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January 4, 2010

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STUDY: EVIDENCE SUGGESTS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY MAY BE EFFECTIVE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Study Measure May Provide an Effective Method of Collecting Assistive Technology Outcomes Data

Arlington, VA — A study conducted at Arlington Public Schools in Va. published in the January/February 2010 issue of the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* explored assistive technology's effect in a public school education setting and found that, relative to other interventions, assistive technology provided by a multidisciplinary team of occupational therapy practitioners, speech-language pathologists and educators may have a significant effect achieving positive outcomes indicated on Individualized Education Program (IEP) for students in special education.

School-based occupational therapy is designed to enhance the student's ability to fully access and be successful in the learning environment. This may include the use of assistive technology, among other interventions.

"Assistive technology's contribution as an intervention strategy appears to be greater than nine other possible interventions – such as related services, tutoring, changes to the curriculum and student maturation – explored in the study," said Anne H. Watson, PhD, OT/L, an occupational therapist with Arlington Public Schools.

The Student Performance Profile (SPP), originally developed by the Rehabilitation Research Design and Disability Center for the Ohio Assistive Technology Infusion Project, was used as the study measure. This study used a modified, print version of the instrument written in conjunction with and approved by the original developers.

"The Student Performance Profile appears to have potential as an effective means of collecting assistive technology outcomes data in the public school setting. The SPP had the advantages of ease of administration and scoring to administrate, can be customized to each student's IEP goals, and is sensitive to change in performance over time," said Watson. "An instrument with these characteristics may help special education staff pursue data collection regarding the effect of assistive technology on student performance."

Authors: Along with Watson, study authors included Max Ito, PhD, OTR/L, of Nova Southeastern University; Roger O. Smith, PhD, FAOTA, OT, of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; and Lori Anderson, EdD, OT/L.

Reference: *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, Vol. 64, No. 1.*

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