

2019 Coaches' Workshop

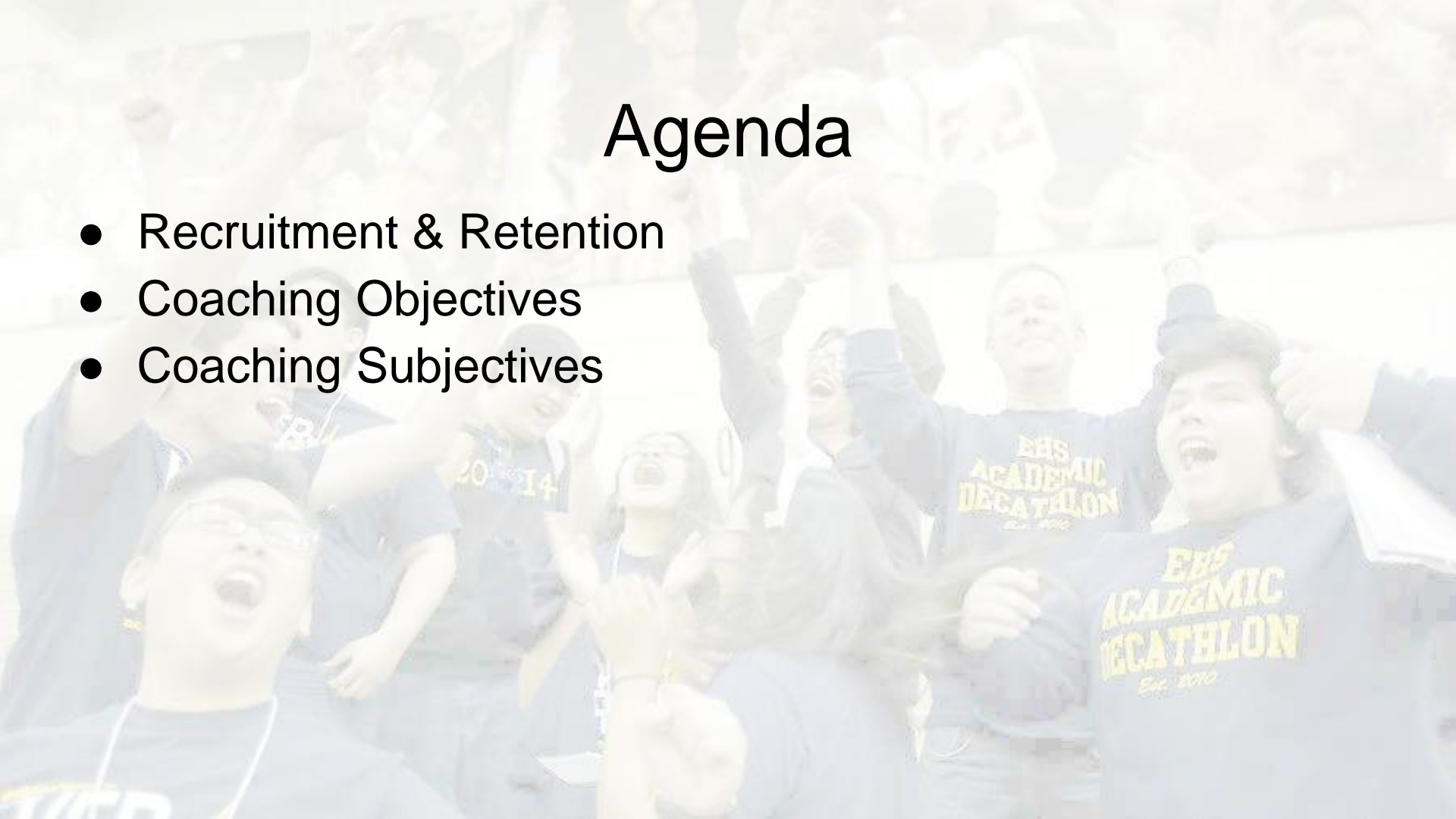


Massachusetts Academic Decathlon
Changing the World, One Student at a Time

MASSACHUSETTS
ACADEMIC
DECATHLON
Est. 1970

Agenda

- Recruitment & Retention
- Coaching Objectives
- Coaching Subjectives





Recruitment and Retention

Or, “How to Build a Team and then Keep It”

