Using the Educational Technology Resource Evaluation Form

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

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(s) 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 site; 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 information about classroom use. 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:

Arts	Fine arts, such as music, performing arts, and visual arts
HPER	Health/physical education/recreational therapy
LA	Language arts, English literature, and appropriate tools
Lib	Reference resource or library support
MA	Mathematics; filling in the specific area will narrow down this topic
SC	Science; filling in the specific area will narrow down this topic
SS	Social studies, history, geography
SW	School to work; skills taught in school that directly translate into jobs
WL	World languages, including American Sign Language

The grades are the standard grade levels; PK stands for prekindergarten. The three provisions listed at the bottom are:

AC	Access is provided for some special needs (physical, aural, visual, etc.)
BL	Bilingual; more than one language is included
LEP	Limited English proficiency

6. Make any necessary installations and 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.).

7. You might want to begin with the technical quality. This section is quite short. If it 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?

8. The very first entry under instructional design is the most cryptic on the form. Mode describes how the student uses the resource.

AC	Access: The software was written to provide access for students with special needs. For example, it might provide a connection to an alternative input device.
AU	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.
BL	Bilingual: Verbal and/or written information or directions are available in more than one language.
CA	Creative Activity: Programs with this designation have some structure or activity that encourages students to exercise their imagination and creativity.
CP	Computer Programming: This denotes a computer language or software-based activity for teaching computer science or computer literacy classes.
DE	Demonstration and Presentation: This is software used to present some aspect of the curriculum or used to create a presentation of material. For example, use the software to create slides and use a slideshow option.
DP	Drill and Practice: These programs offer students unlimited practice on concepts they presumably have already learned. Good drill and practice provide feedback to students, explain how to get the correct answer, and contain a management system to keep track of student progress.
EG	Educational Game: Usually these introduce drill and practice in a game format with a winner or scoring system.
EX	Exploration: Students can maneuver through a predesigned environment, testing and trying various components of the environment.
GP	Guided Practice: These offer students hints, assistance, and even reteaching as they practice a concept.
IN	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.
LEP	Limited English Proficiency: This is software that can be used by students who have limited English-speaking skills.
MM	Multimedia: This software contains multimedia activities or facilitates development of multimedia presentations.
PS	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.
RF	Reference: These include electronic forms of traditional references such as dictionaries, thesauri, and encyclopedias as well as extensive references on particular subjects.
SI	Simulation: These programs create a world on the screen where realistic conditions apply.
TE	Testing: Program tests students on subjects already taught, records their scores, and provides the correct answer.
TL	Tool: These include word processing, desktop publishing, database management, spreadsheets, graphics, and telecommunications programs.
TU	Tutorial: The computer presents new concepts and skills through interactive text, illustrations, descriptions, questions, and problems.

9. 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.

10. Complete the section that begins "Describe the learning strategy incorporated in the design" with a description of the resource in educational terms. Publishers tend to lump everyone under the word user when describing how a resource can be used in the classroom, but specify whether you are referring to a student, a group of students, or a teacher.

11. In addition to responding "yes" or "no" to each criterion for content, include the guidelines for comparison. State the local school or school district publication, state requirements, or national standards being used (e.g., NCTM math standards).

12. Did the resource provide guidelines or rubrics for assessing student success? Are there pre- and posttests? Does the resource have built-in features for students to express what they learn, such as a presentation component?

13. After all of the sections have been filled in and additional comments supplied, grade the resource based on the five areas. 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.

14. 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.