



Welcome to the GCI Alaska Academic Decathlon! This Coaches' Handbook should help you prepare for the GCI Alaska Academic Decathlon State Competition.

The objective of this handbook is to provide the most fundamental "how to" information for a new coach who knows absolutely nothing about the Academic Decathlon and to provide current and pertinent information for all coaches.

We hope every coach, even those 16 plus year veterans, will find this Handbook useful in preparing for the State Competition.

We hope to see many new schools taking part in the **GCI Alaska Academic Decathlon**. Each coach is strongly encouraged to arrange for wide participation by involving as many students and faculty as possible. **Expand the Academic Decathlon philosophy of encouraging, recognizing, and rewarding academic achievement. Foster the important TEAM concept in your school.**

### **Purpose of the Handbook**

The AAD Coaches Handbook has been developed to assist team coaches, both first timers and those with one or more seasons behind them, with the process of selecting and developing an Academic Decathlon team.

We strongly encourage all coaches to contribute material or to make suggestions for additional information, and to make corrections where necessary. This is your Handbook, and we want to make it as useful as possible.

Also, check the AAD web site for recent news items from [USAD](#), or for other information of interest to coaches preparing their teams for the GCI Alaska Academic Decathlon, or the Nationals.

This document is a compendium of materials and information intended to assist Academic Decathlon coaches with selecting and mentoring teams preparing for State competition. This Handbook may be freely shared, printed, reproduced, and distributed, in whole or in part, for use by coaches and team members at no cost.

The material in this Handbook will be regularly updated by the GCI Alaska Academic Decathlon staff to reflect current information, rules changes published by USAD, and the needs expressed by the coaches of AAD teams throughout the State of Alaska.

Updates will be posted regularly to this AAD web site, where you will always find the most current material and information.

### **The Mission of the GCI Alaska Academic Decathlon**

To promote and reward academic achievement for high school students by emphasizing the value of academic excellence and personal self-worth for every participant, and to foster fair and challenging local and state team competitions.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to express our appreciation to USAD, Texas Academic Decathlon and Arizona Academic Decathlon for their assistance, and for allowing us to reproduce materials provided by those respective organizations.

Funding for this Academic Decathlon Coaches' Handbook has been provided through a grant from USAD.

## **Frequently Asked Questions & Answers**

### **1. What constitutes a complete Academic Decathlon Team?**

A "team" for any Academic Decathlon competition consists of nine members. Three members must be eligible as "Honor" participants; three must be eligible as "Scholastic" participants; three must be eligible as "Varsity" participants. However, in an attempt to allow more students the opportunity to participate at the state level, teams are allowed to bring an alternate in the Honors, Scholastic and Varsity Division.

### **2. Can a school be competitive in a State Academic Decathlon with less than the nine member complete team?**

Yes - A school may send a six-member team to compete in the State Competition. If any school team consists of only six members, the school may compete as a "team" if they have two eligible Honor" participants, two eligible "Scholastic" participants, and two eligible "Varsity" participants.

### **3. May a school send fewer than six students to compete in the Alaska Academic Decathlon Competition?**

Yes - however, no more than four students in any division may attend. In other words a team cannot bring five "Honor" or "A" students and none in the other categories. In order to be competitive the team should strive to have a minimum of six participants with two from each division.

### **4. Can more than three students in any category (Honor, Scholastic, or Varsity) participate in any Academic Decathlon competition?**

Yes - A team may have an alternate in Honors, Scholastic and Varsity. Alternates will be allowed to compete in all events except the oral Super Quiz. Alternates are not eligible for awards.

### **5. How important are the stated AAD deadlines?**

Extremely - In order to get all paperwork checked and the students entered into the computer program with an assigned number we must have the paperwork on time. No transcripts or paperwork for students registered at the time of the due date will be accepted at the registration table at State.

### **6. Will duplicate award medals be given if the scores for any event are tied?**

Yes - all ties are awarded

### **7. Will duplicate trophies and medals be awarded to teams if scores are tied?**

Yes and No - Yes - If any team scores for Super Quiz are tied, duplicate trophies and medals to participating team members will be awarded.

No duplicate trophies and medals for overall first place team. In the unlikely event of a tie for first place it will be broken under direction of the Alaska Academic Decathlon Board of Directors. There can only be one State Champion. Second and/or third place team trophies and medals will be awarded in case of a tie.

**8. What is the deadline for changing the positions of any team members already registered for competition with the State competition coordinator?**

The deadline for any changes of team members, as originally submitted by team coaches, shall be by 5:00 PM of the day preceding the actual competition events. The only possible exception to this rule is a true emergency case due to severe illness.

**No changes of student positions will be allowed for any reason after 7:00 a.m. on competition day.**

**9. Who is eligible to receive Award Banquet tickets without charge?**

Only one coach and the nine members of the team who actually attend the Awards Banquet will be provided tickets without charge. All other faculty members, students, alternate team members, parents or other community members are required to pay for their dinners.

**10. May tickets for Decathlon Award Banquet be purchased “at the door” or on the day of the awards ceremonies?**

No - We must have advance reservations for all meal functions. Therefore, deadlines for Award Banquet tickets must be strictly adhered to. Please understand that all reservations can only be accepted with checks, cash, school district purchase orders, or money orders. No refunds can be given.

Since reservations are made in advance (by deadline date given), no other tickets will be available for sale at the door. The banquet tickets for your regular team members (who participated in competition) and one coach will be distributed after team registration on competition day. The distribution time for all banquet tickets will be announced on competition day.

**11. Who is eligible to receive a Student/Board Feedback Luncheon ticket?**

Only one student from each team is allowed to participate in the Feedback Luncheon. We have limited time to give each team representative an opportunity to speak; therefore, only one person from each team will be allowed a ticket. No other tickets may be purchased by additional team members. Team members are urged to have the student who will best represent the team’s questions and comments attend this luncheon.

**What is Academic Decathlon?**

**United States Academic Decathlon**

The US Academic Decathlon program promotes student achievement in public, private and parochial high schools. Decathlon activities provide the opportunity for students to realize the potential of their

intellectual ability and to appreciate value of academic pursuit. In Alaska, ninth through twelfth grade students compete on teams composed of a combination of three Honor "A", three Scholastic "B", and three Varsity "C" or lower students.

The Academic Decathlon, like its ancient Greek counterpart, consists of ten events. Unlike the Greek Decathlon, however, this is an academic, rather than an athletic competition and a team competition, as well as one for individuals. In a typical Decathlon competition, ninth through twelfth grade students are tested in seven areas: economics, fine arts, language and literature, mathematics, science, social science and the Super Quiz. In addition the students amass points in three communication events: the prepared and impromptu speech event, the oral interview event, and the essay-writing event. The Decathlon concludes with the Super Quiz, a team relay in which teammates answer five questions read orally before an audience.

By encouraging students to compete for awards and recognition academically, just as athletes do physically, the Decathlon provides an antidote to intellectual apathy and under-achievement. The Academic Decathlon recognizes the individual winners in each of its events. However, it is the well-rounded team whose high combined scores for all 10 events will bring them to the topmost ranks of the champions. This is the Decathlon's way of emphasizing a growth of knowledge in all academic fields rather than a specialization in but one.

The Decathlon program provides incentive not only for the brilliant student to become interested in intellectual activities, but it opens the door to academic achievement for all. It gives scholastics a similar public recognition and status that has long been afforded to outstanding athletes.

### **History and Background of the GCI Alaska Academic Decathlon**

In 1981 Dr. Robert Peterson, of Orange County, California, responded to interest in his local Academic Decathlon program and founded the United States Academic Decathlon. In 1984 the program expanded to Alaska, and in 1994 the Alaska Academic Decathlon Association received a 501 (c) 3 tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service.

Nearly a million young people nationwide and over 6,500 Alaskan students have enriched their lives through participation in the Academic Decathlon Program. Each year, \$9,000 in scholarships are awarded to A, B, and C students throughout Alaska by the GCI Alaska Academic Decathlon. An additional \$15,000 in scholarships are made available every year to Decathletes who participate at the State level from UAF, UAA, and other educational institutes. Individual medals and team awards are also presented each year. The highest scoring Alaskan team is sent to the National Competition.

### **Why Are We Called the GCI Alaska Academic Decathlon?**

In 1996, for the mutual benefit of both General Communications, Inc. (GCI) and Alaska Academic Decathlon, it was agreed to allow GCI to become the Prime Sponsor for the Alaska Academic Decathlon and all its associated events. In exchange, GCI provides AAD with substantial cash donation and additional support services in kind. It was agreed that AAD would use the GCI logo on all publicity and printed materials and would become known as the GCI Alaska Academic Decathlon. The Alaska Academic Decathlon remains a 501 c 3 non-profit organization as described by the IRS. GCI encourages other sponsors to become involved.

