

# The Poly Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

VOL. XCVII, No. 1

SERVING THE POLY COMMUNITY SINCE 1913

AUGUST 2010

## Poly as Media Darling

Briahna Angulo  
Staff Writer

The TV crews are often here before many students.

Their objective: the secret to Poly's ongoing success in raising test scores.

Principal Gerardo Loera has become the must-get interview for local TV and print media and his quotes appear weekly in the press.

On TV, Poly has been making the 6 o'clock news with regularity.

And the news is all good.

Fox News was here opening day to talk about Poly's new balanced traditional calendar and early start and interviewed Loera.

Later, the news crew visited special ed teacher Brenda Fishler's PAES Lab.

"I saw Mr. Loera come in the room and then a minute later a news reporter, Cristina Gonzalez, and a cameraman came in," said Fishler.

"I didn't know who she was at first" said Fishler. "She asked a lot of questions about what the class was about but she was there to find out how the students felt about starting early."

Los Angeles Times columnist Sandy Banks didn't quite make it to Poly, however, despite what she said in her August 17 page two story entitled "What Effective Teachers Can Do."

"My visit to Polytechnic High in Sun Valley last week" Banks told her readers, but the facts are a little different, according to Counseling's Jamille Kenion.

"I spoke to her on the phone," Kenion said. "She wanted to speak to the principal but he was busy so he told me to talk to her."

Kenion suggested Banks talk to former Principal Jan Fries-Martinez.

Most of Banks' story consisted of her phone interview with Fries-Martinez.



Photo by Alejandro Cadena

**PLEASED:** Poly Principal Gerardo Loera smiles at the news of another year of rising CST scores for Parrots in all grades.

## CST SCORES UP AGAIN

Poly beats CST targets for tenth year in a row.

By Daniel Martinez  
Staff Writer

Recently released California Standardized Test (CST) scores show Poly has exceeded its target scores for the tenth year in a row.

"We have gains in almost every single possible area," said Poly Principal Gerardo Loera.

Big improvements included Algebra 2 results, where 20% of Parrots scored proficient or above compared to 3% last year. Ninth Grade students scoring

proficient or above in English ran 39% versus 30% in 2009. Eleventh grade student scores increased to 35% from 24% last year.

"About eight years ago, Poly was at the bottom 10% of schools with similar demographics," said Principal Gerardo Loera. "This year, Poly is in the top 20% of schools with similar demographics."

The percentage of students in the Below Basic or Far Below Basic fell. Ninth Grade English dropped from 40% to 30% Below Basic or Far Below Basic while Tenth Grade English fell from 51% to 39%. Algebra 2 fell from 80% to 57% Below Basic.

"Each score is its own story, because there is a story behind each one of those pieces and I think that's what the media tends to miss sometimes," Loera said. "They get so fixated on those numbers that we miss the story behind those numbers."

"If we look at Ninth Grade English last year for example, scores went down a little on the students who are proficient or advanced. The Ninth Grade teachers were not going to let that happen again. They took a lot of ownership and the results speak for themselves - they are they highest they've ever been."

In World History, proficiency scores climbed to 28% from last year's 17%. Below Basic or Far Below numbers in the same subject fell from 57% to 40%. U.S. History climbed from 27% proficient or above to 36% while Below Basic fell from 48% to 38%.

"The expectations we have [See CST, pg 7]

## Million Dollar Look

Poly gets trees, shrubs, flowers and a teachers lounge to start the new school year.

By Gloria Marin  
Staff Writer

Poly's campus looks greener this year, thanks to over a million dollars in Measure R money.

The school's Small Learning Communities (SLC) Campus transformation project, begun in October of 2006 and nearing completion, was part of a \$3.87 billion bond measure passed in 2004.

