

PREGNANT AND PARENTING TEENAGERS IN EDUCATION

An International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship.

TINA BAMPTON & MELINDA BROWN

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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

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Personal Acknowledgements:

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5. Hope Academy: Kristy Honaker, Coordinator of Community Services Family and Children's Center, Kendra Bringe, Teacher, staff and students
6. Nowell Leadership Academy: Toby Shepherd, Executive Director, staff and students
7. Alley's House: Brenna Wriston Executive Director, staff, students and volunteers.



2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FELLOWSHIP BACKGROUND

Tina Bampton and Melinda Brown are educators working in the suburb of Narre Warren with disadvantaged youth, specialising in pregnant and parenting teens. They have been working at Narre Community Learning Centre, now known as Foundation Learning Centre, for many years with youth aged 15-20 years, supporting them to complete their secondary education. Foundation Learning Centre is a non-Senior Secondary School Provider and funding is sourced by Skills First as well as under an MOU arrangement with local secondary schools. As part of working within this organisation Tina and Melinda were both very keen to see a program implemented that would allow pregnant or parenting teens the opportunity to continue their secondary school education by studying VCAL in an environment based on early childhood practices that was flexible and supportive. This program would see young mums or pregnant teens attending school and completing their education whilst also continuing to parent their baby, all in a shared environment. The curriculum is based around parenting practices utilising qualified staff in Early Childhood including the coordinator, educator and early childhood support worker in the learning environment to support these students with positive parenting practices and role modelling. This program started at the Narre Warren location in February 2018. Tina and Melinda were awarded a joint Fellowship in 2018 from the International Specialised Skills Institute. This Fellowship allowed them to travel to the USA to visit similar organisations that are supporting pregnant or parenting teens. These organisations were offering their students the chance to continue their secondary school education after having a baby or while still pregnant. As the Fellowship was carried out in March/April 2019, many of the students were close to completing their Senior Year of schooling as the USA School year runs from August- June.

The Fellows visited four organisations at five locations; Simpsons Academy for Young Women, Hope Academy, Nowell Leadership Academy and Alley's House to conduct a quantitative evaluation of their programs. Emphasis was placed on discussions with students, counsellors/support staff and coordinators or Principals of the various programs. The Fellows were seeking to learn about new program ideas, engagement strategies, parenting programs and support services that have proven successful. Key to the discussions with the students was to establish what they feel is important in a program and to identify what barriers may jeopardise them successfully completing their studies.



3. FELLOWSHIP BACKGROUND

CONTEXT

The overall aim of this Fellowship was to learn from organisations overseas that have established successful programs with positive outcomes. . FLC's program is in its infancy and some of the organisations visited have been running for over 20 years. We felt we could learn a lot from these experienced organisations.

The specific aims of the Fellowship included:

- » Examine best practice within international organisations and implement similar programs/practices at Foundation Learning Centre and encourage other Australian based organisations to implement similar practice.
- » Learn how best to engage this young cohort in order to increase attendance and therefore increase student's completion rate
- » Investigate how organisations incorporate wrap around services that assist their cohort to engage in education whilst supporting them with the external challenges they face.

The Fellows chose to undertake their research in the USA in order to identify how to improve current and future practice to reflect 'best practice' based on these overseas models. The organisations that hosted the Fellows are all well established and have been operating within this sector for 20 years plus therefore, have greater experience and knowledge than Australian based models.

The key focus areas were:

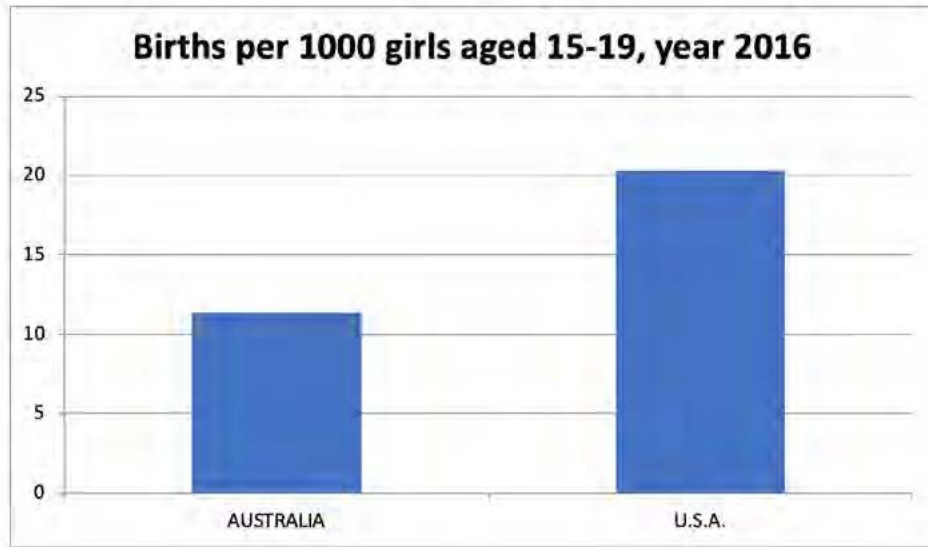
- » student engagement strategies
- » how to facilitate consistent student attendance
- » how to create students sense of pride in their educational achievements
- » how to build students sense of 'belonging' in their education space.

In addition, the Fellows were interested in how these organisations catered for the requirements of the babies of their students within the educational space and how, if at all, they tailored the students curriculum to support them with learning about parenting practices.

The high level focus of the Fellowship was to gain information about the organisation's external partnerships, volunteer programs (if any) and funding sources.