ONE DOES NOT SIMPLY

"FIND" GOOD VARSITIES

Building A Team

- Get the word out: flyers, school announcements, activity fairs
 - Ask coworkers if you can make small presentations in their classes
 - Everyone in the school should at least have heard about Decathlon!
- Some students will come to you, but you cannot rely on that
 - Often, the kids who need Decathlon the most will be the last to reach out
- Don't be afraid to use your students to recruit!

Varsity Recruitment

- PSAT, SAT/ACT scores as indicators (good test-takers?)
- Ask AP teachers, counselors, fine arts teachers for leads
 - Those who get C's and D's in AP classes
 - Those recognized as intelligent but underperforming
 - Don't have to be upperclassmen!
- Personalized letters and 1-on-1 meetings -- don't be afraid to keep asking!
- What to Emphasize:
 - AcDec is unique in that it is made for students like you
 - Family, food, this is different from learning in the classroom → sense of belonging
 - Varsities often are most successful at subjectives

Honors and Scholastics

- Honor, prestige, glory, etc.
- Interdisciplinary learning, not just rote memorization
- MEDALS! (First is the hardest, but powerful motivator)
- Learn about cool subjects that you would not have the chance to experience in high school (especially art, music, and sometimes science/social science)
- Opportunity to represent your school in competitions
- “People will work for a living, but they’ll die for recognition.”

Developing a Team Culture

- Students are the best recruiters and motivators
 - Coaches as more than facilitators and sponsors: responsibility to coach (create a team dynamic from individual personalities)
- Academic Decathlon is more than just a competition - it's also a community
 - Frequent meetings & practices – every week as bare minimum
 - Commitment to their teammates – “I love meeting here with you guys...this is the best part of my day.”
 - Other students want to be part of the experience

Developing a Team Culture (cont'd.)

- “Our biggest ally is our winning tradition”
 - <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/community-news/irving/headlines/20130121-winning-coach-pours-heart-and-soul-into-academic-decathlon-at-irving-nimitz.ece>
- Get parents, teachers and administrators involved
- Build atmosphere of friendly competition
 - Ideally, students should push each other
 - Prizes, individual and team goal-setting
- Positivity + encouragement
- At an individual level: recognizing students’ struggles and goals and working with them to motivate & achieve

How to Build Camaraderie?

- “The buddy system”
 - Accountability + motivation
- Team apparel
- Movie nights
- Facebook groups/GroupMe
- Practice Sessions at Student Homes (with snacks!)
- Subjectives practice build sense of shared experience
- Not everything has to be related to AcaDec!

Expectations and Commitment

- Assigned readings
 - **Students cannot succeed without covering the Resource Guides!**
 - Importance of studying on their own at least a little bit every day
- Importance of regular meetings (at least weekly)
- How should practice be structured?
 - Group discussions (students bring own questions)
 - Individual student presentations
 - Reinforcement - quizzes, visual summaries

Picking the Final Team

- As final team can only have 9 students, you will often have to “cut” your team in preparing for Regionals
 - Practice test scores: November Round, Xathlon scrimmages
- Also important to consider:
 - Team chemistry
 - Are they a team player?
 - Are they a senior?
- How to move forward: practice for only the nine? What about alternates?