Poly's new look includes SLC "contiguous spaces" in the Freshman Center, the Tenth Grade Center, the area behind classrooms 16-19 for Sports, the area adjoining room 95 for HABIT and the area between the music rooms and the auditorium



Photo by Jennifer Martinez

**SLC LOUNGE:** Measure R funds helped pay for a teachers' lounge in room 95 that includes computers, printers and work tables.

for FAME.

Each courtyard has or will have banners and tables with umbrellas.

A variety of bushes, shrubs, trees and flowers have been planted in these areas and tented rest areas with tables erected for FAME and the 9th Grade Center.

The newly completed Upper Grade Career Theme SLC Center in room 95 includes counseling and deans' offices and a spacious teachers' lounge with computers and a printer.

Planning expenses for the project of \$344,951 and

construction costs of \$750,558 ran the transformation total to \$1,095,576.

Measure R funds have been used to repair and upgrade aging classrooms and build new neighborhood schools to reduce overcrowding.

Measure R also qualified LAUSD for \$1.5 to \$2 billion in state matching funds, money that has been used to repair old schools like Poly.

Poly repairs have included asbestos/lead paint abatement and restroom repair.



Photo courtesy of Vanamali Bishakaha Tay

## Now that's a vacation

Science teacher meets terracotta warriors.

TRAVEL - page 5



Photo by Jennifer Martinez

## Rabins New Tennis Coach

Girls' season saved by volunteer.

SPORTS - page 8

## OPINION



## Teaching, Testing and the LATimes

The Los Angeles Times published a story August 15, 2010 claiming CST test results by LAUSD students indicate how well a teacher can teach. These were among the replies the Times published on August 18, 2010.

**Shame on You**

Free public education is a cornerstone of our democracy. Attacking dedicated teachers who have missed the bar on teaching to standardized tests will only discourage people who are considering teaching as a career. Shame on The Times for publishing this series, and shame on L.A. Unified for sharing its testing information.

Teresa Nield, West Hills

**Inexplicable Teens**

As I scour my just-released test scores from the past school year, I am struck by the student who shot up 84 points in my eighth-grade honors English class. Oops, I also see a kid who dropped 44 points.

These are two girls, in the same period, the same learning environment, taught the same standards-based curriculum and given the same homework assignments.

Why the discrepancy? Is it me? Am I to be held accountable for such disparity in test scores within the same class?

Looking at each of my classes, I see the same thing. My conclusion? Teenagers are teenagers. They are inexplicable, as are student test scores.

Naomi Roth, Marina del Rey

**Grading Reporters**

Let's grade the editors, reporters and staffs of major metropolitan newspapers. What was the circulation of your paper when you started? What is it now? Who's responsible for its slide? Oh, not you?

You're saying there are many other factors why some papers are slipping while others are doing better at holding readers? That you can't judge the work of a professional by a single metric, and that to imply otherwise would be misleading at best?

Steve Kaplan, Chatsworth

**What's the Score?**

The Times must be as qualified to judge good teaching as I am to judge good journalism.

That being said, here's my take on your article: You posit that raising student test scores equals good teaching.

No. Or at the most, maybe.

Raising student test scores equals getting students to raise their scores on a state test. When somebody can prove that high test scores produce good citizens, critical thinkers and productive members of society, then and only then can we say the teachers who taught those kids were "good."

Steve Franklin, Glendale

## ON THE BEACH

Summer is a great time for catching up on your reading. Below, Parrots comment on books they liked.

**"I Am Not a Serial Killer" By Dan Wells**

**Storyline:** Teenager thinks he has the potential to be a serial killer, discovers there is a real serial killer in his town and tries to stop him.

**Review:** The main character, John, must struggle with his darker side in order to understand the demon that is stalking and killing his friends and neighbors. An interesting approach to a classic young adult theme.

Well written and extremely readable!

Wendy Elam / English

**"Water for Elephants" By Sara Gruen**

**Storyline:** Jacob Jankowski, a 93 year-old man living in a nursing home, is reminiscing his memories and experiences in a traveling circus. The story takes place in the Depression. Jacob is sitting for his veterinarian finals. When he is told his parents were killed in an accident, he rushes out of class. He hitches a ride on a train, which turns out to be a traveling circus.

