

By [Rich Tenorio](#)

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## Reading science team reaches Olympic heights

The A.W. Coolidge Science Olympiad Team earned first place in the Massachusetts Science Olympiad State Competition at Assumption College on Saturday, March 5.

This is the team's 23rd state title, and the squad now has the honor of representing Massachusetts at the National Science Olympiad Competition, which will take place at the University of Wisconsin–Stout in Menomonie, Wisc. on May 20-21.

"I could not be any prouder of my 29 students and their victory at states," said Head Coach Karawan Meade, who was on the team herself from 1994-1996 when she was a Coolidge student. "These are kids who love science and learning so much that they voluntarily spend up to 16 extra hours a week at school. They practice on Saturday mornings and during school vacation weeks."

The Massachusetts Science Olympiad offers middle school students the opportunity to compete with their peers in science and engineering events. This year, 28 middle schools competed in 23 events, covering an array of science and engineering topics.

The Coolidge Science Team dedicates this year's victory to the memory of John McCarthy, a Coolidge science teacher and one of the founders of the team, who passed away earlier this school year.

"He was my own eighth grade science teacher, one of the best I've ever had and a great role model for me when I decided to become a teacher myself," said Meade. "He had a special way of connecting with all his students. He loved Science Olympiad and had an amazing dedication to both the program and to all the team members."

Sample events this year included Scrambler, in which students build cars that aim to reach a target as quickly as possible without breaking an egg on the front of the car; Dynamic Planet, in which students take a written test on oceanography; and Anatomy and Physiology, which focused this year on the muscular, skeletal and integument systems of the body.

This year's team is made up of 29 students.

The team includes eighth graders Nick Brown, Youngwon Choi, Tyler Gonick, Alex Gornovoi, Nick Luikey, Amogh Morje, Sarah Murphy, Jeffrey Pan, Jeremy Rosh, Ben Rotstein, Somil Singh and Matt Smith; seventh graders Andrew Benassi, Henry Bresnahan, Katherine Growney, Jason Kapodistrias, Emma Lloyd, Matthew Mejail, Will Merry, Gavin Pu, Michael Rogers, Ava Serrano, Kevin Upton and Brendan Wilcox; and sixth graders Elliott Choi, Vivian Hing, Pete Koster, Sam Lonks and Chloe Mathieu.

Collectively, the regular team earned 11 gold, four silver and two bronze medals, as well as one fifth-place ribbon and two sixth-place ribbons.

The alternate team earned first-place ribbons in nine events, second-place ribbons in eight events and a third-place ribbon in one event. The Coolidge alternate team also earned first place among the competing schools.

"We are all very excited for the chance to travel to Wisconsin and compete in the national tournament with some of the best Science Olympiad teams in the nation," said Meade. "It's an incredible opportunity, and often a life-changing experience for team members."

"It's especially exciting for middle school students to experience staying on a college campus," Meade noted. "They stay in dorms, eat in the university dining hall, and it inevitably gets them thinking ahead to their own future."

Head Coach Meade was supported this year by Jerald Coyne, a science teacher at Coolidge, and Mark Beckley, a parent of former team members and a coach. The coaching staff is in turn supported by parents, teachers, community members and high school student team alumni who serve as event coaches for the 23 events.

"I think that the science team has helped put Coolidge on the map as a school known for the quality of its science education," said Meade. "New teachers have arrived at the school already having heard of our team and sometimes hoping to get involved with it. Teachers from other states know about our school and its reputation. Schools in neighboring towns have gotten involved in Science Olympiad after hearing about it from us."

And the participants don't forget about science when they leave the Coolidge. "Many science team alumni are still passionate about science and about education," Meade said. "Our team has produced research scientists, engineers, doctors, nurses, teachers, school administrators, and many undergraduate and graduate students in math and science fields ... Many of us still remember our science team years as some of the best of our lives!"

The Coolidge School Science Olympiad Team is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and all contributions are tax-deductible. For more information about the team, visit [coolidgescienceteam.org](http://coolidgescienceteam.org).



Jason Kapodistrias, Ava Serrano, Katherine Growney and Vivian Hing with the team's trophy. COURTESY PHOTO

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