The Baby In Me: A Story of Teen Pregnancy

An EVC Study Guide

A Production of

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Acknowledgements

STUDY GUIDE

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Introduction

The Educational Video Center is a non-profit youth media organization dedicated to teaching documentary video as a means to develop the artistic, critical literacy, and career skills of young people, while nurturing their idealism and commitment to social change. Founded in 1984, EVC has evolved from a single video workshop for teenagers from Manhattan’s Lower East Side to become an internationally acclaimed leader in youth media and education. EVC’s teaching methodology brings together the powerful traditions of student-centered progressive education and independent community documentary.

EVC CORE PROGRAMS

Documentary Workshop is a 15-week credit-bearing course that teaches high school students from undeserved communities across New York City to research, shoot, and edit compelling documentaries that examine issues of immediate relevance in their lives.

Youth Organizers Television (YO-TV) is a ten-month pre-professional paid internship that jumpstarts the college and media careers of graduates of the Documentary Workshop.

External Education Programs provide workshops and resources in media production and EVC’s methodology, including EVC’s Youth-Powered Video DVD Curriculum, for K-12 teachers and after-school educators, nationally and abroad.

Community Engagement promotes dialogue and social change through the screening of EVC’s youth produced documentaries in collaboration with strategic partners. An important component of the Community Engagement program is the Youth Speakers Bureau, a group of EVC alumni who receive training in public speaking and facilitation skills and who use this training to lead screenings in local schools and community organizations and encourage audience members to engage with important social issues.
Guidelines For Using This Tape

EVC documentaries are powerful, and often deal with sensitive issues. For this reason, we recommend that you preview *The Baby In Me: A Story of Teen Pregnancy* documentary and supporting materials before using them in the classroom. The curriculum we’ve prepared represents suggestions for using *The Baby In Me*. If any of the activities are not useful to you, feel free to modify them and design your own.

Before using these materials, consider the following questions.

- How similar/different are your students and their experiences from the students who made this video?
- How does this video relate to the subject you are teaching?
- What results do you hope to see from using this video?
- What concerns do you have about your students’ responses to the issues raised in this video?
- What background information will your students need before viewing this tape?

Assumed in this guide are the following beliefs about teaching and learning:

- Writing deepens thinking and is one of the best ways to explore sensitive issues, even before discussion.
- All learning starts from the students’ own experiences.
- Diversity of opinion is useful in a classroom and must be respected.
- Students can make a difference in the world.
- Students can learn from each other.
- Social issues and community problems are an integral part of the school curriculum.
- Students learn from a variety of methods.
- Students learn best through experience.
- An active viewing experience leads to a richer understanding of the documentary.

For many teachers, having students write or take notes while viewing is not something new. For others, this aspect of active viewing is a bit controversial. Some feel it gets in the way of their viewing experience, while others feel it enhances it. You may want to show the tape twice: the first time to view it, and the second time to complete the viewing exercise. Your comments and questions are always welcome. Contact us at info@evc.org.
Background Information

RUNNING TIME: 20 minutes

SYNOPSIS: Nearly half of all American teens ages 15-18 have had sex, yet only one state, New Jersey, has mandatory comprehensive sex education. This documentary follows Regina, 15, and her 17 year old boyfriend, Anthony, who are 6 months pregnant. Through their story, Regina’s sister, an EVC Youth Producer, attempts to understand the causes of teen pregnancy, the possible impacts later in life, and some of the major historical and societal shifts on the issue.

EXPERT INTERVIEWS (in order of appearance):
• Karyn Brownson, Director of Teen Health Initiative at the NYCLU
• Michael Carrera, Director of Carrera Adolescent Sexuality and Pregnancy Prevention Program at the Children’s Aid Society
• Chris Chau, NYC High School Science Teacher

RELEVANT STATISTICS:
• 100 adolescents get pregnant every hour in the U.S.; 50 adolescents give birth every hour; 25 have a pregnancy terminated every hour.
• 435,000 babies were born to teen parents in the U.S. in 2007, 23,000 of which were born in New York City.
• Sex education hasn’t changed since the 1960s. Birth control and condom use are not covered in schools.
• $1.6 billion has been spent in the U.S. on failed abstinence only programs.
• New Jersey is the only state that mandates comprehensive health education from grades 1-12.
• More than twice as many teens get pregnant in New York than New Jersey.
• It costs about $11,000 to raise a baby in his or her first year in NYC (not including housing); the maximum a 15 year-old can earn on minimum wage is $6,000 pre-tax.
Before Viewing the Tape

