself, and I'm like, I will honey.

He (father of the child) graduated in '92 or '93. He graduated a year early. He lives with his parents. Well, we decided that everybody keeps asking us if we're getting married. We will, I'm sure, in time, but we're not getting married because of the baby, because it's not the right thing to do and we're not going to move in because of the baby, cause that's not the right thing to do
either. We're going to wait until we're financially set and then we're going to move in together so we're just going to know that we're going to land on our feet and not on our behind.

[If someone else were going throughout this experience I would tell her to] handle it day by day. Maybe, I don't know, be cautious of people. There is always people in the hall ready to knock you down and hurt you. There is always fights in these halls. I just walk away. I don't want to get into it. I used to be the type of person that would stand in the middle and try and push away from each other, but I'm not going to endanger my baby for someone else.

[After I have the baby] I will still go to high school and do my work and get good grades. I never have [done after school activities]. I only have one more year, so I'm not going to ruin it. The baby is not going to ruin it. Babies, my grandmother always said, it was God's will. Babies are never mistakes, so they are just there to love.

[When I finish high school], I want to be either a child and early child care teacher, like in a preschool, or a daycare, or I want to be a legal secretary. I'm already taking classes in both, so. Child care you get two credits, cause it's two periods long. Marketing is like what some computer courses are like. English and History are the only two [courses] that are required, that I have left. I need one more of each and then, next year, I'm taking some more elective classes. [This semester I'm taking] English, Biology and Math. I'm taking Math History and Child Care. I had word processing, but that is only a half year, so it's a half a credit. So actually, I'm taking the other half. I'm taking Word Processing II. My guidance counselor figured [I have] five or six [courses to take once I have the baby], but I think she missed a few because when me and my mother added them up, I only need four. But I'm going to take five. [Once I have the baby], I'll be out early. I'll be out about 12:20 PM [It will set me back] a little bit, but...

It's hard being a teenage mom [with] parents working. Don't beat your kid. There was a case where there was a boy being beat. I watched a movie the other day and I cried and I cried. I would never hit my kid. This man on this show came home. He was mad from his boss at work. He picked up his two year old and threw him into the wall. Never would I do that to my kid. That is so mean. I saw that and I started crying. I could not understand how anyone would do that to their kid. You don't throw a kid, you spank them on the rear end if they need it or on the hand, if they bite you. My mother said, bite them back, but I don't know.
Oh, I'm wicked excited [about the baby]. I can't wait. I can't wait to feed it and have it spit its food right back out. [I'm] a little bit [worried]. I'm worried that something is going to go wrong, that's the way my luck has gone. I was pregnant, nobody knew except for, actually nobody knew, I didn't even know. I just got these really, really, sharp pains in my stomach and they were so bad that they put me on my knees and I would end up crying. I went to the doctor's and they told me that it was just a very early miscarriage, you couldn't have known. I'm just worried that it's going to happen again, only this time, I know. My grandmother says once your through the first one (trimester), the rest is a breeze, until you get to labor.

My grandmother loves us. She's going to start knitting me clothes. [Next year when I have the baby] my friends and probably A, she's a kind of, I don't know how to explain it, [a counselor], [will be my support]. She does divorce and all of that, but when she comes to school, she helps the kids out with their problems and stuff like that. I used to talk with her last year and with all my problems and she helped me out. I'm doing a lot better. I'm healthier now, too. Last year I was always sick, cause I always had things on my mind and I wouldn't sleep and I would hardly eat. I've gained five pounds. I used to weigh, well, I went from one hundred and two pounds, in my freshman year, to one hundred and two pounds, in my freshman year, to one hundred and ten pounds and then when I got pregnant, I guess I'm up to one hundred and fifteen pounds. [I'm supposed to gain] between five and seven pounds my first trimester.
I'm seventeen. I'm going to be eighteen in June. My mom, when she found out I was pregnant, she just said that she would help me and everything. She let me live on my own [with my] boyfriend. Plus, my mom has four other kids; seven, six, four and three, so sometimes I don't like my mom watching her (the baby) because it's really noisy over there and extremely quiet [at out house]. So I'm living with my boyfriend right now. He's twenty and he's the father [of the baby]. I was sixteen when I found out I was pregnant. I found out last February and my daughter is Caitlin and she is three months old.

