Educational Software Evaluation Form

Title: __________________________________________________________

Publisher: _______________________________________________________

Copyright: __________________________ Version: ________________

Platform/version: __ Mac  __ Windows

Media: __ Diskette  __ CD-ROM  ___ DVD

Also Needs: __ Internet  ___ Microphone  ___ Other

Cost: ____________

**Teacher Support**

**DOCUMENTATION:**  __ Binder  __ Booklet  __ Included on media  ___ on Internet

**INSTRUCTION MANUAL HAS:**

- __ Objectives
- __ Lesson plans
- __ Sample screens
- __ Resource information
- __ Reproducible student pages
- __ Student booklets
- ___ Other

**Content**

Material is presented impartially and without bias or distortion: ___ Yes  ___ No

Compared to the standards from: ____________________________________________

Meets these standards: (Mark only one)

- ___ Inadequately
- ___ Minimally
- ___ Appropriately
- ___ Exceeds Them

Content is current.  ___ No  ___ Some  ___ Mostly  ___ Yes

Content is thorough. ___ No  ___ Some  ___ Mostly  ___ Yes

Content is age appropriate. ___ No  ___ Some  ___ Mostly  ___ Yes

Content is reliable. ___ No  ___ Some  ___ Mostly  ___ Yes

Content is clear. ___ No  ___ Some  ___ Mostly  ___ Yes

Content is fully referenced. ___ No  ___ Some  ___ Mostly  ___ Yes

**Assessment**

Has pretest. ___ Yes  ___ No

Has posttest. ___ Yes  ___ No

Has record keeping by student. ___ Yes  ___ No

Has record keeping by group. ___ Yes  ___ No

Has assessment guidelines. ___ Yes  ___ No

**Technical Quality**

**Installation and Setup:**  ___ Difficult  ___ Time consuming  ___ Simple

**Sound is:**  ___ Essential  ___ High quality  ___ Supplemental

**Videos:**  ___ Run jerkily  ___ Run smoothly  ___ Are essential  ___ Not essential

**Classroom**

**SUBJECT AREAS—Please circle all that apply**

ASSESS  IT  MC  SW  AT  IN  MM  SC  CC  KB  PS  SS  EC  LA  PRO  DEV  SN  HPER  MA  RL  TE  WL

**TEACHER SUPPORT**

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**ASSESSMENT**

Has pretest. ___ Yes  ___ No

Has posttest. ___ Yes  ___ No

Has record keeping by student. ___ Yes  ___ No

Has record keeping by group. ___ Yes  ___ No

Has assessment guidelines. ___ Yes  ___ No

**TECHNICAL QUALITY**

**INSTALLATION AND SETUP:**  ___ Difficult  ___ Time consuming  ___ Simple

**SOUND IS:**  ___ Essential  ___ High quality  ___ Supplemental

**VIDEOS:**  ___ Run jerkily  ___ Run smoothly  ___ Are essential  ___ Not essential

**Teacher support**  ___ Yes  ___ No

**E-mail option**  ___ Yes  ___ No

**Spreadsheet**  ___ Yes  ___ No

**Calculator**  ___ Yes  ___ No

**Print options**  ___ Yes  ___ No

**OTHER**

**FINAL REPORT CARD**

**TEACHER SUPPORT**

- Teacher support  ___ A  ___ B  ___ C  ___ D  ___ F

**CONTENT**

- Content  ___ A  ___ B  ___ C  ___ D  ___ F

**ASSESSMENT**

- Assesment  ___ A  ___ B  ___ C  ___ D  ___ F

**TECHNICAL QUALITY**

- Technical quality  ___ A  ___ B  ___ C  ___ D  ___ F

**INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN**

- Instructional design  ___ A  ___ B  ___ C  ___ D  ___ F

**YOUR OVERALL RATING**

Reviewer’s Name: _______________________________________________________

Contact Information: _____________________________________________________

Dated: ____________________
### Instructional Design

**CIRCLE THE MODES THAT APPLY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AC</th>
<th>AU</th>
<th>BL</th>
<th>CA</th>
<th>CP</th>
<th>DE</th>
<th>DP</th>
<th>EG</th>
<th>EX</th>
<th>GP</th>
<th>IN</th>
<th>LEP</th>
<th>MM</th>
<th>PS</th>
<th>RF</th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>TE</th>
<th>TL</th>
<th>TU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**PROMOTES**

