

Loyola University's *Countdown*: Acting locally, reaching globally

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What began as a local initiative on Chicago Access Network Television (CAN TV) to compensate for the lack of time devoted to math in the Chicago Public Schools' classrooms, found an eager audience in Chicago and later– the world.



Countdown's on-air educator takes a live a call from student.

Loyola University's interactive math program, *Countdown*, teaches third to eighth grade math concepts every week in a live show format on CAN TV during the school year. Students call in during the show to work through math problems with some of Chicago's finest educators.

Dr. Diane Schiller, a Loyola education professor, started *Countdown* in 1997. At that time, Chicago Public Schools had the shortest school day in the nation. *Countdown* offered students an extra hour of quality math instruction every week.

"I saw the incredible power of TV as a medium to teach students undertaught math concepts," said Schiller. *Countdown* began to reach thousands of students over the next several years, but that proved to be the tip of the iceberg. An expanded audience for the math programs would soon emerge through use of the Internet.

In February of 2002, a website was created to incorporate the lessons taught on *Countdown*, and the television episodes were made available through its website at countdown.luc.edu. This allowed students to work at their own pace and review problems as needed.

"The idea is that the web site is infinitely patient, because the repetition is right there," noted Schiller.

The value of this educational resource quickly gained national and international attention on the Internet and viewership rapidly grew beyond Chicago's borders.

With the rising popularity of its educational video segments, *Countdown's* web audience grew from 235,000 visitors to 1.7 million in four years. Amazingly, 27% of *Countdown's* website visitors today come from outside the U.S.

The *Countdown* classroom, which began in a small studio in Chicago, now extends into homes as far away as Canada, Australia and Europe, bringing high quality math education to students worldwide.