

## **So...**

You have volunteered to manage a DI team this year. *Yay for you!!!* 😊😊😊 And thank you!! You are providing a huge service to the children on your team, and you are in for a fun, exciting, and rewarding ride.

Now, you may be asking yourself, “What have I gotten myself into???” Here are a few tips that may help you as you begin this journey:

**1. Take advantage of the resources available to you.**

Carefully read the challenge that your team will solve. Also read the “Roadmap,” and become familiar with the “Rules of the Road.” These are all booklets that you will receive once you purchase your DI team number, and DI has put them together in a readable format to help people like YOU. Also, if you possibly can, attend an in-person training session. Training will be offered in Wauwatosa in late October or early November, and there will also be an on-line version. (More details will be available soon.) Team managers who receive some form of training have a more positive DI experience than those who don’t. Investing your time early in the season, in reading through your program materials and participating in a training session, can pay big dividends through the rest of the year.

**2. Make photocopies of your challenge**, and give a copy to all your team members (although, please note: copyright rules limit you to 10 copies). At one of your first meetings, you will want to read over the challenge carefully with the kids, and you should continue to refer to it throughout the season. Don’t assume your kids will remember what the challenge says! If you have a competitive team (as opposed to Rising Stars), pay special attention to the section titled “Reward Points,” which outlines the scoring for your challenge. See p. 42 of the Roadmap for more tips on reading the challenge.

**3. Have a plan for your meetings**, but understand that your team may not stick closely to the plan. DI teams often take an unexpected route toward solving their challenge. The Roadmap is a terrific guide for how to hold meetings, from the very beginning of the season through the tournament. We recommend you use it!! (If you have a Rising Stars team, the Rising Stars booklet has excellent tips for running meetings on pp. 8-14.)

**4. Work with your team to set guidelines**, such as “No interrupting other people,” “Respect everyone’s ideas,” and “Don’t use art materials without permission.” Team

managers sometimes become frustrated and burned out because they have not established boundaries for themselves, their time, and their home. Similarly, team members can wind up with hurt feelings if you don't establish and enforce guidelines about mutual respect. Watch out for the child who is quiet or who may feel shy about contributing ideas, and try to draw him or her into team discussions.

5. **Remember that DI is not like other kids' activities**, such as scouting, sports, or a school play. With those activities, adult leaders can tell the kids what to do, and how to do it. In DI, we would call that "interference," and it's a strict no-no for competitive teams. The team members themselves must generate all the ideas themselves and do all their own work. As the team manager, this means that you sometimes have to watch them make mistakes, and try something that will ultimately fail. It can be hard to keep your mouth shut, and not intervene! But this is the genius of DI—because kids learn by doing, and by persevering through occasional failure. However, the Interference rules do not mean that you can never help kids acquire skills, nor that you leave them alone during their meetings. You still have a responsibility to help them understand their challenge, to keep them on schedule, to keep them safe, and to help them manage any conflicts that may arise. For more information about what is and isn't considered Interference, see pp. 13-16 of the "Rules of the Road." (Please note: Rising Stars do not have the same rules regarding interference, but the children will learn more and have more fun if their team managers let them do most of the work themselves.)
6. **Your team will almost certainly encounter conflict**, even if it is just a mild disagreement among friends. Sometimes conflict can completely stop your team from moving ahead. The Roadmap has good tips on how to understand and manage conflict. See especially pp. 14-15, 79, and 91.
7. **Expect a certain level of chaos with DI.** The non-interference rule can be hard on kids, as well as adults. In our culture, they are accustomed to asking for the "right" answer, and to receiving a lot of direction and coaching from the adults in their lives. At times, they may feel frustrated and discouraged, and you may, too. Hang in there!
8. **Ask for help when you need it.** See if another parent on the team can provide snacks, or take the team to the hardware store to purchase materials, or open his or her home for a meeting. You don't have to do it all. If you have questions or problems, ask a fellow team manager or your DI coordinator for advice. We can provide you with an experienced team manager who can serve as a mentor. We can even line up high school DI students to attend one of your team meetings, which we have found to be very helpful, since sometimes kids are more likely to listen to a teenager than to an adult. Feel free to contact Anne Coulling, the regional DI coordinator, for advice or assistance: [anne.coulling@wisconsin.org](mailto:anne.coulling@wisconsin.org), 262-501-8153. You don't have to do this alone!