STATISTICAL INFORMATION



“Hundreds of thousands of teens in the United States become pregnant every year and 85% of the pregnancies are unintentional. The U.S. has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in the western industrialised world.”

- » 96% of teen mothers keep their babies
- » only 33% of adolescent mothers will graduate high school, and only 1.5% will earn a college degree by age 30
- » babies born to mothers aged 15-17 have less supportive and stimulating home environments, poorer health, lower cognitive development, worse educational outcomes, higher rates of behaviour problems and higher rates of teen childbearing themselves
- » children of teen mothers have lower birth weights, are more likely to perform poorly in school and are at greater risk of abuse and neglect

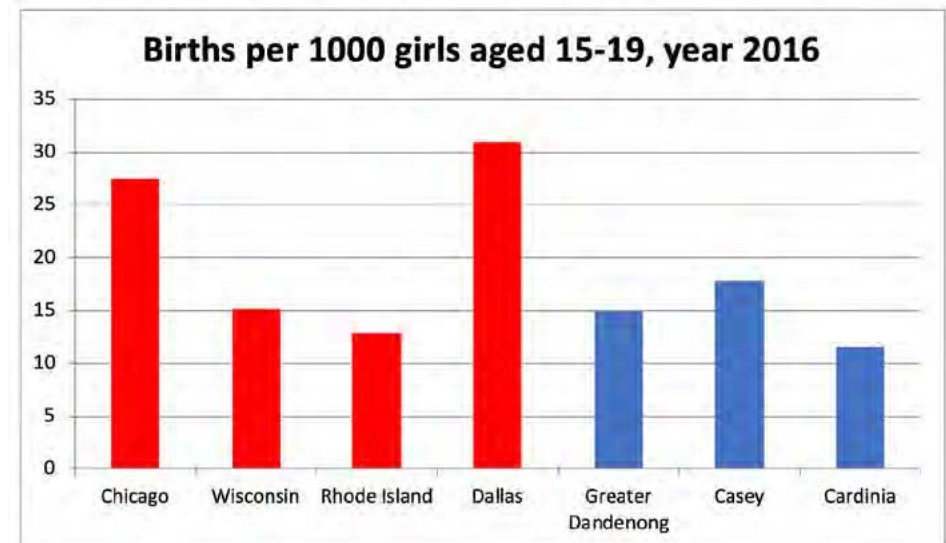
» only 40 percent of teen mothers finish high school. Fewer than 2 percent finish college by age 30

» young women who give birth while attending a community college are 65 percent less likely to complete their degree than women who do not have children during that time

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/teen-pregnancy-affects-graduation-rates-postcard.aspx>

» approximately 38 percent of teen mothers earn a high school diploma and less than 2 percent earn a college degree by the age of 30, according to the CDPH.

<https://chicago.suntimes.com/2017/11/12/18437218/chicago-s-teen-birth-rate-reaches-new-low>



USA / Victorian comparative statistics



Fellowship methodology

The methodology utilised to address the Fellowship goals included:

- » discussion with staff involved in various roles within the organisations visited in order to increase knowledge of best practice. .. It was valuable to gain the differing perspectives of professionals as staff in various roles provided varying perspectives on the factors that lead to success.
- » interviews with students to gain a first-hand understanding of what they believe is important, what support they require and what support is currently available to them
- » visits to education based programs to learn about engagement, learning support, well-being and pathways strategies utilized to support pregnant and parenting teens.

Fellowship period

The Fellows left for USA on March 21, 2019 and completed their work on April 11th, 2019

Chicago, IL: Simpson Academy March 21st -27th

La Crosse, WI: Hope Academy March 26th

Providence, RI: Nowell Academy- March 28-April 6 (2 campuses)

Dallas, TX: Alley's House- April 8th – 11th

Abbreviations/ Acronyms / Definitions-

FLC:	Foundation Learning Centre
YPEP:	Young Parents Education Program
NSSSP:	Non School Senior School Provider
VCAL:	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
VE:	Vocational Education
USA:	United States of America
SELLEN:	South East Learn Local Employment Network
VET:	Vocation Education and Training



Fellows biography

Tina Bampton:

Tina has worked for the community-based training organisation, Foundation Learning Centre for 15 years in a variety of roles. Currently she is employed as the General Manager. Tina's passion and commitment to the health and wellbeing of others, particularly children, young people and disadvantaged persons can be seen throughout her career having undertaken many roles in various learning, support and care-based organisations. In terms of qualifications and professional development Tina has spent the majority of her career developing her knowledge and skills. From her initial qualification, an Associate Diploma in of Childcare and Social Sciences, Tina moved forward and successfully completed a range of further qualifications including a Certificate IV in Education and Training and a Diploma of Youth Work with further training over many years in the area of youth, mental health, addiction, welfare and education. Tina has been an advocate for disadvantaged young people accessing education and represents Foundation Learning Centre on the steering committee of the Flexible Learning Victoria network. Tina lives in the South Eastern Suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria. Bringing up 3 sons together with her husband, she continues to follow her career while enjoying the happiness, and facing all the usual hurdles, of family life. She strives for fairness and equity while taking on new challenges with unfaltering focus and determination. Tina thrives on providing programs, education and support to those that need it most; children, young people and the disadvantaged.