**PREPARATION:** It is important for you to watch *The Baby In Me* before showing it in class. This will make your preparation and post-discussion more fruitful. Test out the TV and DVD player and make sure the TV volume is set to a good level. Ideally, all students will sit close enough to the TV that they can read all the captions in the video. If this isn’t possible, we recommend that you use your remote to pause the video long enough to read important captions aloud.

**UNDERSTANDING DOCUMENTARIES:** If necessary, familiarize your students with the concept of documentary film. Here are a few guiding questions:

- Have you seen a documentary film before?
- Based on what you have seen, what is a documentary film?
- Why do you think someone would want to create a documentary?
- How are they different from other kinds of films?

Here are some points that you may want to incorporate into this discussion:

- Documentary films are often referred to as "documentaries" or "docs."
- Docs are significantly different from narrative or fiction feature films (even the feature films that are based on true stories).
- Mainly, documentaries are different because they record events as they happen, without a script or actors.
- Documentary filmmakers incorporate several resources in order to accurately report the truth. Examples include the use of archival footage (of past and present people or events); interviews with experts in the field they’re working on; interviews with the general public or members of a community to gather opinions or information on a subject.

**OPTIONAL BRAINSTORM WARM-UP ACTIVITY:** Have students say the first thing that comes to their minds when they think of sex education in schools. Take a minute to reflect and make a list. Using your list as a beginning, have students discuss or write about the following topics:

- Does your school offer sex education classes?
  - If so, is it a requirement?
  - If not, do you think it should be offered/required? Why or why not?
- Do you know any teens who have had to deal with a pregnancy?
- What are some of the issues you think arise from teen pregnancy?
- What are some of the social stigmas that surround teen pregnancy?
Lesson Plan

**FOCUS QUESTION:** What is the relationship between sex education and teen pregnancy?

**OBJECTIVES:**
- To raise awareness of the relationship between sex education and teen pregnancy.
- To talk about the hurdles that teen mothers and fathers face.
- To encourage students to seek more information about sexual health that may not be offered in school or in their community.

**EDUCATION STANDARDS**
NYS Language Arts Standard 3; NCTE Standard 12; NYS Health, Physical Education, and Family and Consumer Sciences Standard 3; NYS Arts Standard 3; NETS Technology Standard 6

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**
- Before starting the lesson, make sure students have paper for note taking.
- Prepare markers and large newsprint for note taking during the post-screening discussion (or you can use the chalkboard).

**INTRODUCING THE DOCUMENTARY:** (3 minutes)
It may be helpful to say a few words before watching *The Baby in Me*. Here are a few suggestions.
- 14 high school students from the Educational Video Center in New York City produced this video.
- The stories told in the video are all true. Some are about people’s personal experiences with teen pregnancy.
- Please view this tape respectfully, even when you hear points of view you may not agree with or understand.
- You may want to talk a little bit about what is sex education, mentioning how it is linked to health but not required in schools.

**SCREEN BABY IN ME:** (20 minutes)
Ask students to take notes while watching the video. Have them write down anything that surprises them, whether a story or a statistic, or anything they may feel strongly about. Screen the video.
OPTIONAL PAUSE POINTS: (7 minutes)
You may choose to pause the video and propose discussion questions. A good pause point is just after the sex education portion, about 10 minutes into the documentary. As an alternative, you may choose to add these questions to the "After Viewing the Documentary" discussion. The following questions may serve as a guide:

- What are some cultural influences that encourage teens to have sex?
- What are some of the ways Regina may have avoided pregnancy?
- What is the relationship/link between knowledge and action?
- What is the difference between abstinence only and comprehensive sex education programs?

AFTER VIEWING THE DOCUMENTARY: (15 minutes)
Respond to the video. Below are several questions to help lead a fruitful discussion of the film.

