

# DOINGWHATWORKS



Slideshow

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## Advocating for Success: The Young Parents Achieve Program

Sleepy Hollow High School, New York • February 2009

Topic: Dropout Prevention

Practice: Adult Advocates

### Highlights

- The Young Parents Achieve program at Sleepy Hollow provides pregnant and parenting teens with services such as case management, counseling, and academic support.
- Homebound instruction and childcare services are two essential components of the program.
- Support networks and trained adults who provide guidance can make a difference in the lives of struggling students.
- Program participants share their personal successes as a result of the services provided to them by the Young Parents Achieve program.

### About the Site

Sleepy Hollow High School

Sleepy Hollow, NY

## Demographics

51% Hispanic

37% White

9% Black

2% Asian

24% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

28% English Language Learners

Sleepy Hollow High School serves an ethnically and economically diverse student population. The school operates a broad range of programs to support students:

- Young Parents Achieve programs serves pregnant and parenting teens
- Play It Smart to ensure athletes stay focused on their academics
- Bridge classes for non-native English speakers to help them master essential content
- After school homework support centers available to all students
- Ninth and tenth grade Humanities Team to help students make a successful academic transition to high school
- Positive behavior approach

## Full Transcript

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Sleepy Hollow High School

Sleepy Hollow, NY

Eve Hausler is a social worker with Westchester Jewish Community Services and is the lynchpin of the Young Parents Achieve program. This program provides pregnant and parenting teens with case management, individual and group counseling, personal advocacy, referrals for medical services, day care, and academic support.

Slide 1: Meeting Their Needs

Text: This program is designed to meet the academic, emotional, and health-related needs of its participants. It serves pregnant teens and young parents, who might have dropped out of school if it wasn't for the services supplied by the program and the emotional support provided by Ms. Hausler. She acts as a resource and an adult advocate for her students.

Audio: The participants of the Young Parents Achieve program are pregnant and parenting teens in the school districts and communities that we serve. Primary focus of the program is to really establish a caring supportive and consistent relationship with the teens. I think that that's a very important component. We do that by providing individual and group work services so that I can better understand and meet the needs of the students, whether they are dealing with personal problems in their lives with families or boyfriends, as well as providing some very concrete services, services that are offered through the community and through the schools that they really need to avail themselves of if they're going to succeed.

### Slide 2: Academic and Personal Support

Text: Schools can partner with local social service agencies to support their students. Young Parents Achieve has two important components: a homebound tutoring program and referrals for health services. Ms. Hausler contacts and arranges access to medical and childcare services for her young parent participants. Without the help, many students with children would not be able to continue their education.

Audio: Two very important pieces to this puzzle are the tutoring programs called Homebound Instruction, which is provided to the students, and I coordinate and collaborate with the tutors to ensure that the students are receiving this services. They go out after they have their baby for about six weeks—four to six weeks, and during that time, tutors go to their house and provide them with tutoring. And this is critical because it really keeps the students on top of their work. It keeps them connected to the school, and in this way they're able to stay in touch with school—it's an important connection—as well as staying on top of their school work so that when it's time for them to come back, they're not feeling so overwhelmed. I think that this can be a really critical time for dropouts because of all of the stress that, clearly, a new young mom has to deal with, and then to add on top of that, the requirements of school. Having missed school for so many weeks can be daunting to any teen, and I think that you might find teens dropping out at this point if it weren't for the fact that we're providing this homebound instruction.

A second important component, which we also help the students acquire, is childcare. Clearly students can't come back to school unless they have someone to watch their babies. So, we work with family care providers, those are people who are providing daycare or childcare in their home, as well as local daycare centers. We coordinate with them to make sure that the students have access to those services.

### Slide 3: Advocacy and Encouragement

Text: Building trust is essential for developing the relationship between the student and the adult advocate. Ms. Hausler builds trusting relationships with her students by initiating personalized counseling sessions. In these sessions, she strives to understand the student holistically and without judgment. It is important for

the student to have a safe place to go and an adult with whom to share his or her problems, questions, and concerns.

Audio: In working directly with the students, I'm able to understand what their needs are. So, if they're dealing with a personal issue, I can speak with a parent or a friend or whoever the issue is with or help the student speak with that person and work out the issues. I'm in close contact with teachers, with guidance counselors; they'll often speak with me about issues that they might have or concerns that they might have with the students. I think that they think that I am a valuable support to them. I also think that the students feel very supported when I can go to a teacher on their behalf and help negotiate situations. So, all in all I think it's a win-win on both sides for both students and staff here at the high school.