## Annual Calendar of Events

<b>May 1<sup>st</sup></b>	Program for the next competition year is released from USAD
<b>Mid-May</b>	USAD ships early orders of Study Guide, novel, and music CDs to schools
<b>August 1<sup>st</sup></b>	Curriculum materials shipped to schools that placed orders in May
<b>September</b>	Begin recruiting team members
<b>October</b>	Team preparations: speeches written, basic reading completed
<b>November 1<sup>st</sup></b>	Intent to Participate due to State Director, including a P.O. or check to pay for registration fees
<b>Mid-November</b>	Practice Test A mailed to school test administrator from the State Office
<b>January</b>	Practice (Regional) Test B mailed to school test administrator from the State office
<b>January</b>	Local or regional competitions
<b>February 1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>Team registration paperwork due in State Director's office</b>
<b>March</b>	Order curriculum materials from USAD for the next school year competition
<b>Late Feb – Early March</b>	State Championship held in Anchorage at the Hilton Hotel
<b>April</b>	National Finals

## Starting an Academic Decathlon Team

### **Find a Coach**

First, and most important, you need a coach. This will most likely be a teacher who has shown enthusiasm for the program. It is helpful to recruit several teachers to help, especially in economics, math, fine arts, and maybe speech. But the primary coach will be the team motivator and must be willing to spend the most time with the students.

Many schools use the study materials as curriculum for a class that is held during the school day. The teacher who teaches Academic Decathlon will normally be the coach in this case. While this is a good option it isn't the only way to form a team. A team can also be formed as an after school activity. This of course takes a greater commitment of time from the coach.

The coach should make sure the teachers of classes that cover the Decathlon topics for the year know what you are working on so they can arrange to cover those topics at a time that is most helpful to you. Order your curriculum materials from USAD. Keep the preparation process simple and focused.

### **Recruiting Students**

Putting together a team is usually a challenge since many students may not show enthusiasm for studying as a leisure activity. While a team can compete with as few as 6 students, to be a competitive team at the state finals, you will need to find 3 "A" students, 3 "B" students, and 3 "C" students. (See Eligibility Guidelines for a complete explanation of the GPA requirements and calculations.)

Academic Decathlon is the most difficult academic competition in America today. As such, it has immediate appeal for many A or B students. The "Varsity" students, those with a GPA below 3.0, are usually the most difficult to recruit for your team, but they often turn out to be the most spirited and the most successful. While each high school will need to devise its own strategies for team recruitment, the following may bring you success:

- Ask your counselor to check PSAT/SAT scores; they tend to be good predictors of success in the Academic Decathlon
- Hold an orientation meeting for interested students and their parents
- Ask students who might be interested to complete a self-report sheet that includes such information as GPA, Strong and Weak Subject Areas and other commitments
- Ask other teachers in your school to make recommendations
- Ask interested students to invite their friends to a Decathlon meeting
- Promote that A, B and C students can earn scholarships
- Look for C students who are taking upper level courses. Some students would rather be challenged with a C rather than get an easy A
- Visit every English classroom and talk about the Decathlon
- Stress that Decathlon is for everyone. Not just "brains and nerds"
- Make it an honor to be on the Decathlon team similar to being selected for other team activities or organizations such as Honor Society

### **When to Start Your Decathlon Program**

While most coaches start their program in the fall after classes begin, some dedicated teams will work throughout the summer by having their students read the novel, listen to the Music CD's and collect research materials. Students need to be involved in deciding upon a Decathlon preparation schedule. Realistic goals for study session and meetings should be established.

### **Eligibility**

#### **Selecting the Final Team Members for the State Competition**

Selecting the 9-12 students who will ultimately participate at the State Championship competition can be a difficult task. Selecting your final team is regulated by the following eligibility guidelines. After these guidelines are met it is entirely up to the coach to decide other criteria for selecting their final team.

#### **Guidelines**

GCI AAD is not an official interscholastic activity that is governed by ASAA or any other Department of Education agency. We do not require the same rules for eligibility in order to participate in the State Competition. Your school or school district may require that your team meet the same activity guidelines as other activities within your school. Please check with your principal or superintendent for your school policy on interscholastic activity eligibility rules.

Schools are divided into three divisions based on student population.

Division 3, Small Schools – Up to 125 Students

## Division 2, Medium Schools – 126 – 400 Students

## Division 1, Large Schools – 401+ Students.

Student numbers are based on the October 1 counts by the Department of Education and Early Development. Combined district team numbers will be based on an aggregate of the schools within the district that are actually sending students to the Alaska Academic Decathlon.

All full-time high school students throughout the State of Alaska are allowed to compete on a Decathlon team in their school or school district. Because Alaska has so many small and remote schools, Alaska has a special way of bringing some teams together. If your school is an ASAA regulated 1A, 2A, or 3A school, or, in other words, if your school has 400 students or less as of October 1st of the previous year, then you may have a "combined team." A combined team is a team of students from different high schools within the same district. In the rural areas of Alaska, this is sometimes the only way to get a team together.

However, if your school is regulated as a 4A school, or has 401 students or more, then you may not have a combined team and all team members must be from one high school. This ruling allows for small rural schools to have a team and ensures that the larger schools do not form an \*All Star\* team with a large group of students to pull from.

We want to encourage as many students as possible to have the experience of attending the State competition. Currently, individual schools and school districts may send more than one team to State as long as they pay \$550 per team of up to 12 members. This would include an alternate in Honors, Scholastic and Varsity divisions. Alternates are allowed to participate in all events, but cannot win medals. Their scores will not be counted for team awards. An alternate may not be substituted for a regular team member after the competition has begun. An additional or second team from individual high schools will be allowed to participate in all events, but will not be eligible to receive individual or team awards.

A competition team consists of nine full-time students from the ninth through twelfth grades. A full-time student is defined as a student who is enrolled in four or more class periods per day. Each team is made up of three Honor students, three Scholastic students, and three Varsity students as indicated by the following grade point average definition:

3.75 - 4.00 GPA:	Honors Division
3.00 - 3.74 GPA:	Scholastic Division
0.00 - 2.99 GPA:	Varsity Division

Contestants may compete in a higher division than their own grade point average division but not in a lower division. Each team member competes in all ten events of the Decathlon and is eligible for individual medals in all ten events. Only six scores count for the final team standing in the competition, the top two Honor scores, the top two Scholastic scores, and the top two Varsity scores. Therefore, schools may enter with fewer than nine members and still be eligible for team awards as long as there are at least two Honor, two Scholastic, and two Varsity members.

USAD requires that the nine students who attend the National finals must be the same nine students who participated in and won the State competition. If any of the nine students are unable to attend the National finals, then the team may compete in the National finals with fewer than nine students

with concurrence of the State organization. The State organization supports sending the championship team to the National competition by providing transportation and team housing for the nine team members and their coach. The team is responsible for any food requirements outside of the meals provided at the National competition.

## Computation of Grade Point Averages

The following guidelines are to be used to compute official Decathlon grade point averages. These criteria must be followed to ensure uniformity and equity among all participants in the Alaska Academic Decathlon.

Grades from the following transcripts are considered in computing the GPA for the Academic Decathlon:

**Twelfth Graders:** All of tenth grade, all of eleventh grade, plus summer session between tenth and eleventh and between eleventh and twelfth.

**Eleventh Graders:** All of ninth grade, all of tenth grade, plus summer session between ninth and tenth and between tenth and eleventh.

**Tenth Graders:** All of eighth grade, all of ninth grade, plus summer sessions between eighth and ninth and between ninth and tenth.

**Ninth Graders:** All of seventh grade, all of eighth grade, plus summer sessions between seventh and eighth and between eighth and ninth.

Grades for the following academic subjects shall be used in grade point computation for competition purposes: *academic business courses, art appreciation, art history, computer science, economics, English/language arts, foreign language, humanities, journalism, mathematics, music theory, music appreciation, music history, science, speech, and social studies*. Grades for all other courses shall be excluded from the GPA compilation. Inquiries regarding borderline courses should be referred to the State Director who will make the determination based on the academic nature of the course, and who will then implement the decision uniformly throughout the state.

**DO NOT** count classes such as performing arts, vocational courses, aerospace, band, bookkeeping, career awareness, concert choir, crafts, dance, driver education, ESL classes, foods classes, library science, mechanics courses, photography, P.E. courses, sewing, sports medicine, typing, or yearbook.

For letter grades, all A's will count 4.0, all B's will count 3.0, all C's will count 2.0, and all D's will count 1.0. Anything below D will count 0 points. When numerical grades appear on the transcript in place of letter grades, they shall be converted to letter grades according to the official conversion scale that appears on the school's official transcript or in the school's official profile.

If a student receives a Fail in any academic course, the F is counted in averaging the student's grades even though no credit is given. When a course has been failed prior to the focus period for which the

GPA is being computed but repeated during that period, only the repeat grade is counted. When a course is failed and repeated during the focus semesters, both grades will be counted in the GPA.

Incomplete or pass/fail grades are not included in computing the GPA unless the student received an F that appears on the transcript. Once a grade is given to remove an incomplete, that grade must be used to determine the Decathlon GPA. If only pass/fail grades are assigned, the State Director will determine an evaluation scale in concert with the USAD Testing and Competition Coordinator.

Community or college courses are included in the GPA only if high school credit is given and the course is listed on the official school transcript.

A grade, regardless of whether it is advanced placement, honors, regular, or remedial classification, will count the face value of the final grade as reflected on the official transcript. **No weighting of grades for honors classes will be included even if this is the local district policy.** An "A" grade, therefore, will count 4 points for Decathlon computation even if it counts 5 points within the local system. Under no circumstances may an "A" grade count three points. **The letter grade shown on the transcript will be used in computing GPA regardless of any plus or minus.** State Directors may determine standards for eligibility for students from schools with non-traditional grading systems. Such standards shall be communicated to USAD for approval prior to the state competition.