I was in 10th [grade when I got pregnant]. Now I'm in 11th [grade], so I only have one year to go. [I had her] November 12th. I was due the 28th, but I had her the 12th of November. I had her at 9:00 PM at night and I called my friend about 11:30 - 12:00 AM and so she called everybody else up. Then I had, like half the school come up to visit me that night. So everybody knew, and then W (boyfriend/baby's father) called his family and I called mine.

I didn't tell everybody [that I was pregnant right away], but I told some of my friends cause I was like seven or eight months and I didn't show. I looked like, I mean, I showed, but I looked like I was like three months, so they didn't know. They were like, yeah, sure, but they knew I was pregnant, but not that far.

[I first found out I was pregnant when] I went, well, first I went to the doctor's because I missed my period, that's why. I didn't know if it was because of stress because I was having a stressful month and I didn't know if it was because of that, or not, so my mother told me, well, you might as well go in and check, so I did. Then you have to wait a day. So I said, "OK." Well, I went to Planned Parenthood the next day. I had to call at 4:00 PM to the hospital, so I went to Planned Parenthood and had a test there and it was positive. I had a feeling that the other one would be positive, too. I called W at work and told him. Then he came home and then I had one of my friends, cause I didn't want to tell my mother, cause I was so scared what she was going to do cause she had me when she was nineteen, cause she's thirty-six years old, and I'm almost eighteen. So she was, I don't know. It happened to me so she got upset, but I had one of my friends there and she has been like my friend for like eight or nine years, so she came and she helped us out. We told [her.] It was me, W and my friend S and we just came out and told her. She cried and cried. My parents are divorced and my father lives in Florida so I had to call and tell him and I didn't. My mother told me not to tell him
because I haven't really talked to him for two years, so I didn't tell him until I was five months pregnant and that's what got him mad. He's mad that I was pregnant, but he also got mad, more mad, that I didn't tell him right away, till five months. That's what he got upset about.

I took six weeks off. I was in school even when I was in labor. I was in school. I told people, I said, well, I ain't [going to miss school]. Everybody [said],"well, Kristen you have to stay out of school." I said,"I can do it", so, cause I knew I could, and I didn't want to miss. I knew I was going to miss six weeks so I just wanted to stay in. I was in school for three days while I was in labor. I went into labor on a Wednesday and I had her on a Sunday. I stayed in until Friday. [The nurse knew], so they had me go down like every hour, like every time after class.

[The teachers found out I was first pregnant], like when I was seven or eight months. I told some of them, plus I was eating and drinking in class, which I was allowed to do, so I had to go to the bathroom a lot more. There was like my math teacher, we get to go to the bathroom once every quarter and I turned around and said, "I can't go once every quarter, maybe once every twenty minutes."

They (the teachers) really didn't [care]. I mean, they cared, but they didn't, you know, they just have, some of them turn around. A lot of them just turned around and said, "You know, we'll help you." They told me if there was any projects, big projects due a month in advance. I was supposed to be out for six weeks and right before my due date they gave me like my big projects so I could get that done. [So I did that while I was out] and I had a tutor, too. The state paid for that, I guess. But that didn't even really help cause she didn't even come. She came when she wanted to, so I had a few of my friends get my work, but I was really surprised because I was like caught up more than I thought [when I returned to school].

[The six weeks], they were fine because after a week, I was fine. I got bored just sitting home and I just wanted to go back to school because school is a lot of fun, it's more fun than just sitting home and watching TV. But I stayed out the full six weeks. I could have stayed out three, but I wanted to just spend time with her.

[When my friends found out I was pregnant], they told me that they would help me and everything else, basically, what my teachers said. [I had one friend that had a baby.] She had C (friend's baby's name). She helped me a lot cause I was friends with her, too. I am not [friends now], but I was

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friends with her, like five or six years ago. My other friend is pregnant now. She's only two or three months pregnant.

