



Polk Central parenting project: (from l. to r.) some of the students who took part, Anna Pack, Crystal Littlefield, Jessica Spivey, Deidra Hall, and Erin Terrell.

Ninth Graders Learn Parenting Tasks

Visitors to Polk Central during the week of March 25th may have noticed students walking through the halls carrying small baskets filled with eggs, both cooked and uncooked. Was this some sort of pre-Easter celebration?

A closer look revealed that the eggs were not dyed, although some had faces painted on them and others were wearing bonnets. Most were tucked comfortably into their baskets surrounded by blankets and toys. A few baskets were equipped with baby bottles.

Cynthia Terrell, Health and Physical Education teacher at Polk Central, says she assigned the egg basket project to her ninth grade students as a way of helping them experience some of the responsibilities of parenthood.

Her students were required to carry their baskets around for an entire week to classes, to the lunchroom, through the halls, to home and back. They were cautioned not to be careless with their tiny charges - dropping them would amount to child abuse. "If you drop a real baby," said Terrell, "it might become brain damaged. Even its physical growth might be affected."

Students couldn't ignore their egg-babies, either. Their need for food and changing had to be considered. Egg-babies

couldn't be left in a locker. Their "parents" had to think about them all the time.

This was a heavy lesson for ninth graders to learn, Terrell admits, but what better time for young people to discover the meaning of parental responsibility than at the age of fourteen or fifteen, when many are beginning to date?

Terrell came up with the egg basket idea while teaching a required ninth grade course entitled, "Sexuality, Commitment, and Family."

"The egg-babies go everywhere their parents go," she said. "If the parents want to step out for the evening they have to hire a babysitter, and this costs anywhere from \$3 to \$5 per hour. Or they can place their children in a nursery. A gain, this is expensive."

Said Erin Terrell, a student of Terrell's who, along with her classmates, seemed to take the lesson seriously: "Having to pay attention to these eggs really helps you learn about the responsibilities of having kids."

Shannon Hudson, one of twelve boys who took part in the exercise, said he didn't mind carrying around a basket of eggs for a week, even if his friends thought the whole thing was a joke. "Why shouldn't boys learn what it means to be a parent?" he asked.

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