If a school or a teacher has a policy of changing grades subsequent to receipt of advanced placement test scores, the new grade must be used for the computation of the Decathlon GPA.

### **Verification of Eligibility**

Each high school MUST submit a copy of the official transcripts of team members to the State Director by the required deadline. The Competition GPA Verification Chairperson shall check the GPA computation in accordance with the above guidelines and verify eligibility of each team member. The team coach shall be notified of any discrepancies.

Foreign students are eligible to participate in the Academic Decathlon. A foreign student who does not possess a valid transcript may participate in the Honors category. If a coach wishes to qualify a foreign student for the Scholastic or Varsity categories, the coach must provide adequate evidence that the student performed at a relative B or C status within the foreign system during the two years prior to participation in the Decathlon.

For the National Finals, the State Director must file a team certification guaranteeing that this is the same team that won the State Championship and that all team members are eligible for the categories as indicated. Official transcripts must accompany this form. In addition, USAD may request seventh semester transcripts directly from the high school in order to verify eligibility.

Questions regarding computing the Decathlon GPA or eligibility of students should be addressed to the [State Director at 1-907-868-6994](tel:1-907-868-6994) or e-mail:

Participation in the GCI Alaska Academic Decathlon is open to all students regardless of race, creed, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability or handicap.

### **Substitutions**

If it becomes necessary to make a substitution after your Coach's Registration and other paperwork is sent to the State Director's office please follow this procedure. Complete all the necessary paperwork for the new student and forward the required registration materials to the State Directors office as soon as possible.

### **Submitting Your Intent to Participate Form**

After you have confirmed that you will have a team qualified to participate at the State Competition it will be necessary to submit an "Intent to Participate" form to the State Directors office. A sample of this form is included in the appendix. The intent to participate form is due November 1st, and registration is due February 1st.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE: Intent to participate is due Nov 1<sup>st</sup>; Registration is due Feb 1<sup>st</sup>**

Well in advance of the State competition all coaches who have submitted their Intent to Participate form will receive a packet of registration materials. These materials are also available in a printable format on-line at this web site.

### **Registration Requirements and Deadlines**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE: All Forms, Transcripts and Computation of Grade Point Averages Are Due in the State Director's Office by No Later than February 1. No transcripts or other paperwork will be accepted at the competition unless you have had to make a last minute substitution.**

(Samples of the required registration forms are included on this web site. All forms on our web site are available in a printable format.)

A set of forms must be completed for each student. Numbers 1-5 may be submitted online from our web site. Numbers 6-8 must be mailed by the deadline. ALL mailed paperwork MUST be submitted in one packet.

- **Coaches Registration Form** (May be submitted on-line)
- **Hotel Housing Form** (May be submitted on-line)
- **GPA Computation Form for each student** (May be submitted on-line)
- **Student Extracurricular Activities Form for each student** (Recommend submitting on-line so the judges can clearly read the student's activities)
- **Student Feedback Luncheon Reservation** (May be submitted on-line)

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** The following forms **MUST** be submitted by the deadline. These must be mailed to the State Director:

- **Official school transcripts for each student** (Copies are acceptable)
- **Student Registration Form for each student** (Original signatures required)
- **Code Of Student Conduct for each student** (Original signatures required)

Be sure to check each student's paperwork for omissions. Incomplete paperwork may delay your team or disqualify individuals on your team at the registration for the State competition.

### **Motivating Students**

Experienced coaches indicate anything that builds team morale helps to hold your team together and to keep the students motivated to study. Here are some ideas to try if you are looking for additional ways to motivate your team.

- Vary study places and methods; go to a local college library to study if one is available. In small communities a change of pace might be found in the town hall or community center.
- Set team and individual goals.
- Remind students about winning individual medals and scholarships.
- Plan social occasions; celebrate their achievements and special events not necessarily related to Decathlon activities.
- Create a team spirit where every Decathlete truly feels like a part of something special.
- Arrange for an all school assembly to recognize the Decathlon team.
- Find a member of the community who might be willing to host a party for Decathlon participants
- Create mini-competitions with rewards; who finishes reading the novel first, who finished reading the Super Quiz materials, who can identify all the music, etc.
- Encourage competition between team members ... sophomores vs. juniors, boys vs. girls etc.
- Serve food at team study sessions. Food typically motivates teenagers.
- Always be positive and stress that the rewards of the program are well worth the effort.

### **Holding Practice Competitions**

Many coaches use the competitive challenge throughout the preparation period. Holding practice competition will help your students prepare for the State Competition. A practice test booklet is included in the USAD curriculum package. The State will send out practice tests to teams who check the appropriate boxes on the Intent to Participate Form. The first practice test will be available in mid-November (Test A) to teams submitting their Intent to Participate Form by the November 1 due date. January Test (B) will be available by mid-January.

The January test is used as the Regional Test in areas hosting a Regional Competition. In order to maintain our charter with the United States Academic Decathlon we must follow certain rules for administering these tests. They are as follows:

- Teams requesting a practice test must provide the State Director with a Test Administrator. (See the Intent to Participate Form)
- Tests are copyrighted property of USAD and may not be used for any purpose other than an Academic Decathlon competition
- These tests may not be released out into the public domain nor at any time be given to students or coaches for study, practice or any other purposes
- All tests and answer sheets must be destroyed after they have been administered

### **Code of Student Conduct**

The GCI Alaska Academic Decathlon expects all team members to conduct themselves properly while attending an Academic Decathlon event. This includes all of the travel and sightseeing time associated with their participation in the Alaska Academic Decathlon. State Competition will be held at the Hilton Hotel Anchorage, February, 2015.

Appropriate conduct of team members is the sole responsibility of the team coach who has the legal responsibility of chaperone for his/her team members at all times. Students should be under the supervision of their coach during all excursions, activities and on the campus.

It is the responsibility of the team coach to be available to enforce good behavior and any other regulation determined necessary by the Alaska Academic Decathlon officials.

#### **Inappropriate conduct includes but is not limited to:**

- Damage to or vandalism of any property
- Appropriation of memorabilia from the UAA campus or competition site
- Use of alcohol or illegal drugs by students regardless of age
- Use of water pistols, water balloons or any other projectile at the competition site
- Fighting, loud noise or any other behavior which is disruptive to others at the competition site

Financial liability for all damage incurred by actions of a team member shall be the sole responsibility of that team and the student's parents.

### **Dress Code**

Appropriate attire for speech and interview, and the Awards banquet is described below. Distracting apparel or any kind or any indication of any school, state, region or location is considered inappropriate for the speech and interview events and will be penalized.

#### **The following are acceptable student dress standards:**

- Boys: Coat, shirt and slacks, sweater, or shirt and slacks without coat, jeans without torn or ragged edges. Shoes must be worn.

- Girls: Dress or skirt and blouse, or blouse and slacks, jeans without torn or ragged edges. Shoes must be worn.
- Team uniforms for both boys and girls are optional
- Excessively baggy clothing is inappropriate

During speech and interview contest, contestants may NOT identify ANY school, region or location in informal conversation, content, apparel or insignia of any kind. A penalty will be assessed for each violation. Distracting apparel, including hats of any kind, shall be considered inappropriate. If violations of the dress code are observed by the test proctor or Alaska Academic Decathlon officials, the student will be given the opportunity to comply with dress standards prior to the event. A student who has been allowed to compete in an event may NOT be disqualified based on dress standard violations.

In the case of any incident NOT mentioned in this publication or any other Alaska Academic Decathlon publication, the Alaska Executive Director shall convene a panel of three Board Members to discuss the incident and determine the appropriate action. Appropriate action may include individual or team disqualification.

This Code of Conduct and Dress Code has been adapted from the USAD Nationals Competition Code of Conduct & Dress Code.

Student and parent support of this code is essential for the Alaska Academic Decathlon. Coaches should appreciate their obligation to model the expected standards.

We request that Team Coaches print this form and ask each participant and their parent to sign and date it, then countersign it as the coach. Please bring the completed forms to the competition or mail them in advance to Curtiss Clifton.

### **Competition Rules**

It is important that each student who participates at the State Competition is made aware of the following competition rules.

#### **Rules are strictly enforced**

#### **Participant Identification**

All test materials pertaining to a participant must show an identification number in order to be acceptable for scoring. ScanTron forms will be pre-slugged with identification numbers. No students should identify their school names to any judge during the speech or interview competition.

#### **Leaving the Testing Room**

Participants may NOT leave the testing room (including Super Quiz) for any reason before the scheduled break. A student who leaves a testing room or event will not be permitted to return until the next scheduled break. A participant who leaves must first secure the permission of the proctor and turn in their test and ScanTron. Any participant who has a medical condition that requires special

provisions of any kind must provide the State Director with written documentation from a physician in advance of the competition. The time lost may not be made up. At break time, everyone should remain seated until the Test Administrator dismisses the entire room.

### **Super Quiz Relay**

This event is held before a large audience; therefore, spectators are required to be as quiet as possible in order to give each contestant an equal opportunity. Participants are NOT permitted to bring books, notes, purses, backpacks, coats, hats, electronic devices, or any other items to the team seating area or competition floor. Coaches are not allowed to sit with or communicate with their team members during the Super Quiz.

### **Tardiness**

Participants are responsible for being in the proper test location at the time each test begins. A participant who is tardy will NOT be allowed to enter the testing room until the break. Participants will not be allowed to enter the Super Quiz Relay venue once the competition commences.

