

Westview students will be tuning in with new tools

By [Jodi Heckel](#)

Monday March 19, 2007

CHAMPAIGN – Westview Elementary School's in-house television station, WVOW-TV, is now more than a decade old. The problem is, so is much of the equipment.

The cameras, which use VHS tapes, don't always work. The connections that allow live broadcasts don't always work. The camera batteries are unreliable.

"Technology has kind of left us in the dust," said Westview Principal Trevor Nadrozny.

Budding broadcasters at the school will soon have new cameras and equipment to work with, though. The school recently received a \$2,500 grant from Best Buy's Teach Awards program.

With the money, the school bought a video camera that records digitally rather than to tape. The recording can then be burned to a DVD, said Sandy BerryKnoop, Westview's library media specialist.

The school expects to upgrade other equipment as well. Local developer Peter Fox is matching the Best Buy grant, and he's asked local businesses and individuals to match his \$2,500, either with cash donations or in-kind contributions.

WCIA-TV has donated some microphones and lighting stands no longer used at the station.

The schoolwide television station lets students learn how to use video equipment, and classrooms show the entire school their projects. When guests come to the school to read to children, they are sometimes broadcast on the station. And children do multicultural readings on air, with a student reading in his or her native language and another translating to English.

In the past, students produced a mini-news magazine for the station, doing all the writing and directing. They have interviewed community leaders, and BerryKnoop would like to see more of that.

"We'd like to show everybody what is going on in the community," she said, but "we don't want to invite the community in when the technology is not working.

"(The equipment's) inconsistency tends to hold us back on doing bigger projects. You want to be able to teach them and open those different doors for them with current (technology) that hopefully works every time," she said. "We can't always put what we're working on, on our TV station. A lot of times, it just won't work."

BerryKnoop said the new camera she just purchased is lighter, so children will be able to do interviews away from the school. And if students can do live broadcasts again, they'll learn to think on their feet, she said.

School officials hope to buy another video camera, tripods, a computer and a multimedia software package, two LCD projectors, studio lighting and microphones, and a digital tape-to-DVD converter.

Nadrozny said the software has a green screen on which students can project background images during a broadcast, and it has prompting capabilities as well.

"They'll have nicer equipment and will be able to do more camera angles, more on-the-spot type reporting," Nadrozny said. "I think the broadcasts will be a little easier to do and they'll look a lot more professional."

BerryKnoop said donated equipment doesn't need to be new, but it does need to be in good working condition and something the students can use.