**Review:** The description of circus life is phenomenal. You feel as if you are right there and get to learn about the behind the scenes of circus life. There is a love triangle, compassion, jealousy, rage, murder, and a surprise ending. You'll love it. I could not put it down.

Leona Warman / College Counselor

**"The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" by Stieg Larsson**

**Storyline:** A quality computer hacker gets mixed up with a touched journalist to solve a mystery and they end up fighting for their lives.

**Review:** I picked this book because not too many best sellers take place in Sweden. I visited family in Sweden a few years back and was interested in reading a book that took place there. I had a little difficulty "getting-into" the book but after the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter I was hooked.

There are some gruesome crime scenes described in the book, so it is not for children. I'm saving "The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets Nest" for my break in Sept. I hear the Swedish version of the movie "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" is excellent. I hope to rent it soon.

Brenda Fishler / Special Education Coordinator

**"The Freedom Writers Diary" by the Freedom Writers and Erin Gruwell**

**Storyline:** Diaries by students from Wilson High School. Ms. Gruwell (A teacher from Wilson High) changes student's lives.

**Review:** The Freedom Writers Diary is a very good book that I have read this year. I can relate to almost all the students in the book. This book really showed me that I wasn't the only one going through some problems as these students were going through. I was inspired to start doing good in school because without education you can not live a happy life. I am glad that I had the chance to read "The Freedom Writers Diary."

Jose Marroquin / 10th Grade

## The Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School  
12431 Roscoe Blvd. Sun Valley, CA, 91352  
<http://polyhigh.org>

**NEWS EDITOR**  
Vanessa Marroquin

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
Joel Hinojosa

**PHOTO EDITORS**  
Jennifer Martinez  
Alejandro Cadena

**SPORTS EDITOR**  
Kelsey Cruz

**CARTOONIST**  
Letty Juarez

**WRITERS**

Briahna Angulo, Joel Hinojosa, Gloria Marin, Daniel Martinez,  
Vanessa Marroquin, Sophia Mendez, Stephanie Menjivar, Mariana Santos

**OPTIMIST ADVISOR**  
John Blau

**LETTERS  
TO THE EDITOR**

Letters to the Editor must be typed or printed in ink and include the writer's signature. The OPTIMIST reserves the right to edit submissions. Send letters to Rm.14 or Mr. Blau's box.

**EDITORIAL  
POLICY**

The OPTIMIST is the voice of the Poly community, accepts the responsibilities of a free press and follows the Code of Ethics for the Society of Professional Journalists. Editorials are the opinions of the staff.

The OPTIMIST received nearly 100 book reviews from students and teachers. We appreciate your responses.

## INTERVIEW

Poly alumnus Daysi Espinoza talks about her long journey from El Salvador to Cal State Fullerton.

By Mariana Santos  
Staff Writer

**Q. You were featured in a recent LATimes story. How did that come about? Who contacted you first?**

I attended a scholarship event and met a few LA TIMES journalists. I attend the Los Angeles News Emmys every year with Fox 11 news anchor Christine Devine and usually see the same faces. This time I was contacted by Larry Gordon, Times Staff, through my scholarship director.

**Q. Who interviewed you, where and how long did the interview last? How much of the interview made the story in the paper?**

Larry Gordon interviewed me at my dorm. Most of the interview made the story.

**Q. Was the story accurate? Was it what you thought it should be? Did they get your part of the story right?**

Yes it was accurate. He was very objective.

**Q. How did your friends and family respond to the story? Did you get recognized on campus?**

I got contacted by a few people such as the Associate Dean of the Department of Communications. My friends were shocked because I never made it public until they saw the newspaper. I actually found out through friends when it came out.