### **Test Materials**

The proctor will supply all printed materials and writing utensils necessary for the written tests. Calculators are allowed in the testing area for the Mathematics test only. All calculators must meet competition criteria. Pens are allowed for the essay writing only. ALL additional materials including mascots, notes, purses, books, backpacks, coats, hats and electronic devices must be left outside the testing room. Students must clearly mark within the ScanTron bubbles in order for the score to count. All testing materials must be returned to the Test Administrator at the end of each test.

### **Starting/Stopping**

If a proctor determines that a student has failed to stop when instructed to do so or has started before being instructed to do so, the student will receive a score of zero for that particular test.

### **Cheating**

If a participant is involved in any unauthorized communication or uses any type of notes or unauthorized item, the proctor must immediately report the incident to the State Director or Test Administrator. A participant who is proven to have cheated will be disqualified from the event and may be disqualified from the competition. Participants removed because of cheating or misconduct will not be eligible for any awards. The decision of the Alaska Academic Decathlon is final and irrevocable.

### **Withdrawal/Alternates**

In case of emergency or illness, a participant must formally withdraw in order to be eligible for any awards. To formally withdraw the participant must inform the State Director in writing. An alternate student CANNOT be substituted for a regular contestant once the competition begins. The State

Championship team that attends Nationals must be the same nine team members that competed in the State Competition.

## **Test Scores**

All scores posted on competition day are unofficial. Scores for Essay, Speech, and Interview and Super Quiz will not be posted.

## **Essay**

Two essay judges will read all essays. If the scores differ by 200 points or more, the essay will then be read by a third reader. The closest two scores will be averaged to determine the essay score.

## **Speech and Interview**

Students are encouraged to find their assigned room for speech and interview a few minutes ahead of their scheduled time. Judges have a very full schedule and no-shows will not be allowed to make up their time if they are late. Students are cautioned to remain quiet in the hallways while waiting their turn. Excessive noise will not be tolerated.

## **Appeals**

An appeal regarding any test item can be made by any contestant through the team coach. Appeals must be presented on an Appeals Form to the State Director or Test Administrator during the earliest break after a test has been completed. Appeals on the Oral Super Quiz must be presented within 15 minutes of the completion of the oral Super Quiz. An Appeals Committee convened by the State Director will decide all appeals at the time of the appeal. The decision of the Appeals Committee is final. Essay, Speech and Interview scores are not subject to appeal. (An appeals form is located on this web site.)

## **Standards of Conduct**

Coaches and Decathletes are required to comply with the above competition rules and those stated in the Alaska Academic Decathlon CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT AND DRESS CODE. Failure to adhere to these rules may result in the disqualification of the participant and/or an entire team.

## **Costs and Materials**

### **State Entry Fee**

The entry fee for the State competition is \$550 per team. This fee partially covers the cost of the following: All testing materials, the competition rooms at the hotel, the student ice breaker, the Saturday Feedback Luncheon for one representative from each team, ten tickets to the awards banquet, awards, and the after banquet dance.

GCI AAD contracts with a hotel in Anchorage to provide a fair and reasonable rate for rooms at the State competition. Housing costs shall be funded by the individual schools. You will need to provide housing for your team and coach. Often additional chaperones will pay their own housing costs. We

encourage you to house your students at the contracted hotel when participating at the State competition. By doing so, you assist us in meeting our room block. When we meet our room block our competition space is free. This assists us with keeping team registration fees at a minimum.

Teams must also provide for their transportation to and from the State competition. While some teams have these costs paid by their school or district, many of our participating teams raise their own funds to cover the costs of housing and transportation, as well as the costs of their curriculum materials.

The State Championship Team will have their travel to and from their hometown to the National Competition site and rooming costs paid for by GCI AAD. All extras activities and food not provided by USAD will be at the expense of the team.

### **Purchasing Your Study Materials**

Curriculum materials should be ordered from USAD. They provide curriculum materials in sets of 10 (schools participating with fewer than 10 team members should contact USAD for a per item cost breakdown). Each set of 10 curriculum packets will cost in the \$500 range. This will equip a nine-person team plus the coach. **All USAD curriculum materials and test materials are based on the subject area outlines published in the USAD Study Guide.**

Competition test writers will derive 50% of the items on each language and literature, music, and science test from the information presented in the Subject Area Resource Guide for that subject; writers have been instructed to derive the remaining 50% of the test items from sources beyond these guides.

Test writers will construct tests such that at least 10—15% of the questions on each test will require the use of higher order thinking skills. USAD's Higher Order Thinking Skills booklet is included in the curriculum package or can be ordered a la carte.

The following items represent the minimum materials recommended for preparing your team to compete and are all included in the USAD Basic Curriculum Package.

### **The Study Guide**

The study guide is **the most essential tool** for competing in the Academic Decathlon. This document sets forth the basic curriculum for the coming year with topic outlines in each of the six standard subject areas. The general rules for the other three events - speech, interview and essay are included, as well as the eligibility guidelines for participation.

The Study Guide is released on May 1 each year and may be ordered from the USAD office. By submitting your order early (in February or March) you will receive your order in May and be able to distribute them to team members before school is out.

## **Subject Area Resource Guides**

Subject Area Resource Guides in Language and Literature, Music, Science, and Super Quiz are recommended. The Super Quiz Guide will be a compendium of articles and excerpts written by multiple authors. The other guides will each be written by a single content-area expert. ALL of the Super Quiz Test items—both oral and written—will be based on the information presented in the Super Quiz Resource Guide.

## **Book of Art Reproductions**

This booklet is a compendium of reproductions of the nineteen artworks in this year's art outline. No text beyond the title, artist, date, etc. will accompany these reprints. Individual artist research will be necessary.

## **Music CD's**

Covers the music performed by the artists to be studied.

## **Practice Test Booklet with Tape**

Gives students an overview of the types of questions they can expect on the competition tests.

## **Recommended additional materials not included in the basic curriculum package**

### **The Novel**

The novel includes 50 pages of introduction, notes on the text, further reading and a chronology

### **Other Materials Available Through USAD**

The USAD Study Guide contains a section on "Essential Information for Coaches" that lists various resources available for studying the topics for each year's competition.

## **Essays**

### **Total Points Possible - 1000**

All students will be required to write an essay. Fifty minutes will be allowed to write the essay. At the beginning of the 50-minute session each student is given the following instructions:

- Select one of the four prompts as the topic for your essay. Two are related to the Super Quiz theme, and the other two are related to the literary selections that you studied this year.
- Write the number of the prompt in the designated box on the cover sheet of your essay. It is not necessary to include the specific language of the prompt at the beginning or in the body of your essay.
- Write a well-developed and organized essay in which you clearly respond to the question or direction that is presented in the prompt.
- State your individual thesis or position and clearly indicate your purpose for writing.

- Follow the accepted rules of standard English sentence structure, usage, spelling and punctuation; use appropriate diction and style.
- Maintain legible handwriting. Use a pen if you wish, but avoid messy cross-outs. Allow yourself time to proofread your essay.
- For the essay topic you choose, state your individual thesis or position clearly. Use specific information and examples from your studies to support your position.
- Provide a final paragraph to conclude or close your essay.

You have 50-minutes for the essay test. You will get a five-minute warning after 45 minutes has elapsed. You will write your essay on the notebook paper provided. Make sure your ID number is on the cover sheet. Write your ID number in the upper right hand corner of each page of your essay booklet. If you need additional paper, raise your hand and a proctor will provide it.

### **Essay Grading Procedure**

Two essay judges will read all essays. The essays will be graded using the USAD Scoring Rubric. If the scores differ by 200 points or more, the essay will then be read by a third reader. The closest two scores will be averaged to determine the essay score. A Sample Essay Scoring Rubric is located on the web site.

### **Science Event – Total Points Possible – 1000**

Like the economics event, science is rotated out of the USAD curriculum when the Super Quiz topic is a science topic. When science is included as one of the six subject area events, its actual topic changes completely from year to year. It is important, therefore, to check the Study Guide and obtain the Subject Area Guide to determine the precise focus of the event. Because science is not seen as a uniform area in all high schools' core courses, the material that Decathletes are expected to master is kept relatively fundamental. As in the economics event, obtaining a set of the right textbooks may be helpful, but you or the appropriate science teacher will need to determine which chapters and pages relate to the USAD outline, so you do not overload your team with an abundance of unnecessary material.

### **Social Science Event – Total Points Possible – 1000**

**Important Notice:** For each year's competition, one theme of the Super Quiz will be rotated out as an individual event.

It is more difficult to identify the proper scope and depth of preparation for some topics than others. The USAD Subject Area Guide endeavors to correct this situation by covering the subject that varies tremendously from year to year with most of the relevant material that students need to know in preparing for the competition. This reduces the arduous and often unnecessary task of researching the topic and creating outlines to simplify the learning.

### **Competition Scoring**

- The Academic Decathlon has ten events; each event is evenly weighted at 1000 points per competitor for a 10,000-point possible total. However, only six scores are counted for the

team ranking, (top two Honor, top two Scholastic, and top two Varsity) so the top team score possible is 60,000. Winning scores at the State Finals are usually in the 40,000 range.

