Geographic Education for Preschoolers: The *Dora the Explorer* Contribution

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Abstract

We propose that the preschool show *Dora the Explorer* contributes to geography education by introducing the use of a map on every episode, demonstrating a significant step in teaching preschoolers about maps and map use. Furthermore, we suggest that the format in which the map is presented supports learning, allowing it to serve as a cognitive organizer. This program is an important component in the development of geographic concepts and skills of children aged two to five. Because the show is seen by millions of preschool children around the world every day, it seems apparent that *Dora* provides geographical experience and background for these young viewers and will enhance the start of their formal education. Therefore, to assess the contribution of *Dora the Explorer*, we propose some research questions that might be addressed to assess the contribution of this show to the geographic education of preschoolers.

Keywords: *Dora the Explorer*, preschool geography education, map use, cognitive organizer, TV format, spatial intelligence

Introduction

With the creation of *Dora the Explorer*, Nickelodeon, an American children’s channel, brought a seven-year-old Latina cartoon character and an
animated “Map” to television in 2000. More than 10 years after its debut, 
_Dora the Explorer_ is still one of the most-watched preschool television 
shows in the United States (Nielsen Media Research, 2010) and continues to 
have an impressive reach and success (Cortés, Diaz-Wionczek, & Lovelace 
2009; DeMott, 2010; Kit, 2010). Through the years, the series has won 
many prestigious awards including the Peabody Award for distinguished and 
meritorious public service by radio and television stations, networks, producing 
organizations and individuals, and the Imagen Award which recognizes 
the positive portrayal of Latinos in the entertainment industry. Thus, most 
would agree that _Dora the Explorer_ has become a social phenomenon (Diaz- 
Wionczek, Lovelace, & Cortés, 2009).

The series was designed to make use of the Theory of Multiple 
Intelligences articulated by Howard Gardner (1993). By using these 
intelligences, preschool-aged children learn as they interact with the 
characters on the screen. _Dora’s_ use of a map as a space organizer and as 
a way finder addresses spatial intelligence, and provides young viewers 
with the opportunity to gain geographic knowledge and develop map 
skills. Since the program brings ‘geography’ to millions of children, we 
believe that it deserves critical evaluation as to the nature of its contribution 
to geographic education.

Examining a Typical _Dora the Explorer_ Episode

Nickelodeon has aired more than 120 _Dora the Explorer_ episodes, and 
all follow a common format. _Dora’s_ best friend and companion is a blue 
monkey named _Boots_. Together they go on adventures, often joined by other 
characters. _Dora_ wears _Backpack_, a character who magically contains things 
that _Dora_ needs on her travels, including an animated map (Figure 1). Most 
of the episodes are approximately 23 minutes long; however, a few are double 
in length.

Each episode starts with an introduction from ‘_Dora_’ where she wel-
comes the viewers and establishes that, “we have to go someplace.” The 
viewers are invited to join _Dora_ on her journey, and participate along the 
way by helping her problem-solve in order to reach their destination.

Before _Dora_ (and the viewer) embark on their journey, she asks while 
looking at the viewer, “Who do we ask for help when we don’t know which 
way to go?” Viewers are compelled to call back, “Map!” _Map_, the character, 
jumps out of _Backpack_ and takes over the screen singing, “Who’s the guy 
you need to know when you’ve got a place to go?” “What’s my name?” [The
More than 10 years after its debut, the most-watched preschool television program in the US (Research, 2010) and continues to receive awards. Díaz-Wionczek, & Lovelace (2010) argue that, in the years, the series has won many awards, including the Image Award for distinguished achievement, an Emmy Award for outstanding single-camera comedy series, and a Peabody Award for distinguished achievement. The series has been shown on television stations, networks, producing several seasons, and has been translated into many languages. The program is recognized as a social phenomenon (Díaz-Wionczek, & Lovelace, 2010).

The use of the Theory of Multiple Intelligences by Gardner (1993) is evident in the program. By using these theories, the program helps children to interact with the world and to develop spatial and visual-spatial knowledge and develop map skills. Díaz-Wionczek, & Lovelace (2010) argue that by millions of children, we have access to the nature of its contributions.