**Q. You just finished your freshman year at Cal State Fullerton. Tell us how you did, what challenges you had and what you enjoyed about the experience.**

It was difficult adapting because I felt lonely every time students would leave during the weekends. CSUF is a commuter campus so students usually go back home during holidays and weekends but I had to start from the bottom, had to make new friends but it was difficult since again, everyone does their own thing.

I enjoy being in college. I take every day as a gift. Not many have the opportunity to attend a four-year university on a five-year full ride.

**Q. How well did Poly prepare you for college life and what surprised you about college life?**

Poly's magnet program definitely prepared me because I do not find it so difficult when it comes to academics. What surprised me about college was that money management is really important and even though I have monetary help, all fees are up and books are expensive. I'm on my own so I'm living the life of an independent student without parents to back me up but myself and the scholarships I applied for during HS.

**Q. Tell us about your summer at Fullerton. You've been taking history**

“I wish my country offered what the U.S offers so that I never had to separate from my mother.”

Daysi Espinoza

**classes? How many classes and how much homework a night?**

I've been taking two summer courses. They are General Education but since they are only five weeks long, they require a lot of dedication. I'm also working at the school's housing office and I'm part of four organizations/clubs on campus. I basically just come home to do homework and sleep. Don't have time for much.

**Q. You are in a salsa class. How often do you meet and where? Is it coed? Will you be performing anywhere? Are you taking this for fun or are you more serious?**

I have been dancing for a year now. I'm part of a team and have already performed

not plan to do much. Life in Fullerton is a little boring so I usually go to LA to have fun.

**Q. Why did you decide to attend Fullerton? Tell us about life on campus. How many students and what is the school known for?**

I came to Fullerton because of my scholarship because I needed to be secure when it came to paying for all my expenses. The school is known for their Business program. Life on campus is busy because I got involved the day I started school.

**Q. Most of your university costs are covered by financial aid and help from the Guardian Scholars. How did you**

I do but they work for the Spanish media.

**Q. You got good grades in high school and obviously met the four-year university requirements. How did Poly help make that happen?**

My counselor Ms. Bryan and teachers Lehavi, Kazaryan, Bonar, Quinteros were always supportive.

**Q. Tell us a little bit about your experience at Poly. How do you describe Poly to your friends and what did you most enjoy about your time at Poly?**

I enjoyed the magnet program as it prepared me for college through its rigorous math and science program.

**Q. You lived in Arleta during high**

# Against All Odds

at events hosted by CSU Long Beach. I take this for fun as it balances my academic life out, but I have to admit that I'm very serious with it as well.

**Q. You also have a summer job on campus. Tell us about that? How many hours a week and what do you do? How did you get the job?**

I work every day for four hours. I'm a "Conference Assistant" which is similar to an RA during the summer.

**Q. You and your roommate have a four-person suite with a kitchen and a view of the campus arboretum for the summer. How did that happen and how long can you stay there?**

It's my dorm for the summer and I will be moving into a different dorm for the fall semester. The CSUF dorms are like apartments. We don't have a meal plan so that is the reason why we even have a kitchen.

**Q. What have you done for fun this summer? What is life like in Fullerton?**

I have not done much but gone out salsa dancing. I have school and work so I do

**make those connections?**

Since I was in 9th grade, I began looking for scholarships. I was going to attend Arizona State University but I was not fully covered by financial aid. Fullerton offered a lot more help. They also have a great Communications Department.

**Q. You want a career in Spanish-language media. How did you pick that career and what specifically would you like to be doing after you graduate?**

I'm not sure as of now but I'm interested in perhaps being an international correspondent. I'm going to grad school and I may change my mind.

**Q. Are you a print media person or do you prefer electronic media, like TV, film and the internet? Are you a news junkie? Do you read newspapers everyday, hard copy or online?**

I'm definitely a news junkie. I wake up and first thing I do is read the news. I prefer electronic media.

