



## p.a.p.a. Curriculum Overview

### What is p.a.p.a.?

p.a.p.a. — Parenting and Paternity Awareness — is a public education curriculum for youth developed by the Office of the Texas Attorney General (OAG) Child Support Division. Its goals are to promote responsible parenthood, build a basic understanding of paternity and child support laws, encourage the involvement of non-custodial parents, prevent relationship violence, and support the formation of strong, stable families. The 2009 edition of the **p.a.p.a.** curriculum, and its companion video, are distributed as part of the OAG-provided 6 hour training. The curriculum and training are free to public schools, local community- and faith-based organizations, and other public agencies. The OAG has provided **p.a.p.a.** training to more than 5,000 educators since January 2008.

### Is p.a.p.a. required?

Yes. HB 2176, passed by the 80<sup>th</sup> Legislature, directed the State Board of Education (SBOE) to work with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) to develop a parenting and paternity awareness program for mandatory use by school districts in the high school health curriculum beginning the school year of 2008-2009. The bill specified the topics the program must address: parenting skills and responsibilities, child support and other legal rights and responsibilities that come with parenthood, healthy relationship skills, and skills relating to the prevention of family violence.

The OAG worked closely with members of the SBOE to revise existing OAG curriculum materials, and in March 2008 the State Board of Education adopted the OAG's **p.a.p.a.** curriculum to fulfill the requirements of HB 2176.

### What does p.a.p.a. teach?

**p.a.p.a.** is an evidence-based curriculum that teaches the benefits of sequencing parenthood *after* a student has completed his/her education, has started a career, and is in a stable, committed relationship (preferably marriage). The curriculum includes interactive lessons on the financial costs of parenting, the legal responsibilities of parenthood including child support, the skills of healthy relationships, the impact of parenting relationships on children, and the prevention of family violence. The key message is that becoming a parent is more than giving birth; the responsibilities of parenting impact all areas of an individual's life, regardless of how old they are when they become a parent. It should be noted that p.a.p.a. is not a sex education curriculum.

### What's in p.a.p.a.?

The curriculum contains 14 sessions of approximately one hour. Generally, each session follows this structure: (1) an introductory video segment of 2-3 minutes, featuring interviews with teens and young adults who discuss how their lives changed after becoming parents; (2) a classroom lesson supported by group activities, handouts, and workbook exercises that may be done in class or as homework; (3) optional research assignments.

**p.a.p.a.** is designed to not take time away from core academic curriculum, as all 14 sessions of **p.a.p.a.** are linked to existing curriculum requirements in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Health.

### What do principals say about p.a.p.a.?

In independent interviews conducted with a random sample of high school principals, evaluators from the LBJ School of Public Affairs found that, overwhelmingly, principals laud the **p.a.p.a.** curriculum. These principals believe that the concepts covered in the curriculum are essential for their students to know prior

to graduating from high school; they appreciate the balance in the **p.a.p.a.** lesson plans between technical information regarding parental responsibilities and paternity establishment and reflective discussions about making responsible choices. Almost all principals interviewed understood that p.a.p.a. is not a “sex-ed” curriculum. Most, however, commented that **p.a.p.a.** provided a valuable addition to their current “abstinence-only” curricula. The principals consider **p.a.p.a.** to be “reality based” and something that their students can relate to.

### What do teachers say about p.a.p.a.?

Eighty-five percent of teachers from the statewide survey “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that the issues discussed in **p.a.p.a.** are relevant to their students, and more than three quarters believe that all students should be taught **p.a.p.a.** prior to graduating from high school. Most teachers believe that **p.a.p.a.** will change their students’ attitudes and behaviors when it comes to parenting and relationships. Teachers report that the quality of the curriculum is high, and approximately 90 percent of teachers thought the training workshops provided by the OAG adequately prepared them to teach **p.a.p.a.** Three-quarters of teachers reported that one class period is enough time to teach one session of **p.a.p.a.** and that the entire curriculum could be taught in one semester. Just over half of teachers made some modifications to the curriculum to make it fit into their class schedules.

