



Sydney Distance Education High School for Committee on Community Services

Inquiry into support for new parents and babies
in New South Wales



4 June 2018

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SDEHS Productions: Film – *Learning for Two*

The photo on the front page was taken at the launch of the school's 2015 website film, *Learning for Two*. The film documents the experiences of three young women as they balance being mothers with their studies at school. In the photo, Alexis takes to the stage to watch her mum Charlotte on the big screen!

You can enjoy the film to see how our school supports pregnant girls, young parents and their children through the eyes of the students' themselves.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvoHpAkAi2M>

**We show our respect and acknowledge the
Traditional Custodians of this land the**

1. Background

Sydney Distance Education High School (SDEHS) has a special program to support the wellbeing and learning of pregnant girls and young parents. Although the school has a history of supporting pregnant students and young parents, the current program, that includes a Supervisor of Pregnant Girls and Young Parents (SPGY) who coordinates the support for these students, was established in 2014. Students are enrolled under the Department of Education *Distance Education Enrolment Procedures, Category 2.6: Pregnant students and young parents*. Many of these students face a number of challenges and are often at risk of disengagement in their schooling. This program has been successful in providing ongoing assistance for these students and their families, enabling them to continue with their education whilst being pregnant or parenting children. From 2005–2018, 240 students have been supported.

2. Pregnant girls and young parents program

The Supervisor of Pregnant Girls and Young Parents is paramount in supporting our pregnant girls and young parents in their education and in the development of life skills. The SPGY supports the school executive on issues relating to pregnant girls, and young mums and dads, with the aim to provide support and increase the participation and retention of students in school. Through regular contact such as phone calls, emails and field service visits, the SPGY explains school processes and procedures to students and supervisors, including the importance of communication, the use of elearning, and the regular completion of schoolwork. The SPGY develops Personalised Learning and Support Plans (PLSPs) for every student as soon as possible after initial enrolment, working with students to set educational goals for students, supervisors and staff to work towards. The PLSPs are overseen, monitored and evaluated by the SPGY in collaboration with school staff, executive and the Learning Support Team. This has proven to be effective in supporting students to achieve goals, stay engaged and develop a plan for their future after school.

The SPGY liaises closely with the student, family and relevant Student Wellbeing Team members to organise leave for identified students once they have their baby. This includes collecting medical certificates, modifying schoolwork with teachers and negotiating the rescheduling of examination dates. The SPGY then supports the student upon returning to ensure continuity of their education. An important community program that has been attended by a few of our young parents on Thursday mornings at school is a playgroup supported by *Lou's Place*, a daytime women's refuge in Potts Point, allowing young parents to meet with other young parents and their teachers.

In close collaboration with the Careers Advisers, the SPGY supports subject selection and the process of Stage 6 Pathways programs. This includes strong support in the transition of students to post school options, including TAFE, private providers and employment. Young parents are often accompanied by the SPGY to TAFE interviews and orientation days. The SPGY also supports the young parents to access the Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Child Care Fee Assistance so that their children can be minded whilst they attend TAFE. The SPGY works closely with outside services such as the Red Cross Young Parents Program to assist our pregnant girls and young parents integrate and access services in their local community.

3. Supervisor of pregnant girls and young parents

The Year Advisers and Head Teachers Welfare work collaboratively with the SPGY, Roll Call teachers and Faculty Head Teachers to develop wellbeing support strategies to foster increased engagement for pregnant girls and young parents. The Student Wellbeing Team, including the SPGY, organise and participate in case meetings, both at school and in the community, to support the wellbeing and engagement of pregnant girls and young parents. Young parents and their children are also provided with the opportunity to attend fun days organised by the school, such as the Big Day In, Harmony Day, Girls Day In and Diversity Day. This creates a sense of community amongst our teachers, students and their families. SPGY responsibilities include the following.

- Identify pregnant girls and young parents who are disengaged through teacher referrals and through communication with school faculties and teams
- Maintain contact with students and conduct regular field service visits to increase engagement and support them in their learning
- Record all interventions on the student data base and communicate information, as appropriate
- Attend Student Wellbeing Team Meetings
- Refer pregnant girls and young parents to community agencies for further support and intervention eg parenting centres run by external providers
- Implement Personalised Learning and Support Plans for all pregnant girls and young parents and conduct case meetings with staff in relation to strategies implemented
- Use community resources to create opportunities to further support identified students and their families
- Liaise closely with family and relevant Student Wellbeing Team members to organise leave for identified students and support them upon return to ensure continuity of their education
- Support students in transitioning to post school options including TAFE, private providers and employment

4. Department of Education procedures

Guidelines for pregnant students and young parents for whom no appropriate local provision is available are outlined in the Department of Education, *Distance Education Enrolment Procedures 2018*.

Pregnant students or students seeking to re-engage in education as a school-aged parent may be eligible for enrolment at a distance education school. Enrolment can be maintained for up to 200 days or extended to the completion of the next stage of learning after the development of a comprehensive case management plan.

The principal of the distance education school may seek advice from the local School Services team where the student lives, to investigate alternative local education provisions before enrolment and to help the student to transition from distance education at the end of the enrolment period.

The school's Head Teacher Secondary Studies (Student Engagement & Student Reviews) has the responsibility to conduct reviews on the completion of 200 days and follow up in consultation with the Deputy Principal and the Head Teacher Welfare for that student.

