

Science Olympiad Helpful Tips

Recruiting Students For Your Team:

- STAR Club – Science, Technology and Research
- Start with having a project in science classes - hold the judging on a Sat. - “Fun Science Olympiad”
- Announcements, posters, food
- Invite those that are interested to a meeting and do a fun, hands-on activity.
- Get with the MESA supervisor for your school—you can share kids and activities.
- Make sure science and shop/TLC teachers know about you, advertise, and give you names of potential candidates.
- Have an open house to introduce them to Science Olympiad
- Have team members look for new students to be on the team
- Look for the students who express interest in a certain topic area and find out as much as you can about their strengths/interests
- Integrate the events into the classroom to get kids interested – when you see someone doing a good job on an event, ask them to compete in that event on the team (recruiting)
- Talk about all the fun involved
- Ask other teachers to help recruit or let you talk to their classes
- After they have done it once, they will be excited and self-motivated
- It’s O.K. to start small and then build up to a great team
- Use fun activities that include Science Olympiad events, such as Write It/Do It, Mystery Architecture, and Experimental Design so that all the students are familiar with all the events.
- Make a big deal out of it at school.
- Start early, in September, to introduce SO events.
- Do a survey for events the students want to do, then let students pick their favorite events
- Relax & let kids have fun
- Have informal training for a few months and then choose your final team

Tips for Stronger Student Commitment:

- Hold tryouts so they take it more seriously
- Have students sign-in when they are present
- Guidelines or rules as to how many times they may miss practice before not being on the team
- Have a student “participation contract”

How to Get Other Teachers Involved:

- Remember you “can’t do it all” – ask other teachers for help
- Lull them in gently at first, just get teachers to help with one event or area that they specialize in themselves (i.e. ask choir teacher to help with Sounds of Music)
- Have a good relationship with other teachers so they will be willing to help
- Be specific with what you need and want them to help you with
- Have them choose 1-2 events they would like to help with
- Once they start helping, they’ll keep coming back

Parental Involvement & Support:

- Get permission from parents for their students to participate
- Invite them to help in their field of expertise
- Congratulate them for their students being chosen and build up Science Olympiad
- **Let them know that their kids think it’s important**
- Just ask if they are willing to help
- Keep communications open – so many of them will help a lot if just asked
- Our school has lists of parents who are willing to volunteer for certain events and their fields of expertise - I call them.
- We tap our kids for parental support and others.
- A lot of letters home so parents know what’s going on.
- **Invite parents to meetings/practice**

Fundraising & Sponsors:

- We will ask our person at our school who is hired to seek funding for our charter school.
- Students have a fee, auction, garage sales,

- Beg your principle, solicit parents, see local businesses for support.
- Tie into organizations that are located in your school area—stress connections between specific events and the products/goals of the organization.
- Keep asking nicely
- Try to get gift cards to buy supplies
- Businesses to donate (Target, Lowe's)
- Try for grants through school districts
- Be specific with your needs when asking businesses for help
- Ask for a part of their advertising budget
- Give recognition to sponsors
- Be thankful for any help they offer
- Write thank you notes
- Invite sponsors to attend Science Olympiad competition at Weber State

Organization tips from experienced coaches:

- Manual is the most valuable tool. Go through the event rules in the manual with the students using a highlighter on the rules. Things to highlight: How many students can participate in the event, supplies needed, length of time of the event, object or purpose of event and what students are expected to accomplish during the event, restrictions
- Keep folders in your file cabinet with a copy of the event rules which will be available for students on the day of the competition.
- Bring extra nametags. Make individual schedules for the students – dates, times, places, & supplies
- Have a team cell phone list posted in the base camp.
- Map with highlighted event areas – give students a copy of the map
- Have an event schedule chart with students' names, events, rooms and times posted in the base camp.
- Use plastic totes or big Ziploc bags to keep all materials needed for each specific event, such as goggles, voucher, calculator, pencils, etc.

Team Building:

- Team building is important.
- Partner older, stronger kids with younger, weaker kids.
- Have parties to bring (unite) members of team together
- Have team identity (shirts)
- Try very hard to have at least some selection or filtering process because you want students who take Science Olympiad seriously and will prepare/train for their events, even if it means not having a full team

Tips for preparing the team:

- Do practices and activities that teach them basic concepts and principles pertaining to the events and how to problem solve.
- I look up information about the topic from the Internet and textbooks and make study packets for kids to learn at home. I don't have time to teach them all the info.
- Have a set schedule, be prepared to teach basics, check on building events regularly.
- Get them going on their own events early on so they have time to focus on their event.
- Start early, start small, take it as a fun thing, DON'T STRESS
- Use www.soinc.org
- Since I don't plan to be competitive overall, I spend a lot of time (1-1.5 months) of just doing cool practice events when everyone participates in the same thing, then once people are enthusiastic they can start to specialize.
- After the competition, survey students after the events asking them what they did, should have done, wished they had done, etc.
- Have event binders that include student survey from previous year competition, rules and many resources.
- Make sure kids know what they need for their events – quiz them.
- Have a mock SO competition.
- Run through each event according to the rules before the competition.

- Emphasize to the students that they need to practice and complete projects well in advance so that problems can be corrected.
- **FOLLOW the EVENT RULES-read them carefully**
- Double check that the students are following the rules/parameters.
- Expect certain proficiencies at certain points
- Cross train students – in case students back out
- Hand students study materials and have them study/train by themselves
- Keep in contact with past students so they can help you prepare your team

When to practice:

- Early in the mornings because no one else is there. You find out who's dedicated.
- Use Saturdays for building events
- Four days a week for 1-1 ½ hours or three days a week for 45 min.
- Have after school practices
- Use off-campus locations if needed
- Provide snacks once in a while and take breaks when practicing

General Tips From Experienced Coaches:

- If it is your first time don't try to do all events. Start with a few, come compete, experience, watch, and learn while you are at the competition.
- Avoid the burn out - use internet resources.
- B division kids need lots of direction or they will be completely lost. So coaches really need to know their stuff as well and make sure to read the rules.
- Make it fun.
- Start early.
- Get as many adults involved as possible—even if it's just one event and they just help the kids get ready.
- Don't get too frustrated when things go wrong, i.e. a kid drops out (a week before the competition), etc.
- The bold writing on the rule sheets indicates additions or changes in the rules for an event that was participated in the previous year. It is suggested that the rules copied for the students should be collected at the end of the year or copied on different colors each year.
- One coach stays in the base camp for the first 3 hours on the day of the competition. Expect to do some handholding, comforting and encouraging.
- The sign up events, such as most of the building events, are usually shorter than an hour.
- Three events is the most # of events any one student should be competing in. More than that is too much for a student.