- ___ Creativity
- ___ Higher-order thinking
- ___ Collaboration
- ___ Problem solving
- ___ Discovery
- ___ Memorization

**MOTIVATIONAL**

- ___ Student controls pacing
- ___ Stimulates curiosity
- ___ Challenging
- ___ Real-world connections

**STRENGTHS:**

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**WEAKNESSES:**

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**DESCRIBE THE LEARNING STRATEGY INCORPORATED IN THE DESIGN:** [Either here or on another page]

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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Using the Educational Software Evaluation Form

The goal of this form is to provide teachers with an evaluation guide that focuses on the educational use of a technology resource. This form can be used for software, an Internet site, a laserdisc, or any other technology-based resource to be used with students.

The abbreviations and classifications used throughout the form are consistent with those in the 2002 Educational Software Preview Guide published by ISTE.

This form is not the final word on evaluation. You are encouraged to modify the criteria so they address your school’s or district’s needs. For example, cost is often crucial in determining whether a resource can be recommended for purchase. So, in addition to a rating, you might add another category—“Recommend for Purchase”—with grades or just a “yes/no” option.

USING THE FORM

1. Schedule enough time to examine materials, install any programs, explore the level of interactivity, and set up any management components.

2. Write your name and contact information in the lower left of the form. This information is only for the person collecting the information—someone who may need to clarify your comments—not for general distribution. If this review is to be viewed in a public place, then the reviewer box could contain only an identification code.

3. Use the publisher’s materials to supply the publisher, copyright, version, and cost. You may also want to list the company’s Web site. Circle all the hardware platforms that apply to the resource you are evaluating. List further needs under “Also needs,” for example, “at least 8 MB of RAM.”

4. Look through the documentation and note what is contained under the section titled “Teacher Support.” Instead of checking any of the items listed there, you may want to insert a qualifier or quantifier to indicate the quality of support material in the documentation. Many publishers now include manuals on CD-ROM or at their Internet sites; record that information, too. If the publisher provides documentation only in an electronic form, then reduce the grade for teacher support. The documentation should have all the information needed to make any necessary installations.

5. You might want to use pencil to fill in the “Classroom” section. Publishers may provide information that accurately describes their materials in relation to subject area, topic, grade level, readability, and special-needs provisions.

If you examine the material and still feel a different set of selections is more appropriate, then use your ink pen. The subjects are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASSESS</td>
<td>Assessment (Includes tests and testing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>Fine Arts, such as music, performing arts, and visual arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Cross Curricular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPER</td>
<td>Health/Physical Education/Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Instructional Tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN</td>
<td>Internet/World Wide Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KB</td>
<td>Keyboarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>Language Arts, English literature, and appropriate tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Mathematics; filling in the specific area will narrow down this topic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Start using the technology resource. Examine it from the student's point of view, making mistakes and hitting wrong keys. Examine it from a teacher's perspective, and compare what it offers with what is needed in the classroom. Examine it as a supportive colleague and identify how else the resource might be used (e.g., which other grades, topics, etc.).

You might want to begin with the "Technical Quality" section. This section is quite short. If the program is not accessible, installable, or operational, then the evaluation is over. Be fair. If the resource did not perform well because of limiting hardware, then note that exception. If you used at least the minimum resources recommended by the publisher and the program still did not perform well, then grade accordingly. In your grading on technical quality, indicate the way it leaves your equipment when you're done. Does your computer monitor suddenly show a new color or a different resolution? Does the resource alter any settings without returning them to normal?

