

My Family's Journey with Destination Imagination

If I had to say I have a passion, it would be a program my family has been involved with for 3 years now. It is an afterschool program called Destination Imagination (DI for short, www.idodi.org, Colorado website www.extremecreativity.org). Kids from kindergarten through even college age, gather together into teams with their peers to solve a multi-level problem or challenge, over a span of several months. The teams are led by an adult (preferably two!) who are called the Team Managers. The kids choose from the following 7 types of challenges: theatre/arts, science, improvisational, mechanical engineering, structural engineering, or a community service project. Only the students decide what ideas they will use to solve the challenge. Only they can build whatever is required.

Three years ago our 2 boys were both introduced to the program. Teams may consist up to 7 team members. Our younger son was on a team where the competition level was for kindergarteners through 2nd graders. They had to build a structure out of newspaper that could support the weight of as many as their team members as possible, create a skit, & costumes to go along with a simple story line. This level of competition is called Rising Stars. They present their challenge at a regional DI tournament in March. All Rising Star team members receive a medal & high praise for what they've done.

Our older son's team competed at the elementary school level for 3rd - 5th graders. He competed with one team for 2 years. Their team always chose the mechanical engineering challenge. Every year has been rewarding, as we as parents watched them build with power tools, create these amazing mechanical devices & structures, props, & costumes. To see them go through the year long process & compete at their regional DI tournament, advance to the state competition

held at the Auraria campus in Denver in April, & last year advance to the final level of competition- Global Finals at the University of Tennessee campus, has been one of the big thrills of my life. No matter how a team does at the competition, the real winning for each team takes place throughout the course of the year, as each DI team learns to work together in a group, speak up & share ideas, work with different personalities, become a leader, be creative, think outside of the box, uses hand tools or power tools & actually build something that moves, discover how much they can really do as individuals, & bring it all together. The skills that students learn in DI carry over into their adult lives, as they confront problems within their workplace & even problems of our world. And for those adults who have the privilege to work with these amazing children, they too, learn these same skills. I have learned so much through DI. I have a more open mind. And I let my children try to solve their own problems without me immediately wanting to interfere or say what I think they should do.

This year my children are at a new school which did not have a DI program. I feel so strongly about DI as an chance for all children who may be seeking this kind of an opportunity, I have started the program at their new school. We hoped to have enough student interest for at least just one DI team. Well, we have 2 DI teams! Our teams are hard at work doing the “Assembly Required” & “Hold It!” challenges.

I invite you to attend one of your local area regional tournaments. Tournament info can be found at <http://www.extremecreativity.org/tournaments> Feel free to come anytime on that day, sit in the audience, & get ready to be amazed at what our FUTURE citizens are... doing right now!