- Five of the objective tests have 50 items; the raw score is converted to a 1000-point basis by the computer with each item worth 20 points. The math test has 25 items. Each item is therefore worth 40 points.
- The essay is scored holistically based on a rubric. Each essay is read independently twice. If there is a divergence of more than 200 points in the two scores, the essay is read and scored by the Chairperson. The third score then replaces the divergent score. The two scores are averaged for the final score.
- The speech and interview are performed before a panel of judges (usually three). The judges complete the ScanTron scoring forms. These are scanned directly into the computer that then computes an average score based on a maximum of 1000 points.
- Super Quiz has both a written component and an oral component. The written test will have 40 items worth 15 points each that will count for 60% of the total score ( $40 \times 15 = 600$ ). In the oral relay, each student will answer five questions worth 80 points each that will count for 40% ( $5 \times 80 = 400$ ).

The ScanTron scoring forms used at the competition are at the following links. You'll need Adobe Acrobat Reader on your computer in order to open them. It's a free add-in from the Adobe web site, if you don't already have it.

[Essay ScanTron form](#)

[Speech ScanTron form](#)

[Interview ScanTron form](#)

- Gold, silver, and bronze medals are awarded in each event and for each category. All ties are awarded.
- Team overall ranking is determined by the top two scores in each category, i.e. the top two Honor scores, the top two Scholastic scores, and the top two Varsity scores.
- In Super Quiz, the team ranking is also determined by the top two scores in each of the three categories. NOTE: It is not necessary that the six students whose scores count for the Super Quiz be the same six students whose scores count for the Overall.
- There are three trophy divisions at the State competition. Trophies will be awarded for first, second and third place in each of the following three divisions:
  - Division 1 Small Schools: All teams composed of 1A-2A schools under ASAA classifications.
  - Division 2 Medium Schools: All teams composed of 3A schools under ASAA classifications.
  - Division 3 Large Schools: All teams composed of 4A schools under ASAA classifications.

The first place winner from each division will be deemed the State Championship team in the division. The highest scoring team overall will be deemed the Overall State Champion.

- A Winners' List is released following the presentation of awards that recognize the gold, silver, and bronze medal winners in each event and the each teams overall standings. Each coach receives a printout of their team's scores.
- Special awards are common in the Academic Decathlon. At the State Finals they include the State Director's Award, the Highest Scoring Student on each team and Rookie Team trophies for first, second and third place teams competing for three or less years.

## **Calculators**

### **Competitors May Use Calculators for the Mathematics Test**

If competitors wish to use calculators on the USAD Mathematics Test, they are responsible for bringing them to the test. Calculators will not be provided for students who do not bring their own. Calculator use is permitted only for Mathematics; competitors will not be allowed to use calculators on any other test.

### **Permissible Calculators**

If a competitor wishes to use a calculator, it may be any four-function, scientific, or graphing calculator, provided it has none of the features listed in Section III below.

### **Prohibited Calculators**

Calculators with any of the following features are NOT allowed in USAD competition:

- Pocket organizers
- Handheld or laptop computers
- Electronic writing pads or pen-input devices
- Models with an alphabetic (QWERTY) keypad, e.g. TI-92 or HP-95
- Models with paper tape
- Models that make noise
- Models that can engage in wireless communication (transfer data or information with other calculators)
- Models that require a power cord

Because companies are continuously introducing new products, it would be impossible for USAD to maintain an up-to-date list of specific model numbers that possess these features. If a competitor is uncertain whether a particular calculator will be allowed, the student should bring a backup that does not possess any of the features in question. No backup calculator will be provided for any competitor whose calculator is disallowed.

## **Competing Without a Calculator**

Competitors may choose to take the Mathematics Test without a calculator. Coaches should have students practice using their calculators on practice tests to make sure they are functioning correctly and that the student understands how to use it correctly.

## **Calculator Failure During a Test**

If a competitor's calculator stops working during a test the student should continue taking the test without a calculator. No additional calculator will be provided, and the competitor will not be allowed to take the test again later. However, a competitor may bring a backup calculator and/or spare batteries to the test.

## **Written Tests**

The tests in the six written test subject areas are multiple-choice with five answers. Each test has 50 items, except math, which has 25. Before beginning the coaching process in each of the subject areas, a thorough review of the official USAD Subject Area Guide and Practice Test for that area is advised! The rule for preparing for the Academic Decathlon subject tests is "Keep It Focused!" Assistance from other teachers, from past Decathletes, or from community people should be welcomed in these areas, but they need to understand that the competition instruments are focused on the Study Guide Outline and therefore any outside instruction should pertain to that outline.

## **Test Room Seating Arrangement**

We use arena testing for all of the written tests. Students are required to sit at least one row apart and two seats apart from teammates. Coaches should instruct their team to sit in the same general area while still abiding by the above rules. This will allow our aggressive testing schedule to be maintained. Coaches are required to provide their team with their ScanTron forms just prior to each of the written tests. Coaches are not allowed to remain in the testing room after the test is started. Coaches are sometimes asked to be proctors for the test, in that event those proctoring will remain in the testing room.

## **Marking Instructions for ScanTron Forms**

*Results can be less than satisfactory if:*

- the wrong marking instrument is used (a #2 pencil gives the best results and is provided)
- the mark is not dark and does not fill the box
- Erasures are not clean – incomplete erasures can be read as a mark

## **Art – Total Points Possible – 1000**

The art test covers the specific pieces of art listed in the Study Guide, the artists, the schools of art, and the fundamental concepts and techniques that are utilized by those artists and within those schools of art. The Book of Art Reproductions contains full color reproductions of the selections. It is also possible to obtain slides of the art works from USAD, which many art teachers like to use for lecture purposes. Independent research on the artists' techniques, concepts and schools of art will be required.

## **Music – Total Points Possible - 1000**

The music test covers the specific pieces of music listed in the Study Guide, the composers, styles, historical periods, and fundamental concepts of music including instruments and voices that are pertinent to the theme. The USAD Subject Area Guide in music provides information on each composer and the particular selection. Also available is a CD of the musical selections. In order to assure that students “experience” the music, a portion of the music involves a listening section, in which students listen to a 15-second excerpt, recognize it, and answer a question about the piece. Many coaches view the art and music sections of the Academic Decathlon as a wonderful opportunity to provide a rich cultural experience for students that may not be otherwise available.

## **Language and Literature – Total Possible Points – 1000**

The language and literature event in the Academic Decathlon usually includes one or two novels and several poems. The tests in language and literature also contain a section on analytical reading in which the students read a new “unknown” passage about 25 lines long and answer 10 questions about it. In these questions, the students are asked to do any of the following:

- Recognize the main idea
- Recognize restatement of information
- Make inference on the basis of information
- Identify techniques used to determine tone
- Recognize tone
- Analyze argument
- Identify meaning of word in context

Because this type of analysis is intrinsic to all reading comprehension, your team members will most likely have a long background of performing this type of task on standardized tests and in English classes. It is, therefore, an area that you will probably not address in your Decathlon preparation unless you have a lot of time or you win at lower levels and are trying to refine your skills for the state or national championship.

Ideally your team members have read the novel(s) during the summer. The language and literature test presumes a mastery of the novels that requires students to discuss characters by name, settings by location, and incidents by description. In addition, they must have a working knowledge of the literary terms that are used in literary analysis and the ability to apply them properly to the novels. Some time must be spent on focused team discussions of the novels with the aid of the Subject Area Guide.

There are usually several poems of varying length in the poetry section of the language and literature event. Students must be able to identify or discuss each poem by author, title, format subject, and theme, and must have a working knowledge of the literary terms and their application. While test items on the poetry often contain a reproduction of the particular line or lines from the poem that are relevant to the question, the student is expected to have sufficient recall of the poem to know how those lines fit into the total “happening” in the poem.

If you are not an English teacher, then recruiting one will prove very beneficial. You will need his or her help in many English related areas; essay, poetry, novels, and perhaps critical reading. You should consider recruiting them as an assistant coach. After the students have read and “learned” the literature, extended discussion periods on each piece of literature will be necessary for them to develop a full and accurate understanding of each one.

### **Economics – Total Points Possible – 1000**

When economics is the theme of the Super Quiz it will not be a separate event. It is only in the last ten years that all states have finally adopted economics into the state curriculum. In most high schools it is now taught during the last semester of the senior year, usually opposite a semester of American government. If this is the situation in your school, then it is likely that at the time of your preparation for competition no one on your team has studied any economics. For this reason, the Academic Decathlon economics event is very basic made up of the most fundamental concepts and terminology. You should focus coverage of only the materials that students will need to master outlined in the Study Guide. Also helpful may be your school’s economics textbook. Be sure to determine which chapters and pages relate to the USAD outline, so that you are not asking your team to absorb an entire course in economics for one test.

### **Mathematics – Total Points Possible – 1000**

Math is the event that is typically the least prepared for in the competition. Most coaches will allow students to rely on their years of math training and their inherent abilities to perform reasonably on the math test. It is possible to sharpen those skills with only one or two math sessions that could result in a significant improvement in scores. On a comprehensive math test, the student spends time recognizing the type of problem presented and the proper solution process called for. A skillful math teacher can review the practice test with the students and prepare them for a quick recognition of each problem type. Use of calculators is allowed, but students must follow the calculator policy.

### **Super Quiz**

#### **Super Quiz Written – 600 Points**

The Super Quiz topic is based on the overall theme each year. The USAD Resource Guide provides a comprehensive collection of articles and speeches by various experts covering the breadth of the subject. The Resource Guide is the only source that is needed for Super Quiz preparation, and conversely, it would be impossible to compete in Super Quiz without reading the Resource Guide.

