

## Local Schools

# Madison to host nation's best science students for renowned competition

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Scholar, Hamilton Middle School students, from left, David Jin, Helen Deng and Maddie Moon plot points on a map in preparation for the Science Olympiad National Tournament.

JOHN HART – State Journal



### SCIENCE IN PUBLIC

Public events at the National Science Olympiad Tournament:

**Your Wisconsin Showcase:** Friday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery, 330 N. Orchard St. Talk to industry recruiters, participate in "Exploration Stations," and learn about UW-Madison science majors.

**Opening Ceremony:** Friday, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Kohl Center. Features a science show by Bassam Shakhshiri and Clint Sprott.

**Innovation Expo:** Saturday, 8:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Engineering Centers Building, 1550 Engineering Drive. a traveling expo on science and technology.

**Science Olympiad spectator events:** Saturday, 8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Events include Helicopters, Storm the Castle, and Sumo Bots. See [nso.wisc.edu](http://nso.wisc.edu) for locations.

This week, catapults will storm the walls of UW-Madison buildings. Robots will wrestle at the Field House. Rubber-band helicopters and bottle rockets will zoom into the university's airspace.

And there will be about 6,000 extra people on campus.

Starting Wednesday, students, parents, and teachers will stream into Madison from all over the country for the Science Olympiad National Tournament, the Olympic Games of middle and high school science.

It's the first time Madison will host the event.

"This is the oldest and largest program of its kind, to get next-generation students excited about math, science and engineering," said Paul Peercy, UW-Madison College of Engineering dean and a strong supporter of Science Olympiad.

The best middle and high school teams from across the country — including Hawaii and Alaska — will compete in 23 scored events, with names like Disease Detectives (tracking food-borne illness), Storm the Castle (making a trebuchet catapult), Junkyard Challenge (creating a contraption on the spot) and Crime Busters (using chemistry to solve a crime).

The idea is to extend the science curriculum beyond the classroom, allowing students to delve deeper into their scientific interests in an after-school setting.

The competition itself takes place Saturday, but Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, students can attend science workshops or take tours of Devil's Lake, Epic Systems in Verona or the Synchrotron Radiation Center near Stoughton.

Opening ceremonies will be held Friday at 6 p.m. at the Kohl Center, featuring a dual performance by two of UW-Madison's science wizards: chemistry professor Bassam Shakhshiri and physics professor Clint Sprott.

In Saturday's competition, Wisconsin will be represented by Menomonie High School and Madison's Hamilton Middle School.

Hamilton Middle School's team is young. It started last year, when then-UW-Madison students Ben

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Spaier and Alec Li approached sixth-grade science teacher Ann Haase about starting a team. In high school, they had been on Madison West's Science Olympiad team.

Hamilton students didn't have high hopes for making it far in 2010 but surprised themselves when they won the state tournament and went on to nationals. Then they did it again this year.

"The thing is, we like science more than anyone else," Aman Nihal, a 13-year-old eighth-grader at Hamilton, said at a practice last week. "We kind of love science, I guess you could say."

Eighth-grader Peter Ji chimed in, admitting: "We like to look at college textbooks."

Nihal added: "You get to be with people just like

you, who like science and want to learn more about it."

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