

# Destination Imagination Teams Rock!

By Christie Coll  
Destination Imagination Coordinator

Saturday morning, March 25, dawned bright and sunny as 30 kids, eight managers, and many, many parents gathered at the AE/MS parking lot to begin the 20-minute caravan to Kearsarge Regional High School. Once there, our five Destination Imagination (DI) teams joined 55 other teams from around the state to participate in the regional DI tournament.

Each year teams from around New Hampshire, the United States, and even from around the world eagerly await September 1 and the unveiling of six new challenge problems developed by Destination Imagination. DI is a world-wide, volunteer-run program that promotes the development of creativity, problem solving, effective communication, time management, and teamwork. DI also requires that the participants solve these problems totally independent of adult input.

Come March, teams frantically put the finishing touches on their props and skits and compete first at regional tournaments, then at state finals, and finally at global competition in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Our youngest team, called the Rising Stars, consisted of six first graders: Jacqui Morris, Nicholas Stiles, Griffin Merriman, Cope Makechnie, Ainsley Goodwin, and Curtis Chamberlin, plus four-year-old Madalyn Goodwin. Patiently coached by Renee Goodwin and Megan Coll, this team went through the entire DI process. They wrote a script, developed costumes, created back-

ground scenery, and performed their original story of a dragon that loses his scales and ends up visiting Santa at the North Pole to retrieve them. Our team performed beautifully and received wonderful compliments and encouragement from the judges.

Our youngest competitive team consisted of second grader Tyler Holman, third grader Samantha Underdahl, and fourth graders Emily Lance, Emma Walker, and Seth Newton. They were en-



Rebekah Stearns, the DI Gnome, and Shannon Haley at KRHS.

Photo: Katherine Stearns

thusiastically coached by Susanne Underdahl and Cass Walker. Their play involved a magical hat from Germany that turned one of their characters into a dog. It also featured an original song and dance.

Mr. Murphy led one of our middle school teams as they explored the world of improv. They spent months researching different environments and animals and also practicing "on the spot" performances. Brendan Coll, Will Hen-

riques, Alec Walker, Patrick Allen, Elise Goodwin, Elizabeth Stearns, and Amy Lamos received glowing compliments on their fourth-place performance after just 30 minutes of planning and rehearsal.

Our second middle school team included one ninth grader from Merrimack Valley High School. Abby Lance from MVHS and Becca Lance, Ashley Lamson, Danielle Adams, Stephanie Nelson, and Chantal Caron from AE/MS researched Australian aborigines. Their skit involved "volleyball geeks and surfer dudes" learning to work together. One of their props featured original aboriginal picture stories based on techniques and symbology they learned during art class with Mrs. Diminico.

Our last team did not stop at Kearsarge High. The elementary team of Jason Ashburn, Katelyn Ashburn, Shannon Haley, Jessica Underdahl, and Rebekah Stearns was ably coached by Cheryl Ashburn and Katherine Stearns. Their skit of the hat that fixed the Leaning Tower of Pisa placed first and moved them forward to state finals on April 8 at Portsmouth High School. They performed well while there. They enjoyed the long day of competing against and observing the best teams from the entire state.

I want to thank all of the team managers, appraisers, volunteers, and parents for their time, support, and encouragement of the children. I especially want to thank the AE/MS staff for their patience and understanding during the winter-long process of Destination Imagination.

## NCLB Doesn't Daunt Teachers At AE/MS

By Gretchen Hildebrand  
AE/MS Second Grade Teacher

In the March 26 *Concord Monitor* article titled *Teachers: One Test + All Kids = Unfair*, several AE/MS teachers were quoted. The article focused on the federal law called No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and its impact on area schools. But even though I was quoted in the article, I don't feel that it conveyed the true sense of how Andover Elementary/Middle School is impacted by NCLB.

Andover is a separate district with unique and distinct qualities among the faculty, staff, and administration, and we have our own perspective on the federal law and how we uphold it at our school.

Kristy LaRoche, Jennifer Bent, Holly Gagne, and I all teach in different parts of the same building, sometimes sharing students, but with our own separate daily tasks. When we were asked to meet the reporter from the *Monitor* about NCLB, we had not discussed NCLB among ourselves. But during the interview we discovered that we share the same opinions of NCLB and how it influences teaching and learning at AE/MS.

### NCLB: Not An Issue

While it is true that the mandates, policies, and the undeniably punitive structure of NCLB have impacted each

of us in some way, the recurrent theme of our discussion was this: We do not think about NCLB very much here at AE/MS. It does not rule our curriculum, dampen our day, or cause us to lose sleep because:

1. The staff of AE/MS is committed to being vigilant in our focus on helping all children succeed in our school. Of course there should be no child left behind, no child slipping through the cracks or earmarked for failure in any way. We want all of our students to love learning, to get the most from their time within our walls, and to become productive and caring citizens.

2. We have administrators who provide constant reminders that all children are valuable and deserve our best effort. They encourage us to collaborate, problem-solve, create alternative ways of addressing subject matter, and look into current research, all for the benefit of serving our students' needs.

3. Our school board supports our students as much as we teachers and staff do. Our school board stays informed on current educational issues and consistently makes decisions with the students' best interests in mind.

4. The vast majority of our students' parents cares deeply about their chil-

dren and supports AE/MS in providing quality learning experiences in myriad ways. They make sacrifices of time, personal resources, and money to provide opportunities for their children individually and for their school as a whole.

So, citizens of Andover, East Andover, West Andover, Cilleyville, and Potter Place, it may be comforting to know that whether or not there is/are:

- under-funded federal mandates, and
- standardized test scores that fail to match the standards they are designed to measure, and
- threats of punitive action against schools and teachers when children fail to meet the standards, and
- no explicit definition of what "proficient" means, and
- in some districts, a frantic "teaching to the test," leaving real learning behind,

our school community lives by Mrs. Bent's statement in our interview with the *Monitor*: "For us, it is not N-C-L-B. It is A-E-M-S..."

We will always strive for excellence, fairness, and compassion, whether the government tells us to, or not!

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**2006-2007 Kindergarten**

The Andover Five Alive Program is now accepting registrations for the 2006-2007 school year. Call Robin Rego at 735-6566 or stop by The Hamp House during operating hours. Limited spaces available. Deadline for registrations is May 15.

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