COMPLETING THE CURRICULUM

SUMMARY

Destination Imagination (DI) is a cause-driven, volunteer-led, non-profit organization. Our purpose is to inspire and equip students to become the next generation of innovators and leaders. Annually, DI produces fun and engaging academic Challenges that give students the opportunity to learn and experience the creative process from imagination to innovation. Student teams solve our open-ended Challenges that incorporate STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), the arts, and service learning disciplines and can present their solutions at tournaments.

Since its inception in 1982, DI has grown from a non-profit startup into an organization that offers programs for students of all ages across the United States and in more than 30 countries. The organization has more than 1.5 million alumni. Today, more than 150,000 children and more than 38,000 adult volunteers take part in DI programs each year.

Our programs are reviewed annually to ensure they are relevant and align to National Education Standards, STEM standards, ELA Common Core Standards and Mathematics Common Core Standards. Every year, with the help of parent volunteers, educators, and subject matter experts, we design new and exciting Challenges for student teams to solve.

THE CHALLENGE PROGRAM

The DI Challenge Program is a project-based learning program that begins with the fall school semester each year. Elementary, middle, high school and university students form teams of up to seven members, and each team selects one of seven Challenges. With the guidance of a teacher or parent as Team Manager, each team creates an action plan and works together for weeks or months to develop and create a solution to the Challenge.

Each year, more than 1,400 teams advancing from local, state and country-level tournaments earn a spot at Global Finals, held in May at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

These students will be the ones that take the rockets NASA is working on now to destinations unknown.

- Tammy Rowan, NASA
THE CREATIVE PROCESS

Our goal at DI is to give students the opportunity to learn and experience the creative process. The creative process consists of five stages. These stages do not represent a linear progression but rather comprise elements that guide students from imagination to innovation.

Stage One: Recognize
This stage is extremely important. Mindfulness, positive attitude and attribution, brain health awareness, and curiosity enable students to not only prepare themselves for challenge solving but also prepare them to identify opportunities.

Stage Two: Imagine
Once a challenge/problem is identified, the student will learn how to explore mental options. Imagination is defined as the mental capacity to transcend time, place and circumstance: future thinking, exploration, risk analysis, novelty and creativity. The student is provided tools and techniques to enhance fluency and novel thought.

Stage Three: Initiate & Collaborate
This stage is where students build ego-strength. The stage is designed to give students creative confidence to voice their unique ideas and to pursue well-thought-out options. Students learn how to be non-judgmental in fluency and how to make a selection from a variety of options. This stage complements in-school curriculum and teaches students to develop and implement a project plan.

Stage Four: Assess
In this stage, students learn to manage a project’s execution by monitoring and controlling the process. Budgets, risks and progress against their plan are key components of stage four. Sometimes the Assess stage requires students to return to earlier stages.

Stage Five: Evaluate
In this stage, students reflect on their progress or project completion. If the project is complete and the team is pleased with the result, then this is the stage where they celebrate and reflect on their project success. If the project does not meet expectations, then they may have to return to earlier stages to complete the project. In any case, students learn to reflect on lessons learned and to celebrate the closing of the project even if the project did not have the desired end result.
**THE URGENT ISSUE**

The future of our students, workforce, nation and world is on the line. Our students are preparing to enter a dramatically changing workplace, one that will require a new, dynamic skill set.

According to a 2012 survey conducted by the American Management Association (AMA), employees are lacking in key analytical skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication. Three-quarters of the 768 managers and other executives who were surveyed said that this analytical skill set will become ever important as the workplace continues to change and expand. In addition, the managers and executives reported that 21st century skills, including critical thinking, communication and team building, are priorities for job applicants.

Project management is another skill in high demand. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, 95% of executives identified project management as the “single most important skill” for their current and future success.

Here’s the problem: educators and parents today are not prepared to foster these skills. Even our youngest parents and educators grew up in a remarkably different world than that of their children.

Traditional education is in urgent need of complementary programs focused on teaching students how to become world-class innovators and critical thinkers. DI fills that need. As participants create solutions to DI’s STEM, artistic and service learning Challenges, they learn a remarkable set of skills, tools and methods that transforms the way they solve problems for the rest of their lives. Research and independent studies have taught us it is possible to transform the way a person thinks and interacts with others. We have seen how our programs can positively affect the way that our participants approach problems and find solutions. DI is at the forefront of a movement to get beyond the rhetoric and meet the challenge of preparing all young people for the future.

**THE ARGUMENT FOR DI**

DI has developed a new caliber of programming.

We have garnered partners like 3M and Oracle Academy because of our commitment to developing engaging, educational Challenges. Our Challenge program is connected to national educational standards, and our Challenges engage students, create workforce development opportunities, and lead to scholarships, internships and increased interest in specific industries. Participants gain a corporate audience interested in new talent, and they have invaluable experiences that will affect them for years to come.

DI is focused on cultivating 21st century skills to prepare students for college, career and life.

Students must learn to adapt to change and apply personal skills to achieve their future goals. Our Challenges are developed every year by volunteers who are experts in their given fields. Our development cycle ensures our subject matter is relevant to current trends and participants never have the same experience twice. Our participants learn to see the similarities between problems they face, and they learn to apply the creative process to solve those problems.

DI teaches in fun and rewarding environments.

DI stresses process above outcome. Participants learn to work together in comfortable settings like homes or schools, and we provide materials so every team can learn the creative process on their own timetable. Teams present their Challenge solutions to live audiences in fun-filled tournaments, where our Appraisers are trained to reward points to teams for their achievements.

DI encourages teams to take ownership of their solutions.

Because of that ownership, our participants become engaged with learning the creative process on their own terms, so they can apply the process when they face problems in the future.

DI Challenges are varied and multifaceted.

Our Challenges are developed for a wide range of student interests, and every student can participate in DI. Our Challenges have evolved over time to better complement traditional school curricula for a more complete educational experience. We offer Technical, Scientific, Fine Arts, Improvisational, Engineering and Service Learning Challenges. We also provide a noncompetitive Early Learning Challenge.

“DI is the best thing you will ever do for your child’s education, as well as for helping to shape their future as an innovator and leader.”

- Melissa Dick, Parent & Team Manager
IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES

DI is in the vanguard with other thought leaders who say we need to shift our educational and business focus toward process. Too often, our children are left with the idea that higher achievement simply means trying harder or working longer. However, success does not often stem from more work, but rather in changing tactics—in other words, working differently and more effectively. Dramatically different results can happen, but only if we focus on the nature of the process with which we approach and solve problems.

In the 21st century, we will reach our greatest achievements only by reimagining our current approaches. DI program participants learn to innovate solutions by taking unique approaches to problems. The creative process releases them from the constraints, limitations and over reliance on linear thinking to which they are bound.

Our past and current corporate sponsors share our view of shifting the traditional culture and way of thinking in schools and in the workforce. Among our esteemed sponsors are: 3M Corporation, PCG Education, Mayo Clinic, Motorola Solutions Foundation, IBM and Oracle Academy.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

We invite you to join DI in giving students everywhere the opportunity to train their imaginations for creative ventures and learn in ways they may have never considered. We know that once you take the first step, you will be hooked, and like so many others, you’ll come back again and again. Help enable students everywhere to experience the creative process by taking part in an extraordinary community-based experience. Visit our website at DestinationImagination.org for more information.

“DI taught me how to think creatively. As a scientist, I think differently than other people, and it is certainly an advantage.”

- Lauren Zarzar, Ph.D, Harvard Graduate