



*Research for Action*

**Creating Supports for Academic Achievement:  
A Report for the Teen Parent Family Center  
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November, 1995**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Teen Parent Family Center, administered by the acting director of Comprehensive Services for School-Aged Parents and staffed by two social workers/parent educators, is situated at Martin Luther King High School (MLK), one of 22 comprehensive high schools in Philadelphia. The MLK population of approximately 2,400 students (1994-95 school year) is nearly 100% African American as is the group of approximately sixty pregnant and parenting adolescents with whom the Teen Family Center works. Aware of the goal of the program to support adolescent parents' academic achievement and knowing of the slow and difficult progress of many pregnant and parenting teens in school, the staff of the Teen Parent Family Center invited Research for Action (RFA) to conduct an inquiry into the relationship of the teen parents to school. The purpose of our investigation was to gain a greater understanding of how the Teen Parent Family Center program might provide supports to help young parents

stay in school, graduate and go on to employment or post-secondary education.

Issues related to pregnant and parenting teens' school achievement are nested within several larger, ongoing conversations. Both nationally and locally, there is increasing focus on the relationship between long-term welfare dependency and adolescent childbirth. Despite the fact that the majority of young mothers are white, the burden of the image of dependent adolescent parents falls on urban African American youth. And in fact, African Americans have a disproportionate share of teen births; while they are 15% of the adolescent population, they represent 29% of adolescents who give birth (Children's Defense Fund 1988 in Scott-Jones and Turner 1990). While young African American mothers tend to remain in school the longest of any group (Upchurch and McCarthy 1990, McCrate 1988 in Scott-Jones 1991), parenting a young child can greatly complicate staying in school through graduation. In the current climate in which federal and state support for young parents and their children is being threatened, it seemed especially important to investigate ways in which programs such as The Teen Parent Family Center might enhance young parents' chances of succeeding in school.

In addition to the compelling circumstances created by the welfare reform debate, two other conversations going on in and about schools are also relevant to this study. The first concerns the high drop out rate among urban youth

(e.g. the drop out rate for Philadelphia public high schools for African American youth is 34% for grades 10 through 12 and would probably be higher if the data was just for the comprehensive high schools and included grade nine<sup>1</sup>). In examining the phenomena of drop out from urban public high schools, Michele Fine discovered that schools systematically "discharge" non-mainstream students, such as adolescent parents (1991). Despite the consequences for young people of not earning a high school diploma, school personnel often let youngsters disappear or there are too few school counselors per pupil to take a personal interest in what is happening with individual students while they are still in school. This research can contribute to current reform efforts by helping adults see how young people in programs such as this one are experiencing school and how these young people can be supported in the contexts of their school and family lives.

A second relevant conversation is the restructuring of school as community institution that plays an important role in bringing an array of services to students and their families. In this context schools are focusing on students holistically and beginning to examine school learning in relation to youngsters' social worlds. As schools move into this community sphere, services such as those provided by the Teen Parent Family Center become central to a revised

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1. All figures in this report on Philadelphia high schools come from data collected by the School District of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia *Inquirer*.

mission. Looking at how the Teen Parent Family Center at MLK can link with school programs to support students' academic achievement seemed particularly relevant as teachers, students, parents and administrators struggle through issues of restructuring within the context of the District's reform plan, Children Achieving, which has moved resources to provide greater support to school-age parents and families in general.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

We used different strategies to gather information from a range of perspectives on adolescents' school experiences. We looked at conventional indicators of school achievement -- absences, lateness, suspensions, promotions/retentions -- to describe the group the Teen Parent Family Center works with in terms of their progress in school. Through focus group and individual interviews with the young adults in the program we identified their beliefs about their difficulties in school, as well as their feelings about the program. By joining with students from the program as they attempted to negotiate school processes which they had named as difficult for them, we were able to understand the disjunctures they experience. Throughout the year, we volunteered as tutors in the program. This provided us with yet another lens on the relationship of these students to school achievement. We interviewed counselors and other adults in the school who provide services to these young women and men and finally, we visited another comprehensive high school with a program

for pregnant and parenting adolescents to see whether what we were learning at MLK was relevant to other programs working with young parents.

The Teen Parent Family Center staff looked with us at our data several times during the year. They helped us interpret what we were seeing, contributing their knowledge of and insights into the lives of pregnant and parenting adolescents. Together, we generated a set of program recommendations.

