

Odyssey of the Mind

Odyssey of the Mind is an international educational program that provides creative problem-solving opportunities for students from kindergarten through college. Kids apply their creativity to solve problems that range from building mechanical devices to presenting their own interpretation of literary classics. They then bring their solutions to competition on the local, state, and World level. Thousands of teams from throughout the U.S. and from about 25 other countries participate in the program

Through this program students are put onto teams, of 5-7 students that meet several times a week over a five month time period. As a group they select a “Long Term Problem” from those provided by OM and work to create a solution that involves a presentation, props and costumes. The students develop a skit that is 8 minutes long as well as create all necessary materials needed to help the audience understand their solution. All problems contain a technical element as well. Adult coaches (comprised of parents and the OM advisor) are just that. They are not permitted to suggest ideas or assist students with their solution. In presenting their solution teams compete against other children from around the region.

Students also practice and compete to solve “Spontaneous Problems”. These problems are presented to the teams the day of competition. They are given a short amount of “think” time and then asked to give answers. Students are scored on the number of answers they provide as well as the creativity of their answers.

Teams compete in a Regional Competition in divisions based on their age level. The top two teams in each division’s problem go on to the Pennsylvania State Competition. The winners of this competition then move on to a World Competition, which is held in a predetermined area in the United States.

Odyssey of the Mind Advisor -Upper Elementary School

The Odyssey of the Mind Advisor’s biggest role is that of organizer. The following tasks are accomplished in the first month of the program’s start

- Informational Parent Meeting
- Team Coordination – Excel Spread Sheet
- Coach Selection
- Coaches Training (8 hours-Saturday)

In addition, ongoing activities include:

- Team Meetings
- Team Communications
- Coaches Meetings
- Parent communication.
- Coordinating Judges for training (early February)
- Liaison between coaches, parents and the School District
- Attending Judges Training (5 hours)

Total Students 2007/2008 (28students = 4 teams)

Teams are open to students in grades 3, 4 and 5. Students choose which problem they would like to solve and then teams are designed based on this selection. Currently there are four teams, with a waiting list. Teams we limited due to a limited number of parent coaches that were available. All members must sign a commitment to participate in practices as well as be available for both the regional and state competition dates.

Regional Competition (7:30-5:30)

The Regional Competition takes place in March. On that day, each coach is responsible for making sure their team is present and registered. Teams participate in both an opening and closing ceremony. Throughout the day, teams can watch other teams present as well as practice spontaneous problems, while waiting for their presentation times to take place. The day concludes with a closing ceremony in which winners from each division are announced.

The following Saturday, all teams are encouraged to attend a celebration party at a local establishment to honor the hard work and creativity demonstrated over the past seven months.