They (the teachers) were a lot nicer [when I was pregnant], like [they would say], "Are you OK, do you need...?" They would be in the middle of talking in class and I'd be just sitting there and they were like, "Are you OK?" They would stop and they would just ask me, "Do you need to go to the bathroom; do you need a drink; do you have any crackers?"

Now [that I have the baby] I can be late to class and I can't get into trouble, like if I just come in and check on her and I'm late for class, I don't get in trouble. They understand stuff like, all my teachers have had kids actually, except my math teacher, that's it. She understands too. If there's like a big project due and if it's a day late, it's OK or if I have to like... I had a book review due and I haven't even done it yet. It was due Monday and I told him, I just don't have time to sit and read a book because the time she goes to sleep is like 11:00 PM at night. I mean she sleeps through the night but its 11:00 PM and I'm tired by then. I can't sit and read. I can probably read like a paragraph and then I fall asleep. My boyfriend brings me to work. I can bring it and read then, but that's all of five minutes, I guess.

It is easy in the morning cause I just get up and I get her first. I get up and I take a shower and then I get myself ready and then I get her ready. I get up at 5:00 AM. I used to get up at like 6:30 AM, now I have to get up at 5:00 AM. I usually have to wake her up. I get myself ready and then... The night before I get her diaper bag ready so that in the morning all I have to do is make her formula and get her dressed. My friend, she tells me it's hard for her to do it in the morning cause she's always rushed. I figured, why don't I just do it at night. After she goes to sleep, just put in the diapers, extra clothes and then we'll be all set. So all I have to do is get her dressed and I get her dressed and then I put her in the car seat and I wake him up. He gets up, he gets dressed in like five minutes. I get here [at school] about 7:00 AM and then I walk down to the cafeteria and I get breakfast. Then I have child care the first two periods which is 7:30 AM to like 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM. Sometimes I'm in the same room, basically as her. Like this week, I'm in the nursery, so I'm with her. Then I have math, which usually I try not to be late to cause that's my favorite subject. But it's really hard, that's the class I have to try to keep up with because she does a new section of chapter everyday so if I miss one whole minute... After fourth period, I reach the fourth period like five or six minutes early, and then I go and get my lunch and bring it down to the nursery. I'm with her all fifth period and sixth period. I have study hall, so I can be down there with her. Seventh period I have US History, which I leave five or ten minutes early to get her dressed and my friend gives me a ride
home. I'm basically with her four periods out of seven. I'm really with her. It's like, I'm getting credits to be with her, so I mean, it's not that bad.

[I get home] about 2:30 PM and most of the time she's sleeping cause she sleeps on the way home. I live like ten or fifteen minutes away from here so she usually falls asleep. I try to do my homework, but I can't for some reason. I can't sit and just sit and read. I have tried. I always feel like I have to clean or I have do laundry or I have to do this or I have to that. I can't. Before, like when I was pregnant, I could sit and read and before that, I could read, just sit and read and now, I can't sit and read it. Or I can sit and read it, but then I forget what it was about, so.

Most of the time she'll sleep to like 4:00 PM or 5:00 PM and my boyfriend gets home about 5:30 PM and then we usually eat supper. Sometimes, we go out, we just go visit my mom or go visit his sister and she is usually up like at 6:00 PM. She will stay up until about 8:30 - 9:00 PM and then she will usually fall asleep for the rest of the night like 9:00 PM on. She sometimes, she will wake up about 5:00 PM, but when she's sick she'll wake up like at 2:00 AM in the morning.

She has [slept through the night] since she was like a month old, so I guess I'm pretty lucky. So a day is pretty easy. It's just when I have a lot of work, like right now, I have a book review I have to do. I have to write an essay. I have to do a term paper for English and that's what I'm worried about because I have to take time and I have to do note cards and then I have to do a bibliography. I mean, its like, ten different things I have to do just to get up to the first rough draft. Then I have to do the rough draft and then I have to do a final draft. You know, it's really hard cause its going to take a long time. She was sleeping one day so I ran down to the library and got books and came back, so I did a lot. I got a lot done that day.