Melinda Brown:

Melinda Brown has been an Educator at Foundation College (Formerly Narre Community Learning Centre) for over 12 years. Melinda's background was in Early Childhood Education and Care; she has spent over 10 years working in Early Childhood settings and in the past 12 years has focused on teaching youth. Melinda's qualifications include a Certificate of Applied Social Science (Child Care Studies), Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, current First Aid Qualifications as well as a Certificate II in Community Services. Melinda currently works in the Young Parent Education Program (YPEP) at Foundation College. This program is for pregnant and parenting teens and enables them to continue their Secondary School education in a supportive environment where they can bring their babies and care for them while completing their studies. Melinda's passion is to support young parents whilst still enabling them to continue their education. Thus, she has been able to combine the two areas of her work life; working with babies and young children whilst ensuring their parents educational aspirations are achieved. Melinda believes that if you work hard, you will achieve great things, a philosophy that she encourages her students to pursue. Family life is very important to Melinda, she and her husband have raised three boys in Berwick; she enjoys living and working in at a local community level.



4. FELLOWSHIP LEARNINGS

Whilst visiting the organisations in the USA, it became very clear to the Fellows that Australia does not have the same attitude or access to philanthropy. Whether it is private donors or big organisations, the organisations that the Fellows visited are able to secure funding from a variety of sources which allows them to provide extra services to their students. The Fellows learned that organisations working with disadvantaged pregnant and parenting teens must work collaboratively and holistically to improve the outcomes for these students and to provide them with the best opportunity to complete their secondary education which then leads to better prospects for gaining employment and/or further education. Comparatively, education in the United States has a main focus on a 'College' pathway whereas Australian students have the opportunity to gain employment without a 'college degree' and also engage in training at a certificate or diploma level rather than a degree. Discussions with USA organisations revealed that a student's pathway into College was extremely limited and if they did attend college the completion rate was low.

The Fellowship highlighted the need for further wrap around, onsite services to support this most vulnerable cohort of students. These services include case management (including housing, financial, emergency funds, self-care, navigating forms and support with job seeking) counselling/wellbeing, onsite childcare, food bank, baby boutique and health clinic. In addition, the Fellowship provided underpinning knowledge of the ideal funding model: from both the State and Federal Governments so that the aforementioned wrap around services can work collaboratively to provide an enriched and positive educational environment that

offers every student the opportunity to have a successful outcome both in regard to education and parenting.

The Fellows interviewed students at each educational provider and it was clear from these discussions that having childcare onsite, encouraged and assisted them to attend classes on a more regular basis. Accessing childcare for young parents is challenging and when babies were ill, students could not attend classes and then found it difficult to make an appointment with a doctor to get a clearance for the child to return to childcare.

Across all organisations visited one of the main barriers for students attending school was housing. In the United States, accessing support services to assist with housing (if you are homeless) is not an option for young parenting teens. Services assisting those that are homeless work mostly with individuals over 18 years of age, with very few working with teenagers and none working with parenting teens. Families interviewed told the Fellows that they have had to indicate that their baby is the maternal grandmother's child in order to access housing services.



SIMPSON ACADEMY

Contact Mrs Sherita Carter-King, Principal

Mission

'To empower young mothers, and to prepare them for success in college, career, and life. Our school offers a competitive academic standards-based curriculum, as well as parenting and life-skills education. We utilize advanced technology and tailor new programs to guide our students toward success in a 21st century world.'



Background

The Fellows commenced their Fellowship in Chicago, Illinois, at Simpson Academy for Young Women. The Fellows spent three days at the school meeting with the Principal, counsellor, teachers and students; learning about their programs, challenges, outcomes and recommendations. The Simpson Academy is a Magnet (able to take students from outside local neighborhood) Public School located in the outer suburbs of Chicago, approximately 5 kilometres from the city centre. Simpson Academy is exclusively for female pregnant or parenting teens that offers years 6 through to 12. The demographic of the school is 71% African American and 29% Hispanic with 100% of students classed as low income. The school has a Principal, Counsellor, 10 teaching staff and 6 auxiliary staff. Childcare for the students is in a nearby location which is run by an external organisation; The Salvation Army.

Outcomes

Feedback from staff and students pinpointed childcare as an overwhelming issue amongst the students. In asking the question "What prevents you from attending school?" the consistent response from students was childcare. Most commonly, family members are used for childcare however, if they are sick or their work plans change it affects the students' ability to attend school. Secondly, they use childcare centres closer to their homes because of the challenges of travelling long distances to the Simpson Academy, on an often unreliable public transport system. If their child has been sick, a medical certificate must be supplied before the child can re-enter the childcare service at Simpson Academy and it is challenging for students to access medical appointments. Although they have access to a nurse at Simpson's Academy, most students found that by the time they attended Simpson's to gain the medical clearance and then returned to the childcare service the school day was over. The response from students was unanimous that if there was an accessible childcare service within the Simpson Academy their attendance would improve dramatically. They felt that if their child was onsite, they would be still be able to parent the child, their relationship with their child would improve and their connection to the school and attendance would be enhanced.

The overall feedback from students was that Simpson Academy supported them in their learning journey.

Support Services/Partnerships

Simpson Academy for Young Women has a number of support services available onsite for students to access:

RUSH Hospital partners with the school and offers the following:

- » An onsite health clinic with a nurse five days per week who is available to the students at no charge.



- » Bellies to Babies Program is conducted by student nurses from RUSH hospital in science classes.
- » A Social Worker and Psychologist are based onsite two days per week to support students with any mental health challenges.

YOUNG LIVES is a mentoring program that supports students in their Physical Education classes.

FAMILY FOCUS is an individual peer to peer mentoring and case management program. They work with students during lunch breaks at least twice per week. They also host group meetings at an offsite location after school hours to support SEL (social and emotional learning) with topics including parenting best practice, relationships and conflict resolution. Home visits are also a service provided by Family Focus.

Greater Chicago Food Depository provides weekly food bank delivery for students to access as needed.

