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County Superintendent of Schools

Orange County Department of Education
Educational and Student Services Division

Orange County Academic Pentathlon

2026-2027 Fact Sheet

WHAT IS THE ACADEMIC PENTATHLON PROGRAM?

The Academic Pentathlon is an exciting five-event competition for grades six, seven, and eight. The program is uniquely designed to engage students of all achievement levels in a variety of challenging academic events.

Under the guidance of an adult coach, teams of students prepare for competition in the subject areas of fine arts (art and music), literature (including essay analysis), math, science, and social science.

2026-2027 Theme
Journeys of Transformation:
An Exploration of Travel and Transportation

2027 Competition Dates
(Dates Subject to Change)
Scrimmage Window – March 1-6
Essay Test – March 30 or April 7
Objective Testing – April 3 or April 10
Super Quiz & Awards – April 24 (grades 7-8 only)
Super Quiz & Awards – May 1 (grade 6 only)

WHY PARTICIPATE IN THE ACADEMIC PENTATHLON?

The Orange County Academic Pentathlon prepares students for success in college, careers, and life.

The Academic Pentathlon program contributes to a Multi-Tiered System of Support and Local Control and Accountability Plan priorities by building academic and social-emotional skills, engaging students, families and community members, and fostering school connectedness. The competition culminates with an exciting Super Quiz relay, a team event where parents, faculty, and classmates cheer for their teams from the sidelines, championing academics much like the environment of a sporting event.

Students who participate report improvement in the areas of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and character, and they report feeling a stronger sense of belonging at school.

Student Outcomes

Survey results from students who participated in the 2025-2026 Academic Pentathlon:

- **93%** of students reported improved **skills in critical thinking**
- **92%** of students reported the program helped them to **build relationships with their peers**
- **94%** of students reported improved **skills in teamwork**
- **91%** of students reported improved **skills in communication**
- **88%** of students reported development of **stronger character traits**
- **83%** of students reported the program helped them **feel more connected to their school**

HOW DO SCHOOLS PARTICIPATE?

Supervision

Each participating school must have a faculty representative to serve as a coach. As Academic Pentathlon is a multidisciplinary program, having an assistant coach is beneficial.

Program Fees

Curriculum

- ►Each school will order curriculum materials directly from the United States Academic Decathlon's online store.
- ► The $300 fee includes a site license to download materials and unlimited copying and distribution of the curriculum at the school site.

Team Registration

- ► $650 per team
- ► $100 per alternate student

HOW ARE TEAMS FORMED?

A team consists of up to nine students from the same grade. The nine members include three students from each of the following grade point average (GPA) categories:

CATEGORY	***GPA***
Honor	3.85 – 4.00
Scholastic	3.50 – 3.84
Varsity	0.00 – 3.49

Eligible Coursework and GPA Calculation

For each student, grades from the previous school year are used to determine GPA (2 semesters, 3 trimesters, or 4 quarters). The Orange County Department of Education utilizes the United States Academic Pentathlon criteria to determine student GPAs to ensure uniformity among all participants. More information on GPA calculations will be provided for participating coaches.

HOW ARE STUDENTS RECOGNIZED?

Individual Awards

Students compete only against students in their respective GPA category. For each GPA category, medals are presented to the top individuals in each subject area as well as the highest scoring individuals overall.

Team Awards

Medals and plaques are presented to the top Super Quiz teams and highest scoring teams overall.

WHOM MAY I CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

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