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ECB/PBS to explore ways to get media into classrooms

What does the future have to do with teaching and learning about the past? How can digital video resources be best used in classrooms?

To answer these questions, the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board (ECB) has teamed up with the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and Madison's Cherokee Middle School. Together, they will be exploring how digital broadcasting and other methods for delivering educational content can give educators easy access to classroom media.

The media for this project, geared for students in grades 6-12, explore westward expansion in U.S. history. The ECB will supplement materials from PBS's own *Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery* and *The West* with resources from *Investigating Wisconsin History* and *Tracks: Impressions of America*.

This fall, three Cherokee Middle School eighth grade teachers will experiment with using indexed digital content delivered in three different formats: via digital datacasting, via Internet broadband, and on CD-ROM. Teachers and students also will have a common search tool they can use to identify videos/materials related to their studies in content delivered using any of these formats.

Those trying out digital datacasting will be able to view videos prebroadcast to a digital server/receiver at the school. (Datacasting allows additional content to be embedded into the regular digital broadcast signal.) Those using broadband will view streaming video delivered over the Internet. Those using CD-ROMs will be directed to the specific CD that includes a video clip they have identified using the search tool.

Classroom use of these pilot materials will be evaluated by the Center for Children and Technology in New York and by ECB staff. They will gather both student and teacher feedback to learn how the materials supported meaningful instruction and to identify technology and interface design issues that need additional refining. Watch for results of this pilot study in upcoming issues of *Interconnect*.

The ECB is one of four public television broadcasters around the nation that PBS has selected to take part in its K-12 Digital Classroom Project. Others are Idaho Public Television, KCPT-TV in Kansas City, Missouri, and WHRO-TV in Norfolk, Virginia. The project is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations.

Last year, the ECB conducted the nation's first tests of delivering interactive television content to classrooms via digital datacasts.