

Summary: BPS Policy on Expectant and Parenting Students

Boston Public Schools aims to graduate all students from high school prepared for college and career success. For students who are expecting or raising children, it is especially crucial to maintain high expectations for school completion; for many students who drop out of school, especially young women, pregnancy and parenthood are among the primary reasons for this decision. As a school district, Boston Public Schools must first aim to *prevent* student pregnancy. However, for students who are currently expectant or parenting, it is also essential to engage with students to ensure a safe, supportive learning environment and promote academic success. Moreover, we must ensure district compliance with federal Title IX law, which prohibits discrimination against students who are pregnant or parenting.

Definitions

- “Expectant” means expecting a child, and it applies both to individuals who are pregnant and those who are partners to someone who is pregnant
- “Emancipated minor” means an individual under age 18 who is self-supporting and independent of parental control. Minors do not become emancipated just because of their expectant or parenting status, although pregnant and parenting students have the right to independently consent to medical or dental care for themselves and their children.

Maintaining Confidentiality

- Expectant and parenting students may choose how and when to seek services and support from school staff
- School staff must follow all applicable laws and regulations on student confidentiality (including FERPA and HIPAA)
- Personal information that students share with school personnel must be kept confidential within the confines of the law
- School staff should encourage, but cannot force, expectant and parenting students to involve their parents or guardians in conversations and decisions about their pregnancy or parenting
- Students must give written, informed consent before any information about their expectant or parenting status is recorded as part of their academic records

Ensuring a Safe, Supportive Learning Environment

- Federal Title IX law protects the rights of expectant and parenting students to attend school in an environment free of discrimination or harassment
- Schools may not discriminate against any expectant or parenting student or exclude any expectant or parenting student from any school, program, class, or extracurricular activity on the basis of a student’s expectant or parenting status
- All school staff are expected to maintain and communicate high academic expectations for all students, regardless of expectant or parenting status, and they are encouraged to be sensitive to the health needs of expectant and parenting students
- The Title IX coordinator at each school and the BPS Office of Equity are responsible for monitoring compliance with these provisions

Promoting Academic Success

- Expectant and parenting students have the right to remain in their regular or current school program, subject to universal participation requirements
- Expectant and parenting students may attend an alternative school or participate in an alternative program or activity, but their enrollment or participation must be completely voluntary

Implementing Sensible Attendance Policies

- Absences for reasons of pregnancy and related medical conditions, including pregnancy-related illness or health condition, the termination of a pregnancy, childbirth, and recovery therefrom, are considered excused absences
- Student parents are entitled to a fair and reasonable parental leave following the birth of a child, with the amount of leave determined in consultation with the student, school staff, health care providers, and other adults the student consents to include
- Medical documentation is required to verify absences for expectant and parenting students only if it is also required for absences due to other medical conditions
- Parenting students may take excused absences when their child is sick or has a medical appointment during school hours
- Expectant and parenting students have access to home and hospital instructional services on the same basis as other students with temporary medical conditions, and they have the same opportunity to make up assignments as any other student would have after an excused absence
- Schools are encouraged to work with expectant and parenting students to determine a school schedule that promotes on-time arrival and regular attendance

Using Liaisons to Share Information

- Schools with any grades 6-12 must identify a school-based liaison for expectant and parenting students to help share information among the school community
- Schools are required to share this policy with staff, students, and families, and to make it publicly available both online and in the school
- Liaisons are responsible for informing the school community about this policy and sharing resources for expectant and parenting students, including information from the district, partners, and community agencies

Policy Implementation and Review

- The Comprehensive Student Support Team will work with schools where there are large numbers of expectant and parenting students to establish a plan, aligned with the culture of the school and its available resources, to provide more comprehensive systems of support
- This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as needed