Pointers For Parents

New Technologies Help Children Learn

(NAPSA)—The use of technology to enhance learning is an effective approach for many children, particularly those with learning disabilities (LD), such as dyslexia. In fact, research has shown that assistive technology (AT)—which is used to bypass areas of difficulty—can help students with LD experience greater success—with improved grades, increased course retention, higher test scores and enhanced reading and writing proficiency. From word processors to personal digital assistants, a range of widely available tools assists students with the challenges associated with LD. However, choosing the right product for your child may be a daunting task.

"As with any device or piece of equipment, you want to know how user friendly and reliable an AT tool is before you invest in it," said Dr. Marshall Raskind, a world-renowned assistive technology expert and the director of research and special projects for Schwab Learning.

AT can address many types of learning difficulties. A student who has difficulty writing can compose a school report by dictating it and having it converted to text by special computer software. A child struggling with math can use a handheld calculator to keep score while playing a game with a friend. And a teenager with

Assistive technology (AT) has the potential to enhance learning for students.

dyslexia may benefit from AT that reads his employer's online training manual aloud. But how do parents choose products to most benefit their child?

Schwab Learning has published a free guide for parents, including a unique and simple Selecting AT Worksheet that provides the steps to work through the selection and experimentation process of matching AT tools based on a child's specific needs in the areas of reading, writing, math, listening, memory and organization.

The new Guide also includes tips for parents to help kids get the most from AT products:

• **Consider your child's strengths and limitations.** This will prepare you to identify AT tools that may help your child bypass difficulties and play to her strengths. Find a checklist at www.schwablearning.org/atguide.

• **Where will the product be used?** The right technology in one setting may be entirely wrong in another. Think about where your child will use the tool, how it will be stored and if you have the right furniture or electronics to support it. If your child can use the AT at school, the same considerations will apply in the classroom.

• **Does it need to work with other technologies?** Make sure the AT product is compatible with other technologies. For example, software designed to work on a PC may not work on a Mac at home or in the classroom. Also, make sure accessory items, such as a microphone to use with a computer, are compatible.

• **Try before you buy.** Before you select an AT tool for your child, take the time to learn all you can about the products available. Have your child test-drive tools or devices you're considering purchasing. Your child is the one who is going to use—or not use—the product, so you want to make sure she is comfortable with it. The "perfect" tool will only work if it's used!

For more information on assistive technology and how the right product can enhance your child's learning, visit www.schwablearning.org/atguide.