**Q. Do you have any media people you admire or use as role models?**



Photo courtesy of Daysi Espinoza

**school. Tell us how you made that connection and what your home life was like.**

I lived at a home without support. I was on my own throughout high school. The only support came from the teachers and counselors that I mentioned. School was like a second home where I see the foundation of my life as a student.

**Q. You left El Salvador at 10 for California with your father, an American citizen. Tell us about that experience.**

My father brought me to the U.S in order to get a better education. He was neglectful and I was placed in foster care by the Department of Children and Family Services.

**Q. Why did your father come to the US? What adjustments did you have to make from life in El Salvador? Where did you first live in California?**

I had to leave what I love the most, my

[ See Fullerton, pg 7 ]

## GRADUATION

# Shine On Rising Stars

## New bodies added to Poly's expanding galaxy.

### PRINCIPAL'S GRADUATION ADDRESS

The following are excerpts from the Principal's address to the Class of 2010, "The Rising Stars."

Each one of you is embarking on a critical and exciting new phase of your lives and as such, new demands will be presented to you. You have spent the first part of your lives growing into the adults you will become and harvest time is just about here!

It is now your turn to inherit the challenges of adulthood, to discover that leader in you and to inspire and positively influence those around you.

Think of graduation as the first "crack in the egg." You are officially being released into the world of adulthood and you will begin to feel your own personal strength and power as you exercise your ability to make critical choices that will affect you throughout adulthood. Each one of you has a responsibility to yourselves and your families to live the best possible life for you.

Life continuously presents us with challenges, and the way you choose to rise to each occasion defines your character. I encourage you to take responsibility for your life, pay attention, and allow your integrity and leadership skills to guide you.

I know I speak for the entire faculty and staff when I say how proud we are of your collective and individual achievements.

NOW is the time to take that momentum to the next stages of your lives, whether you are going to continue your education at college or a trade school or you're taking your skills directly to the work place. You will all be starting fresh new lives and you have lots more to learn.

The world is becoming more competitive. Many job opportunities that could have remained here have been outsourced to other parts of the world. Reports tell us that China's economic growth was almost 12% last year, while ours was about 3%. It is up to us to maintain and strengthen our own economy. Competition is healthy, but we all need to be prepared to bring our best game to whatever field we choose.

Now it is your turn to contribute your knowledge, integrity and skills to this country's heritage. It is up to you to be prepared to stake your claim, work for what you want to achieve and inspire those around you.

This year marks the best year in Poly athletics in nearly 14 years. Nine teams made the playoffs or qualified: Football (had the best season in nearly 20 years), Girls Volleyball, Cross Country, Girls Basketball, Girls Softball, Boys Tennis, Boys Volleyball, Baseball and Boys Basketball.

Four teams were league champions this year: Girls Volleyball, Cross Country, Girls Basketball and Softball.

Our Academic Decathlon Team set many records this year and competed for the first time at the state competition.

Among our graduates today are many proven leaders. I will



Photos by Jennifer Martinez

**GRADS:** Cell phone captures Parrot joy as the class of 2010 leaves the shelter of Poly for the real world.

take a few moments to recognize a few of the most distinguished Poly graduates.

1) Tam Luu (UC Berkley) – captain of the Academic Decathlon team for three years.

2) Jessica Caballero (MIT) – one of only four students from California to be accepted to the prestigious MITES (MIT) program.

3) Sesen Yedego (Yale) – led the INTERACT program and helped provide food to needy families in the community.

4) Flor De La Cruz (MIT) –

finished multi-variate calculus and differential equations by the 11th grade.

5) Karenina Cruz (UC Berkley) – one of the top leaders of both Academic Decathlon and Poly's award-winning student newspaper the OPTIMIST.

6) Monica Vizconde (Georgetown University) – participated in the INTERACT program in environmental projects and helping the needy.

7) Eddie Carillo (MIT) – a future leader in physics, especially anti-matter and astro-physics.