The Explorer Episode

In the episode “Dora the Explorer,” the protagonist, Dora, and her companion, Boots, embark on an adventure. Dora, a young girl, is at risk of getting lost in a forest, but Boots, her friend and companion, helps her navigate through the forest. They gather clues and solve problems to find their way back home. Dora asks, “Where is the map?” and Boots responds, “I don’t know what Map is.” Dora then asks, “What’s my name?” Map sings, “Who can help you say, hey, I figured out the way.” Dora asks, “What’s my name?” Map sings, “What’s my name?” Dora asks, “Who can help you say, hey, I figured out the way.” This scene is repeated several times throughout the episode. As Map sings, a spatial map appears behind them and occupies the full screen showing the route that Dora and her friends need to follow to get to their destination. Thus, the map is on screen in two forms simultaneously: 1) the character (on the top left corner of the screen) and, 2) the spatial display (as a full screen background). After his song, Map tells the viewers the route to follow to get to the destination (Figure 2). As he describes the route, his eyes focus on the icon for each location which becomes highlighted on the map. In a regular-length episode, there are typically three locations to be visited. The character, Map, names the locations and then asks viewers to repeat the sequence, typically, three times. He ends by prompting viewers to tell Dora where to go first, and then disappears from the screen. In most cases this is the last time we see Map and the complete, full screen, spatial map.

Dora returns to the screen, standing behind the three icons of the locations from the map, and asks, “Where do we go first?” (Figure 3). After viewers have called out the first location, she turns to find the environment in which they must travel. Viewers are once again asked to participate by choosing the correct path to get to the location, which viewers see in the distance. This location matches the icon in the map almost exactly. Once Dora finds out (from the viewers) which path to follow, she goes down the path singing a characteristic travel song, “C’mon! Vámonos! Everybody, let’s go!”

Along the way and at each location there are frequent situations that require input from the viewers to help Dora solve problems using multiple intelligences. For example, logical/mathematical (e.g., patterns, number identification), verbal (e.g., saying, “ Más hueces!”), kinesthetic (e.g., reaching to catch a ball), or spatial (e.g., picking the longer route with trees rather than the shorter route with no trees in order to stay away from Owl’s sight).

After we reach our goal at the final location, everyone celebrates and sings the characteristic end song “We did it!” and the episode concludes with Dora saying, “We couldn’t have done it without you. Thanks for helping. Gracias.” In its original broadcast form on cable television, the episodes are shown with no interruption, which helps maintain a strong linear narrative. When broadcast in foreign markets, an episode may be interrupted with commercials or announcements.
Figure 1. Four principal characters: Dora, Backpack, Map peeking out from his pocket, and Boots (Photo courtesy of Nickelodeon).

Figure 2. Map the character showing the route we have to follow. In this instance Map's eyes are looking at the river, which is highlighted in a bright glow (Photo courtesy of Nickelodeon).

Figure 3. Dora is asking young viewers to follow her lead (Photo courtesy of Nickelodeon).

Incorporating "Map" into the Pedagogical Strategy

Curriculum-based educational methods are often used in early childhood education, drawing on the basic interactive style of children's content. The interactivity supported by the storyline of "Dora the Explorer" is well suited to the show's format. Each episode follows a simple plot: Dora and her friends embark on a high-stakes adventure, facing challenges along the way in order to complete their mission.

Each episode features visual elements that draw upon linearity through the use of a map, which serves as a spatial reference (Akerman, Bryant, & Diaz-Wionczek, 2009). By laying out the route, "Map" provides intermediary steps en route to adventure, thus fostering young viewers' interest in geography and skills (Diaz-Wionczek, Love...
Incorporating “Map” into *Dora the Explorer* by Supporting the Narrative

Curriculum-based educational television for preschoolers has evolved from the basic interactive style established by *Sesame Street* to a more formal interactivity supported by the strong linear narrative of *Dora the Explorer* (Akerman, Bryant, & Diaz-Wionczek, 2011). Unlike other curriculum-driven shows, *Dora the Explorer’s* curriculum is seamlessly embedded into the show’s format. Each episode follows a narrative structure which always involves a high-stakes adventure, and viewers are asked to help *Dora* overcome challenges along the way in order to reach the ultimate goal.

Each episode features linearity, repetition, and interactivity. The show draws upon linearity through *Map*, which is present both as a character and as a spatial reference (Akerman, Bryant, & Diaz-Wionczek, 2011; Carter, 2009). By laying out the route, *Map* emphasizes the importance of completing intermediary steps *en route* to achieving long-range goals. Since interactivity fosters young viewers’ interest and facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and skills (Diaz-Wionczek, Lovelace, & Cortés, 2010), one could assume that
the multiple repetition of locations, themes, and questions enhance viewers’ spatial learning.

