

# COMPLEMENTING THE CURRICULUM



**THE WHITE  
PAPER**

## Executive Summary

Destination Imagination, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that creates programs to teach the creative process. Our namesake program is an educational program where student teams solve open-ended Challenges and can present their solutions at tournaments.

Since its inception, Destination Imagination, Inc. 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 125,000 children and more than 38,000 adult volunteers take part in Destination Imagination, Inc. programs each year.

## 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 skills needed for success, 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, communication and the ability to manage change.

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 be world-class innovators and critical thinkers. Destination Imagination fills that need. As participants create solutions to Destination Imagination 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. Destination Imagination, Inc. 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, Inc. 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 re-imagining our current approaches. Destination Imagination 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, Ameresco, Thinkfun, Motorola Mobility Foundation and Motorola Solutions Foundation. Past sponsors include the National Dairy Council, the Association of Equipment Manufacturers, Federal Express, Best Buy, Velcro USA and Bank of America.

## The Destination Imagination Program

Destination Imagination is a fun, inquiry-guided group learning program 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 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’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, 1,200 teams advancing from local, state, and country-level tournaments earn a spot at Destination Imagination’s Global Finals, held in May at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

## The Argument for Destination Imagination

**Destination Imagination is recognized for developing a new caliber of educational programming.**

We have garnered partners like 3M and Ameresco because of our commitment to developing engaging, educational Challenges. Our award-winning 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.

**Destination Imagination is focused on cultivating 21st-century skills through the creative process.**

Students must learn to adapt to change and apply their 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.

**Destination Imagination teaches in fun and rewarding environments.**

Destination Imagination stresses process above outcome. Participants learn to work together in comfortable settings like their 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.

**Destination Imagination encourages teams to take complete 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.

**Destination Imagination Challenges are varied and multifaceted.**

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

## ✓ 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 the creative process to all students, and take part in an extraordinary community-based experience. Visit our website at [DestinationImagination.org](http://DestinationImagination.org) for more information.

## Testimonials

“Destination Imagination 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.”

**Lauren Zarzar** - Chemistry Graduate Student, Harvard University

---

“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.”

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

---

“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 the program.”

**Lara Kopf** – Project Manager, Northrop Grumman Corporation

---

“The students of today are going to have multiple careers, and so the skill sets they need are much different. It’s not just about memorization and knowledge. It’s about teamwork, learning and a lot about Destination Imagination’s principles as well: collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving.”

**D.R. Whidder** – Executive Director of Innovation, Philadelphia University

---

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

**Russell Musgrove** – Managing Director for Global Vehicles, Federal Express

“Destination Imagination provides opportunities for [our children] to think, take risks, and work together to solve common problems—traits that will get them to rule the world.”

**Raymond Simon** – Deputy Secretary, United States Department of Education

---

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

**Alex Cirillo** – VP, 3M Foundation, 3M Corporation

---

“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 Destination Imagination. I am extremely thankful for the things I learned years ago, as they continue to play a large part in my everyday life.”

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

---

“Destination Imagination has proven to be an outstanding program that facilitates problem solving, critical thinking, risk-taking and leadership skills development. It 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.”

**Marjatta Chapman** – Elementary School Principal, Lac la Hache, British Columbia

---

“Destination Imagination 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.”

**Susan McNally** – DI Parent, Elk Grove, California