

Wisconsin students take part in nation's first tests of interactive digital television datacast to K-12 classrooms

September 25, 2001 Schoolchildren at three Madison, Wisconsin area schools will welcome the future of instructional television by participating in the nation's first K-12 classroom tests of interactive digital television received by datacasting.

During the next three weeks, Verona's Country View Elementary School, Oregon's Netherwood Knoll Elementary, and Madison's Marquette Elementary are part of a "datacasting" demonstration by the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board (ECB), in partnership with WISC-DT, a commercial digital television [DTV] station in Madison.

Datacasting is an aspect of DTV that lets broadcasters transmit computer-like (digital) data along with a video program to a TV receiver. In this classroom demonstration, teachers will be able to view full-screen, digital instructional television (ITV) blended with interactive features similar to what might be found on a CD-ROM or at a Web site. Combining resources in this manner enables students to explore topics of their choice in greater depth at convenient times that work best with classroom instruction. In the Verona and Oregon demonstrations, fourth-graders will use an interactive or enhanced version of "Making a Living: Agriculture," a program from the award-winning ITV series [Investigating Wisconsin History](#).

"Enhanced" means that students will be able to view video segments as many times as they wish, as well as explore additional resources such as graphics, written materials, and audio recordings. The enhanced resources in the "Agriculture" demonstration include video segments of historical eras in Wisconsin agriculture, maps, photographs, historical documents, tours designed to help guide student learning, and audio segments of actual diaries. For teachers, there is an integrated teacher guide, teaching tips, and a list of related Wisconsin Model Academic Standards. Classrooms will receive the datacasts of interactive ITV programs using a computer, loaned by ECB, equipped with a DTV tuner card.

ECB staff created the interactive Wisconsin history program using video, CD-ROM, and print resources that the ECB has produced. Later in October, ECB plans to test a second interactive ITV program developed for second- and third-grade students. This program will enable Marquette Elementary students to study social studies using this new learning technology. Students will explore how the economy works using the first episode of *Hand in Hand*, an instructional series being developed by ECB and the Center for Educational Resources (CER), of Indianapolis, Indiana. Students will view a 20-minute ITV program, using interactive features to further explore career choices, identify 19th-century household objects and how they were produced, create flow charts for getting products to market, and more.

A teacher guide, vocabulary, and a tutorial on using interactive TV are also included. Results from these first classroom demonstrations will be used to shape the future of interactive digital television. Additional classroom tests are anticipated as early as 2002, when public DTV channel WHA-DT, in Madison, is expected to add the ability to transmit digital datacasts. In the future, datacasting will allow teachers quick access to other classroom resources. For example, a school could request a specific ITV program and have it quickly datacast to the classroom, rather than waiting to record it off-air during its later scheduled broadcast time.

Teachers could order multimedia resources, such as CD-ROMs or DVDs, and have them delivered to their classroom computer. Future possibilities also include having one computer in each school receive datacasts, allowing teachers to access those centrally stored programs from classroom computers that are linked to a school network.

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