

## **20. TV Weathercaster**

**OBJECTIVES:** After completing this lesson, a student should be able to:

- \* **Prepare a classroom weathercast**
- \* **Present a PRIMARY classroom "broadcast" OR**
- \* **Present an INTERMEDIATE classroom "broadcast"**

### **TEACHER BACKGROUND:** *(Grades 1-8)*

Lights, camera, ACTION! That's what most people think of when they think of TV. When most people describe the job of a TV weathercaster, they describe a person who spends only a few minutes per day pointing to weather maps, satellite images and radar screens in front of a camera. That may be a portion of the TV weathercaster's job, but it isn't all that is required to make a broadcast. The broadcast itself is usually one of the easier duties in the day for the TV forecaster. Although the broadcast lasts a few minutes, preparation may take hours.

Accurate weather forecasts result only after acquiring the input of regular weather observations, satellite images and radar data. Since many weathercasters make their own forecasts for their broadcast area, it is important that the television station be equipped with the tools needed to collect the weather information.

Most TV stations have special computers which print out the latest weather information. Most stations also have a graphic computer which helps the broadcaster to draw and present the colorful weather maps and other graphics you see on the broadcast. Many stations also display "live" color radar pictures. Private weather companies sell daily satellite images and weather maps to TV stations and transmit the data to subscribing stations via telephone line or communications satellite.

The news, weather and sports are broadcast "live," and deadlines are a constant concern for broadcasters. If a storm intensifies just before the broadcast, updated information must be prepared to insure that the viewer will receive the latest information.

Once the weather segment begins, the forecaster has a specific amount of time to deliver all of the maps, images and graphics prepared that afternoon. It's not uncommon to work for hours for only a few minutes on the air!

### ***Some notes on the computer software:***

Ideally, one student per day should complete the computer activities and present the weather to the class. (In classrooms without computers, students may post and describe their worksheets.) The teacher should determine when the students are ready to prepare and present computer "broadcasts."

While students collect and load daily weather observations and map symbols into the program, students in grades 4-8 must also select which satellite picture (the clear west or the cloudy east) and which radar scope (the one with or without precipitation) they wish to feature in their presentation. The software displays the satellite and radar image the student viewed last. Students should accurately describe these images to the class. The student concludes by determining whether tomorrow's local weather will be sunny or cloudy.

# TV Weathercast

## "BROADCAST" FOR GRADES 1-3

**Time:** Preparation 10-15 minutes  
Delivery 45-60 seconds

**Materials:** Computer program plus ONE of the following:

1. today's newspaper weather map OR
2. worksheets #2 and #3

**Preparation:** Discuss last night's broadcast by your local **Weatherschool** channel. If you haven't already done so, begin individual student "broadcasts" using the computer. (If a classroom computer is not available, students can post worksheets #2 and #3 on the board to present the weather.) Since it takes days for each student to give a broadcast, you may assign certain students to certain days. Each student can use that day's observations and draw that day's weather map on the computer.

**Procedure:** After completing the preparation above, have each student stand next to the computer screen while another student presses the *space bar* to change their color graphics. When the weathercaster is "cued" to start, he or she should describe the computer information to the class. Ready? GO!

**Evaluation:** Did the broadcast go well? If so, present the **Weatherschool** Award (located near the back of this guide).

**Excursion:** If your school has video equipment, involve other students to tape the broadcasts. This shows students that a broadcast involves a *team* effort of many people. Check to see if your tape can be played on a school or community cable access channel!

## "BROADCAST" FOR GRADES 4-8

**Time:** Preparation 20-30 minutes  
Delivery 2 minutes

**Materials:** Computer program plus ONE of the following:

1. today's newspaper weather map
2. worksheets #2 and #3 OR
3. alternate data on back page of this guide

**Preparation:** Discuss last night's broadcast by your local **Weatherschool** channel. If you haven't already done so, begin student "broadcasts" using the computer. (If a computer is not available, students can post worksheets #2 and #3 on the board to present the weather.) It may take days for all students to participate, so jobs may be assigned. (A director starts and stops the "broadcast"; a camera person; a floor director times the "broadcast"; and the weather person.) Weathercasters can use that day's observations, draw that day's weather map and select the radar and satellite images they wish to describe. (Alternate map data on the back page of this guide MATCHES the images on the computer disk.)

**Procedure:** Have each weathercaster stand next to the computer screen while another student presses the *space bar* to advance the graphics. Each student should spend 2 minutes describing the graphics to the class. (Exact timing is important on TV!)

**Evaluation:** Were the "broadcast" timing, information and geographical descriptions accurate? If so, present the **Weatherschool** Award (located near the back of this guide).

**Excursion:** Video tape the broadcasts using a school *team* effort! Check to see if your tape can be played on a school or community cable access channel!

### WEATHERSCHOOL QUESTION:

**Obtain the question and correct answer from your local Weatherschool TV channel!**