



## Revel preps University of Houston students for real life with virtual learning

### By Patrick Golden

Located in the heart of Houston, Texas, the University of Houston (UH) is a vibrant institution of higher learning, serving the needs of more than 46,000 students, including 37,000 undergraduates from across Texas and beyond.

At UH, teaching fellow Jelisa Boykin relies on [Revel®](#) from Pearson as her go-to platform for teaching Introduction to Human Development and Intervention. This asynchronous course focuses on human growth and development across a person's lifespan, and she uses Revel with Pearson's *Human Development: A Cultural Approach, 3rd Edition*, as her primary text.

Among Revel's many [interactive tools](#), Boykin particularly values MyVirtualLife and MyVirtualChild. These immersive learning experiences, which simulate human development, are integral to all Revel Developmental Psychology titles. Boykin explains, "What I really enjoy about Revel is the MyVirtualLife activity embedded within the eTextbook chapters."

### Bringing classroom concepts to life

MyVirtualLife and its companion, MyVirtualChild, provide interactive simulations that resemble actual life events and arcs, such as raising a child.

In Boykin's course, students apply developmental psychology principles through MyVirtualChild simulations, bringing new concepts to life. Students make decisions, such as how to respond to a child who hasn't started walking, directly impacting their virtual child's development. Boykin's instructional approach is

structured: students first read the eTextbook chapter in Revel, complete concept checks, and then engage with the MyVirtualChild simulations. MyVirtualLife and MyVirtualChild are included in all Revel Developmental Psychology titles.

With MyVirtualChild, a student can simulate raising a child to age 18. Boykin instructs her students to read the chapter e-text provided in Revel, and then complete concept checks, and then engage with the MyVirtualChild simulations.

“I think the students learned things about themselves. They could see how their decisions impacted their (virtual) kids,” she says. “Revel does a really good job of having prompts and options that emulate real life as best it can.”

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This real-life context includes culturally rich content that highlights diverse parenting approaches from around the world.

Revel introduces weighty topics that can impact the parents of newborns, such as postpartum depression, anxiety, and psychosis.

“MyVirtualChild and MyVirtualLife are really connected to a real-life application that I feel is much better than assigning papers,” says Boykin. “You really have to live this out and see the effects and consequences of what happens to your child as they experience the things you choose.”



MyVirtualChild also includes culturally-rich content, focusing on the diverse approaches parents around the world take toward raising children.

### **Fostering effective intervention**

Boykin emphasizes the value of Revel’s [Performance Dashboard](#), which she uses to track student progress and [foster engagement](#). It helps her decide whether to adjust coursework broadly or provide targeted support to individual students.

“It gives me more reassurance because when I get a small percentage of students who aren’t getting something, but the majority have, I know that it’s not that I didn’t explain something clearly or I didn’t give students enough information,” she says.

Boykin can zero in on students who appear to be struggling with the content and engage them.

“It lets me cover my bases that, as an instructor, I’ve done my due diligence of reaching out,” she says. “I just never want a student to fail when I see them struggling.”

In addition to helping her identify struggling students, Revel helps Boykin to streamline grading and keep tabs on the engagement level of the class, which she views as critical in an asynchronous learning environment.

“That’s a big piece of why I use Revel – to give students that interactive component compared to just getting another textbook and having them read chapters and writing papers about it,” she says.

## A virtual world becomes the real world

MyVirtualChild in Revel recently took on a personal flair to Boykin, who was pregnant with twins while teaching Introduction to Human Development and Intervention. She experienced firsthand how MyVirtualChild aligned with her experience. Her twins – a boy and girl – arrived in late 2023. Learning how to manage lack of sleep, soothe fussy infants, and navigate the myriad challenges that accompany parenting, became a reality.

Besides aligning MyVirtualChild with Boykin's life, Revel helped her effectively run the course.

"It kept me accountable by allowing me to check in with my students and see how they're doing," she says. "With its ease and flexibility, you can literally do it while handling newborns! I feel like it's pretty intuitive. It's not cumbersome to navigate. Even if I make mistakes, they're easy to fix."

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As she continues on her path to a professorship, Boykin sees Revel and Pearson as partners along the way – partners that her colleagues would benefit from, too.

"I would definitely recommend Pearson to others," she says. "When I become a professor, nine times out of ten, I will want to use Pearson because I already know how to use this, and I like it."

**Learn more about how Revel can empower your students to actively participate in their learning.**