The decision to use a map as a consistent element that would support spatial intelligence was made during the development of the show. The character Map was created as the interface with the viewers, thus, a flat paper map with one corner turned down was created as the spatial symbolization of the environment in which the story would play out.

Production Research on Map

The production’s research team verifies through testing that the format employed for Map is both effective and appealing. Preschoolers’ recollections of Map’s various locations are tested as part of the production’s formative research for every episode (Nick Jr., 2010). During the first phase of research conducted at preschools, children are read a storybook that closely imitates the style of the show. The scene with Map is typically summarized into one picture. The picture of Map is very similar (sometimes identical) to what children will later see when viewing the program on their televisions, and the narrative is very close to the animation’s dialogue. Researchers code children’s responses to Map’s requests to repeat the locations with him and to tell Dora where to go first.

After the children listen to the story, researchers interview them individually as well as in groups to assess their learning and recollection of specific elements, including Map and his locations. Children are presented with a picture of the map identical to what they viewed during the storybook reading and are asked, “What places did we go to in today’s story?” The children are prompted to name the location with words rather than just pointing at it. Results from these tests indicate that children, typically, recall the three locations, either by name or attribute (e.g., naming a location, “trees” instead of, “forest”). Thus, based on the findings, location designs are sometimes changed or adjusted to be more visually appealing and memorable before the show is animated. On occasion, locations have been swapped based on children’s feedback. One such example entailed moving a more exciting and/or visually appealing location to the redesign of the map.

The Use and Presentation of Map

The use of maps in the presentation of the spatial intelligence of the ‘Dora the Explorer” character, Map, is a geographic organizer (Diaz-Wionczek, 2009) as described by Map “is both a geographic organizer and map (and repeats them in the icon throughout the show. During testing, when children are asked, “What was today’s story about?”, or, “What was the show about today?” or, “What was today’s story like?” the children are studying the locations on the map, which gives young children a comfortable and familiar visual representation of the story. During testing, when children are asked, “What was today’s story about?” the children are studying the locations on the map, which gives young children a comfortable and familiar visual representation of the story.

Overall, this demonstrates a shift from traditional representations of maps and map use.

According to Executive Producer, Gifford (personal communication),

“Dora always travels from bottom left and ends on the right. Also, the areas of the screen are closer and farther away. An interesting thing was that we needed children to look at the map and be able to follow on the map that is in the show.”

The consistent way that viewers are introduced to the unique map-use environment (i.e., what is shown on a television screen for a few seconds, and then falls away) whereas maps are employed (e.g., where maps are employed and how they are used to introduce or reinforce the geography of the show. Viewers have to establish that there is something different about the map; what it illustrates before it disappears from the screen. The map is typically represented at the beginning of the show, where the maps are generally shown by the character, Map. As such, each map is unique in its presentation, serving as an introduction to the story and characters.
or visually appealing location to the middle of the episode, with the consequent redesign of the map.

The Use and Presentation of Maps in *Dora the Explorer*

The use of maps in the program fits the needs of an explorer, addresses the spatial intelligence of the Gardner schema, and serves as a “cognitive organizer” (Diaz-Wionczek, Cortés, & Lovelace, 2009). The journey supported by Map “is both a geographic one and a narrative one” (Walsh, personal communication, October 16, 2011). The show uses three locations on the map (and repeats them in the icon reviews) to help children comprehend and retain the story. During testing, when researchers ask children, “Where did Dora go today?,” or, “What was today’s show about?,” they are able to recreate the story by reviewing the locations. This routine serves a twofold purpose: first, it gives young children a comfortable framework for each episode; and, second, it teaches the concept of consulting a map before setting out on an adventure. Overall, this demonstrates a significant step in teaching preschoolers about maps and map use.

According to Executive Producer and Co-creator, Chris Gifford, the orientation of the map serves an important purpose for the format of the show. Gifford (personal communication, February 19, 2009) states:

“*Dora* always travels from left to right, so the map typically starts on the left and ends on the right. Also, in TV format, objects located at the bottom of the screen are closer and objects higher up are far away. The layout of the map follows this format (bottom left is closer and top right is further away). An interesting thing we found while testing the story concepts with children was that we needed to connect the locations (with a path) if we wanted children to look at the map and tell the journey.” (Figure 3).