General Guidelines

- **Recruiting is a “contact sport”!**
 - Talk about it to students in your classes
 - Give presentations in other classes
 - Display medals and trophies in classroom
 - Ask other teachers for recommendations
- How to get AcaDec as a class?
 - Promote as an “academic elective” (some schools have trouble finding these)
- Potential use of GT/Library funds for curriculum materials

General Guidelines

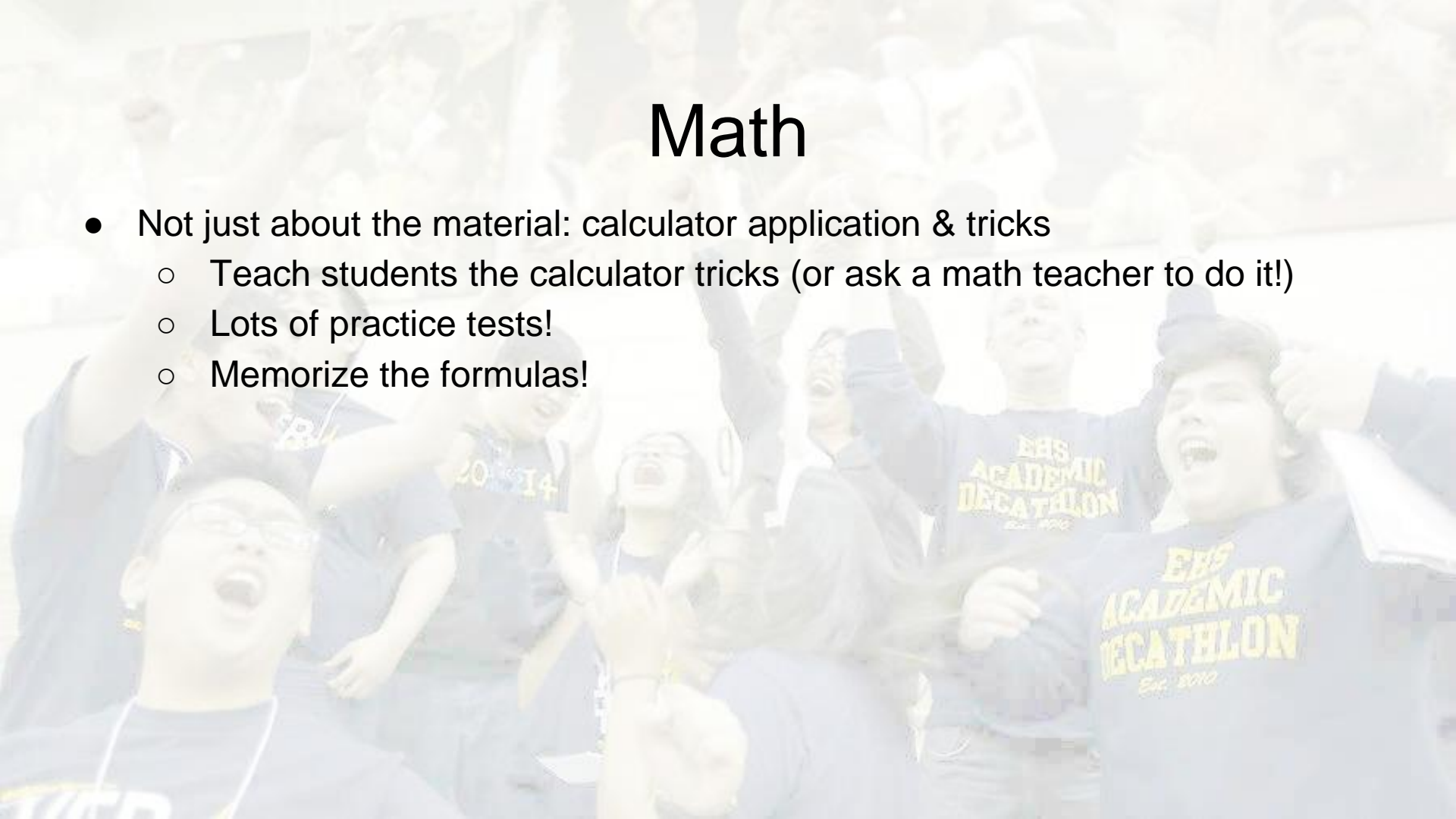
- Balance the team as much as possible
 - Seniors benefit from more advanced classes, especially in math, science, and economics
 - Underclassmen are needed to maintain and grow the program
 - Unique opportunity to have freshmen and seniors coexist & bond
- Be honest about the time commitment - competition is fun but still rigorous and demands serious investment
- It's *not* okay to flake on the day of the competition
 - If you're on the team, you're committed to the team (inexcusable)
 - You're expected not only to show up to competitions but to study
 - Make sure students know that it's not about the individual but the team