The school also conducts regular reviews to assess and monitor individual student learning needs and to ensure compliance with the *Distance Education Enrolment Procedures* for students enrolled in categories that are subject to periodic review to maintain eligibility for enrolment. Students in the pregnant student and young parent category are reviewed each term by the appropriate Year Adviser. Head Teachers Welfare also monitor their engagement in learning.

5. Case studies

5.1 Year 12 home student 2017

Sydney Distance Education High School has given me the opportunity to continue my schooling while being a young mother. I have been able to go into the school with my daughter, meet the teachers and attend study days. SDEHS allows me to complete my work to the best of my ability, due to the flexible hours and the support of my teachers. Completing my education at home allows me to raise my daughter and give her the best future possible.

5.2 Year 12 home student 2012

The student enrolled into a fulltime course load at the end of 2011 in order to complete Year 12 in 2012 as she was expecting a baby. She worked closely with all her teachers to complete her HSC by distance education. The student was offered a place in the Bachelor of Nursing at UTS in 2013 and completed it with distinction in 2015 while being a mum to a young boy. She worked as a registered nurse in the emergency department for two years. The student then enrolled in a Graduate Certificate in Emergency Nursing at the University of Sydney with the goal of becoming an emergency clinical nurse specialist. The student continues to maintain contact with some of the teachers who supported her schooling.

5.3 Year 10 home student

This student enrolled at SDEHS in Year 10 as she was expecting a baby. She successfully completed Year 10 and decided to continue her education in the senior school. The student was on a Pathways program, which involved completing her senior schooling on a part program, so she was able to care for her baby. The student worked closely with her teachers and often visited the school for extra support. The school organised for her baby to attend the local playgroup held every Thursday on campus so she could work with her teachers. She left school after two years and enrolled in a Certificate IV in an Accounting/Business course at TAFE and worked as a part time receptionist in a law firm. The student's goal was to enrol in Macquarie University to study law.

6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1: Annual Enrolment Applications 2005–2018

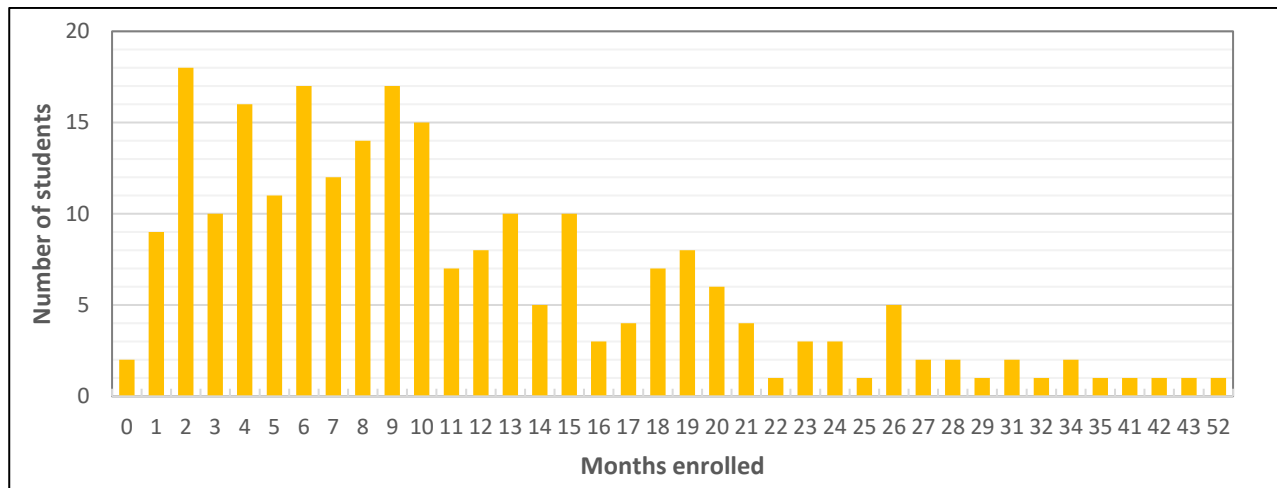
Year	No. approved
2005	8
2006	10
2007	14
2008	14
2009	14
2010	19
2011	28
2012	36
2013	31
2014	19
2015	18
2016	13
2017	9
2018	7
Total	240

2018 number is for total students at end of Term 1.

6.2 Appendix 2: Year Group Enrolled 2005–2018

	Pregnant/parent	Parent	Pregnant	Grand Total
8	5	1	1	7
9	51	1	3	55
10	82	4	2	88
11	54	4	3	61
12	24	3	2	29
Total	216	13	11	240

6.3 Appendix 3: Length of Enrolment Graph 2005–2018



6.4 Appendix 4: Length of Enrolment Table 2005–2018

Months Enrolled	Number
0 - 6	82
7 - 12	73
13 - 18	39
19 - 24	25
25 - 36	17
27 - 48	3
49 - 60	1
Total	240

6.5 Appendix 5: Student Destinations 2005–2018

Destination on leaving	Number
Another high school	30
TAFE / further studies	57
Older than school leaving age	51
Employment	1
Moved	3
Unknown incl blank	82
Current	16
Total	240

