

## NEW DIMENSIONS SOCCER

New Dimensions Soccer is a Learning Organization styled after the model developed by the Center for Organizational Learning at M.I.T.'s Sloan School of Management which draws the blueprint for an organization "...where people expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire," detailed in the book The Fifth Discipline; The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization.

Ours is an outreach program that is, at its heart, multicultural and generative. Multicultural in the sense that we strive to connect with refugee, immigrant children and their families new to St. Louis from such war-ravaged countries as Liberia, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Russia, to name a few. Generative in the sense that we work to help build life skills for the underprivileged, assimilate immigrants, and expose hometown children to cultural diversity. We have witnessed unparalleled growth in the two (2) short years of our existence, starting with 4 teams in June of 2005, to over 120 teams in September of 2006.

The capacity to create (and learn) is built upon five (5) principles, or disciplines, identified as crucial to the success and longevity of the organization, regardless of the nature of that organization. For our purposes, these disciplines are geared toward the establishment of a soccer movement (4v4) that will both promote the most appropriate learning environment for the sport, and attend to the development of the whole child. The ultimate focus of this effort is community betterment through the vehicle of athletics, in this case, soccer. The M.I.T. model, as well as our interpretation of the disciplines is outlined below.

The five (5) disciplines outlined at M.I.T. are as follows:

*1) Team Learning* ...the ability to dialogue by suspending assumptions and enter into "thinking together". This discipline also involves learning how to recognize patterns of interaction in teams which undermine learning.

For our purposes, team learning is facilitated by an organizational chart that is horizontal in nature, as opposed to vertical. This does not preclude the notion that, at some point, a final decision can't be made by an appointed individual, rather, it only hopes to bring forward all pertinent thinking on a topic. Moreover, each person is asked to not only state their position, but to also share any supporting data, and then ask for criticism of the idea(s).

2)*Building Shared Vision*...involves the skills of unearthing shared “pictures of the future” that foster genuine commitment and enrollment rather than compliance. For New Dimensions, much of our success has derived from the fact that we seek to partner with those who share the same goals, hold fast to those goals, and demonstrate an unwillingness to depart from what we feel “is the right thing to do.” People are here because they *want* to be here.

3)*Understanding Mental Models*...identifying unstated assumptions and generalizations about how we think and making that thinking open to the scrutiny and influence of others. Similar to *Team Building*, we embrace this discipline to allow us to question the “way we’ve always done it.” (ex.- to ask for a donation of a food dish as an entry “fee” or requirement to a tournament.)

4)*Personal Mastery*...communicating our vision in an effective manner and deepening that vision by being committed to lifelong learning of our craft. In the New Dimensions model, we strive to appropriately communicate (verbally and nonverbally) a basic respect and professionalism when representing our organization, especially in the face of open criticism, dissent, or disregard of our model. This is our code of behavior and ethics, and it must preserve the integrity of the other person. We support the lifelong learner thru quality instructional clinics.

5).*Systems Thinking (The Fifth Discipline)*...understanding the connectedness of the patterns of the world around us as opposed to only seeing events in isolation. Seeing the “whole” as greater than a sum of its parts. We understand this concept as being applicable in any sphere in which we operate. Thru this discipline, we are aided to see why longstanding problems exist, and where we can leverage a situation for change. Practically speaking, our desire is to give opportunities to those who may not otherwise have it, believing that “everyone deserves a chance.”

## **How Does New Dimensions Create the Future We Desire?**

...by providing a fun playing atmosphere that both reduces the stress of performance on children by limiting coaching and parental voices during play and thus, bringing forward the active creativity of the player in smaller-sided games (4v4). This is the single most important barometer of success, in our eyes.

...by promoting *inclusion* of all cultures interested in our model toward the goal of fostering tolerance and acceptance.

...by providing growth-promoting activities that can serve to impact the quality of a life.

## **Examples of the Above...**

The St. Louis International Youth Soccer Festival  
An Emerging International Cultural Exchange Program  
Counseling Programs and Essay Contests  
Like-Skills Workshops

Our **Mission** is the betterment of our community thru the vehicle of athletics, learning, and acceptance.

Our **Philosophy** can be summed up in the following four (4) statements...

“It’s not about winning, it’s about learning.”

“We’re playing soccer, but we’re really celebrating diversity.”

“Let the game be the teacher.”

“It’s like playing soccer in the park, only better.”