

Orange County

Academic

Promoting a competitive edge for college and career

Decathlon



NEWSLETTER

Orange County Academic Decathlon (OCAD) Newsletter

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Providing you with the latest information trending at OCAD.

Exciting News!

The Cox Cares Foundation has awarded OCAD \$3,000 in grant funding to integrate student response technology (aka clickers) into its Super Quiz Relay. We are excited to go digital in 2015!

Alumni Words of Wisdom

"Few other extra-curricular activities have been as impactful and influential. Joining Academic Decathlon allowed me to refine my studying, writing, oratory, and self-discipline skills. I believe that exploring a theme through a breadth of disciplines is the epitome of a liberal arts education. I am a more well-rounded, educated person today, as a result of OCAD."

Bailey Adling, CSU Long Beach,
Pacifica HS class of 2014



For more information about the Orange County Academic Decathlon, please visit: www.ocde.us/decathlon

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What's in it?: A Sneak Peak at the 2014-2015 USAD Curriculum

In any story lies a central idea that the author or writer is trying to convey to his or her audience; this is otherwise known as a theme. Each year, the United States Academic Decathlon (USAD) selects a theme that all decathletes, Hawaii to Maine, must prepare for. In years past, decathletes have studied themes including the French Revolution, the Great Depression, and World War I.

This year's Academic Decathlon theme is ***New Alternatives in Energy: Ingenuity and Innovation.***

For most of the newsletter readers out there, although fascinated by the title of the theme, they will never see the three-inch binders of study guide materials decathletes prepare from, nor will they witness the vast knowledge decathletes acquire and showcase during competition. If that's the case, then the question "what's in the curriculum" is not the question we want to answer for you. As Annie Dillard states in *The Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (a novel all decathletes must read as part of their USAD curriculum), "The proper question is: "Why is it beautiful?" Although Dillard is referencing the goings-on of nature around her, it is a question that compels any audience for any number of topics.

So, why is the Academic Decathlon curriculum and theme so beautiful? The annual curriculum is beautiful because the material within each subject category is tied to its central theme. This allows a decathlete to envision an interconnected world; where the everyday breadth of classroom topics including art, economics, literature, mathematics, music, science, and social science are not standalone but ebb and flow within the context of what's happening around the world. This year, decathletes will see how ingenuity, innovation, and invention shape the scope of energy alternatives, shift economic systems, and even progress the fields of art and music. Now, that's beautiful!

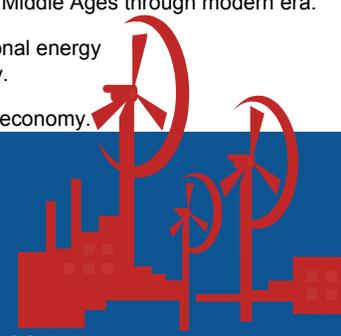
But for all the inquiring minds still eager to see what's in the curriculum – here's a sneak peak:

- ◆ **Art:** Art fundamentals and innovations in art from the ancient world through the twentieth century.
- ◆ **Economics:** Fundamental economic concepts, microeconomics, and macroeconomics along with a thematic section on the economics of energy.
- ◆ **Literature:** Critical reading, eight poems, one short prose work and *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* - Annie Dillard.
- ◆ **Mathematics:** General mathematics, geometry, and an introduction to differential calculus.
- ◆ **Music:** Basic elements of music theory and innovations in music from Middle Ages through modern era.
- ◆ **Science:** Introduction to energy conversion and a discussion of traditional energy generation as well as nuclear energy and renewable sources of energy.
- ◆ **Social Science:** Energy policy, the environment, and the new energy economy.



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OCAD Coach Spotlight: Christie Bettendorf



Christie Bettendorf, Academic Decathlon coach at Kennedy High School in La Palma, has been teaching for 22 years. She currently teaches English and Film at Kennedy High School.

Upon special request of a favorite student, Christie took on the role of Academic Decathlon coach at Kennedy High School and has not looked back. For the last eight years, Christie has built a program that has become highly coveted on campus. Each year, she has up to 50 students try out and compete for 27 spots in Kennedy's Academic Decathlon program. That's three full teams Christie coaches in addition to her role as a teacher!