A group of students, likely members of an academic decathlon team, are shown in a state of high excitement and celebration. They are wearing blue t-shirts with the text "EHS ACADEMIC DECATHLON" and "Est. 2010" printed on them. The students are cheering with their mouths open and arms raised, some holding up their phones to capture the moment. The background is slightly blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting like a stadium or arena. The overall atmosphere is one of triumph and team spirit.

Coaching the AcDec Curriculum

Math

- Not just about the material: calculator application & tricks
 - Teach students the calculator tricks (or ask a math teacher to do it!)
 - Lots of practice tests!
 - Memorize the formulas!

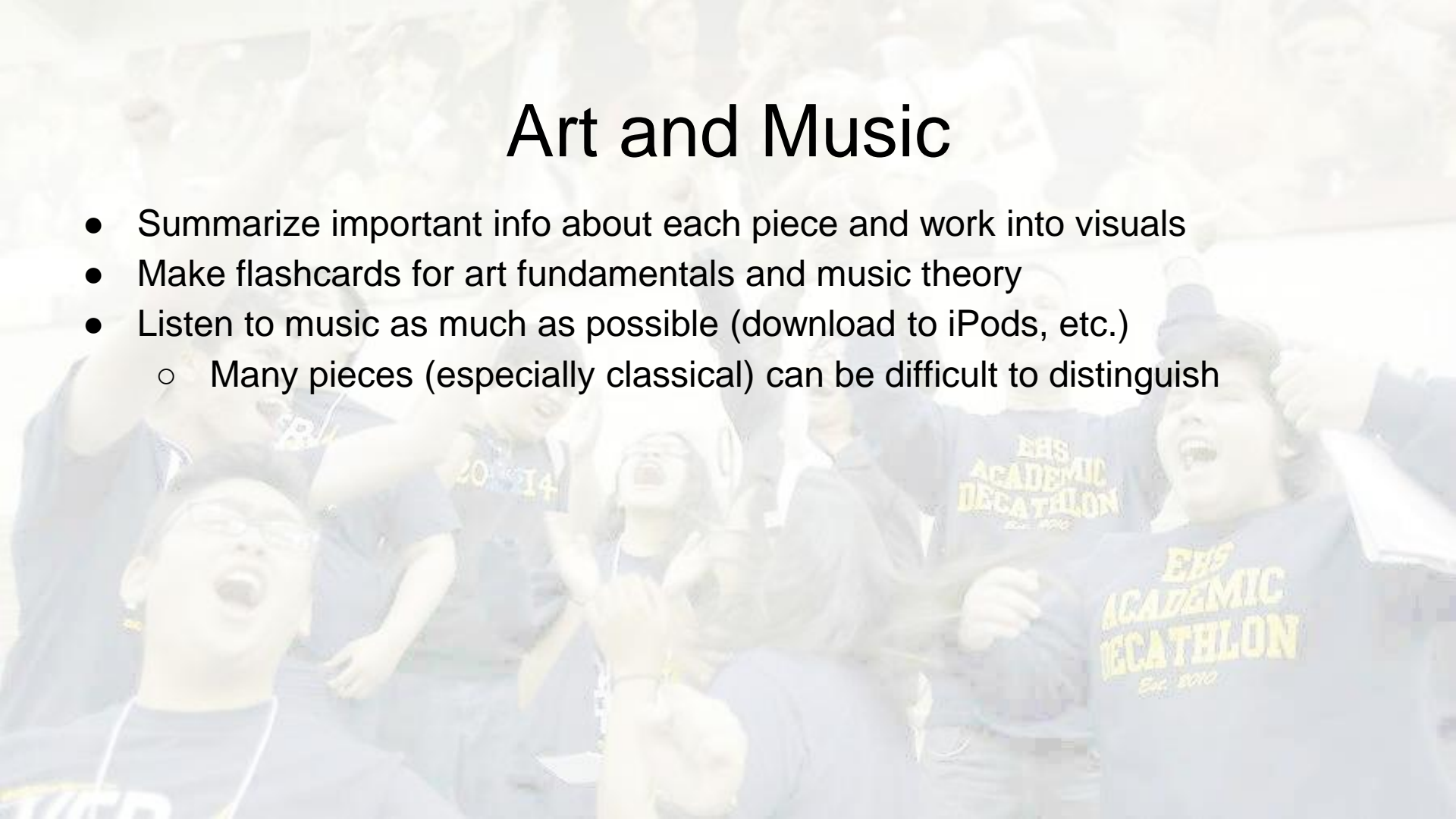


Language and Literature

- Discuss the book → focus on major themes, character development
 - Each student must read the book
- Some coaches have had success asking AP English Lit teachers to walk through different passages
- Make flashcards for literary terms
 - Borrowed from AP English Lit lists
- Work through different passages - prose, poetry, etc.


Art and Music

- Summarize important info about each piece and work into visuals
- Make flashcards for art fundamentals and music theory
- Listen to music as much as possible (download to iPods, etc.)
 - Many pieces (especially classical) can be difficult to distinguish



A group of students are shown in a state of high excitement, cheering with their arms raised. They are wearing blue t-shirts that feature the text "EHS ACADEMIC DECATHLON" in yellow and white. The background is slightly blurred, suggesting a large gathering or event. The overall atmosphere is one of joy and celebration.

What are students having the most difficulty with?

