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School Nurse  
Darden Middle School  
Wilson, NC

## Program Highlights

### Goals:

- Provide hands-on, meaningful health education
- Show students the importance of teen pregnancy prevention

### Other Program Contributors:

- Barbara Williams, Wilson County Health Department Health Educator
- Joan Bogart, Darden Middle School Health Teacher
- Joan Boykin, former Darden Middle School Counselor

## North Carolina Middle School Uses Infant Simulators to Reduce Teen Pregnancy Rate

By Emily Kuhn

*When Darden Middle School Nurse Marsha Miller encountered four pregnant students during the 2006-2007 school year, she knew she had to act. Although the school's health class covered sexually transmitted infections and their ramifications, pregnancy prevention was not a specific focus – until Marsha helped acquire Realityworks' RealCare Baby infant simulators. In the seven years since this North Carolina school first began using the simulators, only 2% of students who have completed the program have gotten pregnant before graduating.*

*"From the beginning, we have had positive comments from students, parents and teachers," said Miller, who worked with the school's counselor to borrow 34 Babies from the Wilson County Center of the NC Cooperative Extension and seven from the Wilson County Health Department. "It has been a joy to gather stats and to hear parents say they were up all night with the baby but were so, so happy we had started teaching this program!"*

*Darden Middle school currently has a combination of RealCare Baby II-plus and RealCare Baby 3 models. Both models cry for care throughout the day and night and require regular changing, feeding, burping and rocking. The RealCare Baby 3 models even monitor surrounding temperatures, track how long they sit unattended in car seats and how often their clothing is changed.*

*When Darden Middle School first implemented the program, Miller made sure to communicate its newest features. Emails were sent to colleagues and staff, and an article was printed in the school newsletter so all parents were informed. Although some were skeptical of the*

*program at first, the infant simulators proved their value quickly.*

*"Over the years, the program has proven itself and turned those naysayers into supportive teachers!" said Miller. "The products are simple to use and easily understandable for students. In addition, the program outline fits in well with North Carolina's sex education health curriculum."*

*That curriculum includes discussion of relationships, sex and the consequences of sex. Students take the Babies home with them on Friday and return with them on Monday morning. More often than not, students also return with stories about how they had to leave a sports game, church or other activity because their Baby needed*



**One Darden Middle School student prepares to take home her "Baby" for the weekend.**

care of some kind, or that their Baby kept them up throughout the night.

*"The program continues to thrive," said Miller, who follows the seventh- and eighth-grade participants through high school to collect statistics on the program's success. "To date, we have taught 350 students, of which only 7 of those have gotten pregnant!"*

*According to Miller, the program's success is a testament not only to the infant simulators but to the importance of community involvement. In this case, it took the collaboration of the Wilson County Center of the NC Cooperative Extension, which owned most of the Babies already; the Wilson County Health Department Health Educator, who has helped teach the program over the years; as well as various high school and middle school administration and staff.*

*"Cooperation of local agencies has been critical in the success of this program," said Miller, explaining that grants will be needed to accomplish the program's expansion. "Our community partners will be instrumental in seeing this recommendation to fruition."*

*According to Miller, Wilson County Schools are now in the process of developing a Youth Master Plan for the county. Miller serves on*

*the health subcommittee, which is making the recommendation that Darden Middle School's teen pregnancy prevention program be expanded to all six middle schools in the county.*

*"The program has had much support and success at Darden, and I always enjoy watching the student's faces and hearing their feedback," said Miller. "But it's most exciting to prepare the final statistics and to share them with all the folks that make the program work... and to think of the possibilities of affecting all Wilson County middle school students!"*

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**Realityworks' RealCare Baby infant simulators require the caregiver to determine whether they need changing, burping, rocking or feeding.**