Heading into her ninth year of coaching, Christie is most thankful for the support her administration has displayed in valuing a program that affords her the opportunity to teach students to be confident, focused, and collaborative beyond the classroom. One of her most rewarding coaching experiences has been witnessing her team captain (Michelle) grow as a leader over the past three years. Christie took a risk, but saw something special in her tenth grade decathlete and saw the immediate positive influence Michelle had on the team – taking the lead in coaching her teammates through interviews as well as organizing additional practices and study sessions. Christie knows her underclassmen learn a great deal from Michelle each meeting, and she hopes that someone will follow in her footsteps and emerge as the next team captain. To Christie, Academic Decathlon is not about the points, but about providing students the opportunity to flourish in a safe environment while practicing the skills they need to become confident and productive young adults.

Words of advice from Christie to new coaches: "Above all, there needs to be food and fun. Provide snacks/pizza occasionally, and make sure they are laughing while studying." Christie has come up with various interactive and competitive games to keep the rigors of preparation interesting. She states that "sometimes the competition gets intense, but they are all friends again by the end of practice." Competition, collaboration, and camaraderie – Christie's team embodies what Academic Decathlon is all about!

Volunteer Now! Here's How...

Do you want to help hard-working and dedicated teens achieve their scholastic goals? Do you want to utilize your personal and professional skills in a fast-paced and engaging volunteer opportunity?

If so, please visit the OCAD website www.ocde.us/decathlon and click on "Volunteer Information" to learn more about our opportunities and to register as a volunteer.

We hope to see you at the 47th Annual Orange County Academic Decathlon!



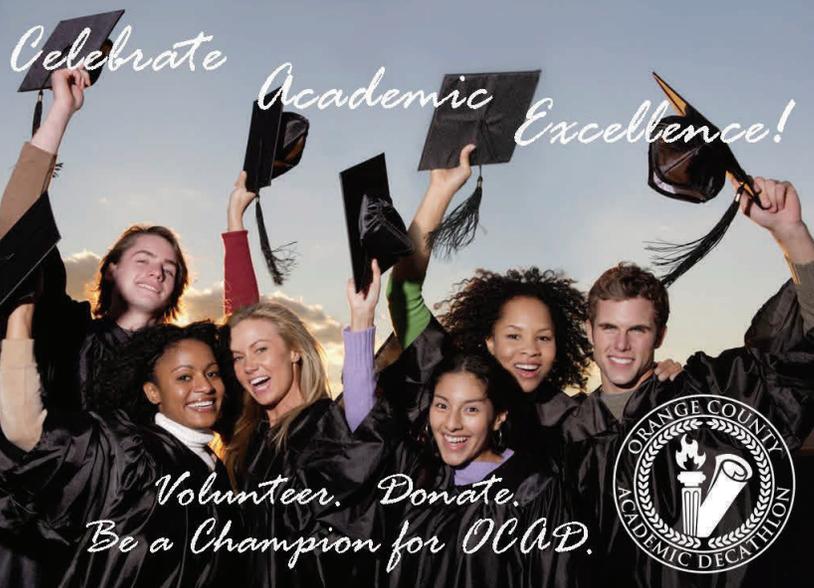
Important Volunteer Dates

Interview or Speech Judge

January 31, 2015 —Tustin High School

Classroom Test or Super Quiz Proctor

February 7, 2015 —Westminster High School



Donate Now! Here's How...

Option 1: Donate online at www.ocde.us/decathlon. Click our "Donate" button on the right side of the page.

Note: You do not need to set-up a PayPal account to donate online.

Option 2: Download our Champions for OCAD brochure online at www.ocde.us/decathlon. Click on the brochure link and fill out the form.

Option 3: Corporate sponsorship opportunities are also available, which include various levels of recognition for your organization.

Please contact Kristin Rigby, Program Specialist, for more information at 714.966.4435 or krigby@ocde.us.