#### **THE GROUP OF PREGNANT AND PARENTING TEENS**

The following provides a description of the group of pregnant and parenting teens enrolled in the Teen Parent Family Center program at the beginning of the 1994-95 school year, the second year of the grant. Sixty-seven young adults were in the program; 64 were young mothers and three young fathers. (This represents a fraction of the teen parents at MLK. In an interview several years ago with the school nurse, who refers students to the program, she told us there are about 140 new pregnancies at MLK each school year, the majority of which result in live births.) Ninety-seven per cent (62) of the teen parents in the Center program were between 15 and 18 years old with the greatest concentration (30% or 20) being fifteen years old. Three per cent (2) were 14 and 4% (3) were 19 years old.

In order to understand the academic history of the group, we looked back on their previous school year (1993-94) records. We found that well over three-quarters of the

group, 84% (56), remained on roll for the entire previous school year. The other 16% (11) either moved, stopped attending or dropped out. When we looked at the groups' average daily attendance (ADA), however, we saw that they came to school less often than the aggregate for all students attending comprehensive high schools, probably reflecting the additional pressures they face during the birth and early years of their children. (The ADA of the Teen Parent Family Center group was 60% in school year 1993-94 as compared to 70.3% for all students attending comprehensive high schools in the same school year. When we disaggregated the data and considered the ADA for the 84% remaining in school for the entire year, it was 63%, slightly elevated but still less than the average for students in comprehensive high schools.) The records indicated few disciplinary problems among the group. Only seven were suspended during that school year, as compared to the norm of one in four students on any given day in the comprehensive high schools.

To understand the progress of the students through school we looked at two factors -- their age in relation to their grade level and their progress in accumulating credits toward graduation. A greater percentage of students in the Teen Parent Family Center program were overage for grade level than all students attending the comprehensive high schools. While 18% of the students attending comprehensive high schools in Philadelphia were at least two years overage

for grade level during the 1993-94 school year, double that percentage -- 37%, or 23 of 63 students (not including the two who graduated at the end of the 1993-94 school year) were at least two years overage for grade level. The highest percentage of overage students was in the 9th and 10th grades (43% or 10 of 23 students and 56% or 9 of 16 students respectively) and the lowest in 12th grade (0 overage), indicating that the more vulnerable students are more likely to drop out of school while still in the earlier high school grades.

Students' records also indicated how hard it is for them to make academic progress. In order to understand their progress, we compared the school district's standard for credit accumulation for promotion from one grade level to the next to the group's success in accumulating credits during the 1993-94 school year. The following shows the school districts' standard.

Grade	Credits Earned in Each Grade
12	6
11	6
10	5.5
9	4

Within the group for whom we have data (64), 28% (18) accumulated no academic credits for the 1993-94 school year and another 28% accumulated less than four credits. In other words, over half of the group did not accumulate enough credits to be promoted from any grade to the next.

Of the remaining 44% (28) of the group, 21% (13) accumulated between 4 and 5.9 credits and 23% (15) accumulated 6 credits or more.

To put this in context, we looked at data that had been collected for the 1991-92 school year. It showed that among ninth graders over 48% earned at least 5 credits, and that the percentage of those earning 5 or more credits climbed in 10th, 11th and 12th grades (Charter and Student Achievement: Early Evidence from School Restructuring in Philadelphia: 61). In other words, the progress of the Teen Parent Family Center group in accumulating credits toward graduation was considerably slower than that of their peers who may or may not have been facing similar stresses and responsibilities. By the end of the 1993-94 school year, two students (both 19 years old) in the Teen Parent Family Center program had accumulated enough credits (21.5) to graduate from MLK.

#### **MAJOR SCHOOL ISSUES**

While the previous section looked at quantitative descriptors of the academic progress of the group, in this section we move toward understanding the adolescent parents' perspectives on school. By looking with students we were able to identify the disjunctures they experience and the consequences for them. First, we saw that when there was a breakdown in the relationship between student and teacher and/or the curriculum seemed irrelevant to the youngster, the teaching and learning relationship was generally unproductive. Second, when the students experienced the



school bureaucracy as indifferent, it impeded their engagement in school. And third, when services for students were disconnected from each other, it often meant students' and their advocates were unaware of opportunities and supports available.

