

How to Grow Your DI Program

Have you ever been to a DI Tournament and been amazed at the number of teams there from just one school? Then you think about your DI program and how hard it is to get a single team going.

Why is DI so strong in some areas and barely surviving in others? What so different between the two programs? It all boils down to one thing:

The difference is ONE person. That's right. Just one person. Somebody just like you. Somebody who felt DI was so important that he or she made a commitment to grow the program.

Perhaps that person is a parent who saw the impact DI had in his child's life. Maybe it's a teacher who loves working on creative problem solving. It might be a person who would have loved DI as a child or who loves the creative outlet DI provides in her life. But it all started with just one person who cared.

This year we decided to find out what these strong programs did to get so many kids out for DI and to keep them involved. We surveyed individuals from 28 top DI schools in the state. The results are compiled below for you to look at.

You'll have a chance to find out:

- How these programs recruit so many kids into the program.
- How they keep the spirit alive during the season and build excitement.
- How they end the season on a high note.
- How they make sure kids get lots of recognition and kudos for being involved in DI.
- How they get kids excited about being in DI the next fall.

Strong DI programs don't just happen by accident. It just takes one person — someone just like you — to move the program to a whole new level. And it's not about doing all the work by yourself; it's about inviting and recruiting other adults to help in the process.

Use the ideas below as guidelines for growing your DI program, but use your own creativity and talents too. There is no right way to make it happen. The possibilities are endless.

The real key to growing DI is people like YOU! We really appreciate your commitment to the program. Please let us know how we can help!

This set of activities can be done at any level in any organization – at the school level or the district level, organized within a school district or as part of any other organization. We have listed major activities that could take place during specific times of the year. Linked to each major time of the year and to each activity is an expanded list, including specific tasks and links to documents you might want to use during that activity. Feel free to download the documents provided and customize them for your own use (we have provided both MS Word documents and pdf files). The copyrighted Parent’s magazine article, however, must be used as noted in the beginning of that document, and is only available as a pdf file). The source for this web page is also available to you, since it can provide you a customizable “list of things to do”. ([Growing DI Word Doc](#), [Growing DI pdf file](#)).

Anytime

- Communicate everything all the time to increase name recognition
- Hang permanent DI posters in schools with current announcements
- Conduct classes on Creative Problem Solving
- Hold Instant Challenge sessions, possibly a problem-solving fair
- Have a designated DI station in the media center
- Create a web site for your organization
- Make DI a lettering activity for high-school kids

Late summer or early fall, before the season begins:

- Create publicity plan for the coming year
- Hand out information at Open House
- Visit classrooms
- Hold information sessions – launch the season!!!
- Hold mini-DI sampler session (to recruit for this year)
- Recruit students who are new to the district

During the DI season

- Hold Instant Challenge sessions
- Conduct classes on Creative Problem Solving
- Hold district show prior to tournaments
- Show team performances during arts / academics / imagination fairs

After the Regional Tournament

- Put article in local newspaper, school newsletters, school news programs
- Celebrate, with an awards ceremony recognizing all teams
- Have teams perform for other students
- Have teams perform for school PTA / school board
- Hold mini-DI sampler sessions (to recruit for the next year)
- Encourage people to attend the State Tournament

After the State Tournament

- Put article in local newspaper, school newsletters, school news programs
- Send flyers home to have people pre-register for the next year

- Put next fall's information nights on district-wide calendar

After Globals, during the Summer

- Put article in local newspaper, school newsletters, school news programs
- Participate in local parades and festivals
- Hold CPS classes or events– either formally as part of summer school or informally as neighborhood events
- Plan the season launch – find out when all the open houses occur

Detailed Lists of tasks for each activity

Anytime

Communicate everything all the time to increase name recognition

- Put as many events as possible on the district calendar.
- Put articles in school (or organization) newsletters – include quotes from kids wherever possible (use first name only when quoting unless you have permission) (the DI alumni association is compiling a list of quotes that could be used by anyone).
- Send flyers home via schools, or in US Mail using postcards or letters.
- Hang posters in schools.
- Put information in local newspapers.
- Get colorful flyers, posters, Power Point Presentation, borrow the DI, Inc. video whenever needed (contact Karen Arnold for these materials).
- Complete set of helpful documents:
 - *Minnesota Introduction to DI* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *Using Your Imagination Parenting magazine article* (pdf file only)
 - *Creativity in the Workforce* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *DI and Education Standards* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *How to Get Local Media Coverage* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *Press Release Model* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *Benefits of being a Team Manager* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *How to Run a Sampler Seminar* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *DI High School Lettering Criteria* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *Sample Course Description* (Word Document or pdf file)

Hang permanent DI posters in schools with current announcements

- Use the vertical DI marketing poster, but augment it with a space for posting announcements. The announcements can be sent to one building contact per building.

