

FOLSOM CORDOVA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Academic Decathlon

Date: November 2012

Subject Area: Elective

Proposed Grade Level(s): 9th – 12th

Course Length: One Year

Grading: A-F

Number of Credits: 5 per Semester

Prerequisites: None

BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of the United States Academic Decathlon is to develop academic competitions, curriculum, and assessment to promote learning and academic excellence through teamwork among students of all achievement levels. The goal of this class is to enhance students' critical thinking and reasoning skills by using selected reading pieces and having students respond in writing, through discussions and with prepared speeches. Each year the topic changes as detailed by USAD, United States Academic Decathlon. Each area of study will have a component related to the assigned theme.

GENERAL GOALS/PURPOSES:

This course provides students the opportunity to learn specific thematic material and to excel academically through team competition. Through the curriculum and requirements for competitions students:

- Grow academically;
- Engage in challenging multidisciplinary learning;
- Learn teamwork as a means to achieve self-knowledge and life-skills development;
- Interact with students of varying achievement levels;
- Compete for both individual medals and team medals in 10 areas of study.

STUDENT READING COMPONENT:

Seven of the ten areas of competition are based on knowledge read in the resource packets provided by USAD each year: Music, Art, Social Science, Language and Literature, Economics, Science and Math.

STUDENT WRITING COMPONENT:

Students work on essay writing skills as they prepare for the essay competition. The essay is related to either the Language/Lit, Science or Social Science categories, so those topics are used to practice their essay-writing skills.

STUDENT ORAL COMPONENT:

Students are required to give a speech, an impromptu speech and participate in an interview at competition. These skills are practiced throughout both semesters.

DETAILED UNITS OF INSTRUCTION:

Students compete in 10 areas: Art, Economics, Language and Literature, Mathematics, Music, Science, Social Science, Speech, Essay and Interview. The topic each year explores a specific theme as it relates to each of these ten areas, however, an overview of what is learned is broken down as follows:

ART: The Art Fundamentals, including an introduction to Art History discussing the methods and development of Art History and an overview of art in both the Western World and Non-Western Art, along with the elements of art defining texture, shape, perspective, processes, and techniques make up 20% of the competition in art. The other 80% is based on approximately 15-20 specific pieces of art (including paintings, photography, mixed

media, sculpture, architecture, etc). They learn about the individual artists, the contextual analysis of the piece, and the historical and social impact of each piece.

ECONOMICS: Economics is broken down into four areas. The Fundamental Concepts make up 10%, Microeconomics is 40% and Macroeconomics is 30%. The remaining 20% is specific to each year's topic. If it is a time period, then it looks at the economic issues during that time or event. If it is a country or region, then it emphasizes the economic structure and influence that region has on the world economically.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE: Each year USAD selects one novel or play that accentuates the theme and four to five short essays, stories or poems. In addition, 15% of the test is based on Critical Reading where students read an unknown passage and analyze so we are practicing those skills regularly in the class. The novel is 55% of the tests and students learn not only everything about the novel – from structure and theme to historical knowledge – but also everything about the author's life. The remaining 30% is based on the short selections.

MATHEMATICS: Students work on their math skills and the more advanced students help those who are not as advanced in order to perform well in all areas from permutation to algebra and statistics.

MUSIC: As in Art, 20% of the music category is based on basic elements of Music Theory. Students look at sound and how it is organized, pitch, rhythm, harmony, texture, dynamics and form, to name just a few. Then, for the remaining 80%, students explore approximately 20 specific pieces of music as it relates to the theme. They learn about the styles of music and the artists' lives in addition to the regional or historical influence on the pieces.

SCIENCE: The science is specific to the topic and region and incorporates a specific element of science each year – physics, chemistry, biology, geology, astronomy, to name just a few of the past areas. In the past, when we studied The French Revolution, we learned all about Chemistry and the historical impact from that year. When we studied The Latin America, we learned all about Evolutionary Biology and Darwin's impact on the science. In 2012, when studying Russia, we studied Space Exploration.

SOCIAL SCIENCE: Like science, the history is dependent on the theme studied each year. Whether it is a region or an event, students look at the ENTIRE history encapsulated in the topic and how that event or region impacts the global history. Past topics have included the regions of China, Latin America and Russia; past events have included The Civil War, The French Revolution and the Renaissance.

SPEECH: Students are expected to deliver a 4-minute speech and a 2-minute impromptu at competition. Students work throughout the first semester mastering a speech, presenting it as part of their final and to ten classes outside of this class prior to competition. It is critical that they put together ideas so that the audience can understand them and is engaged. Students learn to develop relevant examples, illustrations, facts and figures and to deliver the speech with such smoothness that they blend into the framework of the speech as a unified whole. They learn the importance and appropriateness of words and voice in addition to non-verbal behaviors.

ESSAY: Students are required to write an essay in response to one of three essay questions. The questions encompass the information learned in the Language/Literature, Science or Social Science categories. Throughout the year, students practice and strengthen their writing skills, developing focus and organization, content and conventions.

INTERVIEW: Students participate in a 7-minute interview at competition. Throughout the year, we work on our interview skills, both verbal and non-verbal. Students need to be able to address the issue being considered and present information in a clear and concise manner. They are expected to organize information in a logical and sequential order while adjusting responses appropriate to a variety of audiences. Order, logic, imagination, intelligence and other personal qualities are reflected in the way answers are given. Students work on establishing a rapport with the interviewer and learning to speak with certainty and conviction.

THIS COURSE WILL PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE CAHSEE AND/OR CST'S:

Though not designed for direct correlation to the exit exams, this course reinforces the skills needed to be successful in some or all areas of math, reading, writing, language arts and social science.

LAB FEE, IF REQUIRED:

None

SUBJECT AREA CONTENT STANDARDS TO BE ADDRESSED:

Because this course encompasses material from a variety of subject areas and a new theme is established each year, knowledge fluctuates. However, the skill set needed in writing, reading, and communicating is practiced regularly and reinforces those standards found in English.

DISTRICT ESLRs TO BE ADDRESSED:

- **Self-Directed Learners:** - who take responsibility for their own learning. They will be guided toward independent learning as valuable lifelong tool for success in the classroom and beyond.
- **Effective Communicators:** - who will be able to relate clearly and logically in all written and oral assignments using learned techniques and strategies.
- **Quality Producer/Performers:** - who take pride in the work they complete as they master the material and compete in excellence at both the county and state level.
- **Constructive Thinkers:** - who apply learned material and concepts to attain mastery of a topic as it stands on its own and as it interrelates to the other areas of study.
- **Collaborative Workers:** - who work well with peers from varying achievement levels to master the material in order to compete and win as a team at both county and state competitions.
- **Responsible Citizens:** - who understand the importance of their own individual score and how it impacts the team's score. Together they encourage one another to perform at the top level so that we, as a team, can succeed.

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