

# RealCare® Baby infant simulators: Research and Best Practices Listing

Since 1993, schools, agencies and youth organizations throughout the United States have been providing students with a realistic experience of being the parent of a newborn infant using Realityworks' incredibly realistic infant simulators. The technology behind the product has evolved through several models, including "Baby Think It Over" (BTIO) and "RealCare® Baby" and simulators are accompanied by a standards-based curriculum. It is estimated that approximately 60 percent of U.S. school districts have a Realityworks infant simulator available for use, and the company's reach has expanded to 47 countries worldwide.

The program requires students to become the sole caretaker of the RealCare® Baby infant simulator, whose appearance and behavior replicates a real infant. In fact, the computerized infant care schedules are based on the many needs of real infants, whose parents kept a diary of feeding, diapering, rocking and burping. The infant simulator requires care around the clock. When RealCare® Baby cries, it is the student's responsibility to attend to the infant promptly and determine what the infant needs.

The experience with RealCare® Baby is intended to demonstrate to participants the true demands of caring for an infant. It teaches participants how to keep an infant content and how to properly handle an infant, including constant support of the head. This improves understanding of the full-time commitment of childcare. The simulation also requires persistence (getting through the simulation without quitting) and organization (the ability to gather and use infant supplies, and return everything on time).

Throughout the simulation, an internal computer collects important data about the participant's performance. Incidences of neglect, failure to provide head support, shaking,

rough handling, incorrect positioning, and missed care are recorded for the instructor.

Some of these incidents will produce intense crying, just as they would with a real infant. This negative feedback increases the intensity of the experience, and is something students will learn to avoid by better attending to their RealCare® Baby.

There have been more than 20 published studies regarding the use of Realityworks infant simulators, and many more unpublished studies. The studies conclude that . . . "parenting programs that include science-based tools such as computerized infant simulators have a significantly greater positive effect on participants compared with programs that rely upon reading alone".

The accompanying curriculum, developed with the help of parenting, health and education experts around the country, helps students explore the physical, emotional, social, and financial consequences of parenthood. It includes components of the Introduction to Early Childhood Services Program—physical, emotional, intellectual, and social development of the child from conception through toddler years and practical application of infant care skills. It also addresses infant issues for Family and Community Services and Working with Infants and Toddlers, as well as Introduction to Parenting. This component helps teach pre-teens and teenagers about the consequences of teen pregnancies.

## **HORIZON Solutions Site Best Practices Listing**

The RealCare Baby II infant simulators are listed in the Best Practices documentation provided by Yale University: The Horizon Solutions Site at [www.solutions-site.org](http://www.solutions-site.org), is a collaborative program with the United Nations Environment

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Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF, HORIZON's colleagues at Harvard University, Yale University, and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada. The site provides answers to problems related to the environment, health, population and development in peer-reviewed case-studies, articles and exhibits.

## Available Research

An experimental design including a control group and analysis of variance and chi square statistical analysis, demonstrated the effectiveness of the Realityworks curriculum and infant simulators. (McGowan, et al. 2009)

The results indicated that using the RealCare® Baby II simulator in conjunction with a well-designed curriculum had a positive impact on student attitudes toward sexuality and pregnancy, as well as knowledge and competence regarding childcare. A hands-on, practical experience supported by appropriate instruction improved student attitudes in areas related to effective parenting.

Consequently, it was concluded that use of the simulator had an immediate and lasting impact. These findings have important implications for health educators whose main purpose is to evoke behavioral change in students. Students recognized that pregnancy prevention was important because the demands of raising a child would dramatically affect the lives of adolescent parents, showing that students were sensitized about the difficulties of raising children.

In 2006, Realityworks put together a detailed research review. The conclusion from the studies cited in the white paper demonstrated that programs that include infant simulators along with appropriate curricula are more effective in changing teens' perceptions of the responsibilities and constraints

involved in early parenthood than programs that rely on curriculum alone. Science-based teaching tools, such as realistic infant simulators and comprehensive curricula, give educators, parents, and community members the tools to deliver effective programs that support healthy decisions.

The RealCare® Baby infant simulator and curriculum provides the best practical real-life experiences related to caring for a newborn. Research has demonstrated that the program is effective and helps teenagers contemplate future life options based on true-to-life experiences and comprehensive exploration of the consequences.

In addition, there is a wealth of anecdotal evidence gathered through customer testimonials and editorially-reviewed news coverage of programs around the world. Instructors have demonstrated their support of this program in sheer numbers.

- 60 percent of U.S. school districts have Realityworks infant simulators available for use.
- 47 countries worldwide are using Realityworks infant simulators.
- There are over 150,000 Realityworks infant simulators in use in the United States.
- There are over 34,000 Realityworks infant simulators in use internationally.
- More than 35,000 instructors in over 7,800 school districts are active users of Realityworks infant simulators.

## Research Studies

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## Best Practice Listing

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## **Additional Published Studies**

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