“The STEM & Literacy educational approach allowed for my students and teachers to think outside the box. I highly recommend that anyone in the field of Early Childhood Education implements this program throughout the school year.”

- Giselle Cohen, MA Ed. H.D.
  CentroNia, EHS Director, Baltimore Head Start
Destination Imagination

Destination Imagination (DI) is a non-profit organization headquartered in Cherry Hill, NJ with international operations in more than 30 countries. DI provides programs for students that teach the creative process from imagination to innovation. DI’s mission is to develop opportunities that inspire the global community of learners to utilize diverse approaches in applying 21st century skills and creativity.

DI is committed to offering programs whose validity is established by rigorous research. Creativity, critical thinking and social learning skills were the subjects of tests conducted by the Curry School of Education in 2011, which reported strongly favorable results. “On measures of creative and critical thinking, students who participated in the DI program outperformed comparable control participants across the results of the evaluation,” reports Tracy C. Misset, along with Dr. Carolyn M. Callahan and Dr. Holly Hertberg-Davis of the University of Virginia’s Curry School of Education (full report available online at DestinationImagination.org).

The Destination Imagination Early Learning Program consists of three major components: STEM and Literacy Pathways, Rising Stars! and Instant Challenge. These programs are designed to give young learners a foundation in STEM, creative and critical thinking, and literacy to ready them for subsequent learning. DI’s approach uses children’s imaginations and social interactions to help them structure learning strategies and knowledge.
The Creative Process

Recognize
• Becoming aware of a challenge or opportunity within a domain of interest
• Possibility thinking; problem finding
• Maintaining a healthy state of mind (alertness, attitude, brain health)

Imagine
• Applying thinking skills to develop ideas for solutions
• Learning to think flexibly between divergent and convergent processes
• Learning fluency and future thinking

Initiate & Collaborate
• Using process and design thinking
• Taking risks and learning to control behavior
• Working in a collaborative manner
• Learning and practicing interpersonal and leadership skills

Assess
• Monitoring progress; sometimes requires starting over or admitting failure

Evaluate & Celebrate
• Reflecting on the experience, resources, teamwork, and celebrating the solution
Every year, Destination Imagination writers develop a new Rising Stars! for Early Learners Challenge. It focuses on creating a fun learning environment and allowing kids to be creative. Rising Stars! is a non-competitive program that mirrors the Destination Imagination Program. Teams assemble toward the beginning of the school year and develop their Challenge solutions over a long period of time (typically 3-5 months). Rising Stars! Challenges bring fun, educational topics into the creative process, engaging students and teaching 21st century skills.

The Rising Stars! for Early Learners Challenge offers simple experiences with the creative process, and it gives young children (4-7 years old) a place to work together and make new friends.

**The Rising Stars! Challenge:**

- Encourages creative discovery and teamwork in a fun environment
- Aligns with any budget affordably, and can easily be started or incorporated into school, day care or other programs
- Teaches basic story development and script writing, as well as simple building and construction
- Encourages performing in front of an audience
- Is noncompetitive, but offers a tournament showcase option
**Instant Challenges**

Instant Challenge is an essential element of all Destination Imagination programs. Both Pathways and Rising Stars! contain sets of Instant Challenges appropriate for early learners. These Challenges are short, engaging activities that allow students to practice collaboration along with their creative and critical thinking skills. Instant Challenges provide opportunities for assessment in the classroom and can also serve as points of self-evaluation for students. Each Instant Challenge should be followed by a discussion of the group’s successes and areas of improvement. Processing questions that follow Instant Challenges allow students to develop deeper understanding of the principles explored in the Challenge.

“DI is truly making a difference in the lives of kids. It’s helping develop them into amazing adults who have a great ability to think critically, use their imagination, and work together.”

– Tracy Hakenjos, Parent and Team Manager
STEM & Literacy Pathways

Destination Imagination has developed a unique approach to support educational readiness in STEM and literacy concepts. While these areas of education are not historically associated with education at the pre-k and kindergarten grade levels, a philosophical shift in the US is leading states to begin including STEM content in early childhood learning standards. In light of this shift, DI created STEM and Literacy Pathways for Early Learners to provide teachers with resources to meaningfully engage students in creative learning while building STEM and literacy skills.

Pathways is aligned with the Common Core Standards. The activities, Transitions and Feedback Loop Questions can be linked to fulfillment of all key Common Core domains.