Other community partnerships include:

- » Literature for ALL of US
- » UYTC Community Outreach/UIC
- » Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative
- » Peer Health Ambassadors
- » Old Town School of Music
- » SGA Youth and Family Services



HOPE ACADEMY



Contact: Kristy Honaker, Coordinator of Community Services

Mission

A Family and Children's Centre which serves children, families and individuals with a continuum of services designed to strengthen families and promote individual well-being.

Vision

To be the leading provider of human services in western Wisconsin and south-eastern Minnesota: through quality, access, and service.

The Hope Academy is in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Hope Academy provides teen parents the opportunity to complete a high school credential and raise a healthy child. Their foundational belief is that teen parents can be great parents. The staff works to ensure the long-term self-sufficiency of teen parents and the healthy growth and development of their children. Their vision is 'for all Hope Academy graduates to continue to make healthy choices and understand that no consequence is beyond repair. Teen parents dream of a life in which they become the best parent, employee, and community member possible; at Hope Academy,

we make those dreams reality'. Time was spent in a group discussion with the program coordinator, teacher, volunteers, childcare support worker and students who attend the program.

Background

Hope Academy was founded in 1994 and was formally known as "Learning Together Family Literacy". It was renamed Hope Academy in 2012. Hope Academy merged with the Family and Children's Centre in 2012. Hope Academy's budgeted income is \$200,000 per annum and they offer an accredited high school "Mommy and me" program, early childhood education and parent and life skills training. The Hope Academy comes under the auspices of the Family and Children's Centre which is a regional, private, not-for-profit agency that provides a continuum of services designed to strengthen families and promote individual well-being, including:

- » child abuse and neglect prevention
- » alternative schools
- » community-based counselling (counselling clinics, in-home counselling, day treatment)
- » residential options (treatment foster care, youth homes, residential centre, respite care)
- » community support programs
- » several outreach programs.





Program information

Hope Academy provides young pregnant or parenting mothers aged 14 to 21 years of age, academic courses and/or exams to earn a High School Diploma or GED (General Education Diploma). The program is run in conjunction with local schools and the curriculum for the High School Diploma is provided by the school the student is enrolled in. Students enrolled in the GED program use GED books that are standardised and available for purchase to anyone online. The program provides academics, child development education, college preparation and life skills groups. Students are picked up each day in small buses by staff and volunteers with some students living up to an hour away from the centre. Students are supported in the classroom by a qualified teacher along with two volunteers who have been with the program from the onset. A childcare worker is also on staff to look after the babies and children in a separate space next door to the classroom. Students are able to bring babies up to 3 years of age, and the focus is on creating a developmentally sound environment, rich in language and pre-

literacy activities. Students are educated in child development to assist them to raise a healthy child. Students are also encouraged to continue with the day to day routine care of their baby/toddler by feeding, nappy changing and preparing them for sleeping. Students have access to all onsite services provided by The Family and Children's Centre including counselling and the Healthy Families Program. This program offered by Hope Academy has demonstrated a 100 percent graduation rate compared to an average of less than 40 percent graduation rate in traditional schools.

Outcomes

This program was small in comparison to others the Fellows visited, servicing only seven students. Due to its small number, students felt connected and supported on a more 'one on one' level in relation to both schoolwork and parenting. The staff and facility hold and enact a clear belief system that all students can succeed and have the potential to do well within the community. Connectedness to the service was high due to the support offered including pick up and onsite support provided by volunteers and staff.



Support services/ partnerships:

Hope Academy has onsite support services available to the students including:

Onsite counselling

Day Treatment: Mental health program for adolescents with emotional and behavioural difficulties.



Healthy Families Program: assisting participants to learn about parenting, what to expect from baby at different ages, caring for baby, learning to talk with baby, the importance of the role of the parent and coping with the stress of caring for a baby.

Domestic Violence Abuse Project: providing participants with an advocate to assist with development of safety plans, finding safe shelter, ongoing support, legal action and prevention of future domestic violence.

Great Rivers United Way: is an external partner who supports the young people with education, income, health and community basics i.e. food, shelter and safety.

Other Community partnerships include:

- » The Mental Health Coalition of the Greater La Crosse Area
- » La Crosse County Family Policy Board
- » Safe Kids Coulee Region
- » Teen Service Provider Network
- » La Crosse Homeless Coalition
- » Rebuilding for Learning
- » Rotary Clubs across Winona, La Crosse and Viroque



NOWELL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Contact: Toby Shepherd, Executive Director



Mission

The mission of the Sheila C. “Skip” Nowell Leadership Academy is to ensure that Rhode Island’s pregnant, parenting and underserved youth graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills they need to be prepared for success in college, career and family life. Their vision is to become a national leader in providing an exceptionally high quality, competency based high school experience to pregnant, parenting and underserved students.

Background

The Nowell Leadership Academy (NLA) is a public charter high school (fundamentally equivalent to an Independent School in Victoria) which was initially founded to serve pregnant and parenting young adults however, since becoming a Charter School they also accept underserved young students. With two campuses across Rhode Island, it is managed by a leadership team comprising of a CFO, Executive Director, Principal and Board of Directors. NLA has 10 teaching staff and 15 auxiliary staff. With 160 enrolments 66% of these enrolments are pregnant or parenting and approximately 75% are female. Nowell has an annual budget of US\$2,758,953 that comprises of funding from State Aid, Local Education Aid, Grants and other donations. The total amount of funds raised from corporate, foundations and competitive state grants totalled US\$538,832.

NLA does not have their own onsite childcare; there is an external childcare provider in an adjacent building where NLC funds five spots for students to access.



