

Creativity Runs Wild

Destination Imagination Puts Students' Skills To Test In Competition

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Now is the time to positively influence youth and educate them on life's basic and complex necessities. This is where the volunteer-led organization Destination Imagination helps shape the futures of around 150,000 students.

Destination Imagination, or DI, is a creative outlet based on learning STEM principles and displaying them in a theatrical manner. The aim is to develop 21st-Century skills such as team building, problem-solving and confident public speaking.

"DI has taught me how to creatively think," sophomore Ruby O'Brien said. "It's also taught me how to build off my other teammates' ideas."

The beginning of a DI journey involves putting together a team consisting of at least two people and one team manager. Once your team has been decided, all that's left to do is choose the category you will be competing in and then your challenge can begin.

"DI is a great way to learn how to work with a team," sophomore Lucy Decherd said. "I've learned problem solving skills and how to quickly work through them."

One can participate in DI as early as kindergarten. However, students who wait to begin in high school or even college can still gain valuable experiences.

"This is my first year and so far DI has taught me a lot of skills that I wouldn't learn in school," sophomore Zoe Lehmann said. "I also get to talk with people I would never have been able to talk to before."

Within the overall genre of DI, there are eight different types of challenges teams can participate in including: service learning, fine arts, scientific, technical, improvisational, engineering, rising stars and instant challenge, which is required by all teams at competitions. Although they are different, each category requires a skit to be performed, executing their solution for the given challenge that year.

"This year, we really wanted to challenge ourselves so we chose to compete in fine arts and technical," junior Audrey Holcombe said. "We chose two challenges because we wanted to expand our knowledge in wiring and coding."

Each year, every challenge has a different task that needs to be proven in its eight-minute performance. An example of a challenge would be the service team category, where last year all their props had to fit into one box. This year, the challenge is to have a theme of escaping with suspense.

"Having a difficult task that has to be completed to qualify makes it hard," O'Brien said. "Thinking outside the box is what makes the challenge in general more fun."

An instance challenge, or IC, can last anywhere between five to 10 minutes. As an appraiser reads the rules out loud, the team reads along with its own piece of paper. There are three possible challenges that could be presented to a team: improv, building or a hybrid of both.

"Instant challenges really work your brain and get you to be creative," junior Josie Breazeale said. "I realized that without practice it can be difficult to come up with such creative ideas on the spot."

The judges score the team based on whether or not the challenge was successfully completed, how well the team worked together and on many more aspects regarding the challenge. Points can also be deducted because of team managers.

“My first thought was to be quiet. Don’t let them lose points because of me,” Team Manager and Parent Jennifer Holcombe said. “But my proudest moment was seeing them display exceptional teamwork.”

Outside interference, including from the team manager, is not allowed. Even though they can’t interfere, team managers keep the team on track, provide practice instant challenges and make sure safety precautions are being followed.

“There’s a lot of nervousness, anticipation and curiosity going into it,” Team Manager Alex Holcombe said. “But I can’t make facial expressions, move or anything. I just have to sit there and be emotionless, which is hard to do.”

At each school in the district, there are teachers who are aware of DI, constantly checking in and offering their time for instant challenge practices.

“I love the creativity and working with such creative minds just makes my day,” High School DI Advisor And History Teacher Jan Takac said. “To creatively solve a bizarre instant challenge is exhilarating.”

Throughout the annual DI experience, there are three different stages of competition, spread out about a month apart. Regionals comes first, then state and at last globals. Globals is the dream of all fellow DI’ers. Teams from all over the world come together and compete while just having fun and being excited that their teams made it all the way to the end.

“Globals was a fun new experience,” an eighth grader said. “It gave us a chance to show off our knowledge through performance, and obtain knowledge through other teams and exposure.”

Along with competing at globals, teams go to theme parties and interact with other teams during pin trading. Each team creates a pin that represents their act and challenge. At competitions, they continue trading pins with other teams until they’re satisfied with what they collected, at least until next year.

“Pin trading is important because it gets the teams to connect with each other,” a sixth grader said. “It’s also my favorite part of competition because it lets the team de-stress and I can add more pins to my collection.”

All in all, DI provides a fun and engaging atmosphere for students to grow and prosper, making unforgettable memories with their current and newfound friends.

“To me, DI is this amazing organization that helps foster kids’ creativity and takes that love of learning they have in elementary school all the way through college,” High School Principal Dr. Cordell Jones said. “Destination Imagination is near and dear to my heart and I will always love it.”