

Advice for Teaching Spontaneous from a First Year Coach

Thanks to Coach Randy Hartnett

Plan on doing 4 or more spontaneous problems per meeting

- Spend an hour before each meeting planning the spontaneous problems—mostly verbal and verbal/hands-on, with occasional hands-on
 - Good sources: OM books, www.odysseyofthemind.com/practice/ and va.odysseyofthemind.org/weekproblemarchive.html
 - Invent your own. (Kid-invented are not always successful)
- Keep a good supply of materials on hand
 - Deck of numbered cards, dice
 - Timer that doesn't beep
 - Paper, pencils, marshmallows, straws, clay, toothpicks, scissors, tape, etc.
- Problems are like jokes: multiple repetitions get stale. If the team thinks they handled a problem poorly, talk about strategies to improve, then repeat the problem a week or two later.

When practicing

- Include all the kids, not just five. Near the end, use 5 but rotate so kids can decide who should participate on tournament day
 - A coach can participate, but beware—we think differently
- Read the instructions every time – and vary them, to practice listening and understanding
- Give lots of feedback on which responses were creative (after the problem, not during)
 - Provide a team score – they like to track their progress
 - Having kids judge gives them good perspective on creative vs. ordinary responses
- Cheat on the time—2 minutes is too short
 - Don't limit their response time, especially if they are on a roll
 - Don't use an audible alarm
 - Near tournament time, stick to the limits

Seek to develop teamwork, creativity, and speed

- Use “think-ahead” or “follow-on” style problems
 - Alphabetical or numbered responses – “Name colors in alphabetical order”
 - “A is good because B, B is bad because C, C is good because D....”
- Have each team member write responses during thinking time, then give them as fast as possible without repeats
- Invent convoluted scoring schemes, so certain responses maximize points
- Use food problems: “Choose a Cheeto™ and name an animal that resembles it, then eat it in the style of that animal”
- Try no-thinking-time responses, to practice getting un-stuck
- Practice every possible timing scheme
 - Dice, cards, stand-up-sit-down are common
 - Practice without a problem – how fast can they do it without responding?

KEEP IT FUN!!! Do whatever it takes to make spontaneous fun for your team!