

Infant Simulators Success Story

Fairport High School
Fairport, NY

Attracting Students to Family and Consumer Science

Kelly Lang firmly believes that parenting is the hardest job anyone could ever do. A Family and Consumer Science teacher at Fairport High School, a suburb of Rochester, New York, Lang teaches child development.

“Parent education is so critical and so necessary in this country,” Lang says. “An educated parent is a better parent.”

An experienced middle school teacher, Lang began teaching child development at the high school level six years ago. At the time, the Fairport School District had four older models of RealCare[®] Baby infant simulators. With class sizes growing because of the popularity of the RealCare Program, she quickly discovered that four simulators weren’t enough.

A technology grant from the district allowed her to purchase 13 of the latest RealCare Babies, the accompanying wireless Control Center Software, and a storage/charging cart. Now Lang has four sections of the class with over 75 students, and she credits her success to the number of students who want to participate in the program.

The additional infant simulators allow her to lengthen the learning time students spend with RealCare Baby. On a typical Friday students are delivered a fully charged infant simulator that has a randomly assigned care schedule. The Babies are very sensitive to proper care and handling, and required feeding and diapering. Students are graded on their ability to offer care in a timely fashion and points are taken away for mishandling.



Family Consumer Sciences Teacher Kelly Lang with her RealCare Babies and storage/charging cart.

Learning Child Care Skills

During this experience students must do a fair amount of reflection. Most students are enthusiastic about the experience at the beginning, but quickly learn the amount of time and energy required to properly care for a newborn.

“The Babies are very demanding,” Lang admits. “Teenagers can be self-centered. This assignment requires them to think about something else—all the time. The infant simulators don’t care if the student is doing

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- Kelly Lang, Family and Consumer Science Teacher

homework or fixing their hair.” If students get sick, they have to continue to care for Baby, just as a real mother or father would in a similar situation.

Learning child care skills and the demands of a newborn aren't the only lessons students gain from this experience. Because the infant simulators look so realistic, Lang's students often hear disparaging comments from people when they take RealCare Baby out in public.

“When the kids take Baby to the mall, adults will tell them that they're too young to have kids,” she says. “This impacts the kids on so many different levels.”

Parents of Lang's students also value the program. “In the beginning, I would only send the Babies home for one night. I had many parents say, ‘This isn't long enough!’” she says.



Some mothers and daughters really bond over this experience. “Good conversations happen because of his class,” says Lang. “Seeing their teens with the RealCare Babies spurs them to share experiences from their parenting.”

Other Program Benefits

Fairport School District also incorporated the Infant Health Trio, which includes a Shaken Baby Syndrome Simulator, Drug-Affected Demonstrator and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Manikin.



Multiple RealCare Babies in Kelly Lang's child development class at Fairport High School awaiting their temporary parents for a weekend simulation.

Lang plans to share these tools beyond her classroom with the school health department so more kids can experience them, causing greater benefit to the entire school. Her students also benefit from the Pregnancy Profile Vest, which allows students to experience what it feels like to be nine months pregnant.

Lang appreciates how Realityworks infant simulators engage her students. “The Babies are a boost to anyone's program,” Lang says. “Having a product like this makes teaching much easier. It's the little ‘hook’ that gets students and parents excited and teaches them so much. There's no more realistic experience, except having your own child.”

“The support that Realityworks gives is just amazing,” Lang says. She finds the lesson plans and worksheets to be very helpful in her daily planning.

The past president of New York State Association of Family and Consumer Science Educators, Lang is passionate about the child development program at Fairport. “We need core courses like math and science,” she says. “But this is important. This is life.”