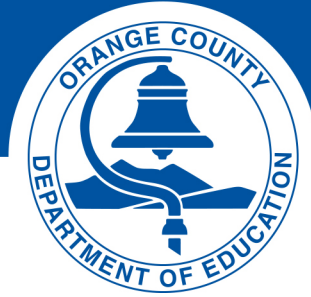


NEWS RELEASE

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High school teams prepare for 50th annual Orange County Academic Decathlon Two-day competition to culminate with the fast-paced Super Quiz Relay on Feb. 3

COSTA MESA, Calif. – Hundreds of students from 42 local high schools will participate over two consecutive Saturdays in the 50th annual Orange County Academic Decathlon (OCAD), which concludes with the Super Quiz Relay in front of a live audience on Feb. 3.

Teams will once again compete for top honors and an invitation to represent Orange County at the California Academic Decathlon in March.

Presented by the Orange County Academic Decathlon Association and the Orange County Department of Education, this year's decathlon is supported by the contributions of community members and sponsors, including NuVision Federal Credit Union, Del Taco Restaurants Inc., the Orange County Register, Aeries Software, Matific Education and the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators.

Decathletes will kick off the communications portion of the event on Saturday, Jan. 27 by presenting prepared and impromptu speeches, participating in personal interviews and writing essays. Approximately 150 community volunteers will assist by serving as speech and interview judges.

One week later, on Saturday, Feb. 3, participants will take 30-minute multiple-choice tests in the subject areas of art, economics, literature, mathematics, music, science and social science. Excluding math, each test will incorporate the 2017-18 theme, "Africa."

The final day of the competition will also feature the Super Quiz Relay, a high-energy contest that resembles a quiz show and sounds like a sporting event, with parents and classmates boisterously cheering on their favorite squads from the sidelines. The Super Quiz Relay is open to the public and will take place at 2:30 p.m. in the Westminster High School gymnasium. The campus is located at 14325 Goldenwest St. in Westminster.

Founded in 1968 by former Orange County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Robert Peterson, the Academic Decathlon is a 10-event scholastic contest staged at the county, state and national levels. Nine-member teams compete for the highest scores on multiple-choice exams, speeches, interviews and essay assignments.

Each team must include three “Honor” students (those with GPAs of 3.75 or above), three “Scholastic” students (GPAs of 3.00 to 3.74) and three “Varsity” students (GPAs of 2.99 or below).

On average, Orange County decathletes report spending 20 to 25 hours a week preparing for the Academic Decathlon. About 10 of those hours involve working with coaches and teammates during after-school meetings; the remaining practice time is spent studying alone or with teammates outside of school.

Along with commitment and content knowledge, academic decathlons promote communication and collaboration, which are considered key components of a 21st-century education. Students create tests and quizzes for one another, host scrimmages and analyze the prepared and impromptu speeches and interviews of their classmates. Those who are stronger at one academic subject often tutor and coach their teammates.

“Many decathletes develop enduring friendships as a result of spending countless hours preparing and experiencing the rigors of competition together,” OCDE Program Specialist Kristin Rigby said. “That is one of the enduring legacies of this event, which began humbly here in Orange County and is now celebrating its 50th year.”

As Rigby noted, the genesis of the Academic Decathlon dates back even further. During the Second World War, Dr. Peterson came up with the concept as a prisoner of war in Nazi Germany after his B-17 bomber was downed. Peterson, who wrote in his journal about “a decathlon of studies,” organized the first Academic Decathlon at Bolsa Grande High School in 1968.

“It is incredibly inspiring to consider the impact of Dr. Peterson’s vision,” Rigby said. “Over the course of five decades, the Academic Decathlon has grown from a small county-level competition into an international program that impacts thousands of students annually, expanding their knowledge, sharpening their research skills, increasing their confidence and forging lifelong connections.”

Top honors, medals and scholarships will be awarded at the OCAD Awards Ceremony at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 9 in the Bill Medley Auditorium at Santa Ana High School.

For additional information, contact OCDE Program Specialist Kristin Rigby at 714-966-4435 or krigby@ocde.us.

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