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ZERO TO THREE

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Not Telling Young Parents How To Raise Their Children:

Dilemmas of Caregivers and Parent Group Leaders
at a Program for Out-of-School Youth and Their Babies



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Many conversations among the staff of the Young Adult Learning Academy's Child Care Center and parenting program have led to this article. Special thanks for sharing their thoughtful approach to children and parents go to Vicki Aspenberg, Khadijah Patrick, Michelle Adams, and Bobbie Hernandez. Thanks, too, to Peter Kleinbard, director of YALA, for his careful reading of several drafts.

At the Young Adult Learning Academy (YALA) child care center, ten infants and toddlers play, eat, sleep, and socialize while their parents develop their academic and employment skills in preparation for taking the GED exam and finding a job. All the parents are between the ages of 16 and 24, read at no higher than an eighth grade level, and live in poverty conditions.

**National Training Institute scheduled
for December 1-4, 1994 in Dallas, Texas**

See page 27

They left high school before completion for a range of reasons. Some left when they became pregnant. Others cut so many classes - whether enticed by their peers or saddled with family responsibilities that kept them out of school - that they were asked to leave. Others fought with other students or with teachers. Most of them experienced frustration and academic failure.

The staff of the child care center have found that parents at YALA express uncertainties, worries, and ambivalence that are an intensified version of what all young parents face. The many factors that caused YALA students to drop out of high school overlay the issues that challenge them as young parents. For example, all young parents find themselves responsible for a child when they want to spend time with their friends.

YALA students find this, too, and are moreover under pressure to study from their teachers, counselors, and even from themselves. Most YALA parents say they are

Contents:

Not Telling Young Parents How To Raise Their Children	1
Life Is Difficult -- Let's Play First!	7
Parent Choice in Early Care and Education:	
Myth or Reality?	11
Audiocassettes from 1993 National Training Institute ... insert	
Parent-professional Relationships:	
Finding an Optimal Distance	19
Supporting Parents in Leadership Roles	23
Hillary Rodham Clinton's Address to ZERO TO THREE	25*
Letter to the Editor	28
Videotapes	28
Publications	29
Conference call	32
ZERO TO THREE Announces Executive Director Search	34

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