



Building Tomorrow's Leaders:
One Challenge at a Time



Why Destination ImagiNation? The White Paper

Executive Summary

Destination ImagiNation® is a leading-edge organization dedicated to teaching participants the essential skills of creativity, teamwork, and problem solving. Traditional education is in urgent need of complementary programs focused on teaching students how to be world-class innovators and critical thinkers. Destination ImagiNation fills that urgent need.

In just over 10 years, Destination ImagiNation 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. Today, 100,000 children and more than 30,000 adult volunteers take part in the Destination ImagiNation program each year. The Destination ImagiNation program—developed jointly with the renowned Center for Creative Learning and The Creative Problem Solving Group—provides children a transformative experience that shifts their worldview for the rest of their personal and professional lives.

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. A 2006 poll of 431 employers around the world reported “workers of the incoming generation... sorely lack in workplace skills.” Three-fourths of these employers judged creativity and innovation to be among the top-five applied skills, and they believe these skills will continue to increase in importance for future graduates (eSchool News, October 2006). According to a growing cadre of government, business and academic thinkers, the “new basic skills of the 21st century” are creativity, innovation, teamwork, the ability to manage change, and communication.

Here’s the problem: educators and parents today are not well prepared to foster these skills. This is less a criticism than an observation that even our youngest parents and educators grew up in a remarkably different world than that of their children.

Destination ImagiNation participants gain the dynamic skill set required for future success. Five decades of social and scientific research in Creative Problem Solving (CPS) have taught us it is possible to transform the way a person thinks and interacts with others. We have seen how the process of CPS can positively affect the way that our participants approach problems and find solutions. Destination ImagiNation is at the forefront of a movement to get beyond the rhetoric and meet the challenge of preparing all young people for the future.

Imagine the Possibilities

Destination ImagiNation 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 the greatest heights of achievement only by re-imagining our current approaches and processes. Destination ImagiNation participants learn to innovate solutions by taking unique approaches to problems. The processes and tools of Creative Problem Solving release 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, the National Dairy Council, Syfy, and the Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM) – one of the largest, most powerful industrial associations in the world. Past sponsors include Federal Express, Best Buy, Velcro USA, and Bank of America.



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The Destination ImagiNation Program

To meet the critical educational need to teach students how to be world-class innovators and critical thinkers, Destination ImagiNation provides a number of extraordinary “hands-on and minds-on” experiences that teach creativity, teamwork, and problem solving. As our name suggests, the Destination ImagiNation experience returns students to an unfettered state where anything is possible. Best of all, our participants learn how to communicate their experiences to others.

Our main program is a 5-month global problem solving tournament that begins with the fall school semester each year. Elementary, middle and high school students form teams of up to seven members, and each team selects one of seven mind-bending Challenges created by Destination ImagiNation volunteers. 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’s proposed problem. From the U.S to China, Poland, Colombia and Brazil, student creativity is unleashed in astonishing ways under the auspices of Destination ImagiNation.

Each year, 1,000 teams advancing from local, state, and country-level tournaments have the opportunity to compete at Destination ImagiNation’s Global tournament held in May at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

The Argument for Destination ImagiNation

Destination ImagiNation programs and Challenges connect to national standards. Destination ImagiNation programs are academically based and correspond to educational standards. Our Team Challenges are focused on one or more of the following areas:

- Technical/Mechanical Design
- Scientific Exploration
- Theatrical/Literary/Fine Arts
- Improvisation
- Structural/Architectural Design
- Service Learning/Youth Empowerment

Destination ImagiNation is for everyone. Every student can excel and experience tremendous personal development in Destination ImagiNation. Our Challenges are created to call on various learning styles, skills, and talents, so our program draws out the best from an array of student populations. Additionally, team dynamics are critical to success in the program. Destination ImagiNation is truly designed so “no child will be left behind.”

Our vision is that every child on the planet will eventually have access to this amazing program, so we have built our program with affordability in mind. We are a non-profit comprised of numerous, coordinated local chapters run by an army of dedicated volunteers. Quite simply, students, teachers and schools can take part in our program at low cost.

Destination ImagiNation encourages personal development.

Students will be able to: solve engaging, open-ended Challenges; learn to never give up; become self-reliant and organized; set and attain high expectations and personal goals; work as a team; manage conflicts in a positive way; develop an appreciation for their own personal problem solving style and the styles of others; recognize and appreciate differences; learn to manage time; be optimistic; learn to use technology, tools, and machinery safely and effectively; and communicate their experiences.

The Bottom Line: Destination ImagiNation prepares 21st-

century learners. For students to stay competent and competitive in the world, they must learn powerful processes that will help them deal with new and unique situations. Destination ImagiNation provides students from Pre-K through University level practical tools that can be applied in the classroom as well as life.

START A TEAM Join the Movement

We invite you to join Destination ImagiNation in giving students everywhere the opportunity to learn in ways you or 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 us bring creativity, teamwork and problem solving to all students, and take part in an extraordinary community-based experience. Visit our Web site at www.IDODI.org for more information.



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Destination ImagiNation: In Their Words

"DI taught me problem solving and how to think creatively. As a scientist, I've noticed how differently I think than other people, and it is certainly an advantage."

Harvard University - Lauren Zarzar, Chemistry Graduate Student

"Participating in the program for ten years has given me the skills and education to fully realize my own dreams of public service to the American people and global community."

U.S. State Department - Rebecca Middendorf, Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator

"The skills that I developed in Destination ImagiNation have allowed me to excel in the workforce. When I have children, I will ensure they are given the same opportunities to participate and succeed in DI."

Northrop Grumman Corporation - Lara Kopf, Project Manager

"Creative Problem Solving has been a way of life for me since I was 8 years old, and it continues to be a vital part of my life. I look back on my competitive experiences in DI with such great fondness that I wish every child could have the same experiences I have had."

Lexmark International/MIT graduate - Simon Dodd, Senior Engineer

"I think every child in America should be competing in DI—every single child should become involved, be part of a team, be innovative, and be able to work outside the box."

Federal Express - Russell Musgrove, Managing Director for Global Vehicles

"We can't teach our children everything that they need to know, but Destination ImagiNation provides opportunities for them to think, take risks, and work together to solve common problems—traits that will get them to rule the world."

United States Department of Education - Raymond Simon, Deputy Secretary

"What we see in DI is a reflection of our values as a company. It prepares children for the workplace. You see creativity blossoming."

3M Corporation - Alex Cirillo, VP, 3M Foundation

"So many of the skills emphasized in the program are crucial in the environment I work in today. Chief among these are teamwork, quick and logical thinking, improvisation, and problem solving. Every pilot knows the importance of these traits as well as hard work, discipline, and determination. Each and every one of these skills is taught in the DI program. I am extremely thankful for the things I learned years back, as they continue to play such a large part in my everyday life."

United States Navy - LT (JG), Matt Noble, Helicopter Pilot

"Destination ImagiNation has proven to be an outstanding program which facilitates problem solving, critical thinking, risk-taking, and leadership skills development. DI helps students become confident innovators who can problem-solve successfully and work cooperatively with others. They carry these valuable skills for the rest of their lives."

Elementary School Principal - Marjatta Chapman, Lac la Hache, British Columbia

"DI has taught me not to limit my daughter to what I think her abilities are, but to allow her to show me what her abilities are."

DI Parent - Susan McNally, Elk Grove, California

What we see in DI is a reflection of our values as a company. It prepares children for the workplace. You see creativity blossoming.