8) Oscar Rodarte – earned the Scholar Athlete award for three years while being the captain of the football team.

9) Gabby Burciaga – student body president.

10) Dalia Galvan – youth advocate for the Sun Valley Area Neighborhood Council.

Poly students, you are all "Rising Stars." We look to each one of you to work and fulfill your potential. Your spirit and enthusiasm are inspiring. I cannot wait to hear about the next chapter for each and every one of you.



## TRAVEL

# Tay In China

Poly science teacher Vanamali Tay talks to the OPTIMIST about her marathon run and other adventures in China.

Stephanie Menjivar  
Staff Writer

## Q. How was your trip to China?

It was an extraordinary experience, full of activities. I traveled to historic sites and national parks, climbed sacred mountains, met people from around the world and tasted some of the best dishes in the world.

## Q. Give us some of the logistics.

I flew from LAX to Beijing International Airport at the end of April on Air China. The total flight time was about thirteen hours. I paid \$900 for a round-trip ticket. Going through Chinese customs was easier than U.S. customs. It took me about thirty minutes to clear customs and retrieve my luggage. A tip for the future traveler: Air China is a budget airline with limited in-flight entertainment options. One should bring a portable DVD player with a few movies, a book, and an iPod to pass the time, and pack a few snacks for the time between meals.

I flew on a Friday night. The time difference between Los Angeles and China is fifteen hours. Honestly, the time change didn't have much effect on me because I was already acclimating myself to Beijing time. For example, I would run at night and go to bed early in the morning. I had two weeks to explore the country on my own before running the marathon.

## Q. Had you prearranged a place to stay the first night?

I had no idea where I would stay the first night, or for the first two weeks. I didn't know anybody in Beijing. I spent my first night sleeping on a train to Xi-an. For lunch, I ate anything that looked good from street vendors. I had had some steamed pork buns and lychee-flavored milk. While riding in the train's pantry car, I had a dinner of steamed rice, sautéed green beans, and steamed chicken with green onions and fermented black-bean sauce.

## Q. Did you go alone?

Yes, I traveled to China alone. But all along the way, I met many people from around the world who were in China for various reasons: teaching, business, sightseeing, etc.

I usually stay in youth hostels because it's the best way to meet other travelers and because it's easier on my pocketbook. For \$9.00 a night, I slept in a nice bed with clean sheets and towels. The room was in a six-bed co-ed dormitory with a common western-style bathroom and hot shower. In Xi-an,



Photo courtesy of Vanamali Bishakaha Tay

**KIDS:** Tiny spectators high-five Poly's V-Tay.

the youth hostel I stayed in was a beautiful historic building, which had belonged to a brother of one of the Ming emperors. Youth hostels are operated worldwide and information about them is available online at [www.hihostels.com](http://www.hihostels.com). In Beijing, I stayed at a Courtyard by Marriott. In Shanghai, I stayed with my Brazilian friend who is an expatriate from San Jose, California and works for a U.S. company in China.

## Q. What was the first thing you did when you got to China and settled in?

I bought an overnight train ticket to visit Xi-an to see the world-renowned Terra Cotta Warriors, which was the beginning of my eleven days of backpacking.

Overnight train service in China is one of the best in the world for budget travelers. I booked a first class, soft-bed sleeper berth for 290RMB, which is about \$50. A pillow and white linens were provided. The berth included a table with tablecloth, and a vacuum flask of hot water for making tea (or to make your own bowl of instant noodle soup, which the Chinese are so fond of). The compartment door locked securely, and a well-dressed attendant looked after each car. Some of the train cars had televisions and power sockets for laptops & mobiles.

Visiting the Terra Cotta Warriors was an incredible experience. I felt as though I was visiting an ancient town full of warriors, chariots, horses, officials, acrobats, strongmen, and musicians. This archeological site, like the pyramids in Egypt, functions as a form of funerary art. The Terracotta Army was buried with the First Emperor of Qin in 210-209 B.C.E. to help him rule in the afterlife.