In each of the following sections we name a **major issue** and identify the **disjuncture** the teens experience and what happens as a result. Then we suggest **implications** for the Teen Family Parent Center program and raise **questions** about how these issues might be addressed.

Major Issue #1: Teaching and Learning

**Description of the Disjuncture**

During the first half of the 1994-95 school year, we explored with the teens what constituted a good learning situation for them. We discovered, and our findings were corroborated by the parent educators, that issues of relationship are central to the young women and men in the program, and that the degree to which they feel connected to those teaching them and the content they are studying influenced whether they perceived the learning environment as a good one or not. For instance, they described good classes as ones where teachers reached out to individual students:

She really takes the time out to teach you ... and you really do catch on. If you don't catch on she take the time to be like, all right, we can do it while the other class is working ... right then and there. (Student)

He acted more like my father than a house director. He called me the day before to make sure I did all my

homework...He made sure that I wasn't slipping or anything. (Student)

These teachers were perceived in control, enthusiastic, demanding and affirming.

She was focussed more on Black culture because of the fact that a lot of things were invented they don't get credit for. She was strict but she was nice. She was strict on homework. Make sure we did it, make sure we did it right. She went over it with you, whatever. She was fun. She was strong. She was black. (Student)

I still remember that man today because he was the only teacher who really got me interested. The things he did. He got the class' attention. That's what I'm talking about here. ... But three words to describe him? Fun, witty and he made me learn anything. He could have taught me anything and I always listened to whatever he had to say. He was a good teacher. (Student)

In contrast, students were also able to describe many teachers they believed had given up:

All day all she do is write there on the Board what she want us to read, writes down what pages we got to do the questions on, and that's it. ... she just sit there while we write that... she don't teach, she just sit there and holler at everybody. (Student)

The teachers don't want to make you. ... There's not even one class that I've got this year where the teacher has been interested in the class. ... If the class is talking he won't get up and make the class quiet. (Student)

### **Implications**

In contrast to much of their academic experience, the Teen Parent Family Center has built an ideal context for learning for these young adults. Strong relationships are the foundation of the program and as a result young women and men describe the Center as a safe and caring place. In the following description one of the students highlights the uniqueness of a place like the Center for her and other young adults.

Not a lot of schools or a lot of people do it -- really take the time to talk to you. But they [the parent educators] do. (Student)

In addition, the curriculum of the Center -- parenting education -- is one the young parents feel connected to because it meshes so closely with their immediate needs. As one student explained,

... our meetings after school, they be helpful. You know, things that you thought you knew or things that you didn't know. They help you with that. (Student)

Through strong relationships and relevant curriculum the parent educators have been successful in constructing with the young women and men who come to the Center a place where they feel they are learning.

This year the Teen Parent Family Center extended its formal educational activities beyond parenting education to include tutoring.<sup>2</sup> The Center program arranged to have a teacher from MLK available to students who needed tutoring and we offered tutoring services as part of our work with the Center. During the first half of the year we offered tutoring in math. Later in the year we assisted students with college applications and job resumes.

As we worked with students we discovered that their use of the math tutoring service was sporadic. It was difficult to keep up appointments because often students would not be

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2. We use the language of "formal" because the students report that in their "informal" conversations with students the parent educators often have stressed the importance of school. Also, this year the program provided new learning experiences through sponsorship of educational and cultural trips.

in school that day, forget the appointment, have a conflict because of another school commitment or family commitment, or lose interest. In helping students with job resumes and college applications we experienced similar difficulties. We did learn, however, that in this latter task we were serving more as a bridge between students and institutions, i.e. helping students' organize their experiences and represent themselves in ways that communicated with colleges and/or employers -- than as tutors. Our experiences with students have led us to wonder whether the traditional tutoring arrangement -- directed at infusing content so that the student is able to handle academic work -- is an effective framework for a program such as this. In visiting another program for teen parents we discovered that their experience with traditional tutoring was similar to ours. While we believe that offering tutoring provides an important support for teen parents who miss school as a result of frequent absences, we believe the Teen Parent Family Center need to reconceptualize tutoring to make it a more effective tool for supporting adolescent parents' school achievement.

#### **Questions Raised by the Data**

-- How can a tutor who is part of the Teen Parent Family Center only for the purpose of offering help with academic subjects build the kind of caring relationship with young adults that leads the students to think of the relationship as reciprocal, i.e. what would support young

adults' ability to be responsible and maintain regular contact with the tutor and commit to learning?