#### Slide 4: Professional Collaboration

Text: An adult advocate can work as a liaison between the student, school staff, and the student's family. Ms. Hausler often facilitates conversations between pregnant teens, their parents, and significant others. She also participates in Child Study Team meetings in which school staff can have a dialogue about a particular student's struggles and successes.

Audio:

I also attend CST meetings, Child Study Team meetings, where students are discussed, and I can very directly know what the issues are from the clinical staff's point of view, as well as teachers who attend these meetings. And I can then go directly to a student and advocate the teachers' or guidance counselors' situation and work with the student directly on issues. That, I think, really creates a much smoother educational process for these students.

#### Slide 5: Individual Connection and Support

Text: Students at risk of dropping out often have significant personal, academic, and social barriers that interfere with their education. Ms. Hausler helps students overcome such barriers and get the support they need. When the students are homebound, she makes home visits and acts as a crucial link between the student and their schooling.

Audio: While the students are home with their babies, I'm also able to make home visits, which is really important because not only do I get to assess how the situation is at home and how they are dealing with the new stressors of being a teen parent but it's also an important connection again to school and to their goals of staying in school—returning to school and staying in school and ultimately graduating. I feel that I am very much in their life, in a sense, in that I keep close contact with them, close contact with the progress that they are making, and I reach out to support staff all along the way to make sure that there are no obstacles

in their way. I think that if I had to really describe the program, it would be in that I clear away obstacles that lead to the path of graduation, and I also introduce services that also help keep that path clean and clear to graduation.

#### Slide 6: Staying on Track

**Text:** Having a support network in place and a trained adult to provide guidance can make an important difference to struggling students. Ms. Hausler aids students by establishing and maintaining a dependable relationship with them.

**Audio:** I think that the students that I work with all really want to do well, and I think that often the stressors of their life can be so overwhelming that they just get in the way. And really it just takes a person to help them clear the brush a little bit in their lives so that they can more clearly see the path towards graduation. And without that support person it can be just way too overwhelming, and that's where kids fall behind and ultimately do not succeed. So, I'm very pleased to be a part of this program and to offer this service so that students can achieve the goals that they really do want to achieve, and that is to graduate high school and to have a better life for themselves and for their children. And they do realize that having that high school diploma means a better life for their children as well as for themselves.

#### Slide 7: Guidance and Support

**Text:** Listen to one participant's narrative of how Ms. Hausler and the program helped her. The student explains that Ms. Hausler assisted her by getting tutors and setting up support groups. With such guidance and support, the student will be soon getting her diploma.

**Audio:** I'm a member of the Young Parents Achieve Program, and it helped me into going back to school. Ms. Hausler she tried to help me, well she did help me get back into my GED program that I am taking this year, and she set up a lot appointments for me. I just had a baby, so I have six weeks off, and she helped me to get tutors to come to my home to help me study for my GED. And we do a couple of programs in school that she calls up a couple of kids, and we have a get-together and talk about what we have been doing so far and how everything has helped us and what we could do better.

#### Slide 8: Making a Difference

**Text:** Another student describes the impact Ms. Hausler's advocacy has had in her life. Ms. Hausler acted as a direct link between the student's home life and academic future. She supported the student and challenged her to continue with school. The student overcame the difficulties her pregnancy had posed and is currently graduating on time and applying to college.

Audio: Hi, I'm one of the participants in the program Young Parents Achieve, and this program has helped me a lot during my pregnancy and even up to now that I have my baby who is almost going to be a year. She is ten months. This program, together with Ms. Eve Hausler, has helped me stay in school and keep on working hard, not just for myself and my future but also for her because if I keep studying I could give her a better future when she grows up. And Ms. Eve Hausler also has helped me during all this time by giving me advice and listening to me, and that really has made a difference because during the pregnancy I have been on the honor roll, and even up to now that it's a little difficult having her and taking care of her, I am still on the honor roll, thanks to her, because she keeps pushing me and saying not to drop off. Even though sometimes I thought about it because it was getting hard to study and to take care of the baby, but she kind of pushed me but it was worth it because now I am senior and I am going to graduate with good grades and I am planning to go to college and I'm applying already to schools to be a nurse.