## Q. Give us a little background on how the marathon works.

I learned about this marathon while I was clicking away on the Internet to gather information about the Great Wall of China about a year and half ago. Among millions of other hits, I stumbled upon the Great Wall Marathon website. A caption on the website stated, "The Great Wall Marathon is a tough, beautiful, and definitely extraordinary experience. The 5164 steps of the Great Wall will put your physique to the test, and the breathtaking surroundings of Tianjin Province will compete with your tired muscles for attention." After reading this, I was convinced that I had to run on the Great Wall. In order to receive a medal for completing the marathon, I had to finish the marathon in under eight hours.

Registering just for the marathon wasn't possible without taking part in one of the package deals that included a cultural learning of China. My six-day, seven-night Beijing tour cost \$1,205, which included the entry fee for the marathon, hotel stay, lunch and dinner each day, and tours of the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, and the Temple of Heaven.

If I would have raised \$5,000 for the Organs-R-Us charity, I could have run for free. But I was only able to raise \$1110, so I paid \$2100 out of pocket, which doesn't include the expenses during my additional stay in China. The total cost for 26-day trip in China was about \$3,000.

[ See Tay in China, pg 7 ]



Photo courtesy of Vanamali Bishakaha Tay

**TAY TIME:** The Great Wall's 5164 steps made for a tough marathon.

"I traveled to historic sites and national parks, climbed sacred mountains, met people around the world, and tasted some of the best dishes in the world."

Science teacher V-Tay



Photo courtesy of Vanamali Bishakaha Tay

**FINISH:** Tay crosses the finish line to earn her marathon medal.

CONCERT

# ADTR Punk's Out X-Games

Getting to the stage is a lot of work.

By Sophia Mendez  
Roving Correspondent

It's 1:15 in the morning and I can not fall asleep. My stomach is growling, and I'm so uncomfortable but I know if I don't sleep now I will be regretting it in a few hours. The thought of what was planned for later that day consumes me. Rotting me from within, the excitement and confusion flowing from my mind is taking affect on my sleep.

In a matter of hours my alarm will go off and I will have gotten no sleep at all. And the fear of it affecting my day keeps me up longer. How am I gonna get to Lupe's house by 9:30 am? Do I even have enough money for the bus and the metro that will be taking us all the way to LA and back? I have 20-some bucks in my wallet and I'm not sure if that's enough. Perhaps I should ask my mother for a few more dollars and a hand full of quarters just to be on the safe side.

Has it really been an hour? It feels like only minutes have passed by and yet still no sleep. The force keeping me up has taken over my body completely, but my body wants nothing but sleep and yet my stubborn mind refuses to let me rest.

Something under my pillow vibrates; my alarm must have gone off. I open my eyes realizing I must have gotten a few minutes of sleep.

I turned off the alarm, got myself out of bed and took a shower. My mother handed me a \$20 and a hand full of quarters for the bus. I was not sure what bus to take to get to Lupe's house. I called Manny.

"Forget it, Jose is gonna take us," Manny answered. "We'll pick you up around 10:00am."

My nerves calmed down as I walked back to my house.

Around 10:30 the phone rang. They were outside. I grabbed my bag.

We got to Staples and walked a block or two to the shut off street where the event was being held. We went through security, then started to look for the main stage where "A Day To Remember" was going to play. We found the stage but it was way too early so we walked around to kill time.

When we came back we found the stage had gotten pretty full since we left. I kept thinking, now I have to



Photos By Sophia Mendez

ADTR: Lead singer Jeremy McKinnon works his way through a set that included the band's current hit "Homesick."

fight my way to get to the front. A lady appeared on a huge screen above the stage and asked us to bring out the band. The crowd went wild and people started to shove as they chanted, "ADTR! ADTR! ADTR!"