-- Should the tutor not only become familiar with the student and the perceived academic problem, but also the teacher(s) of the student? Should the conceptualization of tutor be broadened to include serving as an interpreter or a bridge between the student and the class/teacher in which the student is experiencing difficulty?

-- Are there critical moments when students are more likely to actually utilize tutoring support? When at home with a new-born? When they first return to school after giving birth? Several weeks before and during mid-term and final exam periods?

#### Major School Issue #2: Course Scheduling

##### **Description of the Disjuncture**

During our first round of research, course selection emerged as problematic for many of the young adults. Overall, they experienced this school procedure as unresponsive to their interests and needs; they often found themselves carrying courses which did not match their goals and/or were academically inappropriate. The comments of the following two students are representative of much of what we heard.

They'll [the school administration] give you a lot of problems. My mom even called up here to try to get it [my roster] changed. They just give you a lot of problems and say that you've got to do it at the end of the year ... (Student)

My experience this year was when they had messed with my roster because I had geometry. They had to switch me but they did it in the middle of the school year. I was further behind than the rest of the students. (Student)

As the second round of fieldwork was beginning, rostering for the 1995-96 school year was also starting and we were able to follow several students through the course selection process. We found the rostering system a useful lens for understanding how students experience the breakdown between themselves and school personnel which often leaves them feeling unconnected to their school experience.

From the 9th and 10th grade students we learned that difficulties with rostering often begin with the assembly set aside for course selection. Students told us that the counselor they met with during the assembly was usually any one of the five counselors who was free when their turn came up, and not necessarily the counselor who worked with their small learning community (SLC). We also learned from the students that when they missed the scheduled assembly and the allotted make-up dates (which because of their high rate of absence is not an atypical occurrence) they often were simply assigned courses. Furthermore, we learned that many of the conflicts around rostering arise because students have been assigned to SLCs they didn't select and those SLCs do not offer the course selection they feel they need to realize their goals.

When we discussed the rostering process with a counselor, she told us that there were only five counselors for the whole school and confirmed that one consequence of

the high student to counselor ratio is that students who don't take responsibility for getting themselves rostered are unlikely to get what they want. She said this was especially true for 9th and 10th graders, since counselors meet with 11th graders individually to ensure their graduation credits are in place.

The following two stories, excerpted from our fieldnotes, are reflective of the kinds of problems we heard about among the group. They point to the particular vulnerability of students in 9th and 10th grades.

When Lynette<sup>3</sup> started talking about her experience, she explained that she was between 9th and 10th grades, but had missed the two sessions that 10th graders were scheduled for in order to develop her roster for the following year. ... As we talked further, Lynette also told me that she had wanted to be in the Health Academy since she envisioned herself in the future as a nurse, but didn't know how to go about getting what she wanted. When she first came in 9th grade, there was supposedly no room in the Health Academy and she got placed in Business. While she didn't want to be there, she eventually decided to stay since she was worried that she'd have too many courses to make up if she left. In addition, she thought she might like to do a business internship, but had recently found out that she didn't have the grades to qualify. (Researcher's fieldnotes)

Crystal says that when she first came to King for high school she failed 9th grade. After failing her family sent her to live with an aunt in New Jersey where she did 9th grade again. After passing she returned to King, but her records did not come with her and she had to repeat 9th grade again. She emphasized that she spent 3 years in 9th grade. The summer after she returned to King she went back to New Jersey and got her records and delivered them to King. She was to start 10th grade that year but they told her she had enough credits to be in 11th grade. She passed 11th and this year is in 12th. ... When I asked her about SLCs she told me she did not know about Charters and Academies until this year when she saw their names on the wall of the school. She has never gone for

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3. The real names of all students have been changed.

course selection, only been assigned. (Researcher's fieldnotes)

These two stories illustrate the many points where interaction between students and school personnel can breakdown during the process of course selection. As a result of such breakdowns, students frequently find themselves talking with counselors unfamiliar to them, in SLCs where the curriculum does not match their interests, and even sometimes repeating courses and even whole school years unnecessarily.