- Do you know anyone who is/was a teen parent? What is/was his/her experience like?
- Do you believe teenagers make good parents? Why or why not?
- Why do you think teens decide to become parents if/when they become pregnant?
- What facts or statistics did you learn while watching the video? Did any of these facts surprise you? Why?
- Which personal stories do you remember from the video and why?
- Was there any point of view in the documentary that you related to and why?
- What suggestions do the producers of this video offer? Is there anything you would add to these solutions? If you had produced the video, what approach would you have taken to making a documentary about teen pregnancy?

OPTIONAL WRITING ASSIGNMENT:
Either in class or assigned as homework, research what it takes to raise a child. Write a letter to Regina giving her advice on how she can provide a healthy life for herself and her baby. Offer suggestions on things she could do to encourage other teens to wait until they are adults before becoming parents.
**DAY TWO:** If time allows, we strongly recommend one or both of the following lessons as a follow-up class.

**FOLLOW-UP LESSON: BRINGING UP BABY**

**FOCUS QUESTION:** How does being a parent affect a teen’s life?

**OBJECTIVES:**
- To consider the changes that occur in one's daily life as a teen parent.
- To consider how students can support teens who do get pregnant.

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**
- Pencil or pen and paper
- Chalkboard and chalk or newsprint and markers

**WARM UP ACTIVITY:** (10-15 minutes)
This activity is designed to get students thinking about how becoming a parent would affect their everyday lives, both during pregnancy and while raising a child. If you would like to have your students thinking about different areas of life, some suggestions to think about during this activity are health (mental and physical) finances, social life, and education.

- First, have your students write a list or a narrative of activities that they regularly do during the day. This can be broken down into weekdays or weekends as well.
- Second, have the students write down how they think this daily routine would change if s/he were to become pregnant/an expectant father.
- Third, have the students write down how they imagine their lives would be different after the baby is born.

**ACTIVITY:** (20 minutes)
Ask students to pair up into groups of two. If possible, try to pair up one boy and one girl per group. Ask your students to imagine they just found out that their group partner is going to become a parent. What advice would s/he give to her/his group partner? Ask each group member to give advice to the other, making sure to have them write down their suggestions.

After each group is done discussing, hang two sheets of paper up or split the blackboard into two sections, one for teen fathers and one for teen mothers. Have each student come up and write under her/his respective subject heading the best piece of advice that their activity partner told them.
After each student has gone, discuss the advice as a class. Some discussion questions include:

• Which of the suggestions on the list were given by more than one/several groups and why?
• Are there pieces of advice listed that you strongly agree or disagree with and why?
• What might be missing from the list that you find important for teens to know?
• How do you think your pregnant friend/father’s life would be different if they followed your advice?

FOLLOW UP QUESTION:
What advice do you have for parents, schools, and communities so that they might reduce the number of teen pregnancies?

OPTIONAL TAKE ACTION: (15 minutes)
Either together as a class or assigned as a homework assignment, have students draft a letter to the principal explaining the importance of having mandatory sex education in their schools. If your school already has mandatory sex ed classes, you may choose to write a letter to the student body explaining the importance of taking these classes seriously.

TAKE ACTION WEBSITE LINKS:
The following websites could be useful to support teen parents and also to help prevent teen pregnancies. Students can explore these to gain deeper knowledge on the subject, support their peers or to write a more detailed letter to their principal in support of mandatory sex ed classes.

• Get a glimpse of what comes with being a teenage parent: www.boarmsg.org/screeningroom/animation/1146
• Visit a website that supports teen parents: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/teenagepregnancy
• Know the facts about teen pregnancy and how you can prevent it: www.teenpregnancy.org
Resources

As a follow-up assignment, you can ask your students to research one of the organizations listed below and write a short paper that includes what these organizations are doing to raise awareness of teen pregnancy and/or sex education and what people can do to get more involved.

**ORGANIZATIONS & WEBSITES:**

**The Children’s Aid Society**
www.childrensaidsociety.org
The Children’s Aid Society: Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program uses a holistic approach to empower youth. The program's objective is to help teens develop personal goals and the desire for a productive future, in addition to developing their sexual literacy and educating them about the consequences of sexual activity.