Conduct classes on Creative Problem Solving

- Teach a class on creative problem solving (being done by Greg Adams at St. Paul Open School) (see sample course description listed below).

- Can be during the school year, or part of a summer school program, or during noon recess.
- Elective at the High School level (or independent study).
- Helpful documents:
 - ***DI and Education Standards*** (Word Document or pdf file)
 - ***Using Your Imagination magazine article*** (pdf file only)
 - ***Sample Course Description*** (Word Document or pdf file)

Hold Instant Challenge sessions, or possibly a Problem-Solving Fair

- Promote the sessions via flyers, newspaper articles, etc.
- Sign up either as groups of 5-7 kids, or individually (you put the groups together). Each group must also provide one adult (to be with the group), and one volunteer (to run an Instant Challenge).
- Find or create 6 Instant Challenges, each of which takes 12 minutes to introduce, run and debrief the group. (If you have 12 groups, you create 2 tracks, with 6 groups in each track, if you have 18 groups, you create 3 tracks, etc.)
- Train your volunteers to run the instant challenges while someone does some improv exercises with all the kids.
- Each group then rotates through each of the six instant challenges.
- At the end, each volunteer describes particularly amazing solutions.
- Variations: Can be done as a cooperative effort where each group brings their own Instant Challenge for their volunteer to run for the other groups. Can be done as a tournament and give out awards; can be a fund-raiser if you charge groups from other districts to compete.
- Can be done after school, in the evening, or during noon recess.
- For example Instant Challenges, refer to the list on the Minnesota DI home page.

Have a designated DI station in the media center:

- CPS books
- Improvisation books
- Contact list for local organization
- Books found in the Team Manager's Guide reference section

Create a web site for your organization

- Create a domain name and register it
- Have a volunteer create and maintain the site
- For an example, see www.hopkinsdi.org

Make DI a lettering activity for high-school kids

- See the example from White Bear Lake: ***DI Lettering Criteria*** (Word Document or pdf file)

During early fall, before the season begins:

Create publicity plan for the season

- Find out the contact information for the local newspaper, school or organization newspapers, school news programs. Engage your organization's communication person in this process.
- Make sure you have a reliable contact person in each school. Sometimes the gifted and talented programs will help in this. Regardless of whether or not they are your main contact, make sure you include the G&T people in all information distribution.
- Send out introductory information, include information on the overall program, and let them know when the tournaments are, and tell them you will send them an update after the tournament.
- Complete set of helpful documents:
 - *Minnesota Introduction to DI* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *Using Your Imagination Parenting magazine article* (pdf file only)
 - *Creativity in the Workforce* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *DI and Education Standards* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *How to Get Local Media Coverage* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *Press Release Model* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *Benefits of being a Team Manager* (Word Document or pdf file)

Hand out information at open house

- Schedule coverage at all the schools Open Houses or at some well-attended organization event.
- Use enthusiastic TMs/parents/team members as volunteers, if necessary.
- Continuously show the DI video (contact Karen Arnold to borrow the DI, Inc. video).
- Helpful documents:
 - *Minnesota Introduction to DI* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *Using Your Imagination Parenting magazine article* (pdf file only)
 - *Creativity in the Workforce* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *DI and Education Standards* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *Benefits of being a Team Manager* (Word Document or pdf file)

Visit classrooms

- Do performance and task-based Instant Challenges with the class (See Minnesota DI home page for examples of ICs and improv ideas).
- Show the video if allowed (Contact Karen Arnold to borrow the DI, Inc. video).
- Briefly discuss this year's challenges (whet the appetite!)

Hold information sessions – launch the season!!!

- Make sure rooms are reserved and the dates are on the district calendar before school ends the year before.
- Send flyers home about the information session.
- Write announcements to be read daily for entire week prior to the meeting.
- Put article in local newspaper(s) to advertise the information sessions.

- Invite enthusiastic TMs/parents/team members to the sessions to help answer questions from the various perspectives. Also ask previous TMs to invite others who may be interested in being part of the program.
- Engage the whole group in at least one IC.
- Show video of local team's performance, if high enough quality video.
- Cookies and juice are always a big hit.
- Helpful documents:
 - Published synopses and challenges
 - This year's important dates (registration deadline, training, TM meetings, exhibitions, tournaments)
 - Sign-in sheet for all attendees – name, grade, phone number
 - DI Lettering Criteria for high schoolers
 - *Minnesota Introduction to DI* ([Word Document](#) or [pdf file](#))
 - *Using Your Imagination Parenting magazine article* ([pdf file only](#))
 - *Creativity in the Workforce* ([Word Document](#) or [pdf file](#))
 - *DI and Education Standards* ([Word Document](#) or [pdf file](#))
 - *Benefits of being a Team Manager* ([Word Document](#) or [pdf file](#))
 - Contact [Karen Arnold](#) to borrow DI, Inc. video or pick up colorful flyers

