

Destination: Students ImagiNation

Mounds View School District has several schools participating in program

by Stephen Harding
Staff Writer

SHOREVIEW — What do the theater and engineering have in common? Typically, nothing; however, students who participate in Destination ImagiNation find out that the two go hand-in-hand.

Destination ImagiNation is a community-based, school-friendly program that combines theater, science, fine arts and mechanical skills into challenges that must be solved by teams.

Mounds View School District's Community Education Director Lois Croft said schools in the district have participated in Destination ImagiNation for several years.

It's a fee-based program that costs \$80 to join and is run mainly by parent volunteers. Croft said the money goes toward entrance fees for tournaments, training parent managers and other costs associated with the program.

Teams are made up of seven or fewer students who spend eight weeks or more preparing their team challenges they will solve at the regional Destination ImagiNation held March 8 at Blaine High School.

Chippewa Middle School and Turtle Lake and Island Lake elementary schools, among others, are sending teams to the tournament this year.

At the tournament, teams will have to complete their team challenges and also what is known as an instant challenge.

Kathy Condie, team manager for two Chippewa Middle School teams, said much of the teams' time is spent preparing for instant challenges. The students receive a list of several possible instant challenges which they they might be given.

After the challenge is given, the team has to solve the problem with only five minutes to create props, and plan and perform a skit for judges. A typical performance lasts up to two minutes.

An example of one of the instant challenges is "In The Mirror" which is a takeoff of Alice in Wonderland. The team has to create a story about what happens when it walks through the mirror into a different world.

The team is given one poster board, five colored markers, two pairs of scissors and two pieces of foil. The idea is for the students to work as a strong, cohesive group. Teams earn points for creativity of props



- Submitted photo

Chippewa Middle School's eighth grade Destination ImagiNation team from left to right top row: Catherine Shen, Alyssa Belsito and Kim Nagel. Middle Row: Hope Uggen, Xander Condie and Christopher Hemstad. Bottom: Zach Laughlin.

and in performance and how well members work together.

Condie manages a team of eighth graders and another that is a mixture of sixth- and seventh-graders. Last year her eighth-grade team made it to the state tournament, and the younger team placed third in its region.

When the team practices and performs its challenge, Condie cannot help in any way other than to give direction and keep the students on task.

"I can tell them their project isn't clear. I can't tell them how to clear it up," she said.

Last year her eighth-grade team had to build a structure out of balsa wood and glue that weighed 22 grams or less, which is the same weight as two tablespoons of butter.

Along with building the structure, the team also had to write, produce and act in a story that involved their structure. The structure was able to hold over 200 pounds.

Condie said the eighth-grade team has grown so much while

she's been with them.

"The older they get, the less I have to do," she said.

The group members have learned from each other's skills, according to Condie. She said each child has a strength and the team works together, playing off each member's strengths.

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