



Kent Gardens Odyssey of the Mind FAQ

Calling all engineers, writers, actors, scientists, problem-solvers, project managers, artists, and creative thinkers!

What exactly is Odyssey of the Mind? Odyssey of the Mind (OM) is an international creative problem-solving program that involves students from kindergarten through college. Odyssey of the Mind teaches students how to think in different ways by providing open-ended problems that appeal to a wide range of interests. Team members apply their critical thinking, team building and problem-solving skills to produce an original performance or presentation in a variety of areas including: mechanical/vehicle, technical performance, classics, structure and performance. Teams create solutions to this complex (Long-Term) problem by means of an 8-minute performance and also tackle an unknown (Spontaneous) problem at the tournaments. Tournaments take place on the local, state, and world levels.

What can my child gain from Odyssey of the Mind?

Odyssey of the Mind benefits students at all levels in its hands-on approach to learning. Students are encouraged to incorporate their interests into their solutions as they:

- ✓ Develop a solution to a complex problem in the form of an 8-minute skit.
- ✓ Practice creative thinking and risk-taking.
- ✓ Develop confidence in their abilities.
- ✓ Work as a part of a team, valuing each team member's ideas and contributions.
- ✓ Learn the importance of communication and collaboration.
- ✓ Do ALL of the work themselves, without assistance of those outside the team (including parents).
- ✓ Have lots of fun, make new friends, and learn at the same time!

What constitutes an OM team? Teams consist of five to seven students and one or more volunteer coaches. In elementary school, teams are organized by divisions. The primary division consists of team members in grades K-2. This division is not scored and is a great way to introduce team members to the fun world of OM in a noncompetitive environment. Division 1 consists of team members in grades 3-5, while 6th graders are in Division 2. Teams can be made up of students from different grades. In this case, the team's division is determined by the highest grade level represented. Each team must have at least one parent coach.

What is the time commitment? OM fits your schedule: as a team, you will decide when and how frequently you meet. You pick the day, the place and the time. Meetings generally last 1-2 hours, and teams usually meet about once a week. The season of OM runs until early March, culminating in the regional tournament (for those who progress to the next tournament, the season goes on into the spring).

Can I withdraw my child at any time? Once the team is formed and members begin working on their solution, they are required to be listed on the tournament registration. If a child chooses to withdraw from the program, they will still be listed on the tournament registration, and cannot be replaced.

What are the costs involved? OM is affordable, and one of the least expensive organized activities your child can join. Coaches will decide on an amount to collect at the beginning of the season, usually about \$30 per team member, that funds competition registration and a few supplies chosen by the children. Most teams use recyclables, donations and second hand props and costumes to prepare their skits, keeping the costs minimal. Additionally, the OM organization has a spending cap which is strictly enforced. The coach can keep track of expenses in the event that additional funds or a refund is necessary at the end of the season.

Who coaches the team? Generally, parents are the volunteer coaches. The best scenario is for a couple of families to serve as co-coaches so no one family faces a time burden. One of the great things about Odyssey of the Mind is that that team is NOT ALLOWED to get help from anyone outside children on the team, including coaches. As a coach, you will be there to provide the team with a safe environment and give them a means to learn new skills and work together within the necessary time limits while having fun doing it. The coach commitment is the regular meeting and some prep time, in addition to time at the day of the tournament in May. Please consider this vital and rewarding role!

How can I learn more about Odyssey of the Mind? Feel free to visit www.odysseyofthemind.com or www.novanorth.org for additional information.

How do I sign up? Complete the Interest form. Deadline to sign up is November 8, 2019. Team assignments will be sent out by the following week. Still have questions? Please contact me at katherinekokta@yahoo.com.