



Feds fund Web kidvid

Chicago's WTTW gets \$32.5 million grant

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The U.S. Department of Education has awarded a \$32.5 million grant to Chicago pubcaster WTTW for "Umigo," a multimedia child learning initiative.

Wildbrain Entertainment, led by "Yo Gabba Gabba!" exec producer Michael Polis, will produce the property, from a concept developed by Polis. Michael Cohen Group, a research firm that has worked with children's media, will also help develop.

Launching first as a Web-based property, "Umigo" is targeted to also become a television series and line of consumer products.

Online interactive destination for Umigo will offer kids digital paint, glue, blocks and other tools to "build" everything from clothes to golf courses.

The program, designed for children with limited access to educational resources, teaches basic math principles and encourages creative thinking. Children will be able to share their creations with other participants through the Internet.

"The whole concept was inspired by my twin boys," Polis said. "Because it's a transmedia project, it'll be available on a lot of different devices."

The grant, part of a five-year "Ready to Learn" government initiative, is designed to support the development of educational programming and media for preschool and early elementary school children and their families.

<http://www.variety.com/article/VR1118025902?refCatId=1009>