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Outside Assistance

Students learn best when they complete tasks on their own, and they develop a sense of pride and increased self-esteem when they go beyond what is expected. The nature of the Odyssey of the Mind program is that the team members create and execute their problem solutions using

their creativity and skills, with no assistance from others. While coaches and supports can provide some education and facilitation (within the Program guidelines), they cannot suggest or execute any part of the problem solution. To do so would be deemed Outside Assistance and

the team may be assessed a penalty on competition day.



Help can only be provided by fellow team members.

Key Points:

- All elements of solution must be made by a team member of put together by the team from commercially produced parts
- If this cannot be accomplished by the team members they must find another way to construct the item or redesign it
- Anything that changes a solution, or the appearance of the team during the performance, must be done by a team member or it is considered OA

All About OA

To ensure that team members get the full benefits of participation, and to ensure fairness, team members must design and create all aspects of their problem solution. This includes their membership sign, props, all technical requirements and costumes. These must either (1) be made by the team members or (2) be put together by the team members from commercially produced parts.

If team members are not able to make something they need, or if a coach feels the tools they wish to use are too dangerous for team members to operate, then the team members must find another way to construct the

item or redesign it so they can make it themselves.

Coaches act as facilitators, but they are not allowed to suggest how a team should solve a prob-

A coach helps the team members to grow. This means providing a good environment, maintaining discipline, and stimulating - not influencing - its thinking.

lem. Coaches have the responsibility to organize the team, to maintain order and discipline. They may serve as a "secretary" to a team as long as they write only what the team members say.

By only asking broad questions, the coach stimulates the team members to think. This is the heart of the Odyssey program.

Parents and other supporters may act as tutors or instructors, but they may not make suggestions on how to solve the problem. For example, a parent may teach the members how to sew but may not design or sew a costume for the team's solution. At competition, others are allowed to help the team transport props and other problem materials into the Check-In and Staging Areas. However, others may not help the team assemble backdrops or anything else, or apply makeup, fix costumes, etc. If they do, the team will receive an Outside Assistance penalty.



Mulberry Middle School

Team Meetings:

Wednesdays 3:50 - 5:30 PM

ODYSSEY OF THE MIND

Coach: Kelly Larrow

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We're on the web!

<http://mrsllarrow.weebly.com/ootm.html>

SCENARIO: A team decided they will revolve their skit around a CELL theme. The coach gives them a homework assignment to come up with all of the words they could with CELL in them like CELLophane, CELLular Phone...

QUESTION: Is it OA for a coach to give a homework assignment that gets the kids to think more creatively about an initial idea that they came up with?

ANSWER: Although the coach should not give any examples, the assignment is one of the types of things the coach should do.

SCENARIO: Judge stops team's performance in long term because the vehicle used is marking the floor. Children are allowed to push. At end of performance parents standing outside the taped area lift the car to spare the floor.

QUESTION: Is it OA for any non-team member to help with props after the performance has ended?

ANSWER: No, the only time the team may not have help with prop movement is during the timed competition period.

SCENARIO: Kids put 2 boards together perpendicularly (4th graders) with screws and nails, but it keeps falling apart.

QUESTION: Is it OA to ask an adult who is familiar with carpentry what kinds of things in carpentry can be done to brace the boards? (Going on the princi-

ple that if it can be found with research, an adult can tell them.)

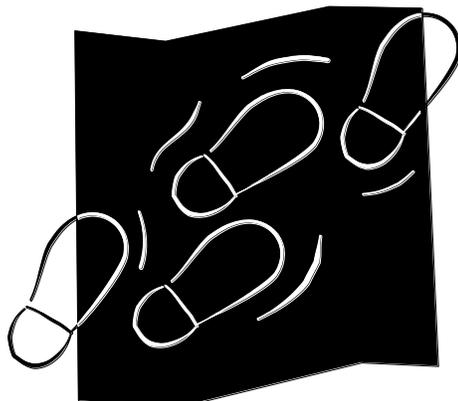
ANSWER: An adult can tell and show the team members various ways to brace the boards as long as s/he does not show them specifically what to do for their problem solution.

SCENARIO: A team is brainstorming their solution.

QUESTION: Is it OA for the coach to write down their ideas for later review?

ANSWER: This is a good idea. The only rule surrounding this is that the coach may only write down what the team members say.

SCENARIO: A coach prepares a simple, generic demonstration of an engineering concept and



Caption describing picture or graphic.

that concept is immediately applied by the kids into their structural design (i.e. a simple demonstration of how a truss withstands lateral loads better than a frame).

QUESTION: Does the presentation

of an engineering concept represent OA in this circumstance?

ANSWER: As stated yes. The coach would have to present several options of construction. S/he could demonstrate how each fails, but the team members must draw their own conclusions.

SCENARIO: A team member tells the adult who is helping to stack weights that he is going to go help resolve a problem with a prop. The adult verbally acknowledges that statement with the affirmation "sure, go ahead".

QUESTION: Does this represent OA?

ANSWER: No. The team member has made the decision to do this. It would be outside assistance if the adult said something like, "Weight placement is more important, just stay here and continue with this" or if the adult initiated the conversation by telling the team member to go help with the prop.

SCENARIO: A team observed another team dressed up in chicken costumes that did very well. The next year the team decided to dress up as chickens.

QUESTION: Is it OA (NOT creative) to observe successful performances in one year and copy facets of it in the next?

ANSWER: No, it is not OA.

Team Interaction with Audience

- We all feel a greater sense of accomplishment when our loved ones support our efforts and watch our performances. But our audience at competition could get us in a little trouble if we aren't careful about Outside Assistance.
- For instance, we know that the performance has to be 8 minutes or less, and that penalty points are assigned if the team goes over time. A parent in the audience who keeps an eye on their watch might start to get nervous when the team passes the 7-minute mark. They might fidget in their seat at 7 minutes, 30 seconds and when 7:45 comes and goes and the performance continues their fear may make them spring to their feet. When they gesture frantically to the students on the stage and pointedly tap their watch at 7:55 we have certainly passed into the realm of Outside Assistance—it could appear to a judge that the team is getting input from the audience.
- We will talk about this more as we get closer to competition, I just thought I would include it in this newsletter because it is another illustration of what can be considered OA, and cause our team to loose points.

More Scenarios to Clarify Outside Assistance