The consistent way that maps are used in *Dora the Explorer* creates a unique map-use environment (Carter, 2005). In most television programming where maps are employed (e.g., news, documentaries), they normally appear on a television screen for a few seconds and are subsequently taken away. Viewers have to establish that they are looking at a map and have to determine what it illustrates before it disappears. By contrast, in *Dora the Explorer*, the map is typically presented at the same time and in a similar fashion in most episodes. The maps are generally consistent in their design and are introduced by the character, *Map*. As such, this presentation of maps is similar to that of
television weather programming where viewers tune in day after day to view new content on maps of a consistent style and format presented by known personalities (Carter, 1998). It is not coincidental that maps, presented in such a consistent manner, have popular followings in the U.S. on The Weather Channel as well as, around the world.

It is likely that preschool children who watch Dora the Explorer have had little or no exposure to maps and map use. Blades, Sowden, and Spencer (1995, p. 18) argue,

“. . . it is important to encourage children’s understanding of maps as soon as they are able to appreciate the idea that a map can represent part of the world around them. Realizing that a map can stand for something else is the first step in recognizing the importance of representations, and the starting point for learning how to use maps as sources of information about the world.”

With the consistent appearance of the flat maps in conjunction with Map’s interactive help, young children have learned to use these stylized maps. Blaut, Stea, Spencer, and Blades (2003, p. 166) hypothesize that the ability to map and use maps is, “universal in culture,” and, “is part of the cognitive development of children everywhere.” Thus, Dora and Map build on children’s inherent capabilities as they lead these young viewers through the on-screen map environments.

Certainly, many children understand the use of maps as presented in Dora the Explorer. It is fair to ask how this type of map use carries over to way-finding in the real world. It is evident that children can grasp the concept, as some have been known to ask their parents to draw “a map—the bank, the grocery store—so they can track their routes as Dora does” (McGinn, 2002, p. 54). There are many anecdotal stories similar to this, in which children ask their parents for help in making a map.

Map as Protagonist

It is not trivial that the character Map is a friend and hero to many young children who interact with him on a regular basis while watching Dora the Explorer. It should be noted that in occasional episodes, Map is a protagonist and does not disappear after giving directions to viewers for their destinations. In one episode, a bird grabs Map to be used to line its nest. As Map is carried aloft he tells, Dora that she will need the Backpack to get paper and markers (Figure 4 and Figure 5). This is further reinforced when the child draws and heartily approves. The child then asks the old daughter pauses the DVD, and asks her father if he would like to help her draw a map with Dora (Clarke, personal communication).

Figure 4. Dora has to draw her map, and her backpack was carried off by a bird (Photo courtesy of Dora the Explorer)

Figure 5. Dora is pleased to see the map her old daughter drew taking us past the field to the mountain (Photo courtesy of Dora the Explorer)
saviors tune in day after day to view the experiences and format presented by known educational that maps, presented in such books as Geography in the U.S. on The Weather Channel, and to watch Dora the Explorer have the viewers at home. Blades, Sowden, and Spencer (1998) write that young children’s understanding of maps as representations of areas and their developments in representation, especially maps as sources of information.

When young viewers first encounter the flat maps in conjunction with Dora the Explorer (2002–2014), they have learned to use these stylized representations (McGinn, 2003, p. 166) hypothesize that the area represented on the map is part of the culture,” and, “is part of the environment.” Thus, Dora and Map build on these young viewers through the use of maps of the world.

As McGinn (2002, 2003) notes, the use of maps as presented in Dora’s world is an example of how this type of map use carries over to personal and local spaces. Children can grasp the concept, and they can apply it to their own contexts to draw “a map—the bank, the woods, the sand, the beach, the lake, as Dora does” (McGinn, 2002, p. 166). This approach is similar to this, in which children are encouraged to draw maps of their own lives.

Dora the Explorer’s Map

Map is a friend and hero to many young viewers and a star on a regular basis while watching Dora the Explorer. In the form of the usual episodes, Map is a protagonist who helps the young viewers find destinations, such as the bank to line its nest. As Map is carried along, he tells Dora that she will have to make her own map. After she turns to Backpack to get paper and markers, we watch her draw her own map (Figure 4 and Figure 5). This is further reinforced when Map later inspects the map Dora drew and heartily approves. This scene seems to be very empowering for young children. One geographer related that at this point in an episode, his three-year-old daughter pauses the DVD, gets her paper and markers, and draws the map with Dora (Clarke, personal communication, November, 2009).