Hold mini-DI sampler session (to recruit for this year)

- Run a Saturday afternoon sampler session, that through a series of Instant Challenges, groups of kids create a structure, a statue, a costume, script, set, and perform their solution (entire session is about 3.5 hours in length).
- This can be held either before the information session (to generate interest) or after the information session (to give people who are hesitant a chance to try DI before committing to an entire season).
- Helpful documents:
 - *How to Run a Sampler Seminar* ([Word Document](#) or [pdf file](#))
 - *Minnesota Introduction to DI* ([Word Document](#) or [pdf file](#))
 - *Using Your Imagination Parenting magazine article* ([pdf file only](#))
 - *Benefits of being a Team Manager* ([Word Document](#) or [pdf file](#))

Recruit students who are new to the district

- Find out who the new students are and set up a process to routinely mail them a packet of information about DI in this district.
- Particularly appropriate materials:
 - Contact list for your organization
 - *Minnesota Introduction to DI* ([Word Document](#) or [pdf file](#))
 - *Using Your Imagination Parenting magazine article* ([pdf file only](#))

During the DI season

Hold Instant Challenge sessions, or possibly a Problem-Solving Fair

- Promote the sessions via flyers, newspaper articles, etc.

- Sign up either as groups of 5-7 kids, or individually (you put the groups together). Each group must also provide one adult (to be with the group), and one volunteer (to run an Instant Challenge). These groups can be teams that are competing this season, or other groups of kids who want to participate in just Instant Challenges.
- Find or create 6 Instant Challenges, each of which takes 12 minutes to introduce, run and debrief the group. (If you have 12 groups, you create 2 tracks, with 6 groups in each track, if you have 18 groups, you create 3 tracks, etc.)
- Train your volunteers to run the instant challenges while someone does some improv exercises with all the kids.
- Each group then rotates through each of the six instant challenges.
- At the end, each volunteer describes particularly amazing solutions.
- Variations: Can be done as a cooperative effort where each group brings their own Instant Challenge for their volunteer to run for the other groups. Can be done as a tournament and give out awards; can be a fund-raiser if you charge groups from other districts to compete.
- Can be done after school, in the evening, or during noon recess.
- For example Instant Challenges, refer to the list on the [Minnesota DI home page](#).

Conduct classes on Creative Problem Solving or Techniques useful to DI: script-writing, costume creation, set-building, special effects, engineering.

- Teach a class on creative problem solving (being done by Greg Adams at St. Paul Open School).
- Can be during the school year, or part of a summer school program, or during noon recess.
- Elective at the High School level (or independent study.)
- Helpful documents:
 - ***DI and Education Standards*** ([Word Document](#) or [pdf file](#))
 - ***Using Your Imagination magazine article*** ([pdf file only](#))
 - ***Sample Course Description*** ([Word Document](#) or [pdf file](#))

Hold a show prior to tournaments

- Can be held at the school level, district level, or for the general community as an Exhibition.
- Exhibition can be run “like a tournament without Appraisers” – realistic with improv items, correct amount of time, with an audience. Can also include an Instant Challenge in another room, similar to a tournament.
- If held within a school, the show can be directed at a few grades, or for the whole school.
- Describe the overall program, demonstrate an IC with people from the audience if possible.
- Hand out summaries of the challenges, introduce the actual challenges before each performance so that the audience knows what to look for in the presentations.
- Helpful documents:
 - ***Minnesota Introduction to DI*** ([Word Document](#) or [pdf file](#))
 - ***Using Your Imagination Parenting magazine article*** ([pdf file only](#))

- ***DI and Education Standards*** (Word Document or pdf file)
- Contact Karen Arnold to borrow DI, Inc. video or pick up colorful flyers.

Show team performances during arts / academics / imagination fairs

- Describe the overall program, demonstrate an IC with people from the audience if possible.
- Show videotapes of performances from kids in your district or show the DI, Inc. video (Contact Karen Arnold to borrow the video).
- If any teams are ready, have them perform. (Hand out summaries of the challenges, introduce the actual challenges before each performance so that the audience knows what to look for in the presentations.)
- Helpful documents:
 - ***Minnesota Introduction to DI*** (Word Document or pdf file)
 - ***Using Your Imagination Parenting magazine article*** (pdf file only)
 - ***DI and Education Standards*** (Word Document or pdf file)
 - ***Benefits of being a Team Manager*** (Word Document or pdf file)
 - Contact Karen Arnold to pick up colorful flyers.
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After the Regional Tournament