The diversity of students now in the school, including pregnant and parenting adolescents, means there is less and less of a typical student, if there ever was one. Rostering, however, appears to be premised on there being "typical" students who are selecting courses routinely as part of a smooth passageway through an SLC. The current system is especially treacherous for those in the 9th and 10th grades, as what individual attention there is gets directed at 11th and 12th grade students to ensure graduation. As previous data in this report indicates, there are more overage students in 9th and 10th grades than in the upper grades, indicating that drop out at this juncture is common and that if this pattern is to be interrupted, more attention is needed at these grade levels.

#### **Implications**

The Teen Parent Family Center is isolated from school processes such as course selection and rostering. Yet, the parent educators find themselves spending time at the



beginning of the school year helping their students straighten out their course loads. Students' stories attest to the fact that a breakdown between themselves, counselors and course selection is commonplace. And the parent educators corroborate the disjuncture students' experience.

The system needs to be restructured to meet students' needs....It's hard to get students going where they need to and there are too many students per counselor. (Parent Educator)

Often, however, what help the parent educators offer has been an after-the-fact uphill battle against bureaucratic processes already in motion.

Although the Teen Parent Family Center cannot substitute new school practices for existing ones, there may be ways in which it can better support students' academic achievement through mediation of bureaucratic processes. We have two models for the role of the Center as mediator or arbiter of school processes.

In one scenario, parent educators would play a more direct intervening role on behalf of the students. This is the model we found at another site for pregnant and parenting students, where a staff members' job was to monitor students and intervene on their behalf. Sanctioned by the principal, she worked closely with SLC directors, counselors, the roster head, and teachers to be sure that students' academic programs reflected their interests and needs and fulfilled graduation requirements. The staff

member was able to build on her relationship with the students to help them negotiate school processes.

Another model is one in which schools would modify the ways in which they provide support to students. In this model, the Teen Family Parent Center would be regarded as a community within the school and would be able to attain direct support for its particular group of students. For example, in this model a counselor might be assigned to work directly with the students who are a part of the program to be sure that processes such as course selection go smoothly for them.

#### **Questions Raised by the Data**

-- Within the context of Children Achieving and its commitment to SLCs and greater personalization, what would be the most effective model for the Teen Parent Family Center to mediate bureaucratic school processes, such as course selection, on behalf of the young adults in the program? What model would put students with their families and parent educators in a pro-active role, as opposed to a reactive state?

-- How might members of the Teen Parent Family Center Advisory Committee support the program staff as they consider how to better support students within the structure of SLCs?

### Major Issue #3: Services for Students

#### **Description of the Disjuncture**

The Teen Parent Family Center offers a valuable and safe place for pregnant and parenting adolescents. Over time and with great personal effort, the staff of the Teen Parent Family Center have also become acquainted with several teachers, the staff of the day care center, the nurse, and several other members of the school community. For the most part, however, the Center is isolated from the overall school program and school personnel. We found as we went with students to visit counselors that it was not unusual for these adults to never have heard of the program, or to confuse it with other programs in the school. When we visited the College Access Program to see how the Center might coordinate with other programs in the school, we discovered that even though this service is only a few doors away from the Teen Parent Family Center program the staff were unaware of the program as well.

#### **Implications**

The isolation experienced by the Teen Parent Family Center program is not unusual in large urban high schools. The same atomization that makes it difficult for the Teen Parent Family Center to connect with other programs makes it difficult for students to connect with the opportunities and supports offered by different activities in the school.

D.R. Moore, who is looking closely at Chicago's reform effort, has warned that the value of programs for student

achievement is often undercut when they are add-ons rather than central to the mission of the school (in press). The Teen Parent Family Program is one of numerous programs we saw at MLK that promotes and enriches the educational experience of the students in the school. All of the programs, however, seem limited by a fragmented structure in which there is little if any coordination among them. Our documenting of the disconnection that exists at a structural level has led us to the following questions.

#### **Questions Raised by the Data**

-- What kind of role is there for the Teen Parent Family Center program and/or its Advisory Committee in trying to create more coordinated, comprehensive service delivery for students?

-- How might the Teen Parent Family Center staff and members of its Advisory Committee come together with parents and others in the school to examine this issue?

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The evidence is that although many pregnant and parenting teens remain in school they often face stresses outside of school that make it difficult to attend regularly and keep up with school work. As a consequence, their progress is frequently slower than that of their peers. The pressures with which these young adults are coping, often invisible to school personnel, complicate their interaction with school personnel and bureaucratic processes. Programs

such as the Teen Parent Family Center, whose staff has built strong relationships with the teen parents, are in an ideal position to play an intervening role in the school lives of these young people through support, advocacy and by creating a bridge between them and academic and other school programs.