NLA offers a flexible curriculum that is modified to support the individual students interests and academic level, although there is no specific curriculum aimed at parenting or child development. Pathways for these students are solely focused on College however, according to Executive Director Toby Sheppard, a majority of students don’t successfully complete. Mr Sheppard acknowledged that as an organisation they should look at other pathways for students so that they all have a successful, positive outcome in either further education or employment.





Outcomes

NLA was the largest educational facility that the Fellows visited. Feedback from interviewees pointed out the need for more extensive onsite childcare services as there are only five childcare ‘spots’ available to the students on only one of the two campuses. This limitation was reportedly difficult to manage amongst the students. Timing of classes also played a factor in engagement as students found it difficult to attend early in the morning and stay late due to childcare challenges and the day to day logistics of getting ready for school and getting baby/child to childcare.

The Fellows were impressed with the auxiliary services that NLA offered. These services were very individualised and offered students on the spot support without having to access external services. Onsite Family Support Workers located at both campuses assisted students who faced challenges to work through them without having to wait for referrals and appointments. The Fellows also observed that students within the classroom received enormous amounts of support from both support staff as well and the classroom teacher.

Support Services/Partnerships

Onsite Support:

- » School Nurse
- » Teacher and Director of Wrap-around Supports
- » Social Worker
- » Family and Community Liaison
- » Student Support Specialist
- » Reading Support Specialist
- » Special Educator
- » Family Coaches (in partnership with Dunamis Synergy Initiative)
- » Instructional Support Specialist (in partnership with Dorcas International Institute)
- » College Advisor (in partnership with the College Advising Corps)



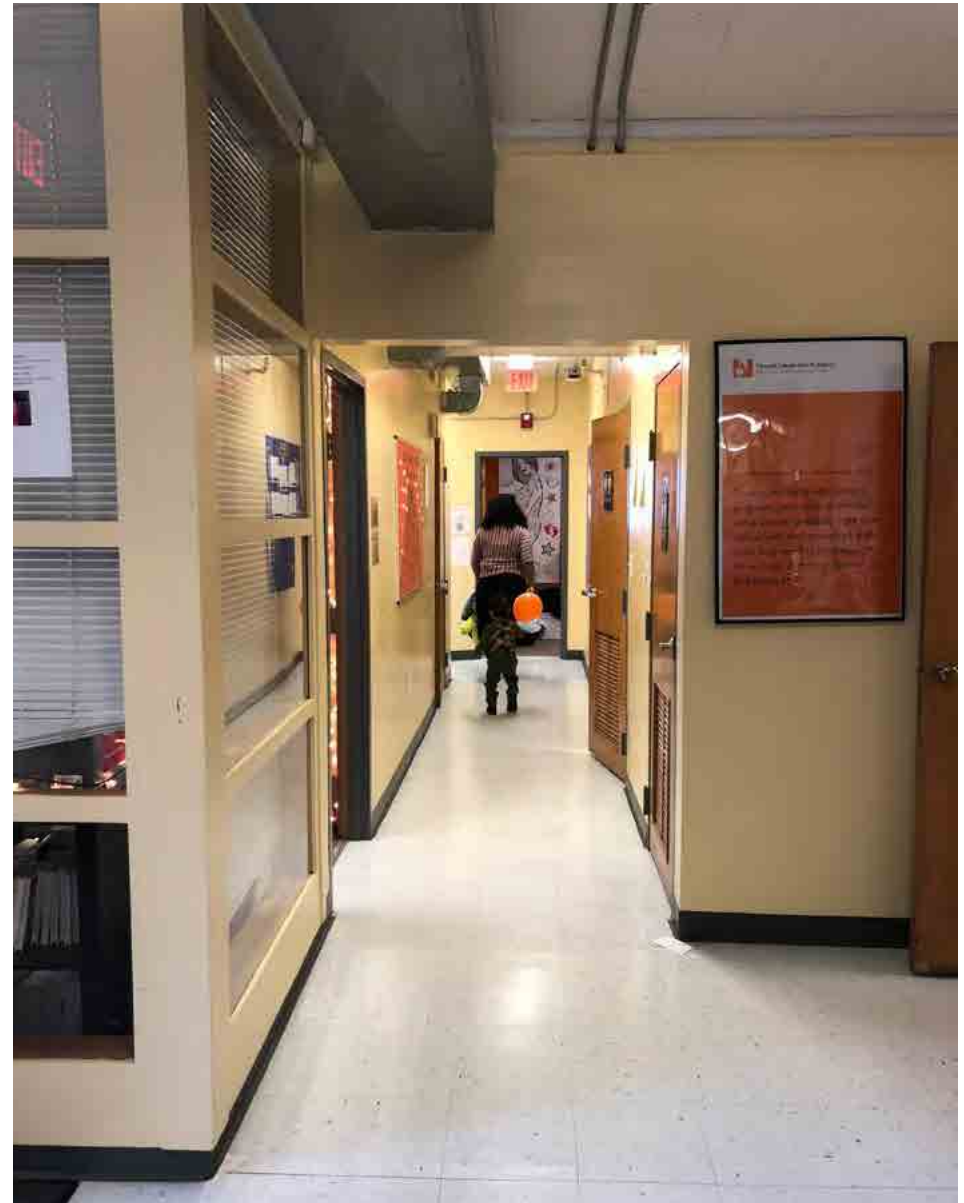
External Support/Partnerships:

Centre for Resilience: Works with students and educators to achieve lifelong healthy habits and positive outcomes

Dorcas International Institute: A Not for Profit organisation assisting non English speaking students access a range of services



Dunamis Synergy Initiative: Employs and provides a Family Coach for each site who provides students with academic planning and counselling around career pathways. They also support students with financial aid, government assistance and referrals.