A group of students, likely members of a school sports team or organization, are shown in a state of high excitement and celebration. They are wearing blue t-shirts with the text "EHS ACADEMIC DECATHLON" and "Est. 2010" printed on them. The students are cheering with their mouths open and arms raised, some holding up their hands in the air. The background is slightly blurred, showing a crowd of other people, possibly spectators or other team members, also appearing to be part of the event. The overall atmosphere is one of joy and team spirit.

Coaching Subjectives

Speech

- Prepared: 3.5 - 4 minutes
- Impromptu: 1.5 - 2 minutes
- No flashcards allowed for prepared
- Impromptu topics cover the whole gamut:
 - Pressing issues in the news (domestic and international politics)
 - Self-reflection (ideal birthday party)
 - What's in your closet?
- Prepared topics can be anything, but stay away from controversial topics

Interview

- 7 minutes
- Wide range of questions
 - Academic Decathlon
 - School/Extracurriculars
 - Future goals/aspirations
 - Perception of the world (what is community?)
 - Current events
- This can be practiced by holding practices after school with teachers as judges and/or simply in a classroom setting going around from student to student

Practice, Practice, Practice

- Challenge for most is overcoming social anxiety
 - People want to hear what you have to say - don't be afraid to own up to it!
- All about non-verbal communication
 - 3-point walk
 - Gestures and other body language
 - Video students delivering speeches
- Practice really is what it comes down to – a month before competitions students should be doing their speeches several times a day by memory
 - Practice in as many social situations as possible to get over shyness/nervousness

A large group of students is shown in a state of high excitement and celebration. They are wearing blue t-shirts with yellow text that reads "EHS ACADEMIC DECATHLON" and "Est. 2010". Many students have their arms raised in the air, and several are shouting or cheering with their mouths wide open. The background is slightly blurred, showing more students and what appears to be an outdoor setting. The overall atmosphere is one of collective joy and achievement.

Other thoughts?