

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MUSCOGEE'S COLUMBUS HIGH SCHOOL WINS SCHOOL'S SECOND STATE ACADEMIC DECATHLON TITLE



Columbus High School took state championship honors at this year's Georgia Academic Decathlon State Competition, sponsored by the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) in partnership with Kennesaw State University. Front row, from left: Kimberly Moreno-Godinez, Gabriel Liscano, Sun Choi, Utkarsh Anand, Tamay Yarway. Back row, from left: Mrs. Kelsey Duncan (Assistant Coach), Hangyeom Kim, Aaron Dorbu, Omari Williams, Parker Hazely, Mr. Bear Elder (Assistant Coach), Dr. Rebekah Atkinson (Head Coach).

ATLANTA – Mar 2, 2026 – Muscogee County Public Schools' **Columbus High School** captured its second PAGE Georgia Academic Decathlon (GAD) State Championship. The competition was held Friday, Feb. 27, through Saturday, Feb. 28, 2026, at Kennesaw State University. The team scored the highest total points overall in the competition, earning the Howard Stroud Championship Trophy.

Columbus High School is a Division I participant (based on Round 2 scores), and will be submitted as the Georgia representative to the annual United States Academic Decathlon® (USAD®) National Competition, April 23-25, 2026. This year's national competition will be in Garden Grove, California.

Clayton County's **Elite Scholars Academy** also earned an invitation to attend USAD's Nationals as the overall 2nd place team in the State Competition.

For the second year in a row, USAD rules allow Georgia to add two more representatives to our National's roster. Georgia's teams finishing in 3rd place overall, **North Atlanta High School** from Atlanta Public Schools, and 4th place overall, **Davidson Fine Arts Magnet School** from Richmond County Schools also advanced to the national competition.

USAD also sponsors an Online National Competition for Small, Medium, and Large Schools, based on school enrollment, held in conjunction with the national finals. The Georgia representatives for the online team competitions are:

- **Westover High School** from Dougherty County (Large School Online Competition)
- **Model High School** from Floyd County (Medium School Online Competition)
- **AR Johnson Health Science & Engineering Magnet School** from Richmond County (Small School Online Competition)

For the first time, Georgia will be sending six students to individual in-person Nationals (two from each GPA category: Honor, Scholastic, Varsity). These students are selected from non-nationally qualified teams. They are:

- Varsity: **Zander Griffin** from Academy of Richmond County
- Varsity: **Jackie Pimental-Martinez** from Rockdale Magnet School
- Scholastic: **Camille Hanson** from Booker T. Washington High School
- Scholastic: **Josiah Samuels** from Rockdale Magnet School
- Honor: **Kyra Hightower** from Academy of Richmond County
- Honor: **Devin Swims** from Rockdale Magnet School

In overall scoring, Division I (higher Round 2 scores) winners include:

- Champion — **Columbus High School**, coached by Dr. Rebekah Atkinson, Kelsey Duncan, and Bear Elder
- First Runner-up — **Elite Scholars Academy**, coached by C. Jack Smith
- Second Runner-up — **North Atlanta High School**, coached by Dr. Deanna Hasty, and D'Andra McPhail

In overall scoring, Division II (lower Round 2 scores) winners include:

- Champion — **Davidson Fine Arts Magnet School**, coached by Melody Spires-Howe, and James Samaha
- First Runner-up — **Model High School**, coached by Sarah Syverson, and Tara Workman
- Second Runner-up — **Monroe Comprehensive High School**, coached by David Wilschetz

Rockdale Magnet School for Science and Technology, coached by Kimberly Wisnewski, captured Rookie of the Year honors, awarded to the highest-scoring team making its first appearance at in-person state competition.

This year's Highest Scoring Students are:

- Varsity: **Parker Hazely** from Columbus High School
- Scholastic: **Ryan Conley** from North Atlanta High School
- Honor: **Utkarsh Anand** from Columbus High School

More than 120 high school students from throughout the state competed in the academic event. The program is unique because each nine-member team is made up of three honor students, three scholastic students, and three varsity students as determined by their USAD grade point averages. Each year, the program features a different overall curriculum topic, and this year's curriculum is *The Roaring Twenties*. The 10 events that compose the decathlon are:

- Testing in seven content areas: economics, art, literature, mathematics, science, social science, and music
- Three communication events: public speaking, personal interview, and written essay
- Super Quiz: the final event comprised of questions from all seven testing areas

This year's winners in the Super Quiz competition are:

- Champion — **Elite Scholars Academy**
- First Runner-up — **Columbus High School**
- Second Runner-up — **North Atlanta High School**

For a complete list of awards and individual medal winners, visit www.pageinc.org/gad/gadstatewinners/.

Serving Georgia educators and students for more than 50 years, the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) is the state's largest and most trusted educator association. Through unparalleled legal coverage, one-on-one coaching, legislative advocacy, professional learning, grants, scholarships, and more, PAGE supports our members – who work in every Georgia public school – helping them succeed in all stages of their careers. And, through programs such as STAR (Student and Teacher Achievement Recognition), FGE (Future Georgia Educators), GAD (Georgia Academic Decathlon), and Academic Bowl for Middle Grades, PAGE honors and encourages excellence in education.