ALLEY'S HOUSE

Contact: Brenna Wriston, Executive Director

Mission

Transforming the lives of teen mothers.

Alley's House provides a powerful support system assisting teen moms to focus on their personal and professional goals as they work towards independence. They provide a nurturing, stable environment to help young mothers overcome obstacles and become thriving women.

Purpose

Alley's House exists to fully transform the lives of teen mothers and their children. They offer a holistic life changing program fostering emotional wellness and teaching practical life skills. They provide five pathways to ready their mothers for a life of independence and meaning: through counselling, education, parenting, financial literacy and job preparation.

Background

Alley's House has been offering support and opportunities for pregnant and parenting teens in Dallas/Fort Worth since 1997 and services clients from 13 - 21 years of age. It was established by Allison Whitehead and initially, the organisation ran out of her own home as a part time program up until 2005. It has since moved to its current location and works in conjunction with Grace United Methodist Church. Texas has the 5th highest teen birth rate in the USA and this organisation has worked with and supported more than 800 teen mothers since 1997.



Alley's House believe emotional wellness is the key to future success for the teen mothers that they service. Their programs include counselling sessions, teen mum groups, case management services, health and wellness workshops and mentoring. The students at Alley's House focus on attaining their GED with subjects including maths, science, social studies and language arts. Volunteer Tutors work with the mothers in groups or one on one and encourage peer learning whilst providing the individualised support they need. The fellows spent three

days at Alley's House meeting with the Executive Director, Brenna Wriston, Program Associate Kirsteen Ederka-Great, placement student counsellors and interviewing the students. They were also able to spend time with a number of the tutors, who all volunteer their time to help support the mothers and this organisation, many working one or two mornings a week focussing on their specialised area of the GED. One volunteer had been there for over 10 years. Alley's House also have many local organisations providing sessions each afternoon to the students on health and wellbeing, financial literacy, parenting and self-esteem.

The student's classroom is a rented basement beneath a church. The students have access to computers as well as the textbooks required for their GED studies. The babies spend most of their time upstairs in a play space set up for children under 2 years of age, which is manned by volunteers who rotate times and days.



The mothers are then called to give routine care for their child including feeding, nappy changing and putting them to sleep as required. The babies are brought into the classroom to eat lunch with their mothers which can be a very social time.

Alley's House is a foundation that relies solely on philanthropic donations. Their annual budget of \$195K supports three employees. The Executive Director's main role is sourcing these donations.

Grants Received in recent years include:-

- » David M Crowley Foundation \$56K
- » Dallas Jewish Community Foundation \$10K
- » United Way Dallas \$10K
- » Texas Women's Foundation \$26K

Other donations include nappies, wipes, baby food, baby furniture and grocery items.

Outcomes

Student engagement was lower at this facility due to the GED being readily available for anyone to achieve without having to attend an educational facility. GED workbooks are purchased online and when a student is ready to do the GED test, they book in and complete this at a neutral location. As attendance at Alley's House is not aligned with gaining the GED, students are not motivated to attend apart from wanting assistance with the learning and to attend the afternoon sessions for self-learning. Feedback from both students and placement counsellors is that due to the placement counsellors only being engaged at the service for sixteen weeks, it is hard to build and maintain rapport as a student could see up to nine counsellors over a 12-month period.

Pregnancy rates in Texas are the highest in America due to the education systems stance on sexual health being that abstinence is the best method of birth control.

Childcare room for student babies at Alleys House



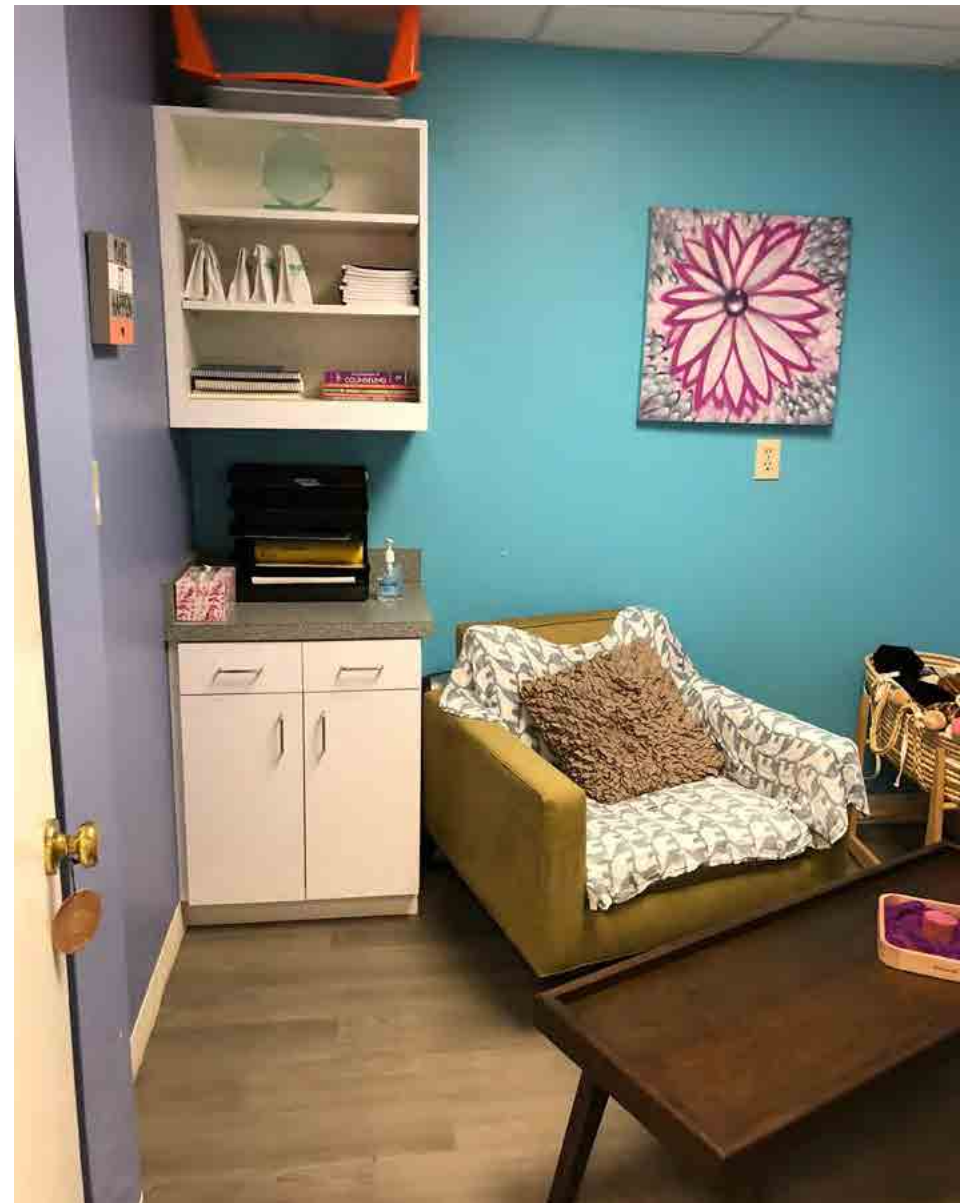
Alley's House has a number of goals they would like the mothers to achieve, their focus is:

- » to break the cycle of dependency on non-supportive systems
- » to foster financial independence
- » to ensure career readiness
- » to teach meaningful and quality parenting
- » to counsel toward mental and emotional health and wellness
- » to see each girl empowered to develop freedom and independence as they move into the world.

Alleys House believes that teaching teen mother's independence empowers them and their children to achieve success with comprehensive programs and support services which are shown to:

- » reduce dependency on government services
- » reduce likelihood of repeat teen births
- » decrease health risks
- » create higher self-worth and personal motivation
- » break the cycle of poverty and teen pregnancy.

Counselling Room



5. PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL AND SECTORIAL IMPACT

PERSONAL

Through being able to travel to the USA for their Fellowship, Tina and Melinda gained an incredible amount of knowledge. While the focus was on young parent programs, the Fellows also were able to extend their networking skills and knowledge of other programs and how they operate. The time spent overseas was invaluable for them to further develop future plans for their YPEP Program. They were able to clarify the vitally important aspects for their program and how best to move forward. They were also able to spend time discussing how they can best achieve their programmatic goals. It was an amazing learning experience for the Fellows personal growth. Meeting other young mothers in education and being able to hear their stories, has impacted the Fellows personally as their stories of hardship throughout their lives resonated with their own cohort of students. To see the same challenges and hardships are faced worldwide reaffirms why the Fellows choose to work in this type of program. Meeting 'like-minded' educators who also have a passion for young women especially and education, was a refreshing and rewarding experience that the Fellows will never forget.

PROFESSIONALLY

The Fellows were delighted to learn that much of what they are doing within their program at FLC is similar to the programs visited in the USA. The staff and students interviewed in the USA were impressed by stories of the FLC educational space and what is offered to the students. This supported the Fellows' vision for their program and helped to 'cement' what they have implemented to date and that their choice to have the student's babies in the room from the outset of their

program was the right one. Feedback from students in the USA confirmed this. Engagement is enhanced when students can have their babies in the classroom and can continue parenting whilst studying, the Fellows have committed to extending their current YPEP program as they believe that extending the age of the babies that are catered for, up to three years of age, will allow their students to engage for a longer period of their child's life. The extension into an adjacent room with additional childcare support staff is another priority for the Fellows current program.

The Fellows also identified that the next step to be taken to support continuous improvement is to incorporate higher levels of the wrap around services that are provided by all the organisations that were visited. The education departments in the USA recognise the vulnerability of these students and their children and have supported them with more than just educational services. The Fellows intend to incorporate the fundamentals of these wrap around services and in line with the USA, engage a welfare support worker who is in the room with the students on a day to day basis to assist them with the challenges that they face to assist the students in remaining engaged in the program.

Feedback from all of the students in the USA was that their attendance would greatly improve if they were able to bring their baby /toddler with them to classes, instead of having external childcare arrangements. The current program that the Fellows have at FLC only caters to children up to 18 months. Being able to extend the age range of the babies will assist with student retention. The Fellows believe that by supporting students with counselling, housing, food and financial services better outcomes will be achieved for both the students and their children. A holistic approach to all the issues that young parents face in a 'one stop' environment will



improve the overall outcomes for this cohort. A specific example was found at Nowell Academy where a dedicated worker is onsite and works one on one with the students to support them with all their needs enabling them to continue their education. This worker can assist students with circumstances outside of the classroom that impact their ability to attend classes and /or engage with their learning.

SECTORIAL

It is the Fellows' intent to use the learnings gained during their Fellowship in a number of ways:

The Fellows are a part of a Consortium run by SELLEN (South East Learn Local and Employment Network), which is working directly with three young parent programs in 2020-2021. The information gathered will assist the consortium, chaired by Mary Tresize-Brown to be able to apply for ongoing funding when the funding from the Strong and Resilient Families Grant ceases at the end of 2021. SELLEN, along with the Fellows will use the Fellowship report as evidence to support further funding applications.

The Fellows will be networking on a regular basis with staff from these aligned programs to share their knowledge and at quarterly Consortium meetings. In addition to this, the Fellows will be endeavouring to attract further funding sources to their program and others in their area, so that they can incorporate some of the wrap around services into their regular programs.