- All of the materials promote a strong level of engagement, creativity and curiosity among early learners.
- In the physical development and health domain, the activities engage early learners in spatial recognition and teach them about health through food preparation and consumption.
- Through the activities that require self-awareness, as well as teamwork, students foster their own social and emotional development.
- With the suggested reading accompanying each theme, early learners will work on language comprehension and vocabulary acquisition as well as develop a greater understanding of the world around them.
- Mathematics, counting and number recognition are embedded throughout the activities.
Engaging Early Learners

Destination Imagination Early Learning programs engage early learners in the following experiences:

- Being intellectually engaged, absorbed and challenged
- Engaging in extended interactions (e.g., conversations, discussions, exchanges of views, arguments, participation in planning of work)
- Conducting sustained investigations of aspects of their own environment and experiences worthy of their interest, knowledge and understanding
- Taking initiative in a range of activities and accepting responsibility for what is accomplished
- Experiencing the satisfaction that can come from overcoming obstacles and setbacks and solving problems
- Having confidence in their own intellectual powers and their own questions
- Helping others to discover things and to understand them better
- Making suggestions to others and expressing appreciation of others’ efforts and accomplishments
- Applying their developing basic oral language, literacy, mathematical, scientific, technology and engineering skills in purposeful ways
- Feeling that they belong to a group of their peers

DI’s early education pedagogical methods support the basic dispositions that all children are innately curious and eager to explore their environment and learn about a wide variety of causes and effects. These programs provide a wide range of contexts for young children to learn and grow.
What’s Included

STEM and Literacy Pathways for Early Learners is a resource for teachers to help guide students to understanding essential STEM and literacy concepts as well as develop key social and emotional skills integral to the development of early learners. The resource contains:

- 90 activities arranged in 16 curriculum-friendly themes
- Instant Challenges for team building and skill development
- Take-home activities to increase parent involvement
- A set of Transition activities for each theme to continue the learning process throughout the day
- Feedback Loop Questions to help teachers and students develop deeper understanding of the skills and concepts

The following pages contain samples from one theme in Pathways, “Shapes All Around Me,” including the theme activities, Transitions, Feedback Loop Questions, Instant Challenge and take-home activity.
Theme: Shapes All Around Me

**Suggested Reading:** *The Shape of Me and Other Stuff: Dr. Seuss's Surprising Word Book* by Tish Rabe

The Theme: Shapes All Around Me teaches the children about basic geometric shapes, both two and three-dimensional. Don’t be afraid to use the mathematical names for the geometric shapes. If they can say Tyrannosaurus Rex, they can say cylinder! STEM concepts of technology, engineering, and mathematics are incorporated in this theme. By the conclusion, the children will be able to point out different geometric shapes wherever they go!

### Activity 1: The Shape of Things

**Instructions:** The teacher holds up a basic geometric shape. The children find an object in the room with a similar shape and they point to it.

**Teacher Guide:** "The Shape of Things" teaches the children to identify geometric shapes and discover objects in the classroom that match the identified shape. Help the children realize there is more than one correct answer in this activity.

**Materials:** Shape cutouts from the Resource section

### Activity 2: Sorting Shapes

**Instructions:** The teacher provides pairs of children with a set of basic geometric shape cutouts. The teacher talks to the children about the attributes of the shapes: color, shape, size, and number of corners. The partners decide how to sort their shapes. The partners tell which attribute they used to sort. Repeat the sorting at least two more times.

**Teacher Guide:** The children will learn more about comparing attributes in "Sorting Shapes." Use the geometric shape cutouts from the Resource section (or classroom blocks of basic shapes). Each pair of children should have a set of shapes to use. Let the partners decide how to sort the shapes into two piles according to what they notice about the shapes. Call on a few partners to tell which attribute they used to sort.

**Materials:** Set of 6 geometric shape cutouts from Resource section

### Activity 3: Form the Shape

**Instructions:** The children walk in a circle. The teacher asks them to form a square. The children are encouraged to be creative, such as lying on the floor or using each other to form a shape. The children should act out 3-5 different two-dimensional geometric shapes using teamwork. There are no materials for this activity.

**Teacher Guide:** "Form the Shape" will get the children up and moving! They will be forming two-dimensional geometric shapes with their bodies. The children can form a huge shape (circle, square, triangle, etc.) as an entire class or in small groups. Ask the children for the next shape to form.
Transitions: Shapes All Around Me

Comprised of a series of simple activities, Transitions are meant to continue the learning of the week in every situation. Transitions are great pick-me-ups and can be facilitated while walking, cleaning, moving, etc. Try your own!

Movement

**Instructions:** The children move from their seats to the group area and sit in a circle.

**Teacher Guide:** Call the children to sit in the large group area forming a basic geometric shape as they are seated. Start with a circle and change it to a square or triangle at another time the whole group gathers.

Problem Solving

**Instructions:** The teacher asks the children what geometric shapes they can make with their fingers/hands.

**Teacher Guide:** Before beginning this Transition, demonstrate how to make a few of the basic geometric shapes with your fingers. Then ask the children to use their fingers or hands to make the shapes as you name them.