The Super Quiz test is given in two parts: a written 40 item multiple choice test in which each question is worth 15 points and an oral relay in which each team member answers five questions worth 80 points each. The oral relay is held before an audience and each student has time in the spotlight to answer five questions raising a hand when they get the correct answer. Most experienced Decathlon teams know it is important to know the Super Quiz materials in order to win the Super Quiz combined event.

#### **Super Quiz Relay – 400 Points**

Contestants are seated as a separate group before the competition begins. The seating arrangement for the competitors in single chair rows as follows:

Varsity V-7	Scholastic S-4	Honors H-1
Varsity V-8	Scholastic S-5	Honors H-2
Varsity V-9	Scholastic S-6	Honors H-3

Students from each school are assigned to the above seating arrangements in rows clearly marked with the team name. The purpose of the above seating arrangement is so only one student from each team is at the answer table at a time. If a team with fewer than nine members is competing, the students should leave a chair empty rather than filling in each seat in the row and only move up when their number is competing.

Coaches and the general public are seated separately from the contestants. Audience Participation Answer Sheets may be provided to the audience. No alternates are allowed to compete in the oral competition but may mark their answer sheets as though they were competing checking their own answers for correctness.

Proctors will be assigned to confirm students are properly seated. **No materials may be brought into the area:** all supplies will be provided.

Preliminary and/or welcoming remarks are given by the emcee, contest officials, etc. Proctors are asked to take their assigned places on the competition floor. The emcee then explains the procedures and rules to the participants and the audience.

The emcee calls up one row of contestants, (i.e., "Students in Row 1, Varsity 7"). After students are settled and proctors have verified contestant numbers, the emcee begins the competition.

A question is shown on the projection screen while the emcee reads the question. All questions are multiple-choice. The students are given 7 seconds to mark their answer sheets, after the question and answer choices have been read. The emcee announces the time is up; at this point, the student's pencil must be down until the answer sheet is scored. The answer is then read by the emcee. Proctors monitor the students while they are marking their answer sheets, score the answer sheets and indicate correct response by instructing the students to raise a hand.

After this group of students (Varsity-7) has answered five questions, the student returns to the end of the team row and all students in the row rotate forward one seat. After all students have completed the oral event, the students should be back in the original order as when they started.

If an answer, right or wrong, is called out by the audience and is heard by the emcee, the question will be eliminated and the total value of the Super Quiz relay will be reduced by 80 points for each voided question.

If a student wishes to contest an answer, the team COACH should submit the appeal in writing to the State Director or the emcee **immediately** following the Super Quiz relay.

## **Appeals**

### **Appeals Procedure**

Coaches are asked to caution their students about making appeals without merit.

An appeal regarding any test item can be made by any contestant through the team coach. Appeals must be presented on an Appeals Form to the State Director or Test Administrator during the earliest break after a test has been completed. Appeals on the Oral Super Quiz must be presented within 15 minutes of the completion of the oral Super Quiz. All appeals will be decided by an Appeals Committee convened by the State Director at the time of the appeal. Disposition of appeals will be made in writing on the appeal form. If the Appeals Committee deems a question invalid, all students will be given credit for that question. Appeals identifying an invalid answer (on oral Super Quiz) will result in the giving of credit to all correct answers.

***The decision of the Appeals Committee is final.***

### **Essay, Speech, and Interview Scores Are Not Subject to Appeal**

If the State Director must leave the testing location and is therefore not available to receive appeals, a designated GCI AAD Board member will remain at the testing location to receive appeals in the absence of the State Director.

In the event of any incident NOT mentioned in this publication or any other GCI AAD publication, (including the Competition Handbook, newsletters, web site postings, etc.), a committee of the GCI AAD Board of Directors shall be convened by the State Director to review and rule on the matter. The committee shall consist of at least three board members. The committee will determine appropriate action and notify the appropriate parties.

- No appeals will be allowed once the contest day competition activities have been completed
- No oral appeals will be accepted. Appeals accepted in writing only
- Coaches only can appeal. Students cannot be involved in the appeal process nor should they attempt to lobby the State Director or the appeals committee concerning their appeal

A sample appeals form is located on this web site, and will be made available at the competition

### **Who Is Involved With the GCI Alaska Academic Decathlon?**

GCI AAD is governed by an all-volunteer Board of Directors who act as an advisory group for planning the functions and setting the financial goals of the organization. Board members also serve as volunteers at the State competition. The Board also works to enlist the community to become volunteers and sponsors.

## 2014-2015 AAD Board of Directors

Name	Role	Affiliated With	Contact
Pam Lloyd	President	GCI	plloyd@gci.com
Roger Hull	Vice President	UAA	rogerhull@gci.net
Greg Dutton	Scoring Chair	GCI	gdutton@gci.com
Bill Miernyk	Treasurer	Moore Business Farms	Bill.miernyk@email.moore.com
Carol Miernyk	Event Office Manager		cmiernyk@gmail.com
Wilson Hughes	President Emeritus	GCI	whughes@gci.com
Liz Boario		Cygnus Group Educational Consultants	cygnusgp@alaska.net
Sara Huff	Essay Chair	GCI	shuff@gci.com
Jennifer Slaughter	Interview Chair	GCI	jslaughter@gci.com
Curtiss Clifton	State Director	GCI	cclifton@gci.com; gciad@gci.net
Bob Ormberg	Fundraising Chair	GCI	bormberg@gci.com
Duane Epton	Speech Chair	Alaska Airlines Magazine	duaneepton@gci.net
David Morris	Secretary	GCI	dmorris@gci.com
Danny Parrish	Treasurer	GCI	dparrish@gci.com

### State Director

The State Director is tasked by the Board of Directors to conduct the business of the Decathlon. The Director is charged with planning, coordinating and successfully executing all necessary procedures leading up to and including the State competition. The State Director is the first point of contact for the participating schools.

*Curtiss Clifton*  
2550 Denali Street  
Suite 1500  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
Ph: (907) 868-6994

## **Scoring Team**

The scoring team is contracted by the Board of Directors to accomplish the scoring of the events and final tabulation of all individual and team scores for the State competition. Greg Dutton is the point of contact for event scoring.

## **Regional Coordinators and Team Coaches**

Several regions throughout the state have coordinators who develop the program within their region. If you are interested in starting a team in your school, please contact the State Director for the regional coordinator in your school district.

Team Coaches are generally members of the teaching staff, however, a coach or regional coordinator may also be an interested community volunteer or retired staff member.

Regional Coordinators and Team Coaches establish a plan for giving the opportunity to participate in Decathlon activities to as many students as possible.

## **Sponsors**

All of our sponsors are important to the continuation of GCI AAD and we recognize their sponsorships in several ways including the following: Logo on our web site; Name in our Brochures; Logo in our Competition Handbook and Banquet Program; Name on a Competition Banner; and their name in our twice yearly newsletter. We receive no public funding and it is only through the generous donations from our sponsors that we are able to continue this program.

## **Volunteers**

In order to conduct the State competition nearly 200 community volunteers are needed to judge the speech and interview events and to act as proctors for the testing and the Super Quiz. Additional volunteers participate as essay graders.

## **United States Academic Decathlon (USAD)**

The National organization establishes the rules for the competition, prepares an annual study guide, selects a new theme and develops new curriculum materials for each competition year. They also prepare the test questions for the Practice, Regional, State and National competitions. The staff of USAD is eager to assist coaches with questions concerning the purchase of curriculum materials or about the program in general. They may be reached on line at <http://www.usad.org/>

## **Competition Awards and Scholarships**

### **Awards Distribution – Teams are only eligible to win in one category**

- Overall State Champion - 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place Team Trophies and Individual Medals
- Small Schools Division - 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place Team Trophies and Individual Medals (1a-2a schools)
- Medium Schools Division - 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place Team Trophies and Individual Medals (3a schools)

- Large Schools Division - 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place Team Trophies and Individual Medals (4a schools)
- Rookie Division - 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place Team Trophies and Individual Medals (Participation 3 or fewer years)
- Super Quiz -1st, 2nd, and 3rd place Team Award and Individual Medals
- Each Event - 1st, 2nd, 3rd place medals for Honors, Scholastic, and Varsity
- The top-scoring student on each team will receive special recognition. All participants receive a certificate of participation.

### **Speech Showcase**

The overall Honors, Scholastic and Varsity Student will present their speech before the Awards Banquet audience. The coaches of the winning students will be notified in advance so that students may continue to rehearse their speech in preparation of their presentation.

### **Scholarships**

Nine \$1,000 scholarships are given. Three per division, (3 Honors, 3 Scholastic and 3 Varsity) determined by the top overall scores in each division.

### **USAD National Finals Team**

The highest scoring team overall will represent Alaska at the National Finals.

### **Coaching Speech**

#### **Suggestions for Coaching the Speech Events**

The ability to express oneself in a public forum is one of our most cherished rights. In fact, the right to express one's ideas in public is so revered that it is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States--not the third or the tenth, but the first. Public speaking helps us to shape the world around us and enables us to preserve and give voice to the long-standing traditions and values we hold dear. In addition to its philosophical and cultural value, public speaking has pragmatic value. Employers seek workers with strong communication skills and, once employed, workers who communicate effectively often rise to higher levels in organizations. Clearly, the ability to speak in a public setting is one that students should master and one that they will use in the future.

