

From March 2006 *Interconnect*

## **Datacasting pilot underway this spring**

Imagine pulling instructional TV programs out of the air and storing them on a school computer for on-demand viewing. Made possible by the capabilities of digital television (DTV) broadcasting, datacasting is a new technology with the potential to do just that.

The Educational Communications Board (ECB) is pilot testing datacasting in the Oregon School District this spring. The agency has supplied district staff with the necessary computer card and antenna, as well as detailed instructions on how to use them. Oregon made the in-house decisions about how to distribute datacast content via school network.

ECB-produced content for fourth grade Wisconsin studies is being datacast for this pilot test. Included are all episodes, with closed captions and teacher guides, from the ITV series *Cultural Horizons of Wisconsin*, *Investigating Wisconsin History*, and *Exploring Wisconsin Our Home*, as well as the program *New Dawn of Tradition: A Wisconsin Powwow*.

Oregon fourth grade teachers and students will work with the materials and offer the ECB feedback on ease of use and any technical challenges that may arise.

As a participant in the 2002 PBS Digital Classroom Project, the ECB was one of the first public TV broadcasters in the nation to test various methods for delivering digital media to schools. While PBS supplied technology and digital media for the 2002 project, the ECB is providing content, equipment, and labor for this spring's datacasting test.

In April and May, ECB staff plan to convene ad hoc advisory committees of educators around the state to discuss a datacast service rollout plan for all of Wisconsin. Watch *Interconnect* for further reports.

School or district technical directors who have the budgets to purchase equipment and try out datacasting on their own this summer can find a "Datacast Receive Site Shopping List," software, and instructions at [www.datacastwisconsin.org](http://www.datacastwisconsin.org). Send questions to [datacastsupport@wisconsin.gov](mailto:datacastsupport@wisconsin.gov).