Math (similarities and differences)

**Instructions:** The teacher instructs the children to count all the circles they see as they move from one location in the building to another. The shape changes with each trip.

**Teacher Guide:** The children identify all the circles they can find as they go to another location in the building. You can help the children keep track by counting and having the children repeat the number back. Change the desired shape on the return trip.

Communication

**Instructions:** The teacher instructs the children to form their mouths in the shape of a circle and then talk to a partner. The teacher should then ask the children to decide whether they sound the same or different.

**Teacher Guide:** This is a fun and quick Transition. For additional reinforcement, as the children make a circle with their mouths ask them to name their favorite shape. Did they pick the same shape as their partner or was it different?

Teamwork

**Instructions:** Each child places a piece of paper on the floor so that together, all the pieces create a geometric shape.

**Teacher Guide:** Start with a very large two-dimensional geometric shape made out of butcher paper and cut into several pieces with curvy edges (this makes it easier to fit back together). A variation is to use only square pieces of paper and ask the children to form a big rectangle and then form a big square.
Feedback Loop Questions

Here are some examples of open-ended questions that will help the children internalize each week’s concepts. Remember that it is your job as the facilitator to allow the children to connect the learning dots themselves. Please supplement the provided questions with your own.

How is a circle different from a square?

What is the shape of a car tire? What would happen if a tire was square?

Which shapes fit together?

What shape would you like to be? Why?

What is your favorite shape?

If you could make up a new shape, what would it look like?

Name two things that have the same shape.

Name the shape of your favorite food.

How would you change a square into a circle?

Can you make a circle out of pretzel sticks? Try it.
Tall Tower
Task Based

CHALLENGE (Read aloud to young learners):
Working together, make a tower as tall as you can, using the cups on the table.

ADULTS:
Provide 60-100 paper or plastic cups (8-10 oz. size works best) on a flat surface and give the students 10 minutes to build a tower as tall as possible. Be sure to let the children knock down the towers when done!

PROCESSING QUESTIONS (Read aloud):
1. Why would you want to build a tower?
2. Have you ever been at the top of a tower? What did it feel like?
3. How do things look from the top of a tower?
Teachers: Please photocopy and cut out enough notes for all of the children in your classroom to take home.

Take-Home Component
Theme: Shapes All Around Me
Shapes in My Neighborhood

Take a walk in your neighborhood. Help your child find and identify different shapes in your neighborhood, such as squares, rectangles, circles, triangles.

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# Common Core Standards

Pathways was designed to be flexible and adaptable to any set of curriculum standards for pre-K and kindergarten. The following pages demonstrate the alignment with the Common Core Standards for early learning. Using this alignment as a guide, Pathways themes can be aligned with a variety of other state and private standards.

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<td>Model with mathematics</td>
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<td>Use appropriate tools strategically</td>
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<td>Attend to precision</td>
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<td>Look for and make use of structure</td>
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<td>Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning</td>
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<td>Know number names and the count sequence</td>
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<td>Count to tell the number of objects</td>
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<td>Compare numbers</td>
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<td>Understand addition as putting together and adding to, and understand subtraction as taking apart and taking from</td>
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<td>Work with numbers 11-19 to gain foundations for place value</td>
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<td>Describe and compare measurable attributes</td>
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<td>Classify objects and count the number of objects in each category</td>
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<td>Identify and describe shapes (squares, circles, triangles, rectangles, hexagons, cubes, cones, cylinders, and spheres)</td>
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<td>Analyze, compare, create, and compose shapes and patterns</td>
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<td>Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic</td>
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<td>Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened</td>
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<td>With guidance and support from adults, respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed</td>
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<td>With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including collaboration with peers</td>
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<td>Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., express opinions about the project)</td>
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<td>With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question</td>
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<td>Demonstrate increasing understanding of the organization of basic features of print</td>
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<td>Demonstrate increasing understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes)</td>
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Choose one method. Payment must be enclosed with this application. Please print or type.

- **Check #**
  - Make checks payable to Destination Imagination, Inc.
  - In US Dollars only

- **Money Order**
  - Payable to Destination Imagination, Inc.

- **Purchase Order**
  - PO must be signed. Enclose or fax copy. We ship as directed by the PO.

**Credit Card: Select one:**
- [ ] Visa
- [ ] Master Card
- [ ] American Express
- [ ] Discover

**Card Number**

**CCV Code**

Exp. Date (mm/yy)

**Cardholder Name** - Must match billing address information

**Cardholder Signature**

**Phone Number**
“These materials give children a ‘sense of wonder’ and have been fully supported by the STEM & Literacy educational approach for our Head Start children.”

- Barb Bartels, Baltimore City Head Start
Inspire love of learning in young students using Destination Imagination’s early learning programs.