The Fellows are presenting at the Doing Schools Differently Conference that is taking place in Adelaide on the 25th and 26th of June 2020.



6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Considerations

Comparing educational approaches between the USA and Australia was challenging due to the differing attitudes, post-school pathways, policies and funding structures between the two countries.

All secondary education in the USA is seen as a pathway to the college/university you will be able to attend. The more successful you are during your secondary education i.e. the higher your GPA is, the more offers you will receive from prestigious colleges/universities. Students that struggle through their schooling or lack financial support from their families will, more than likely, end up at a community college or else begin working straight out of secondary school. The USA has a very clear hierarchy of those that have money & those that do not, and their education system reflects this. Students will often complete their college/university degree with large student loans hanging over their heads; it is not unusual for these loans to be over \$100,000.

When a student successfully completes their Senior Secondary Schooling, they receive their GPA which will then determine the college or university offers that they receive offers from.. High expectations are put on students in the USA to attend university & complete a degree. The option of attending a community college is not seen as valid & a student's career options are more limited without a university degree. Community College graduates are considered to be less educated than a university graduate.

The other significant educational difference between the USA and Australia related to funding. All the organisations that Tina and Melinda visited have been able to

secure substantial funding from a variety of sources.. These organisations were partially funded by various state/federal governments relevant to their locations but all were also able to secure private philanthropic funding, often in excess of \$100K which allows them to employ specialised staff to work with & support the students and it also allows them to offer bus services, food vouchers/gift cards, petrol cards, money for clothing & other essential baby items. The Fellows also noted that there is a stronger commitment to volunteering in the USA.

As much as the Fellows would like to be able to duplicate what they consider to be 'international best practice' in their Australian setting, they must consider the cohort of young women they are working with. The Fellows need to look at them individually, focusing on their educational, emotional and social requirements as well as the needs of their child/children. Recommendations and considerations must be viewed holistically depending on the needs of the young pregnant or parenting teenager.

Recommendations:

LOBBY FUNDING BODIES for further funding to enhance the educational setting with wrap around services. Wrap around services play an integral role in supporting this cohort to remain engaged in education as they work to assist, address and support their ongoing, complex daily needs. A professional counsellor, social worker and a case manager who is onsite and has daily interactions with this cohort would lead to improved engagement and outcomes, not only educationally, but holistically. With one or more of these key workers in the classroom, students would have the opportunity to access support and assistance at a critical time



(which for this cohort is when the issue is happening, not when a referral is made, and they engage with a professional after the fact). If students were aware that when attending the educational setting there would be a key worker that would be solely there to support their needs and engagement, attendance would increase.

ONSITE CHILDCARE preferably in the classroom or adjacent, from ages birth to school, is a fundamental to increase engagement. Overwhelmingly, students both in Australia and in the USA, reported that if this was available, their engagement in education would increase, as a major barrier is accessible childcare. By having onsite childcare, students are encouraged to 'parent' their child in a supported environment where their parenting skills are enhanced. Role modeling, parenting education and support within the educational setting allow the student to enhance their parenting skills which will have an outcome of less interaction with child protection and other welfare organisations and, in turn, have a positive impact on the child and the family as a unit. Onsite childcare should include children from 0 to kindergarten age.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL HOSPITALS would provide opportunities to enhance both the student and baby's health and wellbeing. Having access to professional staff and services including doctors and nurses would complement the role of the social worker/counsellor with the student and child gaining access to appropriate medical care. This would also be an opportunity for students to gain insight into the profession and lead to possible student interest in a career in the medical field. The Fellows have partnered with their local council and now have a maternal child health nurse who regularly visits their program. Mothers can have regular checkups, ask for specific parenting information and have health checks for their baby.

PHILANTHROPIC DONATIONS/COMMUNITY SUPPORT are vital in enhancing the educational setting for this cohort of students. Funding that can be obtained via philanthropic donations would allow organisations to improve the programs and services that can be offered to the student. Community support

through companies that can assist with donations of goods appropriate to the cohort will assist students to engage in education and not feel financial pressure to participate in work instead of attending education. The Fellows are working with their own organisation to create a 'story' around the role of education in young pregnant and parenting teens through a video, so they can connect with companies and philanthropy. The Fellows have also connected with an organisation called Women Making it Work in the South East and a number of members have donated their time to support the young women in the program in various ways, including Kinesiology, photography, MBraining and many other opportunities.

The Fellows are hoping to connect with local government officials to try & secure some funding to further improve their facilities, along with social services to offer greater support to the students enrolled in the program. As part of their roles within Foundation College, the Fellows are continuously working towards improving the educational & emotional environment of their particular cohort of students. Melinda and Tina will continue to seek further opportunities that may benefit their students, whether it be to establish connections with people that could become possible funding sources, or to further initiate external partnerships with organisations that may be able to provide services for our students. The Fellows are hoping to generate further interest from organisations in the local community to establish regular donations of goods and services that our students can access.

The Fellows' current plans include the provision of a second space for their toddler students to be located in. As the Fellows' current space is quite small, Tina and Melinda have been working hard to be able to extend their space to cater for the children as they grow older. This will allow their students further flexibility to be able to continue their education whilst still having their children with them as they move into toddlerhood. While in the USA, the comment the Fellows heard most from the students attending the organisations visited was that they would love to be able to have their children in the same room as them while they study. The Fellows consider this to be a vital component of their strategy as they move forward and this will be the core value of their program.



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8. APPENDIX



Student boutique at Simpsons Academy for Young Women



Counsellors room at Simpsons Academy for Young Women





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