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Space Racers And NASA Aim To Take Over Preschool Entertainment

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If you have children you've probably been inundated by one program after the other that teaches kids how to count, spell, speak, share, play, and a wealth of other information to shape their growing minds. And while I'll always be partial to *Sesame Street* and *the Muppets*, I despise hearing shows like *Calliou* or *Backyardigans* wailing away in the background as I let the TV babysit my daughter while I write stories like this. Please withhold judgment. But soon I may be able to share her enjoyment of the upcoming series *Space Racers*, a science-based animated series backed by none other than **NASA**. Members provide technical consultation for the show.

Space Racers is the brainchild of Richard Schweiger, who was inspired a few years ago by a trip to Washington D.C.'s National Air and Space Museum. There he watched his two young sons have a blast with toy rocket ships he'd purchased from the gift shop and a light bulb went on. "I was like, 'Oh my gosh, how amazing would it be to do a show where the characters are the spaceships, and the spaceships can go on missions through the solar system?'" he told *Entertainment Weekly*. Little did he realize how far this idea would travel.

The rocking rocket cast includes the speedy Eagle, the brawny Hawk, the brainy Robyn, the courageous Starling, and the competitive Raven, all students of the Stardust Space Academy. The first season will be made up of 50 11-minute episodes featuring the characters traveling throughout the solar system, giving

young viewers insight into investigation, exploration, observation, and teamwork. You saw how each ship has its own special trait, right? That's how things work in real life, too. For instance, I'm the "gloopy" one of my friend set.

Each of the episodes will have a singular educational purpose, and the series as a whole is intent on promoting STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), both with the animated tales, as well as interstitial segments where NASA experts pop by to explain the specific ideas. You'll learn from experts from places such as the Air and Space Museum and the Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland. As an added NASA bonus, the institution gave Schweiger and his team access to their extensive library of sounds and space photography. I wonder how hard they tried to get the show called *NASA's and Only NASA's Space Racers*

Sure, kids are always going to be impressed by action-packed cartoons like *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, but rarely do the sciences get the spotlight, beyond the occasional "shows characters go to space" episodes of currently airing series.

Presented by Maryland Public Television, *Space Racers* will hit PBS at some point in Spring 2014. For a better idea of what this show will look like, check out the trailer below.

LINK: <http://www.giantfreakinrobot.com/scifi/space-racers-nasa-aim-preschool-entertainment.html>