By observing a mother and baby at monthly intervals, students learn about the demands of parenting.

The 3rd grade students sit in a circle around Tommy Jacobus, age 17 months, and his mother. Smiling expectantly, they watch with interest as the mother sets Tommy down and begins to unzip his jacket. While his mother struggles to peel off the jacket, Tommy is passive and uncooperative. But he looks around with shining, curious eyes at the ring of friendly faces surrounding him.

As soon as he can, he escapes from his mother's restraining grasp. Toddling purposefully toward the globe in its stand, he points to it "Ball!" he announces. The students get very excited. "Look! He is doing what we guessed! We said he would notice the globe and think it is a big ball."

The classroom teacher nods assent and allows Tommy to remove the big globe from its stand and hold it a moment. Then she offers him an attractive substitute—a big blue rubber ball.

This is a typical scene in a classroom participating in the Education for Parenting (EFP) program. In Education for Parenting, K-8 students acquire knowledge about babies and toddlers through direct, monthly observations of one parent and one baby in their classrooms. Throughout the school year, students keep systematic records of the baby's physical growth and development; emotional and cognitive development; and interactions with the parent. They learn, for example, that babies are not capable of thinking as they do and that each child has its own temperament and capabilities. Students also learn how important the mother's interaction is and how this vital relationship affects the child's development.

If students have a more realistic understanding of parenting, we believe they will be more cautious about becoming parents.