[I use the school child care.] I can get other child care if I wanted to, but I mean, it's a lot easier this way and I feel a lot better cause she's with me. It was hard to leave her there [when I first came back to school]. I know all the people in there that take care of her and everything. It was just hard. I would go and check with her and the people that are taking care of her after every single class. I would ask to go to the bathroom and I would run right now down there just to make sure. Now I know that sometimes when they, it just aggravates me cause they don't write down all the stuff that I need to know. Like they say they'll write down fed her, like, at 10:00 AM, [but] they don't write how many ounces they fed her and I need to know. What I usually do is add how many ounces in the morning and in the afternoon so I know how many. We write down the notes in her book so I usually add
those to her sessions one and two so then I know how many ounces to tell them to feed her sessions three cause she will usually eat like two and a half bottles a day just in here. I usually have to add them all up and everything. I don't yell at them, but I tell them. I like to complain all the time, but it does aggravate me, so I tell them.

[I had morning sickness when I was pregnant], I had that, but that was it. Actually I had to drop out of school because I would have it constantly. It wasn't morning sickness, it was all day sickness and all night so I could not sit in class. I knew I couldn't just sit. I could be sitting here talking to you, I could just, you know, I wouldn't even know cause I would be sitting watching TV and all of a sudden I would just throw up, so I couldn't make it. I dropped like the last three months of the year. I couldn't handle it. [I dropped out April, May and June.] [I lost some of my credits.]

[My grades], they're doing a lot better. Actually, my mom thought my grades would be going down, but they are actually going up. I have no idea [why]. I don't know, but sometimes, well, because I want to become a lawyer. I wanted to become a lawyer since I was like five years old, my mom said. My mom knows. She's like, she says, "You will be a great lawyer because you love to argue and you love to win. You have to get, like, the last word", so she says I'll be a good lawyer, but she doesn't know if I'll be able to do it because I have Caitlin, but I know I can, if I try to do it. Obviously, dropping out of school wasn't that great [of an] idea, but I couldn't be here. But then I said, "I want to go back next year."

I knew that I was going to [come back to school]. School isn't that bad. I don't love it either, but all my friends are here and my classes are so easy that it really doesn't bother me. My boyfriend thinks that school is the time that I get away from Caitlin, but it really isn't cause I go to classes and all I get is more work. It is time away, but it's not, in a way.

[I don't work cause] I had to take Driver's Education first. I was going to take it last year, but I didn't want to take it cause I was pregnant and I didn't want anything to happen so I'm taking it March 5th, cause its part of my education, until April 17th. Then after that my boyfriend bought me a car so I'm going to have a car. It will be a lot easier and then I can get a job after, because I don't have a car and he works until about 5:30 PM. I don't want my friends escorting me everywhere I go. So I'm just going to wait cause, I mean, it's going to be hard to handle trying to keep an apartment up, trying to be a girlfriend, a mother, trying to keep school, trying to keep up with Driver's Education, and trying to keep up with a job, you know. All right, so I'll try to
eliminate some things. After Driver's Education, it will probably be a lot better to try and get a job.

[I expect to graduate] next year.] I have two classes of tenth grade [left]. I lost my English credit and my math credit, that's it, so I'm still in the 11th grade, but I have two 10th grade classes. If I don't pass them this year I have to wait. I'm supposed to graduate next year. If I don't pass this year, those two classes, then I have to repeat, so I actually will be waiting two more years if I don't pass the two classes. I'm taking them now, so next year I have to double up and I have to take 11th grade and 12th grade English and I have to take Biology and Social Studies. I have to make sure I pass. The lowest grade I got on my report card was a C+. I mean, I could even fail third quarter and fourth quarter if I wanted to and still pass. I mean, it's not like I'm right on the tip of not graduating, but I'm not going to just fail.

