

CREATIVE FLAMES

The Newsletter of Northgate Odyssey of the Mind



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WHAT IS CREATIVITY?

In Odyssey of the Mind (OM) something is creative if it is both original and effective.

To be original, it must be unique or innovative. To be effective, it must serve some function or accomplish some goal. Together, a creative solution is a unique take on a problem (original) that still fits within the parameters, or rules, of the problem (effective).

To be unique alone is often odd or silly, which has a place, but often not in problem-solving. A solution that easily fulfills a purpose may help you accomplish a goal, but it will not advance our understanding of a problem or get us to better solutions.

Only by combining originality and effectiveness do we achieve innovative insights, invent new solutions, and go beyond what we thought was possible.

This is what OM is all about: thinking beyond the box. And is what our Northgate Odyssey learn and apply all year.

We congratulate all our Northgate Odyssey teams on completing another successful year of crafting original *and* effective solutions! They shined with their creativity!



Thank you to the Rikki and Larry Berger Giving Fund for sponsoring our program this year!

**Problem 1: Vehicle**

Divisions I, II, III & IV
Teams design, build and operate either a ride-on or self-contained powered vehicle with various energy sources.

**Problem 2: Technical**

Divisions I, II, III & IV
Teams create innovative contraptions and devices while incorporating artistic elements into their solutions.

**Problem 3: Classics**

Divisions I, II, III & IV
Teams research, interpret and present a performance of a classic - literature to architecture to art to mythology.

**Problem 4: Structure**

Divisions I, II, III & IV
Teams design and build a balsa wood and glue structure then test it to see how much weight it can balance and hold.

**Problem 5: Performance**

Divisions I, II, III & IV
Teams present a performance that revolves around a specific theme and incorporate required humorous elements.

**Primary: Introductory**

Grades K-2
Teams are introduced to Odyssey of the Mind with an age appropriate problem similar to a competitive one.

**Spontaneous:**

Divisions I, II, III & IV
At competition, every team is presented with a problem that is verbal, hands-on, or a combination of both. They have 10 minutes to think and solve it.



WHAT IS ODYSSEY OF THE MIND?

Odyssey of the Mind is the ultimate creative problem-solving program. OM students work together in a fun and safe environment to apply what they learn in the classroom and the program, combined with their unique interest and passions, to creatively solve unique open-ended problems. Along with important STEAM skills, students learn teamwork, budgeting, goal-setting, public speaking, and so much more. They become confident in their abilities, build friendships, and learn to express their natural creativity. Odyssey of the Mind is designed to help students at all learning levels grow as individuals, grow as a team, and reach their full potential.

WHAT IS NORTHGATE ODYSSEY?

Northgate Odyssey is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) corporation, dedicated to providing educational support to Northgate School District students by developing their creativity, divergent thinking, and problem-solving skills through Odyssey of the Mind as a parent- and volunteer-led program.

Northgate Odyssey runs Odyssey of the Mind as a school-sponsored activity in the Northgate School District. Together, Northgate Odyssey and the Northgate School District provide financial support to make Odyssey of the Mind available to all district students free of charge.

TO EXCEL & PERSEVERE

Every year begins with an impossibly complex problem. Students learn to persevere through the challenge by breaking the large problem into pieces. Additionally, they strive to attain excellence in what they do. They learn that their good can become better and their better can become their best. Perhaps more important is that they learn they are stronger as a team than as individuals. Together they attain excellence.

A SEASON OF FUN!

TOURNAMENT ROUNDUP

Welcome to Odyssey of the Mind

This was a season of rookies and veterans. In addition to three teams with veteran cores, three teams of kids new to Odyssey of the Mind (OM) joined our journey beginning in October 2024. Even on veteran teams, we welcomed new ideas and perspective that made this year's journey special.

Regardless of their past experience, all our teams worked to improve their creativity skills. They brainstormed, mindmapped, and learned to riff off one another. OM is, after all, a team activity and a team competition. Individuals can be bright, but all ideas shine more brightly when teams augment and enhance ideas together.

Spontaneous Fun Day

All six of our teams participated in Spontaneous Fun Day at Linton MS in February. Spontaneous Fun Day is a fun, warmup competition event where OM teams get a chance to practice each type of Spontaneous Problem they might encounter at the Regional Tournament.

The Regional Tournament

The Western Pennsylvania Odyssey of the Mind Regional Tournament was held at Keystone Oaks MS/HS on March 8, 2025. Six Northgate Odyssey participated: 3 from Avalon Elementary and 3 from Bellevue Elementary.