As this report was being written, the services of the Teen Family Parent Center were being augmented by new resources and additional staff provided by Children Achieving reforms. The parent educators believe that many of the recommendations generated by this study are aligned with the expanded mission of the program. Here are the recommendations for ways in which the Teen Parent Family Center might increase its support for adolescent parents' academic achievement.

- 1. The Teen Family Center should have representation on the school Cabinet or another appropriate high-level policy group.*

Through their work with adolescent parents in the Center program, Center staff are continually learning about the issues affecting this group and how these issues relate to what is happening with these young adults in school. The efforts of the Center staff, however, only reach a fraction of the total student population with young children. By being part of a policy body, the staff of the Center would be able to contribute their expertise on the needs of this population to school-wide policy thereby positively

affecting a much larger group than is possible for them to reach through their daily work.

*2. The Teen Parent Family Center program should have formal connections with SLCs and work in coordination with other school programs providing services to students.*

The historic fragmentation of academic and service programs within large urban high schools has meant that the Teen Parent Family Center and other programs in the school are isolated from the school and one another, limiting the extent to which they have been able to be pro-active in their support for students. By coordinating with SLCs and other school-based services for students and their families, The Teen Parent Family Center would be better positioned to move from short-term, reactive, crisis oriented interventions to ongoing, comprehensive support.

*3. The Teen Parent Family Center should consider ways to bolster support for 9th and 10th grade students in the program.*

Many pregnant and parenting 9th and 10th graders are overage for their grade level, indicating they have been retained once and sometimes two times. Research suggests that being retained increases the odds of dropping out (Darling-Hammond, 1994:14). Despite the vulnerability of this group, the school is providing less one-on-one support to these youngsters than to students in 11th and 12th grades because counselors, each of whom sees several hundred students, are focused on making sure 11th and 12th graders fulfill graduation requirements. One way the Center might

provide additional support to youngsters in 9th and 10th grades is through peer mentoring and other mechanisms which utilize the knowledge of students in the upper grades, who have learned through experience about school processes, programs and expectations, to assist students in the earlier grades. Another way is for the staff of the Teen Parent Family Center to call attention to this group when they interface with SLCs and other school programs.

*4. Tutoring is an important way in which the Teen Parent Family Center is supporting students' academic achievement. In order to help make this service a success, however, the staff needs to utilize their strong relationships with students to encourage trust between students and academic tutors. In addition, the staff will need to work with tutors to broaden the conceptualization of tutoring to include visiting classes in which students are having difficulty in order to help their tutees understand the approach and expectations of the teacher. Finally, the assistance of tutors should not be restricted to help with school subjects, but also might be used to help students make transitions to post-secondary education and employment.*

Tutors usually see students on occasion and for the specific purpose of helping students with their academic work. For this reason, their capacity to build relationships with the young adults is limited. Only with the involvement of the Center staff in this relationship might students learn to sustain their commitment to school, and tutors come to know the student well enough to be able to help him/her.

The current conceptualization of tutoring, as an activity isolated from classroom instruction, often does not help students with problems that arise from classroom interactions. Tutors who broaden their instructional

context to include classroom observations might be better positioned to provide support to students in ways that are congruent with the styles and expectations of their teachers.

In working with students on college applications and job resumes we learned of the positive value of helping students construct representations of themselves which built on strengths and interests. Young adults have few opportunities to do this and need support in their initial efforts. Tutors might play a valuable role in the time-consuming task of exploring with students their interests and goals and the kinds of formal and informal experiences they have had which should be included in applications/resumes for post-secondary education or employment.

*5. The Advisory Committee of the Teen Parent Family Center should consider ways in which it can support parents in their interactions with schools on behalf of their youngsters.*

The frequently tense relationship between adolescents and their families is often exacerbated by pregnancy and the need to help care for their young children. Despite these tensions, however, many young parents report that their parents are helping them with their children because they want them to graduate from high school. Parents, however, often find it difficult, if not impossible to help their youngsters navigate school processes. As a result, they are an underutilized resource for their children and schools lack their insights as well as support. The Advisory



Committee, comprised of an array of community based groups, might consider how it could help bridge the gap between schools and families by providing a forum for the parents of these youngster for the purpose of strengthening family involvement with the school.

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