### How is student learning evaluated?

The LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas is conducting a multi-year, comprehensive evaluation of student learning linked to the **p.a.p.a.** curriculum. Results from the first-year evaluation report found student knowledge about parental roles, legal issues, and financial impact of becoming a parent to have improved significantly after participation in **p.a.p.a.** The findings also indicated the curriculum had some positive influence on students’ attitudes about postponing having a child until they were older and married. Complete results from the first year of evaluation are available upon request at [papa@oag.state.tx.us](mailto:papa@oag.state.tx.us).



### A summary of each of the 14 sessions follows:

**Introducing p.a.p.a. — Session 1** provides an overview of the curriculum. It explains what the OAG Child Support Division does to enforce laws that require parents to support their children. Students learn the definition of custodial and non-custodial parents. In the video, teen parents talk about what it was like to find out they were expecting and how a baby affected their lives. Students participate in a class activity about defining themselves and consider how becoming a parent would change their lives. The research project is to look up average income based on educational attainment.

**What is a parent? — Session 2** begins with a discussion about parents as caregivers and asks students to remember what it was like to be a small child. The video features teen parents remembering the difficulty of telling their parents they were expecting a baby. A group activity asks students to pretend they are grandparents advertising for “ideal parents” for their grandchild. The research project is to find the cost and location of an apartment suitable for a young parent. The workbook asks students to reflect on their childhood and parents and to chart their readiness to be a parent.

**Establishing paternity — Session 3** covers legal terms and their meanings. Students learn the definition of a legal father and the three ways to establish legal paternity if parents are not married. Students watch a video of teen parents recalling their childbirth experiences, followed by a video produced by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement about establishing paternity. The teacher leads an activity called *Legalese*, where students compete in matching legal terms with their definitions. The research project asks students to find out the prices of 10 items needed for a baby. The workbook assignment is to decide the correct legal actions for four scenarios involving unmarried teen parents.

**Benefits of legal fatherhood — Session 4** begins with the video of teen parents talking about the joys and challenges of watching their baby grow, the importance of fathers in a child’s life, and why and how they established paternity. Students learn about the legal relationship between TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy

Families) and the Child Support program. The first of two class activities is *Which Price is Right?* — an exercise where students identify the costs of common items needed to care for a baby. The second activity has student teams identify the benefits of legal paternity for fathers, for mothers, and for children. The research project is to find out how much assistance a single parent with one child would receive from TANF and how eligibility is determined. The workbook assignment asks students to answer questions related to the benefits of legal fatherhood.

**What can you expect? — Session 5** is designed to promote realistic expectations about children at different ages and stages. The video has teen parents discussing how they deal with their babies' needs, how their children are developing, and the challenges of parenting at different ages. A group activity called *The Guessing Game* helps students gain perspective on child development and the challenges of teaching children at different age levels. The teacher leads a discussion about parenting situations and what the appropriate actions might be to keep children safe. The research project asks students to check local newspapers to find out hourly wages of jobs that teen parents could get. The workbook lesson reminds students of the behavioral differences of children of different ages and asks them to describe how parents might respond appropriately to various scenarios where children are misbehaving.

**What it takes to be a parent — Session 6** begins with the video of teen parents discussing the financial responsibilities of raising a child. The teacher leads a brief discussion of the obligation of the non-custodial parent to pay child support and the obligation of the custodial parent to allow visitation. Students participate in an activity called *Whose Job is It?* where teams negotiate which parent will do specific tasks in taking care of a child. Another class activity challenges students to calculate child support amounts. In the workbook, students are asked to describe how they would feel about doing various child care tasks. They also fill out a budget worksheet inserting information learned from previous lessons that will enable them to see what income would be needed to support themselves and a child.

**Single parenting — Session 7** starts with a video clip of teen parents talking about the challenges of working long hours while juggling school and their child's needs. A class activity, *Myth or Truth*, reinforces understanding of the legal issues that have been covered in previous lessons. A handout called the *Weekend Parent* has case studies featuring single parents and their challenges, with class discussion on the difficulties of parenting when you don't live with your child. The research project for the session is to investigate child care options and costs in the local community. The workbook assignment asks students to review and calculate child support payments based on various income levels and number of children.

