



## What is Odyssey of the Mind?



### Overview of Odyssey of the Mind Program

The Odyssey of the Mind School Program is administered in New York State by the New York State Odyssey of the Mind Association, Inc. (NYSOMA), a not-for-profit corporation. Through its affiliation with Creative Competitions, Inc. it fosters creative thinking and problem-solving skills among participating students from kindergarten through college. Participants solve problems in a variety of areas, from building mechanical devices such as spring-driven vehicles to giving their own interpretation of literary classics. Through solving problems, students learn lifelong skills such as working with others as a team, evaluating ideas, making decisions, and creating solutions while also developing self-confidence from their experiences. Each year New York teams demonstrate these skills at numerous local, 16 regional, a state and an international competition.

Odyssey of the Mind is a worldwide event in which over one million participate.

### Why Odyssey of the Mind is Good for Kids

Odyssey of the Mind teaches students to learn creative problem-solving methods while having fun in the process. For more than twenty years, this unique program has helped teachers generate excitement in their students. By tapping into creativity, and through encouraging imaginative paths to problem solving, students learn skills that will provide them with the ability to solve problems -- great and small -- for a lifetime. Odyssey of the Mind teaches students how to think divergently by providing open-ended problems that appeal to a wide range of interests. Students learn how to identify challenges and to think creatively to solve those problems. They are free to express their ideas and suggestions without fear of criticism. The creative problem-solving process rewards thinking "outside of the box." While conventional thinking has an important place in a well-rounded education, students need to learn how to think creatively and productively.

Each year, five new competitive problems are presented for the teams to solve. These long-term problems are solved over weeks and months. Some of the problems are more technical in nature, while others are artistic or performance based. Each long-term problem rewards "Style" in the solution. This helps teach students that they should not simply try to solve problems but take the next step of enhancing their solutions. The teams are invited to participate in competition and present their solution with other teams. At the competition, the teams are given an on-the-spot "spontaneous" problem to solve. The combination of long-term problem solving, Style, and spontaneous problem solving provides a stimulating and fun experience for students.

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### ⌋ In Odyssey of the Mind . . .

- I Students learn to work together and develop team-building skills.
- I Students learn to examine problems and to identify the real challenge without limiting the possible solutions and their potential success.
- I The creative-thinking process is nurtured and developed as a problem-solving tool.
- I Students of all types will find something that will appeal to them.
- I The fun of participation leads to an elevated interest in regular classroom curricula.
- I Teachers have a program to further provide students with a well-rounded education.

### ⌋ Who Participates?

The Odyssey of the Mind program is open to all students. Over its more than 20 year history millions of students from around the world have participated in Odyssey of the Mind. Participants include teams from Australia, Benelux (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg), British Columbia, Chile, China, Croatia, Georgia, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Moldova, Ontario, Poland, Russia, Singapore, Slovakia, Turkey, Uganda, the United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, and practically every state in the United States. The annual Odyssey of the Mind World Finals is an event to behold. It embodies the international spirit of creativity.

### ⌋ Odyssey of the Mind Problems

- I **Mechanical / Vehicle** – Teams design, build and operate vehicles of various size and with various power sources to solve certain specified tasks.
- I **Classics** – Each year the creative challenge of this problem requires a solution that incorporates some element of the classical, taken either from literature, architecture or art.
- I **Performance** – In this problem, teams present performances that revolve around a specific theme and incorporate several required elements. Past themes have included “morphing” objects, animals that express human emotions, and original folktales.
- I **Structure** – Teams design and build a structure, using only balsa wood and glue. They test it to determine how much weight it can support – sometimes more than a thousand pounds!
- I **Technical** – Teams are challenged to design and build innovative contraptions and incorporate artistic elements into their solutions.