

Nickelodeon debuts mobile service Noggin for the pre-K set

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(AP)—Nickelodeon is creating brand-new content and resurrecting old shows for a mobile subscription service aimed at preschoolers.

The \$6-a-month service called Noggin will have new games and activities alongside archives of shows no longer on any of Nickelodeon's TV channels. That includes videos of characters Moose and Zee teaching letters, shapes and other pre-kindergarten skills.

And on the heels of a successful "SpongeBob" movie, Nickelodeon is also developing a musical based on the cartoon character for a potential run on Broadway. Aerosmith has written a song for it, while David Bowie will contribute an old song. But there's no word yet on when it might premiere, if ever.

"It's not definite. We're still workshopping the show. We do think it has great potential," Sarah Kirshbaum Levy, Nickelodeon's chief operating officer, told The Associated Press.

As for Noggin, the ad-free service will debut next Thursday on Apple mobile devices. An Android version will follow.

Although the videos will initially come from Nickelodeon's archives, Levy said new episodes may follow.

She said the impetus came from Nickelodeon seeing rivals thrive with archives of content, while its own "deep, rich library" went untapped.

"Sesame Street," for instance, offers its archives online for \$4 a month. Levy said Nickelodeon didn't see enough broad-reach, television demand for the older content, but thought there would be enough interest on demand. The company is calling Noggin "separate and distinct" from the Nick Jr. preschool channel because the Noggin shows are no longer shown on TV.

Although a few cable channels such as HBO are planning stand-alone streaming subscriptions as alternatives to a cable package, most channels are sticking with existing distributors. In this case, Nickelodeon said it's in talks with pay-TV providers to bundle Noggin with cable and satellite packages. The regular Nick Jr. channel is available through a separate Nick Jr. app, but it requires a pay-TV subscription and isn't sold as a stand-alone subscription.

Levy said Nickelodeon's four traditional channels will remain its core business, and there aren't any current plans to offer similar services for older children.

New York-based Viacom Inc., which owns Nickelodeon, did announce stand-alone subscriptions around its MTV brand this week. The MTV Play video service, launching next Thursday, will offer archives of past content and previews of new shows. It will be initially available only in Germany, Switzerland and Romania, however. The MTV Trax music service will launch Tuesday in the U.K. and expand later to New Zealand. Both services will be aimed at mobile users.

Viacom hinted at the Noggin service last month, but details weren't unveiled until Wednesday at Nickelodeon's annual presentation to ad buyers and other marketers on upcoming shows. Noggin is the original name of the Nick Jr. channel and was chosen partly because moms are already familiar with the brand, said Cyma Zarghami, president of the kids and family group at Viacom.

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