



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*CONTACT: Jill Z. McBride, Public Relations
513-231-5115 jzmcbride@cinci.rr.com*

Interactive CD-ROM Improves State Assessment Tests Scores

OPTIMUM® Software Now Available in Ohio, Illinois and New Jersey

(November 28, 2001 -- Cincinnati, OH) A growing number of states are turning to standards-based assessment tests as a means of measuring the quality of their schools. Not without controversy, students often find such tests intimidating and educators face increased pressure to improve scores. Now teachers and parents can add new tool to their test-preparation repertoire. **OPTIMUM** is an interactive CD-ROM that helps students prepare for state assessment tests by providing sample tests and questions in specific subject areas aligned with state Department of Education guidelines. Available in customized versions for Ohio, Illinois and New Jersey, the **OPTIMUM** software family includes:

OPTIMUM for Ohio -- Ohio Proficiency Tests

Sample tests in reading, writing, math, citizenship and science. Separate CD-ROM's are available for fourth, sixth and ninth grades, with a tenth grade test in development.

OPTIMUM for Illinois -- Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT)

A single CD-ROM with sample tests in third and fifth grade reading, writing and math, and fourth grade science, social science and physical development/health and fine arts.

OPTIMUM for New Jersey -- Elementary School Proficiency Assessment Tests (ESPA)

The combination fourth and fifth grade CD-ROM covers language arts literacy, math, science and social studies. An eighth grade version for the GEPA test is in development.

A growing number of states require students to pass standards-based tests prior to graduation. As schools are often ranked by how their students perform, many devote copious time to annual test preparation.

OPTIMUM software is a valuable resource that can help teachers identify students' academic weaknesses and ensure they get specialized help.

Teachers and schools can purchase **OPTIMUM** in single units, Lab Packs of 5 or Site Licenses for 30. Special fundraising discounts and incentives are available for PTA's and PTO's.

"**OPTIMUM** is the ideal study tool for children living in an age of computers in the classroom and at home," states Judith Tucker, Educational Technologist for the Northwest Ohio Educational Technology Foundation. "It's always one of the pieces of software that teachers put on their must-have list."

Dave Kowalka, principal of Osborn Elementary school in Ashland, OH, concurs, “Practicing helps remove some of the mystery about the test and gives students more confidence because they know what to expect. We purchased the fourth grade version and were so pleased that we later also bought the sixth grade version. Working on the computer makes the test more interesting and engaging. Any time we have students describing studying as ‘fun’ we know we’ve got a winning product on our hands.”

A key component of the **OPTIMUM** software is that the test questions are developed and tested by teachers from each of the respective states. “We don’t use a generic set of questions,” notes **OPTIMUM** founder, Christie Brown, who created the first Ohio CD-ROM in 1996 when she recognized there was no product available to help her children prepare for assessment tests. “In each state we hire teachers to develop questions based on the specific assessment test criteria for each grade level.”

Each CD-ROM includes objective questions, as well as short answer and writing sample questions when applicable. All objective questions are computer graded with a voice tutorial that reviews and explains incorrect answers. Short answer and writing questions cannot be computer graded, but model answers are provided. When they are finished, students receive a score on their practice test. “We were pleased to learn that, in a comparison study, **OPTIMUM** results matched the actual test scores within three percentage points,” adds Brown.

OPTIMUM software is developed by Photonics Graphics, a Cincinnati-based, multi-media design studio specializing in educational software, graphic design, multimedia and Web site development, for consumer and business-to-business clients. More information is available at www.optimumtest.com, or by calling 888-548-4440 ext. 107.

[Attention Editors:

**Sample test questions and product photographs are available for your use.
Call Jill McBride at 513-231-5115 for more information.]**