Three primary teams - 2 from Bellevue and 1 from Avalon - solved a problem that required them to create a skit about visiting two of the Seven Ancient Wonders of the World and also create an original Wonder that celebrated an achievement in our modern time.





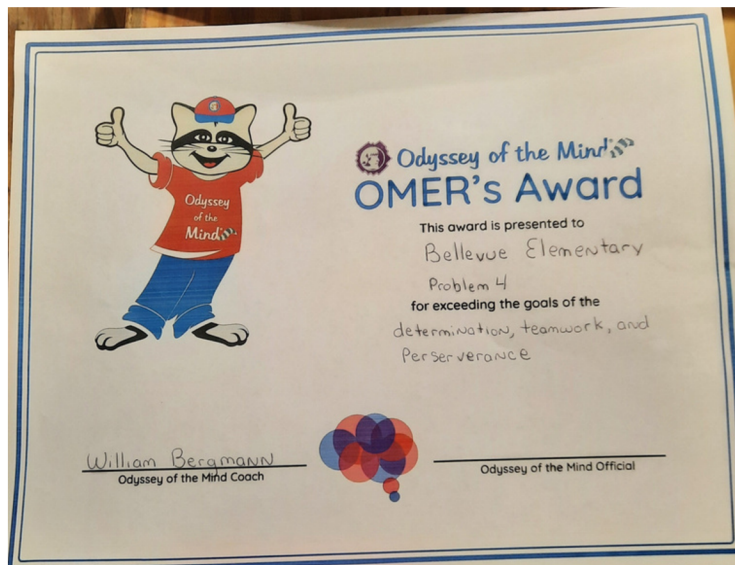
The new Division I team from Avalon (3rd & 4th graders) solved "The OM-Mazing Race," a problem that required them to design, build, and operate a riding vehicle that could navigate obstacles in a skit about a race. The team learned a lot about how to solve Odyssey of the Mind problems and performed admirably at the competition.



The veteran Division I team from Avalon (4th and 5th graders) solved "AstronOMical Odyssey," which required them to create a humorous performance about an original historical civilization and its legends about constellations and stars. The team impressively placed 6 in a tough and experienced field.



The veteran Division I team from Bellevue solved the structure problem, which included a skit about an Animal Rescue Character that had to find a home for team-created animals. Disaster struck when the teams structure was accidentally destroyed. But the team rallied, placing 3rd, earning an invitation to State Finals. They also won an OMER Award in recognition of their teamwork, determination, and perseverance.



State Finals

At State Finals on April 5, the Bellevue team did very well, placing 4th. In addition to everyone in the skit performing wonderfully, the team was thrilled that they set a new team record for weight held by their structure: 745 lbs. To put this in perspective, their structure weighed the same as three regular sheets of paper and held up the weight of a V8 engine.



Northgate Odyssey...

...finances.

Northgate Odyssey Financial Disclosure (Jan.-Dec. 2024)

GROSS CONTRIBUTIONS & INCOME	
General Contributions	\$ 1,580.00
Gross Receipts from Special Events	\$ 1,966.00
Other Income (interest)	\$ 0.08
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 3,546.08
EXPENSES	
Program Services	\$ 1,990.21
Administrative Expenses	\$ 225.82
Fundraising Expenses	\$ 1,343.05
Other Expenses from Special Events (other than fundraising)	\$ 439.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 3,998.08
NET ASSETS	
Deficit for the Year	\$ (452.00)
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	\$ 4,893.00
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	\$ 4,441.00

As a nonprofit committed to providing an accessible program for students, Northgate Odyssey strives to keep our expenses low. All our administrators and coaches are all volunteers.

Our expenses are largely associated with the purchase of materials for teams, tournament expenses, the costs of fundraising, and maintaining our website.

We do maintain some financial reserves. Some of this money allows us to address contingencies of fundraising while also supporting as many teams as we can organize. We also maintain two funds. One fund is dedicated to providing financial support to families in need so they can travel to State Finals, and another is to provide some financial support if any teams advances to World Finals.

TO THE 7 COACHES
WHO MADE THIS YEAR'S
OM EXPERIENCE ONE
AMAZING JOURNEY...

Sarah Outly ***Valerie Cupps***

Melody Detar ***Derek Detar***

Jamie Ciotti ***Bill Bergmann***

Rebecca Rukmanis

Thank you!

