

To the Academic Decathlon Coach

THE CHALLENGE AND REWARD OF COACHING

Coaching an Academic Decathlon team can be a very challenging but rewarding experience. However, to be a successful coach requires an extraordinary amount of energy. It is difficult for a teacher to handle this task alone. A group of teachers working together to support a coach is a wonderful approach. This enables the students to have the expertise of the “coaching team” in each of the events of the Academic Decathlon. There are a number of tasks that can be carried out which help to build a strong program and a strong Academic Decathlon team.

PUBLICITY AND RECRUITMENT

One of the most important steps in building an Academic Decathlon team and program is to stress the importance of school-wide publicity. This publicity should place strong emphasis on reaching the “C” students. One effective method of recruiting “C” students, as well as all other students, is to have former team members **visit all English classes**. Georgia high school students are required to take English in each of the four years of high school. Communication in each of these classes assures communicating to all potential students. Use previous “C” students as “ambassadors” because they usually know other “C” students. The administrator should approve such an approach. This communicates the importance of the Academic Decathlon in your school.

At the beginning of the year when the coach is building a team, he/she may want to write a bulletin to be a part of the **announcements made by the school principal**. In this announcement, talk about the rewards of competition and the opportunity to strengthen the individual’s academic horizons.

Advertise the program. In a highly visible area, have a section of a **bulletin board** devoted to Decathlon announcements.

Plan a “kick-off” meeting. At this meeting have present and former decathletes tell what the program is like. Show a video that explains Georgia Academic Decathlon. The coach and former team members can be present to answer questions that potential team members may have. Invite your principal to be a part of the “kick-off” meeting. This means a lot to the students to know their principal supports this event in an active way.

It is not too difficult to get “A” students involved, but don’t assume that students will join. Some students are shy and some students like to be invited to participate. Go out of your way to invite potential decathletes. **Be on the lookout for potential decathletes.** Invite your colleagues to be active recruiters. Ask counselors to recommend students. Frequently they know students who are in the “C” category who may be good candidates.