

# 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.

### Did You Know?

Each year decathletes throughout the United States study a curriculum based on an overarching theme.



**This year's theme is India!**

### 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](http://www.ocde.us/decathlon)

### Newsletter Contact:

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### OCAD Coach Spotlight: Leslie Murray

Leslie Murray, Academic Decathlon coach at Fountain Valley High School, is in her sixth year of teaching. She is currently teaching mathematics, including courses in pre-calculus and algebra prep.

Stemming from her time as a high school student, Leslie has had her eyes set on being a part of Academic Decathlon. Unfortunately, Leslie's full (and hectic) schedule as a student did not allow her to participate as a decathlete. She remembers one of her favorite faculty on campus being the Academic Decathlon coach – her pre-calculus teacher. In reflecting back, she realizes how much fun the experience would have been and regrets not making room in her schedule. Seizing the opportunity, Leslie took the reigns as Fountain Valley's Academic Decathlon coach as soon as she began her teaching career. Now her experience is two-fold: she gets to positively impact the lives of her students while also living vicariously through their experiences.

Leslie says of Academic Decathlon, "[It] has made such a difference in many of my students' lives over the years. One of the biggest benefits that I have found to come from Academic Decathlon is the chance for students to belong to a team outside the world of sports." For Leslie, the beauty of the program is that it allows her students to continuously practice teamwork and interdependence – skills that are necessary for success that many students do not have the opportunity to learn if they do not join a sports team. These shared team experiences with her students are what keeps her invigorated to continue coaching.

Words of advice from Leslie to new coaches: "Delegate. Delegate. Delegate! Get yourself a great team captain and co-captain, and allow them some freedom to do what they do best. I basically set up our meeting schedules, make sure we have all of our materials, do paperwork, and the students do almost everything else!" Warren Bennis, a pioneer in the field of leadership studies, once stated that "Good leaders make people feel that they are at the heart of things, not the periphery." By allowing her students to take the lead in their own learning environment, Leslie is the embodiment of a true leader, educator, and Academic Decathlon coach.

Does your company or organization want to help the Orange County Academic Decathlon (OCAD) Association with their mission to inspire academic excellence and build 21st century skills that prepare students for college and career? If so...

### Be a Sponsor for OCAD!

For sponsorship information and benefits please contact: Kristin Rigby, 714.966.4435 or [krigby@ocde.us](mailto:krigby@ocde.us).



### In This Issue

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The Academic Decathlon is sponsored by the Orange County Academic Decathlon Association, a 501c3 non-profit organization, and is administered by the Orange County Department of Education.

## If You Build It, Results Will Come

Orange County students will lead the nation in college and career readiness and success. This is the vision of the Orange County Department of Education, and it is a forthright and powerful statement about our goals for students and our responsibilities as educators. To make sense of the vision, we must define what it means to be college-and-career ready.

According to Dr. David Conley, author of *Getting Ready for College, Careers, and the Common Core*, it means to possess the content knowledge, strategies, skills, and techniques necessary for success in a postsecondary setting. Essentially, students must not just have a mastery of content knowledge but also be equipped with the 21st century competencies that prepare them to navigate their future pathways.

How does all this apply to the Orange County Academic Decathlon (OCAD) program and its students? Each year, over 500 students participating in the OCAD competition study exhaustive material from a curriculum written by the United States Academic Decathlon (USAD). The curriculum content itself is special in that it: 1) includes a breadth of classroom subjects, including art, economics, literature, mathematics, music, science, and social science and 2) all subjects are tied in context to a central theme (this year's theme is India). Although all the content they need to know for the testing portion of competition can be found within this three-inch binder, the knowledge gained from the binder is not sufficient in describing the impact of OCAD on any one student.

The mission OCAD is to inspire academic excellence and build 21st century skills that prepare students for college and career. It's easy to witness academic excellence when it's presented with medals and scholarships on stage (we distribute \$13,800 annually in college scholarships to 30 decathletes who show a mastery of content knowledge). But those 21st century skills needed to be college-and-career ready can only be reflected through the voice of our decathletes themselves. To this end, we have summarized data gathered from student surveys that assessed the program's impact on student engagement and developing 21st century skills in the areas of communication, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and positive character traits.

These impressive results are a reflection of the impact Academic Decathlon has on empowering students to think critically and solve problems, creatively communicate their thoughts and knowledge, and work collaboratively with peers toward a common goal. They also have the fortitude and grit to study challenging material and dedicate themselves to the demands of Academic Decathlon in addition to their regular school work.

***Now that's the embodiment of a 21st century student!***

## Measuring 21st Century Skills in our Decathletes

Survey results from students who participated in the 2015 Orange County Academic Decathlon:

- **86%** reported that the program improved skills in critical thinking
- **91%** reported that the program improved skills in communication
- **84%** reported that the program improved skills in team-work
- **71%** reported that the program improved creativity
- **84%** reported the development of stronger character traits
- **91%** reported that the program helped them to build relationships with their peers and become more involved at school

Data are from 174 completed surveys from the 2014-15 Orange County Academic Decathlon Student Survey.

The purpose of the OCAD Student Survey was to assess the program's impact on developing 21st century skills in the areas of communication, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and positive character traits. Contact: Ron Segundo [rsegundo@ocde.us](mailto:rsegundo@ocde.us)

## 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](http://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 48th Annual Orange County Academic Decathlon!***

## Donate Now! Here's How...

**Option 1:** Donate online at [www.ocde.us/decathlon](http://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](http://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.

For more information please contact:  
Kristin Rigby  
Program Specialist  
714.966.4435 or [krigby@ocde.us](mailto:krigby@ocde.us).



## Important Volunteer Dates for 2016

### **Interview or Speech Judge**

January 30, 2016 — Tustin High School

Registration: <http://day1ocad.eventbrite.com>

### **Classroom Test or Super Quiz Proctor**

February 6, 2016 — Westminster High School

Registration: <http://day2ocad.eventbrite.com>

