

Warren Central High School Bowling Green, Kentucky

Celebrating diversity

Chrissy Storms, teacher at Warren Central High School in Bowling Green, KY, calls her school a melting pot. “Over 20 languages are spoken in our school,” she says. Storms appreciates that the school’s 13 RealCare Babies- including African American, American Indian, Caucasian, Asian, Japanese and Hispanic-represent different cultures as well. “We are a very diverse school, so we have diversity in the infant simulators as well.”

Of course, RealCare Babies allow students to understand the challenge of parenting a newborn baby, but some of Storms’ students have learned other unexpected lessons from the experience. Some teens choose to parent a Baby from an ethnic background other than their own. “It’s a real eye-opening experience,” she says. It teaches them what it takes to be a parent, but also what it feels like to encounter prejudice and be judged by other people, Storms says.

As for herself, Storms has a personal, motivating connection to her job. She grew up in Bowling Green, where many families in the area struggle to make ends meet, and returned to teach at the same high school from which she graduated. She has taught at Warren Central for the last six years in the Family Consumer Science Department. Storms teaches several sections of parenting classes to 150 sophomores, juniors and seniors each day.

An eye on the future

When Storms began teaching, Warren Central had six RealCare Babies. Gradually, she added to the number and plans to continue, hoping to purchase three additional infant simulators next year. “Everything we do is funded by grants,” she says.



Sophomore Chelse Dixon, 16, wraps her RealCare Baby in a blanket during a parenting class Thursday at Warren Central High School. Photos provided by Daily News / News Publishing LLC (Bowling Green, KY)

A main focus of the program is to teach abstinence and the importance of waiting to become a parent, Storms says. While the Family Consumer Science Department doesn’t officially track the teen pregnancy rate, she says that it’s not unusual to see pregnant students in the halls of school. Her department works hand in hand with the school’s Youth Services Center, which provides multiple programs for students on a daily basis, including pregnancy support.

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- Chrissy Storms, FACS Teacher

Taking a RealCare Baby home has a sobering impression on male and female students alike. “It’s really different for the guys as well,” Storms says. “They didn’t realize how hard it is to have a child.” Storms has had students take two Babies home to see what it would be like to have twins. Occasionally, a teen mother will take an infant simulator home to see what it’s like with two, she says.

Storms has found that it’s valuable for her classes to hear about the difficulties of teen parenting firsthand. She applauds former students who return to speak candidly about their experience of having a baby while in high school. “It’s important to show that students can overcome this challenge and still go on to lead a successful life,” she says.



Hunter Wilson/Daily News Warren Central Sophomore Raymond Smith, 16, walks with his life like Baby on Thursday at the high school. Raymond is one of a few males who takes the Parenting class, which is an elective. Photos provided by Daily News / News Publishing LLC (Bowling Green, KY)



CiCi Cerimovic, 16, walks to lunch while wearing a RealCare Pregnancy Profile Vest. Photos provided by Daily News / News Publishing LLC (Bowling Green, KY)

Additionally, Storms is enthusiastic about another piece of her program: the opportunity for her students to earn college credits in high school. “A lot of our students want to work with children,” she reports. It was a natural fit to work with Western Kentucky University to establish such an opportunity. After taking Storms’ classes on child development, parenting and child care services, students who pass a test receive a college credit.

Using RealCare Babies is also a good experience for students who may not be college-bound. Storms has had teens volunteer at area daycare centers as an

extension to the programs they offer at the school. When those students turned 18, some were hired as regular employees, she notes.

“Our goals are to help students get into careers and to help the ones that do make the mistake of becoming pregnant before graduating high school,” she says. “There are so many pluses to what we do that benefit the kids.”



Warren Central teacher Chrissy Storms teaches during a class at the high school. Photos provided by Daily News / News Publishing LLC (Bowling Green, KY)