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# The Odyssey for First Place

Can you solve a long-term problem in eight minutes?

By [Lisa Acerbo](#) | [Email the author](#) | May 6, 2011

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Left to right: Brooke Hayden, Ellen Carpenter, Mike Zabin, Bonnie Deal, Steven Schillaci, Jeremy Eckl, and Alyssa Zabin. Credit Linda Hayden

Eight minutes or less.

Students on the [Trumbull High School](#) Odyssey of the Mind team had to demonstrate the solution to a long-term problem in eight minutes or less during a recent competition.

Not a problem.

With a first-place finish in hand, the team will now compete in the World Finals May 27-30 at the University of Maryland. Team members include Brooke Hayden, Ellen Carpenter, Mike Zabin, Bonnie Deal, Steven Schillaci, Jeremy Eckl, and Alyssa Zabin.

Zabin, a junior who has been part of Odyssey of the Mind since middle school was delighted with the outcome of the recent competition.

“It was great that we did so well at the state competition because we have all worked together and dedicated many hours to our solution. All this hard work paid off in our success at the state competition and we are all looking forward to the World Finals in May,” she said.

Odyssey of the Mind is creative problem solving group. The program is 27 years old and has been in Trumbull for the past seven. Teams, who meet once or twice a week throughout the school year, consist of five to seven students.

Every competition has two parts: a long-term problem and a short-term problem that needs to be explained. For the long-term problem, the students pick one of five different scenarios. The team works from October to March designing an innovative solution for the problem usually involving skits, technical, mechanical, or structural elements.

Debbie Zabin, one of the team’s coaches, stressed that students must be involved in every part of the problem’s solution.

“The key to this problem solving is that absolutely no parent help is allowed. Parents cannot give suggestions for how to go about solving the problem,” she said. “Therefore, it’s really up to the students when it comes to script writing, set building, and costume making. Coaches can simply help teams stay on track with the problem and make sure the team has completed all the components.”

For the past five years, Trumbull has had at least one team advance to the World Finals. This year Trumbull expanded on the number of teams that participated in the program.

Six teams with students from [Booth Hill Elementary School](#), [Tashua Elementary School](#), [Middlebrook Elementary School](#), [Hillcrest](#) and [Madison](#) schools and Trumbull High took part in the state competition.