AND TO ALL THE PARENTS
AND FRIENDS WHO SERVED
AS JUDGES AND VOLUNTEERS
AT THE WESTERN REGIONAL
TOURNAMENT AND STATE
FINALS...

T-SHIRT DESIGN CHALLENGE!

Looking for a great summer project?

Help us create an original design for Northgate Odyssey's 2026 competition t-shirt. Here are the basic parameters:

1. The image should take inspiration from Odyssey of the Mind and/or the Northgate School District.
2. Designs must incorporate our name - Northgate Odyssey - and the year - 2026.

The challenge is open to all Northgate district students.

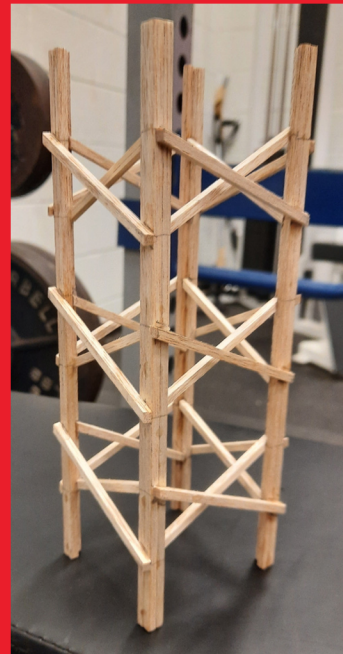
If a student's design is chosen, we will work with them to modify the design as necessary so it can be successfully screenprinted.

Submit designs and questions to northgateodyssey@gmail.com.



NORTHGATE ODYSSEY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bill Bergmann,
President/Treasurer/Program Coordinator
Lauren Rodriguez
Secretary/Treasurer
Valerie Cupps
Fundraising Coordinator



Thank you to
Superintendent Dr. Johns,
the Northgate School
Board, and all the school
principals, teachers,
administrators, and staff
who support our
Northgate
Odyssey teams!

CONTACT INFORMATION

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WEBSITE: NORTHGATEODYSSEY.ORG

MORE INFO ON O.M.

O.M. HQ - ODYSSEYOFTHEMIND.COM

PA O.M. - PAODYSSEY.COM

WESTERN PA O.M. - WPAODYSSEY.ORG



Odyssey of the Mind®

2025-2026 Long-Term Problem Synopses



Problem 1 Vehicle



Off the Rails

All aboard! OMers become conductors and engineers as they design, build, and operate a train vehicle. As the train travels the course it will have a new car attached at each stop. Along the route it will encounter challenges that make the train travel in different ways. After all of its cargo is picked up, the items will be unloaded and assembled into a work of art. The performance will also include the use of ARM & HAMMER™ Baking Soda, a humorous conductor character, and a villain character that tries to prevent the train from getting to its destination. Sponsored by ARM & HAMMER™.



Problem 2 Technical

Lost in OMERland

Getting lost often leads to unexpected opportunities! In this problem OM™ teams will design, build, and operate a Technical Trip Assistant only to find their voice activated-device has a few malfunctions that result in hilarity. While they set out to explore a new place, the device gives a humorous answer to a question, wrong directions that take them to an unexpected location, and a silly translation. All props and backdrops must fit inside two suitcases.



Problem 3 Classics

Classics... The Epic Quest

OMers, are you ready to get EPIC? Quests from history have been passed from generation to generation through many art forms, including poetry. OMers will create an epic poem that details a team-created quest that is acted out in the performance. During the quest, the characters encounter an original beast, will rescue someone, and will overcome an epic challenge. The performance will use colors to help depict different settings.



Problem 4 Structure

Life's a Ball!

Party Time! In this problem, teams will create a performance about throwing a party or a ball. The team will design and build a balsa wood structure that is tested by balancing and supporting as much weight as possible. At intervals various balls will be rolled to collide with the structure. The performance will include a creative "ball" character and a party guest that explains the impact of the collisions using team-created terms.



Problem 5 Performance

Taller Tales of John Jivery

No one can tell a story like an OMer! In this problem, teams will create and present a humorous performance about an original tall tale. The tale will include a team-created hero or heroine that performs an incredible feat, a unique explanation of how something began or came to be, and a surprise for the audience. Each event will be accompanied by a visual weather effect that represents an emotion.



Primary

Clowning Around With Science

What kind of hair do oceans have? Wavy! In this problem, OM teams will create an original performance about a group of comedy performers that teach lessons about natural science. The lessons will also include a visual effect, a sound effect, and jokes.