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www.OdysseyoftheMind.com

Fact Sheet

What is Odyssey of the Mind?

Odyssey of the Mind (OotM) is the largest worldwide creative problem-solving competition for children. The program begins anew with each school year, when five “problems” are delivered to the mailboxes of anxiously waiting, creatively juiced kids.

State and country association finals are held in March and April of each year, and the Odyssey of the Mind year culminates with World Finals, where the best of the best match wits, imaginations and personalities to become world champions.

What is the purpose of Odyssey of the Mind?

OotM's mission is to foster the development of creative thinking and problem-solving skills. Importantly, OotM teaches that great minds don't necessarily think alike – and often march to different drummers; that there are no right answers; that creative solutions come from teamwork, cooperation and risk-taking. Wouldn't you love to find that skill-set in a future employee?

Who participates in OotM?

Teams of children from kindergarten through college-age participate. All receive the same problems; however, their solutions vary – not simply because of age grouping but mostly due to the innovation and imagination of the creators.

Is OotM a school-based program?

It can be, but not always. Each team has a coach, who may be a parent, teacher or other interested adult. While most members are individual schools, home schoolers and community-based programs also participate. Additionally, OotM Association, Inc., provides curriculum and other support materials for teachers who want to integrate OotM's creative problem-solving techniques into daily classroom activities.

For example, in 1997:

Kids from 49 states, the District of Columbia and 31 countries competed in state and association finals during March and April.

June 4-7, 1997, 5,000 of the brightest and most creative young minds in the world converged on the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland, for World Finals. Imagine, all that brainpower, so close to Washington, D.C.

Solutions for the highly topical OotM problems were presented by attending teams. These problems included creating small vehicles that used different methods of energy to propel them as they travel from one point to another and break balloons; the creation of an android that mimicked a human in a humorous performance; and the depiction of scenes – including one where a team member portrayed an archeologist – that describe the logic of how and why ancient artifacts were used.

In every case, teams were judged on creativity, design and style. Additionally, their response to a “secret” spontaneous problem presented at World Finals was judged.

Fun Facts about OotM:

Teams that may travel from remote areas for the competition include those from Morocco and Kuwait. Additionally, teams from China, Japan, Argentina, New Zealand and Australia will participate.

Among distinguished and remarkable OotM alumnae is Barbara E. Walton, the author of Quantum Leap: Odyssey, a book in the popular Quantum Leap series that feature time traveler Sam Beckett. In Quantum Leap: Odyssey, Sam leaps into the body of high school student Sean O’Conner and finds himself practicing with his teammates for an OotM competition!

OotM’ers invent creative solutions for fun and for profit! Several OotM Teams have applied for patents for their projects. A Texas-based team developed the “Board Walk” a portable, less expensive version of a chair that helps a person with mobility limitations rise from a sitting to a standing position. It’s in production. Another team is exploring the possibilities of marketing a device that helps people in wheelchairs unload the washing machine. It’s a basket-shaped apparatus that fits over the agitator and lifts wet clothes from the depths of the machine.