**Parenting as a team — Session 8** begins by examining the concept of team- or "co-"parenting and student attitudes toward marriage and healthy relationships. In the video, teen parents discuss co-parenting and the value of raising their child together, even when they are not in a romantic relationship. They talk about why they think being married to the child's other parent is a good idea. Students are given a handout called *10 Skills for Effective Team Parenting*, and a brief discussion follows. This leads into an activity on how parental conflict can damage a child's self esteem. In the next class activity, students start a dialogue about committed relationships and marriage. Part of the class is assigned research on services state agencies can provide to assist children. The other research project has students interview a married couple. The workbook assignment asks students to consider skills necessary for successful relationships as a marriage partner and as a parent.

**Parents who don't pay — Session 9** begins with the video of teens telling about their experiences applying for, receiving, and paying child support. The class is asked to think about the kind of commitment it takes to raise a child. This then transitions into a discussion on the commitment to pay child support, and what legal actions can be taken to ensure that support is paid. The research project asks students to study non-payment scenarios and figure out what the non-custodial parents can do to straighten out their problems. The workbook assignment asks students to further explore the issue of commitment on a personal level.

**Love, marriage and a baby carriage: What's in your future? — Session 10** begins with the the video of teen parents talking about how having children while still in high school drastically altered dreams and expectations for their futures. Classroom activities include the students' developing a personal timeline for their future and an exercise in which students are asked to discuss their position on values about parenting, relationships, and marriage. Finally, students form small groups to talk about the timing of relationships and important

characteristics to consider when deciding to date or enter into a romantic relationship. The workbook assignment asks students to examine what qualities are important to them at each stage of a romantic relationship.

**Choosing Healthy Relationships — Session 11** features teen parents talking about how their relationships changed after becoming parents and how children are impacted by the quality of their parents' relationship. Students hear a story about a young couple, and then they work in small groups to assess the pluses and minuses of that couple's relationship and how it could be improved. The research project asks students to find out about marriage laws in Texas. The workbook assignment asks students to rate the importance of relationship characteristics, to role play effective communication techniques, and to interview another married couple about the decision to marry and parent.

**Marriage and Families — Session 12** begins with a video of teen parents talking about marriage and children. Students hear from unmarried and married teen parents. After a brief discussion of the last session's workbook assignment, students participate in an activity designed to test their knowledge about marriage. Students review case studies of five couples and discuss what the couples should consider before making the decision to marry. Students talk about the benefits and challenges of marriage and what they have learned about relationships. The research project asks students to gather information about divorce in Texas. The workbook assignment is to interview three people whose parents are divorced or separated to find out the impact on the children.

**Looking at Relationship Violence — Session 13** informs students about the warning signs of unhealthy and/or abusive relationships and strategies for dealing with them. In preparation for the lesson, the teacher researches local resources for dealing with relationship violence and invites a representative from a family violence organization to speak. The **p.a.p.a.** curriculum *strongly* recommends that teachers alert school counselors to the session's subject matter in case of outcries from students experiencing violence in dating relationships or at home. Students are given statistics on relationship violence and its impact on children. Students participate in an activity that helps them recognize the level of danger that different situations present. Students are asked to identify options for people experiencing warning signs of abuse or violence in a relationship. The research project involves an online investigation about the impact of family violence. The workbook exercise asks students to describe how they would help a friend who is in a controlling relationship.

**Building Strong Families – Session 14** sets the stage for students to define a strong family using everything they have learned in **p.a.p.a.** Students see the final video of teen parents talking about the most important aspects of parenting, what they wish they had known before becoming parents, and why it's better to delay having children. The teacher lists the four major roles of a family and distributes a handout called *Characteristics of Strong Families*. After a quick review of homework, students watch a video called *For Our Children*, which features children talking about how adult relationships affect them. Students get into groups and graphically depict a strong family of at least three people – mother, father, and child. After completing their drawings, the groups describe what their illustrations represent. The final workbook assignment asks students to list what they have learned about parenting, relationships, and marriage. Students are asked to reflect on their own future and describe their personal goals for a strong and healthy future family.

**p.a.p.a. training was approved by the Texas Nurses Association, an accredited approver by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation. This activity, CNE# O-AO-12755-06-08, meets Type 1 criteria for mandatory continuing education requirements toward relicensure as established by the Texas Board of Nursing.**