Put article in local newspaper, school newsletters, school news programs

- Find out ahead of time the contact information for each of the above.
- Show video from a team's performance on the school news program.
- Include information on the overall program, and as much specific information as possible about all teams that placed.
- Include quotes from kids.
- Include information about the Minnesota DI tournament, inviting people to attend. For those teams competing at State, include enough information to entice people to watch.
- Helpful documents:
 - ***How to Get Local Media Coverage*** (Word Document or pdf file)
 - ***Press Release Model*** (Word Document or pdf file)

Celebrate, with an awards ceremony recognizing all teams

- Have each TM recognize the achievements of each member of each team.
- Instant Challenge materials make good centerpieces and a good activity.
- Can be a simple banquet style, with deserts only.
- Give something concrete – a trophy, or mementos from the TMs (see DINI list for ideas?)
- Can also have district ceremony for all who place – hold it at or before a school board meeting, or during other district event.

Have teams perform for other students

- Describe the overall program, demonstrate an IC with people from the audience if possible.

- Can perform for individual classes, a few grades, the whole school or organization, or the general community.
- Hand out summaries of the challenges, introduce the actual challenges before each performance so that the audience knows what to look for in the presentations.
- Helpful documents:
 - *Minnesota Introduction to DI* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *Using Your Imagination Parenting magazine article* (pdf file only)
 - Contact Karen Arnold to borrow DI, Inc. video or pick up colorful flyers.
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Have teams perform for school PTA / School Board

- Describe the overall program, demonstrate an IC with people from the audience if possible.
- Hand out summaries of the challenges, introduce the actual challenges before each performance so that the audience knows what to look for in the presentations.
- Helpful documents:
 - *Minnesota Introduction to DI* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *Using Your Imagination Parenting magazine article* (pdf file only)
 - *Creativity in the Workforce* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *DI and Education Standards* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - Contact Karen Arnold to borrow DI Inc. video or pick up colorful flyers.

Hold mini-DI sampler sessions (to recruit for the next year)

- Run a Saturday afternoon sampler session, that through a series of Instant Challenges, groups of kids create a structure, a statue, a costume, script, set, and perform their solution (entire session is about 3.5 hours in length).
- Encourage participants to attend the State DI Tournament to see the end result of a full season of DI, if you are located near the Metro area.
- Helpful documents:
 - *How to Run a Sampler Seminar* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *Minnesota Introduction to DI* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *Using Your Imagination Parenting magazine article* (pdf file only)
 - *Benefits of being a Team Manager* (Word Document or pdf file)

Encourage people to attend the State Tournament

- Send flyers to everyone who participated, as well as everyone who attended sampler sessions and / or information sessions – can be a postcard.
- Include time and location of advancing teams.
- If you send a letter, you can also include a synopsis of each challenge.

After the State Tournament

Put article in local newspaper, school newsletters, school news programs

- Find out ahead of time the contact information for each of the above.

- Include information on the overall program, and as much specific information as possible about all teams that placed.
- Include quotes from kids.
- Include information about Global Finals, including the Globals website.
- Helpful documents:
 - *How to Get Local Media Coverage* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *Press Release Model* (Word Document or pdf file)

Pre-register for the next year

Announce the information session date, if you know it.

- Announce the program, include registration information (offer a discount for pre-registering?)
- Announce any other DI-related activities (such as fund-raisers).

Put information nights on district-wide calendar

- Reserve rooms for next fall, usually in late September or early October.
- Contact district communications person to put it on the district and school calendars.

After Globals, during the Summer

Put article in local newspaper, school newsletters, school news programs

- Find out ahead of time the contact information for each of the above.
- Include information on the overall program, and as much specific information as possible about all teams that placed.
- Include quotes from kids.
- Helpful documents:
 - *How to Get Local Media Coverage* (Word Document or pdf file)
 - *Press Release Model* (Word Document or pdf file)

Participate in local parades and local festivals

- Contact any organization that donated money and see if they want you to march next to their float.
- Consider having your own float or group of kids marching in costume with a banner.

Hold CPS classes or events— either formally as part of summer school or informally as neighborhood events

Plan the season launch – find out when all the open houses occur, schedule sampler session(s), find enthusiastic TMs / parents / team members as volunteers

The Minnesota DI Advisory Board is comprised of Team Managers, Appraisors, Regional Challenge Masters, State Challenge Masters, Tournament Directors, Students, Alumni, and other at large representatives. They recommend ideas for general program improvement. A primary initiative of the Advisory Board for the 2001/2002 season was to provide concrete ideas and materials to help organizations grow their DI programs. This could not have been done without the dedication of the DI Survey Crew: Karen Karbo, Linda Highhill, Kathy Steiger, and Pat Borchert, the additional materials supplied by Jill Konrath and the web assistance of Barb Kostial. We would also like to thank the many

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