

AFTERSCHOOL TRAINING TOOLKIT

Guidelines for Choosing Appropriate Games, Puzzles, and Tutorials

When selecting any computer-based application, here are some things to consider:

- **Content:** Choose an application that is appropriate and aligns to student needs, curriculum and instructional goals. Is there a content-area focus such as math, science, or reading? What kinds of benefits will it provide for the students? How many levels of difficulty are offered?
- **Age range suitability:** Check the age ratings. What age group is it best suited for? Is it challenging enough to cover several grades? Is it designed for group or individual use?
- **Equity:** Is the application gender-neutral? That is, is it appropriate for both girls and boys?
- **Appropriateness:** Does it contain ratings or warnings regarding language, violence, or inappropriate content?
- **Format:** Are the navigation controls, fonts, sounds, screen colors and images suitable for students across a wide range of abilities and needs? Is the format user-friendly or will it take a lot of time for students to learn?
- **What do others say about it?** Read reviews whenever possible; they can be very informative and give you an idea as to whether or not students will be engaged by the software. If students enjoy the activity, the learning part will come more easily. Ask your students and colleagues for suggestions. Have students review various applications and post their reviews for others to see.
- **Technical requirements:** Verify that your computers' operating systems are compatible with the application that you want to purchase and use. Be sure to find out if Internet access is a requirement.
- **Costs and licensing:** Some applications may be free. Others may require you to purchase the software or pay a subscription fee for Internet access. Determine what your budget allows. The cost for purchasing software will vary depending on how many copies you need. Read the fine print regarding contractual and financial agreements. A "lab license" is usually the best way to go if you want several students to have access at the same time. Ask for a demonstration or a trial period.
- **Publishing date and publisher:** This is helpful to know if you want background information or technical support.