

Nickelodeon Champions Early Childhood Education with 2015 Nick Jr. Beyond the Backpack Campaign

***Instant Mom* Star Tia Mowry-Hardrict Signs on as Spokesperson for Kindergarten Readiness Program**

2015 *Beyond the Backpack* Advisory Committee Includes Alliance for a Healthier Generation, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Association of Children's Museums, Boston Children's Museum, Children's Defense Fund, Common Sense Media, Jumpstart, National Council of La Raza, National Head Start Association, National Parent Teacher Association, Reach Out and Read and Too Small to Fail

NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- [Nickelodeon](#) announced today the kickoff of its 2015 [Nick Jr. Beyond the Backpack](#) kindergarten readiness initiative geared to help parents and caregivers prepare their preschoolers for academic success. The campaign features Tia Mowry-Hardrict ([Instant Mom](#)) starring alongside beloved preschool characters, including [Dora](#), [Wally](#) and [Blaze](#) in a PSA series airing across Nickelodeon's TV and digital platforms. The campaign also includes: an advisory committee comprised of leaders in children's education who are lending their expertise to *Beyond the Backpack*; a dedicated web site resource; bilingual (English/Spanish) educational materials; and a parent-targeted mobile program providing weekly tips and information. Every campaign element focuses on five key areas deemed critical to educational achievement: family engagement; health and wellness; early literacy; social and emotional development; and fundamental STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) skills.

Nickelodeon has also partnered with an advisory committee of dedicated educators and children's advocates to create, distribute and promote *Nick Jr. Beyond the Backpack*-branded resources. Organizations include: Alliance for a Healthier Generation, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), Association of Children's Museums (ACM), Boston Children's Museum, Children's Defense Fund, Common Sense Media, Jumpstart, National Council of La Raza (NCLR), National Head Start Association, National Parent Teacher Association, Reach Out and Read and Too Small to Fail.

"Our goal with *Nick Jr.'s Beyond the Backpack*, along with our partners, is to provide parents and caregivers with the information and resources they need to prepare their preschoolers for those important first steps toward formal education," said Marva Smalls, Executive Vice President, Public, Affairs, Nickelodeon Group. "Family engagement plays a crucial role in providing a solid foundation for young children to help ensure they not only succeed in school, but thrive."

"*Nick Jr. Beyond the Backpack* provides parents, who may not know where to start, with a customized learning plan from experts in the field of early childhood education, that will provide a solid foundation for preschoolers preparing to attend kindergarten," said Mowry-Hardrict. "As a mom of a preschooler, I am thrilled to partner with Nickelodeon on such an important issue."

Throughout the year, Mowry-Hardrict will be featured in PSAs alongside the most popular characters from Nick's hit preschool series, including *Dora the Explorer*, *Blaze and the Monster Machines*, *Wallykazam!* and *PAW Patrol*. The spots, airing across Nickelodeon, Nick Jr. and on the *Beyond the Backpack* site (www.beyondthebackpack.com), are designed to raise awareness of the important role early preparedness plays in the success of preschoolers entering kindergarten.

Originally founded in 2010 as a part of the 10th anniversary of the curriculum-driven preschool hit *Dora the Explorer*, the 2015 *Beyond the Backpack* initiative has expanded to include a broad range of educational and socio-emotional topics using the network's stable of hit preschool programs and characters, including *Wallykazam!*, which features a literacy curriculum; *Team Umizoomi*, which combines action-adventure with an interactive math curriculum; *Bubble Guppies*, which features core elements of kindergarten readiness including math, literacy, the arts, science and socio-emotional development; *Peter Rabbit*, which encourages problem-solving and interpersonal skills; *PAW Patrol*, which focuses on social skills and problem-solving; and *Blaze and the Monster Machines*, which comprehensively covers all areas of STEM in every episode.

The elements of the 2015 *Nick Jr. Beyond the Backpack* campaign include:

- **A SMS text program** - Beginning today parents can opt-in to "Beyond the Backpack On-the-Go" to get weekly activities and tips to make learning more fun for their preschoolers. Parents and caregivers can sign up by texting "**BACKPACK**" to 91757.
- **A dedicated website** - Parents and caregivers looking for more information can also visit www.beyondthebackpack.com, where they can take a quiz that when completed provides access to a customized learning plan, educational games, interactive videos and printable activities for their preschoolers.
- ***Beyond the Backpack* Toolkit** - A bilingual kindergarten readiness guide that features a checklist to help parents ensure their preschoolers have the appropriate developmental skills necessary to be successful in school, as well as interactive and skill building activities that can help kids meet necessary milestones.

- **Kindergarten Readiness Block Party** - In March Tia Mowry-Hardrict is teaming up with Nickelodeon and the Compton Unified School District in Compton, Calif. for a kindergarten readiness and registration event, featuring fun and educational activities, Nick Jr. costume characters and more.
- **Additional *Beyond the Backpack* events** - will be scheduled throughout the year. Visit www.beyondthebackpack.com for more information.

Nickelodeon, now in its 35th year, is the number-one entertainment brand for kids. It has built a diverse, global business by putting kids first in everything it does. The company includes television programming and production in the United States and around the world, plus consumer products, online, recreation, books and feature films. Nickelodeon's U.S. television network is seen in more than 100 million households and has been the number-one-rated basic cable network for 20 consecutive years. For more information or artwork, visit <http://www.nickpress.com>. Nickelodeon and all related titles, characters and logos are trademarks of Viacom Inc. (NASDAQ: VIA, VIAB).

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