

Competition shows science can be fun

◇ Students from Penfield competed in several events at the Olympiad at SUNY Brockport.

By Amy Cavalier
Messenger Staff

The New York State High School Olympiad at SUNY Brockport Saturday was filled with a mix of emotions – from victory, to defeat, to just plain fun.

Fun was the reason Penfield ninth-grader Emily Handelman and 11th-grader Dan Willy signed up to be in the Science Olympiad.

“Our science club is pretty new,” Handelman said, “so we didn’t really have much time to prepare for the events.”

Penfield high school had six students participating in a total of nine events at the Olympiad last Saturday.

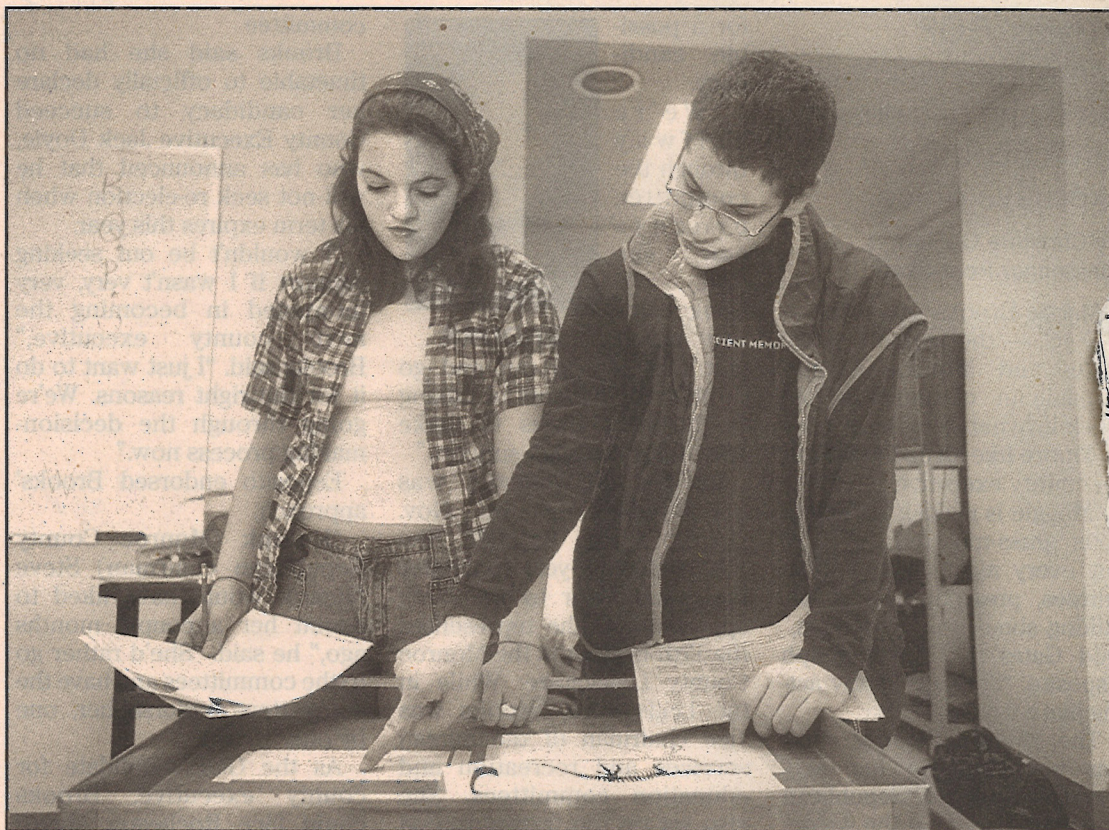
Willy said learning about science at the Olympiad is more fun in than it is in school because “it’s not straight from the textbook.” He said, “You really get to figure out how things work.”

On the other side of the spectrum, The Brighton High School Science Club meets twice a week and Brighton was one of the only two schools with two teams at the competition.

“It’s a pretty big deal,” Brighton student George Qin said. “The school gets lot of publicity if your team advances in to the finals and it looks good on college admissions and transcripts.”

Brighton’s dedication paid off. They earned the number-four spot and will progress on to the state competition.

Scott Robinson, site coordi-



STAFF PHOTO/ADRIAN KRAUS

Penfield High School sophomores Emily O’Brien (left) and Alex Theuman work on identifying fossils during an event at the New York State High School Olympiad at SUNY Brockport on Saturday. Students in this event used reference materials to name fossils and answer questions about their characteristics.

nator for the competition, said the Science Olympiad gives students the opportunity to compete academically. “It’s a chance for them to be recognized for accomplishments in an area that doesn’t usually get much attention,” he said.

He said the goal of the competition is to enhance scientific literacy, consistent with state and national standards.

There were a variety of events, some which required months of preparation, such as Robot Ramble, Storm the Castle, and Mission:Possible. Others drew on the student’s knowledge and ability to use reference materials, such as

Feathered Frenzy, Fossils, and Polymer Detective.

In Write It/Do It, students worked in teams of two. One member of the team spends 25 minutes in a room, writing down instructions on how to construct a preassembled, obscure object made of popsicle sticks, clothes pins, paper clips, and other miscellaneous objects. Then the other teammate must rebuild the object, based on their partner’s instructions.

Eleventh-grader Tori DiPietro, and 10th-grader Emily O’Brien took on Write It/Do It for Penfield High School. DiPietro said the event teaches you how to communicate better

through writing. As she waited for O’Brien to finish building the object, DiPietro said, “What I did have time to write down was clear enough, I hope.”

Of the 25 schools in attendance, Webster Schroeder, Fairport, Greece Arcadia, and Brighton High Schools will advance on to the State Science Olympiad competition at West Point in March. The winners move on to the Nationals.

The Middle School Science Olympiad was at St. John Fisher College this weekend as well. Penfield’s Bay Trail Middle School team took sixth overall and earned medals in three events.