Under "Content," list the objective set of guidelines you are using for comparison. If you are using a curriculum guide that is in print, please state that information. For example, when examining a math program you might be comparing the content to the NCTM Standards or your state framework. List both and how well the software meets each.

Under "Assessment," answer the questions: Did the resource provide guidelines or rubrics for assessing student success? Are there pretests and posttests? Does the resource have built-in features for students to express what they learn, such as a presentation component? If the software allows students to print a report that could be used for assessment in a student portfolio, include that information here.

The very first entry under the "Instructional Design" section is the most cryptic on the form. Mode describes how the student uses the resource.

Accessibility: The software was written to provide access for students with special needs. For example, it might provide a connection to an alternative input device.

Authoring System: These use a code of commands that enables a nonexpert to write interactive programs. This mode also includes shell programs in which teachers insert their own problems or data.

Bilingual: Verbal and/or written information or directions are available in more than one language.

Creative Activity: Programs with this designation have some structure or activity that encourages students to exercise imagination and creativity.
<table>
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<th>Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Computer Programming: This denotes a computer language or software-based activity for teaching computer science or computer literacy classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Demonstration and Presentation: This is software used to present some aspect of the curriculum or used to create a presentation of material, for example, to create slides using a slideshow option.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>Drill and Practice: These programs offer students unlimited practice on concepts they presumably have already learned. A good drill and practice program provides feedback to students, explains how to get the correct answer, and contains a management system to keep track of student progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG</td>
<td>Educational Game: Usually these introduce drill and practice in a game format with a winner or scoring system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EX</td>
<td>Exploration: Students can maneuver through a predesigned environment, testing and trying various components of the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP</td>
<td>Guided Practice: These offer students hints, assistance, and even reteaching as they practice a concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN</td>
<td>Internet: The program directly connects to the Internet or World Wide Web. Some programs function fully without currently being connected to the Internet but can be connected for additional resources or interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEP</td>
<td>Limited English Proficiency: This is software that can be used by students who have limited English-speaking skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM</td>
<td>Multimedia: This software facilitates the development of multimedia presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS</td>
<td>Problem Solving: These require student strategy and input. Most simulations (SI) and educational games (EG) require some problem solving on the students’ part but may not have PS in their mode listing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RF</td>
<td>Reference: These include electronic forms of traditional references, such as dictionaries, thesauri, and encyclopedias, as well as extensive references on particular subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>Simulation: These programs create a world on the screen where realistic conditions apply and students can see cause and effect, test hypotheses, and fix variables one by one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Testing: Program tests students on subjects already taught, records their scores, and provides the correct answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL</td>
<td>Tool: These include word processing, desktop publishing, database management, spreadsheets, graphics, and telecommunications programs, and any software that students use to perform a task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TU</td>
<td>Tutorial: The computer presents new concepts and skills through interactive text, illustrations, descriptions, questions, and problems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. Under the list of items the resource promotes, add your own criteria. Or change the beginning term from promotes to provides and fill in your descriptors, such as remediation, practice, reinforcement, new information, application, and so on.

12. Identify all of the four classic “Motivational” features that apply to this resource.

13. Complete the “Strengths” and “Weaknesses” sections.

14. Complete the section that begins “Describe the learning strategy incorporated in the design” with a description of the resource in educational terms.

15. Complete your recommendation. Publishers tend to lump everyone under the word “user” when describing how a resource can be used in the classroom. Please use educational terms; specify if you are referring to students, teachers, or a group of students, for instance.

16. After all of the sections have been filled in and additional comments supplied, grade the resource. The final rating should not be an average of the grades but a combined grade based on both the scores and the importance of the criteria. For examples, if a resource scores an F on technical quality, then even the best instructional design may not be deliverable to the student, thus the overall rating of F. Or a resource might be excellent in every category but based on flawed content or outdated premises, thus rendering it useless in the classroom.

17. Now for the acid test of both the resource and the report. Take both into the classroom. Use the technology resource with students and modify the report based on your observations and interviews with students.