

PACE Center for Girls, Lee County  
Report submitted by Debbie Webb, executive director  
Sept. 2008 Grant Report

Pace introduced "Baby Can Wait" for the summer semester of Spirited Girls 2008. The program is considered both sexual education as well as pregnancy prevention. The grant was used to purchase six regular baby simulation dolls (3 girls and 3 boys), an "empathy belly", one fetal alcohol syndrome simulation doll, one shaken baby syndrome simulation doll, and one drug affected baby simulation doll. This package included curriculum for the baby simulations along with special activities for the drug affected/alcohol syndrome babies and the pregnancy "empathy belly."

The only obstacle encountered were a few technical issues with two of the simulation babies. These issues were solved promptly after calling tech support and shipping out the malfunctioning babies. This delayed our use in the classroom for approximately two weeks.

The first session of "Baby Can Wait" lasted three months in which students participated in activities that involved effective contraceptive options, the female and male reproductive systems, pregnancy trimester development/characteristics, infant development milestones, the expenses of a baby's first year, and breastfeeding versus formula feeding.

Fifteen students who returned permission slips were able to bring home dolls that exhibit both physical and behavioral attributes of real babies for a Friday through Monday period. The students were required to care for the baby for the entire weekend. The majority of the group came back to school on Monday tired and shocked at how much work actually goes into taking care of a baby. One student complained about having to leave church because of the crying infant. In a post survey by participants, many students replied that this activity opened the lines of communication at home with parents and guardians. Twelve of the fifteen girls said that this experience has affected their future plans and want to wait to have children until they have more time or are more financially stable. Thirteen out of the fifteen girls reported that this experience made them realize that taking care of a baby is harder than they originally thought.

Students were also able to try on a "pregnancy belly" which they attempted their everyday activities while feeling the physical condition of being pregnant. Their reaction was surprise at the difficulty to do things such as sit in a chair or tie their shoes.

Pace is hoping in future semesters all fifty students will have the opportunity to experience the entire program including the weekend at home with the simulated dolls. "Baby Can Wait" program continues to evoke excitement in the students at Pace and has become a requirement in the Spirited Girls course.

