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***** AUTISM AND TECHNOLOGY *****

NEW STUDY DEMONSTRATES COMPUTER-ASSISTED THERAPY INCREASES LANGUAGE & SOCIALIZATION IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

New treatment program TeachTown: Basics provides tools that increase language, education, social interactions and life skills in children with autism

SEATTLE, WA – April 11, 2006 – According to a recent study conducted by TeachTown Inc, a Seattle based autism research company, and supported by a grant from the Department of Education, children with autism and children with Down syndrome using a new computer-assisted treatment program, *TeachTown: Basics*, showed a 53% overall increase in receptive language, social understanding, and cognitive skills.

Additionally, findings suggest computer-assisted programs like *TeachTown: Basics* can increase children's interest and motivation, language and social interaction, and provide treatment at a significantly reduced cost. In addition, it may be an excellent option for rural, low and middle-income families who do not have access to trained professionals or who cannot afford the services. For those children currently enrolled in services, computer-assisted programs can be utilized to supplement and reinforce skills.

This paper is currently at press in the *Journal of Speech and Language Pathology and Applied Behavior Analysis*; 2006. The complete study is available online at www.teachtown.com/research.

"TeachTown has spent five years developing a computer-assisted treatment program that shows solid evidence of increasing language and socialization skills among children with autism," said Dr. Chris Whalen, Founder and Chief Science Officer of TeachTown. "The results from this study are promising and affirm TeachTown's methods, however, more research needs to be done in this new area to continue to develop bigger and better resources for children and their families."

Study findings include:

- Significant changes were observed for children with autism and children with Down syndrome using the *TeachTown: Basics* software with a 53% increase from pre to post-tests.
- Instead of paying less attention to others while on the computer, as most people would, children with autism showed the *opposite* profile – paying more attention to those in the room and showing more positive social behaviors
- Children with autism demonstrated dramatic changes in language and social behaviors (105% increase) while using the *TeachTown: Basics* program compared to baseline play sessions with their parents
- The children used more spontaneous comments (e.g., "Look Mom, a rocket ship!")
- Children also looked at their parents more and showed more enjoyment (i.e., positive affect)



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- While appropriate language went up, inappropriate language decreased
- Positive social behaviors went up, while inappropriate behaviors such as tantrums and avoidance went down
- Inappropriate language and behaviors decreased by 61% for children with autism while using the TeachTown: Basics computer program compared to baseline play sessions with their parents.
- Inappropriate behaviors and inappropriate language also decreased in the off-computer activities (44% decrease) compared to baseline play sessions

"I was very impressed with the fact that *TeachTown: Basics* is totally research based, and it is something that is adaptable and complementary with any of the other programs that the child's likely to be involved in: clinic-type programs, school programs, as well as in the home." Said Dr. Laura Schreibman of the UC San Diego Autism Research Lab.

To further recognize Autism Awareness month, TeachTown Inc. is providing a free 30-day trial to anyone interested in trying *TeachTown: Basics*. More information is available online at www.teachtown.com.

"We cannot stress enough what an important tool this is," said Tom McGurk, parent, Conner, Age 6. "Our only wish is that this program had been available when our son was first diagnosed."

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About TeachTown: Basics

TeachTown: Basics is a comprehensive computer-assisted treatment program intended to teach children with autism, between the developmental ages of 2-7, a variety of skills across several domains, including vocabulary, matching, sequencing, phonics and early reading, mathematics, time, money, emotion identification, matching feelings to events, face matching, following eye gaze, friendship, safety awareness, personal needs, etc. *TeachTown: Basics* also includes extensive data tracking, exceeding IEP reporting requirements in all fifty states, plus a communication interface that connects all members of the child's team. TeachTown uses a client server architecture which allows new lessons to be added to the curriculum on a continuous basis and allows for regular refinement of existing lessons (similar to a high quality ABA program).

TeachTown: Basics also includes "off-computer" learning activities that are developmentally-appropriate and can be printed out and used to engage the child in learning activities. The program recommends that as much time as the child spends on the computer, an equal amount of time should be spent interacting with the child using "naturalistic" learning activities. The combination of structured learning and "real-life" teaching scenarios is intended to optimize the child's treatment program.

About TeachTown Inc.

TeachTown, Inc. is a Seattle-based research company that specializes in the development of computer-assisted treatment services for children with behavioral and developmental disorders. The company recently launched *TeachTown: Basics*, the world's first comprehensive, computer-assisted treatment program for children with autism spectrum disorders. All of TeachTown's programs are based on best-practices from research and designed with input from an expert advisory board with extensive experience in behavior analysis, special education, developmental and clinical psychology, as well as speech pathology that includes Dr. Laura Schreibman, UC San Diego, Dr. Ilene Schwartz, University of Washington Experimental Education Unit, Dr. William Frea, Autism Spectrum Therapies, Los Angeles, CA. More information can be found at www.teachtown.com.