#### **Nature of the Event**

At GCIAAD the speech competition requires that students deliver two speeches: a prepared speech and an impromptu speech. Please be sure that the students are aware of the time limits on the speeches and that they are comfortable with being timed. In addition, it is important that the students know they will be asked to give two speeches. In some cases, students have come in and delivered their prepared address, but have appeared surprised when the judges indicated they would follow up with an impromptu speech. Both speeches should be viewed as an opportunity for the students to express themselves, a chance for them to be seen and heard as individuals. Toward that end, there are several things that coaches can and should do to help students feel at ease in this

event. For ease of organization, we will divide the process into three dimensions: Preparation, Practice, and Conquering Stage Fright.

## **Preparing for the Speech Competition**

Early and adequate preparation will go a long way toward helping students feel confident and achieve success in the speech events. That said, it is important to recognize that public speaking is generally evaluated on the basis of three interconnected dimensions: Content, Organization, and Delivery. While the specific elements that may be on the evaluation form at Academic Decathlon may be slightly different, these three elements are still the hallmark of an effective presentation.

### **Content**

The selection and development of an appropriate topic is the first step to developing sound content. For the prepared speech, students should select a topic that is appropriate to the occasion and the requirements of the competition. It is also helpful if students select a topic in which they are genuinely interested—this will help them feel more confident. Once a topic is selected, the student should engage in research, thought, and reflection on the topic. In addition, they should work to revise the manuscript several times before it is ready for competition.

Because organization is an important criterion in the evaluation of the Speeches, students are advised to build speeches around outlines. Each speech should have:

- An introduction that captures the attention of the audience and identifies the purpose of the speech;
- A body with identifiable main ideas, a logical progression of thought, and good support material; and
- A conclusion that gives the speech a tone of finality.

Language of the speech should be free of colloquialism and should be precise, interesting and appropriate to an adult audience. All words must be pronounced correctly, and the speech must be grammatically sound.

### **Topic Selection**

In choosing a speech topic, the student should consider audience analysis. A panel of adult professionals will be judging the speech; therefore, the contestant is well-advised to reject topics that primarily appeal to adolescents. This is not to suggest that the student avoid topics that concern a young person. Certainly, the best speech topics will spring from the student's strong feelings about subjects of interest. The ideas simply should be presented in a manner appropriate to an adult audience.

The topic should be one marked by originality, or, if a universal theme, it should be unique in analysis and approach.

### **Developing Self Confidence**

To help develop self-confidence, the student should be encouraged to prepare the speech early, rehearse it thoroughly, and give it to a variety of audiences before the contest. Only by repetitive performance does one learn to control nervousness and to channel the energy into a vibrant delivery

style. Urge the student to seek feedback from the audiences and to remain flexible until near the contest date. Too often the students compose the speech and then resist changes suggested by others because of an attachment to the original content. Advise them to address particularly any given criticism that occurs several times from several different listeners. The chances are good the judging panel may have the same observations. Advise them, too, that alterations in the content are not bad; minor adjustments will help prevent the speech from becoming stale.

### **Help Your Student to Understand Stage Fright**

*The Book of Lists* identifies the fear of public speaking as ranking second only to fear of death. Not surprisingly, many GCIAD competitors report more apprehension about the speaking events than about other dimensions of the contest. One possible reason for this increased level of fear is that students may feel they have more control over mental recall than they do over the stage fright that so often accompanies the speech contest. At the same time, however, a fear of public speaking is perfectly normal, may be expected, and can be controlled and even diminished with preparation and practice. Helping students to better understand stage fright will enable them to feel more confident with this dimension of the Decathlon.

Some of the world's best known actors and entertainers experience stage fright every time they face an audience. Singers like Rod Stewart, Barbra Streisand, and Cher have confessed that stage fright has affected their lives as performers. Actors like Tom Selleck, and even the great Sir Laurence Olivier, have also expressed drastic feelings of stage fright when facing an audience. Fortunately, these performers came to understand that their feelings of fear were actually helpful to the performance.

The sense of stage fright and most people experience is a "fight or flight" response to a challenging situation. The mind and body gear up for the challenge with a boost of adrenaline. This may cause an increased heart rate, cotton mouth, perspiration, "butterflies" in the stomach, as well as many other symptoms common for so many speakers. These symptoms should not be viewed as abnormal. They are an indication that the mind and body are preparing for a challenge. As many instructors of public speaking have said, the key to effective public speaking is teaching your "butterflies" to fly in formation! If students are able to recognize the symptoms associated with stage fright and come to see them as a sign of physical and mental energy for the speech, the symptoms will not be debilitating. Laurence Olivier once admitted that the worst performance of his life was one where he did not experience stage fright. Olivier came to understand that stage fright is simply the physical and psychological manifestation of one's fear of being in front of an audience. It is natural, and may be controlled and even used effectively.

### **The Prepared Speech**

Many GCI AAD competitors report more apprehension about the speaking contest than about other contests. Students feel they have more control over mental recall than they do over the stage fright that so often accompanies the speech contest.

To help the student develop self-confidence, you should encourage him/her to prepare the speech early, rehearse it thoroughly, and give it to a variety of audiences before the contest. Only by repetitive performance does one learn to control nervousness and to channel the energy into a vibrant delivery style. Urge the student to seek feedback from the audiences and to remain flexible until near the contest date. Too often the students compose the speech, then resist changes suggested by others because of an attachment to the original content. Advise them to address

particularly any given criticism that occurs several times from several different listeners. The chances are good the judging panel may have the same observations. Advise them, too, that alterations in the content are not bad; minor adjustments will help prevent the speech from becoming stale.

### **Rehearsal for Verbal Effectiveness**

Practice sessions should result in improvement in vocal effectiveness.

- **Rate** of speech, making certain the student is not speaking too rapidly and there are adequate pauses for effect and for listener understanding.
- **Volume**, making certain the speech is loud enough for clear audibility in any size room.
- **Articulation** (clarity of speech), making sure all words and phrases are understandable. Help the student develop variety in pitch, volume, and rate to avoid monotone.

### **For Nonverbal Effectiveness**

Train the student to move into the room with an air of confidence and directness. (First impressions matter)! Help the speaker establish direct eye contact with the judges and project facial expressions appropriate to the verbal message being sent. Posture and gesturing should reflect energy, assurance and directness. They should appear spontaneous, rather than rehearsed.

### **The Impromptu Speech**

Impromptu speaking develops abilities to “think on your feet.” Preparation involves continual practice. It provides the students numerous opportunities to speak spontaneously on a wide variety of topics. Coaches should issue lists of topics for students to practice with as individual homework. Repeated practice will result in mastery of impromptu delivery.

### **Examples of Impromptu Topics**

- If you became ruler of the world, what would you do?
- When are you grown up?
- If you could go back in time, where or when would you go?
- What is a winner?
- Who is the average teenager?
- If you could interview anyone, who would you choose and why?

### **How Students Will Be Judged for Speech**

The following judging criteria have been reproduced with permission from the Toastmasters International.

## Prepared Speech

**Speech Development** is the way the speaker puts ideas together so the audience can understand them. The speech is structured around a purpose, and this structure must include an opening, body, and conclusion. A good speech immediately engages the audience's attention and then moves forward toward a significant conclusion. This development of the speech structure is supported by relevant examples and illustrations, facts and figures, delivered with such smoothness that they blend into the framework of the speech to present the audience with a unified whole.

**Effectiveness** is measured in part by the audience's reception of the speech, but a large part is your subjective judgment of how the speech came across. You should ask yourself such questions as "Was I able to determine the speaker's purpose?" "Did the speech relate directly to that purpose?" "Was the audience's interest held by the speaker?" "Was this subject appropriate for this particular audience?"

**Correctness** of language insures that attention will be directed toward what the speaker says, not how it is said. Proper use of grammar and correct pronunciation will show that the speaker is the master of the words being used.

**Appropriateness** of language refers to the choice of words that relate to the speech purpose and to the particular audience hearing the speech. Language should promote clear understanding of thoughts and should fit the occasion precisely.

**Speech Value** justifies the act of speaking. The speaker has a responsibility to say something meaningful and original to the audience. The listeners should feel the speaker has made a contribution to their thinking. The ideas should be important ones, although this does not preclude a humorous presentation of them.

**Voice** is the sound that carries the message. It should be flexible, moving from one pitch level to another for emphasis, and should have a variety of rate and volume. A good voice can be clearly heard and the words easily understood.

**Non-Verbal** presentation of a speech carries part of the responsibility for effective communication. The speaker's appearance should reinforce the speech, whether profound, sad, humorous, or instructional. Body language should support points through gestures, expressions, and body language

## Impromptu Speech

**Content** justifies the act of speaking. The speaker has a responsibility to say something meaningful and original to the audience. The listeners should feel the speaker has made a contribution to their thinking. The ideas should be important ones, although this does not preclude a humorous presentation of them.

**Delivery** presentation of a speech carries part of the responsibility for effective communication. The speaker's appearance should reinforce the speech, whether profound, sad, humorous, or instructional. Body language should support points through gestures, expressions, and body language.

**Overall Effectiveness** is measured in part by the audience's reception of the speech, but a large part is your subjective judgment of how the speech came across. You should ask yourself such questions as "Was I able to determine the speaker's purpose?" "Did the speech relate directly to that purpose?"

