

‘Bellies’ teach teenagers consequences of pregnancy

By Alaina P.

Jolly Roger

“I don’t wanna get pregnant no time soon,” said Bria B., a senior at Jack Britt, as she reflected on wearing the Empathy Belly. Not many students would recognize an empathy belly, but to the students in April Parnell’s Parenting and Child Development class, it is just another assignment.

The Empathy Belly is a weighed down “garment” used as a replica of a real pregnant woman’s belly. Wearing the belly is heavy and causes stress on the back, making simple tasks like picking up a pencil challenging, Parnell said. According to Bria, she thinks all high school students should wear the empathy belly.

Parnell said she thinks that empathy bellies are a good hands-on teaching aid for teenagers. Students often show the lack of excitement while wearing the empathy bellies. “Please don’t make us go out to the atrium,” is the main reaction of the students, said Parnell. “It shows the negative consequences that a pregnancy would impose on their teenage lifestyle.”

Gretchen Morales, the guidance counselor in charge of the teen pregnancy program at Jack Britt, said she feels the best decision for teen mothers is to finish school and possibly go to college.

Morales said the teen pregnancy group at school provides moral support for pregnant teens at our school.

“We meet up once a month for about 45 minutes,” said Morales, who encourages all of her teen mothers to finish school with a diploma. “[Empathy Bellies] are great to discourage teen pregnancy,” Morales said.