Some of [my] teachers and my friends in school [are my supports]. They act just like before when I was pregnant. "Do you need anything?" They ask for pictures of her. [They say], "if you ever need a baby-sitter." I felt kind of weird when I called up my teacher and asked my teacher if they can watch my baby. That was a little bit weird, but.

I actually just went out last night and my friend watched her from 6:00 PM until 11:30 PM at night cause we went to the Disney World on Ice. She watched her and she loves kids. All my friends, they never want to give her back to me. [They say], "We'll pack her sleeping bag and she can sleep over," but she isn't. She is a really good baby. She doesn't cry really that much unless something is wrong. She doesn't just cry for the heck of it.

She just got out of the hospital, actually Tuesday, because she had the virus that was going around. She was wheezing and she was, like, coughing really bad. She would choke herself and she would stop breathing and W had to give her CPR. He took health occupations and he had to do CPR on her. He got her breathing and we brought her to the emergency room. We had to keep her in there from Tuesday after school until Friday night and I missed all of that from school. I stayed over night. He went to work, but I stayed out of school cause we can't afford the four days of missing work.

[You can miss] twenty [days before you loose your credits]. I have to go appeal for my credits. That's why I don't like this school much any more because of that. To appeal for my credits when I was out for six weeks? All my teachers know that I was out for six weeks because I had a baby. I don't understand why I have to go appeal for them. I know I'm going to get the credit. They have to give it to me. I go to my house administrator, but if they
don't give my credits, I go right to the school board, cause I have to get them. They are guaranteed to me. I'm not just going to recover in a couple of days after I have my baby.

For me it was easy [to settle back into school] because I had a goal, that I want to work to become a lawyer. You can't just, I mean, if you have a goal of what you want to do, you have to get your education. That you need, you know. Basically, it's not really that hard, as everybody thinks it is. I mean, it is, cause I didn't want to have kids until I was like twenty-five. I don't like abortion, I don't even like the word, so I ain't doing that. So I said, "Well, you know, well, I guess we have to have (the baby)." It's really not that it is hard, but I mean in a way it isn't, cause like you have homework that you have to do, like every night. You can do it while your sitting with her and playing with her. I play with her and just jot down my answers real quick. Or I'll feed her and do it. The only thing is, that I never have time to myself, that's the only thing, but I mean that's the only problem that I have. School is just, when I have big projects, it's hard because I need to concentrate on what I'm doing and I need to be in a quiet room so I have to wait until she is sleeping.

I don't feel that I need, that I'm special in any way because I have a kid. So I need an extra week, or like, when a paper is due on the 20th it should be due on the 30th. I don't think I need an extra week. I don't feel that's fair. I mean, I'm just like everybody else. The administrators, I mean, I don't even want them helping me, for once. I got in trouble and cause some girl started a fight with me and I was not about to just let her hit me and she got five days out and since I had a kid they gave me three days in school. If I didn't have Caitlin, I would have had five days out. It's the administrators here. I think they are so easy and they expect, I mean, a lot from you, you know.

There is [some advice I would give the school to help teenage mothers]. Mrs. ____ (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) doesn't allow us to take our babies to the cafeteria to get breakfast with us, or, we can't even take them out of the room to like Mr. ___, my English teacher. He hasn't even seen her yet and now the whole class wants to see her. She won't let me bring her down there. In the morning there is nobody there and I need to get breakfast before 7:30 AM and people don't start coming in until, like, 7:25 AM, so I don't understand. That is the only problem, that we should be able to take them to go and get breakfast with us. Mr. ____ says "If you have 6th period off, you could bring her up so I could see her." I said, "No I can't. I can't even take her out of the room." But Mrs. ____ (director of the Teen Pregnancy / Parenting Program) lets our friends come down there, too. They say that's their lunch and they visit with us.
I have Medicaid. She's on Medicaid, too. I got Gerber Life Insurance for six months, which is free for six months and then after six months I pay $6.26 a month, which I'm going to do for insurance until she's 21. Then I have to start paying $10, I think it was. We're going to do that. I've got a file cabinet at home and I have, like, baby things in it. I have baby offers they have and I have, like, her doctor stuff and everything, so I know where everything is.