Figure 4. Dora has to draw her own map because Map was carried off by a bird (Photo courtesy of Nickelodeon).

Figure 5. Dora is pleased to show viewers the map she drew taking us past the flower garden and corn field to the mountain (Photo courtesy of Nickelodeon).
Other Geography Knowledge and Skills Embedded in *Dora the Explorer*

The use of maps in *Dora the Explorer* is its basic tie to geography. It is often said that geography is, "the study of the mappable." That is to say, if it can be mapped it should be of concern to a geographer. In every episode of *Dora the Explorer* some route and destination is always mapped, even though it is part of a fantasy world. It can be assumed that most children who watch *Dora the Explorer* time and again understand the role of the map and can make sense of the map as the representation of the environment in which the story plays out. However, one must recognize, while *Map* interacts with viewers and instructs them to give *Dora* directions, *Dora* will go where she needs to regardless of the viewer’s answer. Enjoying the program and interacting with it is not a test of a child’s ability to use maps.

Geographers know that map-making and map-use are human activities and, as such, are subject to human frailties. But the maps in *Dora the Explorer* are timely, correct, and never misread. For example, when a kitty is stuck in the top of a tree, *Map* knows exactly where the kitty is and creates a map to get there (Carter, 2008, p. 80). Although this omnipotent capability of *Map* gives an unrealistic image of maps, it, nevertheless, introduces the concept of maps to a vast audience.

In this fantasy world there are links to reality to help educate young viewers about many different environments; *Dora the Explorer* is set in a tropical rainforest with considerable variation in the appearance of that environment. On occasion, *Dora* finds herself in distinctly different physical and cultural landscapes, including towns populated by humans.

The most geographical episode may be, "Dora’s World Adventure," an extended episode in which, *Dora* travels to France, Tanzania, Russia, and China. The map employed is a rotating global perspective with considerable detail and information in the representations of the continents as well as in the portrayal of surface cover on the continents (Figure 6). It should be noted that in this fantasy world, space and time have little meaning, for example, *Dora* is able to take a motor scooter from France to Tanzania. In one instance, *Dora* and her friends look across the ocean to see the Eiffel Tower in the distance. Nevertheless, at least the presence of an ocean and the need to travel some distance is acknowledged.

Although the show takes place in a fantasy world, children see variations in the physical environment. *Dora* and friends contend with the sun, winds, and clouds, however, the program stays away from anything threatening, and promotes caution, for instance, when near water or on steep slopes. Islands are introduced as places surrounded by water where crossing the water to get there sometimes, *Dora* and her friends travel to places with U.S. flavor (Figure 7).

Snow is also present on occasion in the travels there (although it is warm). Sometimes a tall mountain will bring on colder temperatures that come with snow. To help unscramble the season, children are asked to help *Dora* with its name. For example, snow is introduced as well as its elevations. These are important concepts to see snow in their home environment.

**Figure 6.** Snap shot from the rotating globe in *Dora the Explorer* shows us where to go (Photo credit: R. Carter).

Thoughts on Further Using *Dora the Explorer* and Geographical Knowledge on Preschoolers

After more than a decade of *Dora the Explorer* now in elementary school have specific
Knowledge and Skills

Dora the Explorer

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Figure 6. Snap shot from the rotating global image where Dora travels to France, Tanzania, Russia and China. In this exception, Map does not appear on the map but stands to the side as he shows us where to go (Photo courtesy of Nickelodeon).

are introduced as places surrounded by water and separated from other areas where crossing the water to get to an island is sometimes the task. At other times, Dora and her friends travel through a dry environment with a western U.S. flavor (Figure 7).

Snow is also present on occasion. There is snow in Russia when Dora travels there (although it is warm in China and France on that same trip). Sometimes a tall mountain will have snow at its peak, which recognizes colder temperatures that come with height. In one episode, Dora is called on to help unscramble the seasons, summer, fall, winter, and spring. To do this, children are asked to help Dora match the right image of the season with its name. For example, snow is characteristic of winter and very high elevations. These are important concepts, especially for children who will not see snow in their home environments.