"Was the audience's interest held by the speaker?" "Was this subject appropriate for this particular audience?"

**IMPORTANT NOTICE: We use ScanTron forms for Speech and Interview at State. All penalties are recorded on the ScanTron Form by the judges.** (Copies of the ScanTron forms are located in the appendix)

### **SPEECH - Total Points Possible - 1000 (Combined Score of Prepared and Impromptu Speeches)**

The speech event involves students in the delivery of both an individually prepared speech and an impromptu speech.

Objective: To assess the Decathlete's ability to present a speech prepared in advance in accordance with specific written criteria and to assess the Decathlete's ability to present an impromptu speech.

#### **Rules and Procedures of the Contest**

At a pre-scheduled time during the competition, all students will report to a room in which they will remain for approximately 8 minutes. Upon arrival in the room, the student should tell the judges their name and ID number and give them adequate time to check this information on the evaluation forms. A timekeeper will signal the students when they should begin their speech. The student will present their 3½-4 minute prepared speech first before a panel of up to three judges. The chairperson of the judges will give a brief explanation of the rules to be followed. They are the following for the prepared speech:

#### **Prepared Speech – Total Points Possible – 700**

- Note cards may be used in topic outline or bulleted form only.
- Speech may NOT be read.
- Speech must be delivered from standing position with no lectern.
- Speech must be the original work of the student from the current Decathlon season.
- No props may be used.
- The contestant must NOT reveal anything that might be interpreted as identifying information regarding school, state, region, or location in ANY manner, either in informal conversation, speech content, apparel or insignia of ANY kind.
- Speech must be neither less than 3½ minutes nor more than 4 minutes.

To assist the student in compliance with the time limitation rule the following timing procedure will be followed:

- The timer will say "Begin"
- After three minutes, the timer will show a card with a "1". That will be the amount of time remaining.

- When the student has spoken for another 30 seconds, the timekeeper will hold up a card indicating “½”. At this point the student has reached the minimum time limit of their speech. If the student stops speaking before this minimum time a penalty will be assessed.
- When the student has spoken for four minutes the timekeeper will hold up a 0 card, but will not say, “Stop”. If a student continues to speak after the “0” card a penalty will be assessed.

### **Impromptu Speech – Total Points Possible – 300**

The judging chairperson will hand the student a card containing three topics. Upon receipt of topics, each student will be given one-minute preparation time before proceeding with the selected topic. Presentation of a 1½ to 2-minute impromptu speech on one of these topics will be given following these rules:

- Student may NOT leave the room during preparation time.
- Blank note cards provided by the judges may be used. Notes prepared prior to event are NOT allowed.
- Speech must be neither less than 1½ minutes nor more than 2 minutes.
- The contestant must NOT reveal anything that might be interpreted as identifying information regarding school, state, region, or location in ANY manner, either in informal conversation, speech content, apparel or insignia of ANY kind.
- Speech must be delivered standing before the judges.

The timing procedure for the Impromptu Speech:

- When the student receives the topic card the timer will say, “Begin”.
- When one minute has passed, the timekeeper will signal to stop then immediately signal the student to begin speaking by saying, “Begin”.
- After one minute, the timer will hold up the “1” card.
- After 1 ½ minutes the timer will hold up the “½” card, and at the end of 2 minutes the timer will hold up the “0” card.
- The timer will not say stop at the end of 2 minutes. If the student continues to speak after “0” a penalty will apply.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** *Impromptu Speech topics change each year and new topics are also issued periodically throughout the contest.*

After completing both speeches, the student will be instructed to wait outside the door for the judge’s comments. Comments will include one point the student did very well and one point where the student could improve. Judges are instructed to keep comments constructive. Any timing or location violations will be noted on the judge’s comments.

## Sample Judge's Comment Form for Speech and Interview

Thank you for presenting your speech/giving your interview before us today.

Areas of exceptional performance:

Areas where you could improve:

### Speech Penalty Points

- If a student reveal anything that might be interpreted as identifying information regarding school, state, region location in ANY manner, either in informal conversation, speech content, apparel or insignia of ANY kind during the prepared speech or the impromptu speech a -10 will be assessed against their score.
- If a student exceeds the time limit or does not meet the minimum time limit on the prepared speech a penalty of -7 will be assessed against the score. If a student exceeds the time limit or does not meet the minimum time limit on the impromptu speech a penalty of -3 will be assessed against the score.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** Judges will be instructed not to ask for the name of the student's school or city or any information that would indicate the school or school district.

### Interview Event – Total Points Possible – 1000

At a scheduled time during the competition, each student will go to a pre-assigned room for the Interview event. The students will remain for approximately 8 minutes in the interview room. The chairperson of the Interviews will give a brief explanation of procedures to be followed.

### Objective

The interview experience should assist students in learning to present themselves positively when interviewing for a job, scholarship, or any competitive position. It should also give them the experience of learning to listen and respond in an appropriate manner. The objective of the program is to give students opportunities to develop oral communication skills.

Through the interview process, the individual reveals:

Problem Solving Skills	Creating/Developing Skills
Analytical Skills	Interpersonal Skills
Organizational Skills	Promotional Skills

### Judging Format

Two or three judges will be evaluating one student at a time using the ScanTron Interview scoring form. Each team will have a chairperson and a timer. The student is seated in front of panel of judges during interview.

### **Interview Questions are generally limited to the following areas:**

- Activities listed on the Extracurricular Activities sheet
- Selecting a college or university
- Selecting a field of study in college or identifying a career employment goal
- Individual and team preparation for the Decathlon
- Values that have strongly influenced the student's life
- Most difficult event in the Decathlon
- Most influential person in student's life

Judges are instructed NOT to ask any questions regarding race, religion, creed, ethnic groups, national origin or ancestry, political beliefs or affiliations, or any questions that can be construed to relate to these subjects.

### **Timing Procedures for the Interview**

When the Interview has used six minutes of the seven minutes allotted, the timer will hold up the “1” (one minute card) indicating time remaining. At six and one half minutes, the timer will hold up the “½” card. At seven minutes the timer should hold up the 0 card. This indicates the interviewer has used the allotted time of seven minutes. The interview should be concluded at this time.

After completing the interview, the student will be instructed to wait outside the door for the judge's comments. Comments will include one point the student did very well and one point where the student could improve. Judges are instructed to keep comments constructive. If the location is revealed, violations will be noted on the judge's comments.

### **Scoring**

- Students will be scored on their ability to do the following:
- Informally and orally present ideas that are appropriate to the problems being considered.
- Listen to the ideas of others, evaluate them and adjust their responses accordingly
- Establish and maintain rapport with members of a conversational group through voice, gesture and attitudinal posture
- Use voice, vocabulary and language structures appropriate to informal oral communication.

### **Interview Rating Scale**

**Voice Projection** is the way a speaker controls volume, clarity and distinctness of voice to gain greater audibility. Voice should have a variety of rate, volume and pitch to engage interest, hold attention and convey self-assurance.

**Language Usage** refers to the appropriate choice of words, proper use of grammar and correct enunciation. Language should promote clear understanding of thoughts and be appropriate for the occasion.

**Interpersonal Skills** refers to the rapport developed with the interviewers, interaction with the questions asked of the student and involving the interviewers in the responses by leading the interviewers to ask additional questions about previous responses.

**Non-verbal Language** refers to the manner in which the candidate uses gestures, facial expressions and physical involvement for effective communication. It is the indirect revelation of the candidate's real self while speaking. The candidate should speak with enthusiasm and assurance, showing interest in the interviewers and confidence in responses to questions.

**Manner** refers to the students' eagerness and enthusiasm in the interview process, their self-assurance or ease of responding and responding clearly and concisely to the questions they are asked. The speaker should speak with enthusiasm and assurance, showing interest in the audience and confidence in their reactions.

**Listening Skills** refers to the ability to analyze and interpret "what is being asked." In order to answer skillfully and address the issue being considered, the candidate must listen carefully and attentively. The candidate's response to the questions will give an indication of the level of attention and ability to identify, sort and process information being requested.

**Answering Skills** refers to the ability to:

- Address the issue being considered
- Present information in a clear, concise manner
- Organize information in a logical and sequential order
- Adjust response appropriately to a variety of audiences
- Pace conversation to convey necessary information and achieve purpose

Order, logic, imagination, intelligence and other personal qualities are reflected in the way answers are given. A well thought-out answer engages the interviewers' attention and gives insight into the candidate's personal qualities, skills, goals and experiences. Relevant examples and illustrations support the answers. All information presented should be relevant to the question being asked.

**Response** refers to answering each question by thoughtfully preparing the response with insight and conviction of thought instead of just saying anything that comes to mind.

Overall Effectiveness is measured by the:

- Nature of information provided
- Manner in which it was communicated
- Overall impression it created
- Rapport established between the interviewer and the candidate

Some of the questions that will be considered are the following:

- Did the candidate skillfully provide the information requested?
- Was the information relevant and meaningful?
- Was the candidate able to achieve a positive impression when discussing their skills, experiences and personal qualities?

**Appearance** - Has the student dressed appropriately for a college or job interview? Has the student followed the prescribed USAD/AAD dress code for the event?

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** Judges will be instructed not to ask the student the name of their school or city or any information that would indicate the school or school district.