**Brooklyn Young Mothers’ Collective**
www.brooklynyoungmotherscollective.org
The mission of The Brooklyn Young Mothers’ Collective is to break the cycle of generational poverty among pregnant and parenting low-income mothers by helping them actively engage in improving the conditions that impact their lives. They do this by providing comprehensive sexuality and reproductive health education, legal information and advocacy support. They also build leadership skills in young mothers and organize them to improve the response of community and government agencies in addressing their needs.

**SIECUS (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States)**
www.siecus.org
The United States has some of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the industrialized world. Teen pregnancy has a tremendous impact on the health and wellbeing of young women, their families, and their communities. SIECUS believes that young people should have access to the information, skills, and services they need to prevent unintended pregnancy. SIECUS creates resources about teen pregnancy and teen pregnancy prevention to help parents, educators, and policymakers understand this important issue.

**Teen Breaks**
www.teenbreaks.com/index.cfm
A lot of research has been done to determine what works when it comes to helping young people adopt protective behaviors such as delaying sexual behavior or using condoms and contraception. This website provides information on the research that has been done on programs designed to educate young people about sexuality, prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and avoid unintended pregnancy. The research included on the website shows that comprehensive sexuality education works while abstinence-only-until-marriage program have never been proven effective.

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy seeks to improve the lives and future prospects of children and families and, in particular, to help ensure that children are born into stable, two-parent families who are committed to and ready for the demanding task of raising the next generation. Our specific strategy is to prevent teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy among single, young adults. We support a combination of responsible values and behavior by both men and women and responsible policies in both the public and private sectors.

Second Chance Homes: Providing Services for Teenage Parents and Their Children

The difficult life circumstances of most teenage mothers and their children have intensified interest in finding ways to support young mothers in their efforts to become self-sufficient, delay subsequent childbearing, and promote awareness of child development early in their children's lives in order to break the cycle of poverty and reliance on welfare. One innovative service delivery option available is the establishment of "Second Chance Homes" for teenage mothers and their children. Second Chance Homes offer stable housing and other supportive services to teenage mothers, with the intent of providing teens with the skills and knowledge necessary to become more effective parents and lead productive, independent lives.

Mount Sinai Adolescent Center

The Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center (MSAHC) offers a comprehensive, interdisciplinary and integrated model of medical, mental health, and reproductive health services, plus prevention education. The largest center of its kind in the United States, the MSAHC provides health care services to over 10,000 patients per year. Its multidisciplinary team of physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, social workers, nutritionists, and other health workers strive to help teens make informed decisions.
Planned Parenthood
www.plannedparenthood.org
Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) is many things to many people. They are a trusted health care provider, an informed educator, a passionate advocate, and a global partner helping similar organizations around the world. Planned Parenthood delivers vital health care services, sex education, and sexual health information to millions of women, men, and young people.

Pregnant Teen Health
www.pregnantteenhelp.org
Pregnant Teen Help is presented for adults and teens. We offer information on teen pregnancy statistics, pregnancy facts, and teen pregnancy prevention. Our articles and research papers were compiled to educate the public about teenage pregnancy, the warning signs, and options available. We have obtained information from various surveys and sources including the National Institutes of Health, SAMHSA, the White House, FDA and more.

The National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy: May 6, 2009
Hundreds of thousands of teens nationwide are expected to participate in the eighth annual National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy on May 6, 2009. The purpose of the National Day is straightforward. Too many teens still think “It can’t happen to me.” The National Day helps teens understand that it can happen to them and that they need to think seriously about what they would do in the moment.

With One Voice 2007
With One Voice 2007 - a nationally-representative survey of adults and teens - offers interesting insights about teen sex and pregnancy, factors that might influence teens, decisions about sex, and advice to parents, program leaders, and policymakers

Sex, Etc.
www.sexetc.org
Sex, Etc. is an award winning national magazine and website on sexual health that is written by teens, for teens. It is a Teen to Teen Sexuality Education Project developed by Answer, a leading national organization dedicated to providing and promoting comprehensive sexuality education.

Advocates for Youth
www.advocatesforyouth.org/teenpregnancy.htm
Advocates for Youth is dedicated to creating programs and advocating for policies that help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health. Advocates provides information, training, and strategic assistance to youth-serving organizations, policy makers, youth activists, and the media in the United States and the developing world.