Thoughts on Further Research Directions of Dora the Explorer and other Children’s Programming on Preschoolers’ Spatial Development

After more than a decade of Dora the Explorer, a large number of children now in elementary school have spent many preschool hours interacting with
Dora and Map. Likewise, there are many children of the same age who have not watched Dora the Explorer. We ask: “To what extent might the influence of Dora the Explorer be measured and evaluated, particularly in terms of geographical dimensions?” Further, “Is it possible to identify the contributions gained by children from watching Dora the Explorer in comparison to other preschool media experiences?

Currently, there are more than 40 programs on television targeted at preschool children. We ask: “How many, if any, have geographical content?” If so identified, “How might that content relate to the standards established by Dora the Explorer?,” and, further, “How might that content be different from that of Dora the Explorer?,” and, finally, “What is gained by different approaches?”

With the emergence of tablets and other interactive computing devices many new applications are being developed for the preschool audience. Other avenues yet to be explored include: “What is happening in this digital world for preschoolers in terms of geographic content?,” and, “How might that compare to the geographical approaches of Dora the Explorer?”

Finally, one might also ask: “Of the many episodes of Dora the Explorer, which ones have particular relevance to the national geography standards, and which do not?” The answers to many of these questions will provide researchers with the knowledge and opportunity to develop criteria to evaluate what might and/or should be presented in a geographical and cultural nature based on the success of Dora.

The “Beyond the Backpack” project at CSULB is designed for getting children ready to go to school. Dora the Explorer, as a recognized TV personality (DeMott, 2010), is used to introduce the Map, can be employed for the purposes of geography in the sciences and social sciences.

Dora is a young bilingual Latina. Her house and family reflect that she is part of the Mexican diaspora to Latino communities. For example, in one episode (January 6th), and attends her cousin’s party that celebrates the 15th birthday of her cousin that is turning into womanhood. Additionally, much of the cultural flavor. As such, this program has been well received. We might ask: “Do children who have been exposed to the cultural differences and if so what has been learned?” (see Guidotti-Hernandez, 2007). It has been translated into many languages, it is needed to gather more studies to evaluate how the program is used and understood. How available is this program around the world? How much does its availability vary? How is the programming is available for preschoolers in the Latino community? What is the availability of programming in the English language? How is Dora the Explorer received?

Dora the Explorer is an international program. As an explorer, Dora utilizes maps and learning tools; she is a character that the children have watched Dora the Explorer and related to the family that they are intensely engaged with the action and adventure component of the show. She is an exciting component in the development of children. We challenge researchers to further study what concepts and skills are being taught through its programming.
what might and/or should be presented to preschool children of a geographical nature based on the success of *Dora the Explorer*.

The “Beyond the Backpack” campaign in the U.S., designed to promote getting children ready to go to school, employs the character, *Backpack*, from *Dora the Explorer* as a recognized image for young children and their parents (DeMott, 2010). From this, researchers might examine how the character, *Map*, can be employed for the betterment of geographic education and the sciences and social sciences.

*Dora* is a young bilingual Latina who lives in a fantasy Latino world. Her house and family reflect that culture because she visits towns comfortable to Latino communities. For example, *Dora* celebrates “Three Kings Day,” (January 6th), and attends her cousin’s *Quinceañera*, a special birthday party that celebrates the 15th birthday of a girl marking her transition into young womanhood. Additionally, much of the music in the series has a Latino flavor. As such, this program has a cultural geography dimension, and one might ask: “Do children who have watched *Dora the Explorer* recognize any cultural differences and if so what do they take away from the experience?” (see Guidotti-Hernandez, 2007). Because *Dora* is seen in many countries and translated into many languages, it should be possible to perform cross-cultural studies to evaluate how the program is viewed and how the character, *Map*, is used and understood. How available is this educational and entertaining program around the world? How is it accessed and by whom? What other programming is available for preschoolers in the areas where *Dora the Explorer* is received?

**Conclusion**

*Dora the Explorer* is a cultural phenomenon of worldwide dimensions. As an explorer, *Dora* utilizes maps to go places, yet we have not been able to find any studies that have measured whether map skills of preschoolers have increased and/or improved after watching *Dora*. Millions of children have watched *Dora the Explorer* and reportedly many of those viewers have been intensely engaged with the action in the many episodes. Because there is geographic content in most episodes, we can assume this program is an important component in the development of geographic concepts and skills of children aged two to five. We challenge researchers in geographic education to identify what concepts and skills are being developed and build on that content, as well as, in other children’s programming with geographic and spatial content.
References


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