The band walked on stage and I grabbed Diana's arm so I wouldn't be by myself during the concert. What little use that did. When the first notes of "The Downfall Of Us All" filled the area, Diana was no longer by my side. Or Manny, Lupe or Jose.

As the crowd pushed forward, I tried to make my way to the front. Within the first few minutes of the song my body was already exhausted. It might have had something to do with the fact that the sun was directly above us and all the body heat made me feel gross and sweaty, but I continued to push my way forward.

A few songs passed and I had not made much progress in getting to the front, I was so tired I couldn't even sing along. As I looked back I found everyone I had left behind but they didn't seem to be as squished as I was. I looked back to the stage, as I tried to pry myself from the people and make my way to the rail in the front. It wasn't really long before I couldn't breath or focus, the heat and exhaustion took over me and I rested on the people around me. When the band started "Monument," I knew I

had to try and make my way to the front if I wanted to get good pictures.

So I pushed and shoved until I could see the stage. But I still wasn't close enough. I forced myself between a couple, putting me right behind the people right behind the rail. Now all I needed to do was force myself between these two guys. I grabbed the rail and pulled myself closer, but the guys refused to let me through. I was so tired but I knew if I let go of the rail, all of my suffering would have been for nothing.

As they began "Homesick," more crowd surfers appeared. As they passed above my head I realized that the two guys would cover the top of their heads to protect them selves so I pulled myself toward the rail while they pushed the people out of the pit. I was finally in the front! The two guys weren't happy so they tried to push me back but I refused to move. They soon gave up and I was able to enjoy what was left of the show.

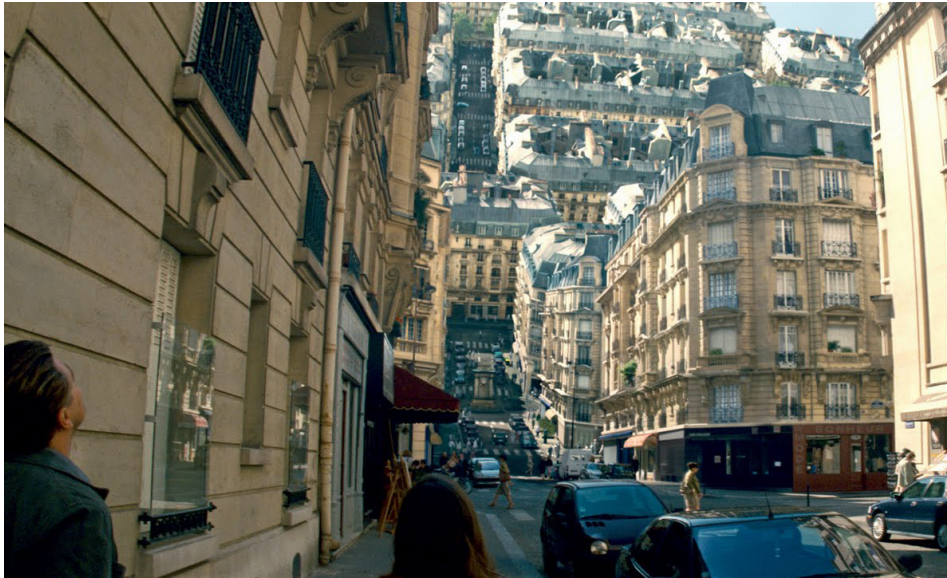
The show, recorded for live streaming, was amazing. ADTR, formed in Ocala, Florida in 2003, is known for its diversity of metal core and pop punk musical sound, like a mixture of "As I Lay Dying" and "New Found Glory."

COMICS

Life With Letty: Senioritis



## CINEMA



Google Image

**MIND-BLOWING:** *Ariadne (Ellen Page) displays her imaginative abilities to Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio) by folding a city in half.*

## WHERE DREAMS ARE REALITY

“Inception” explores “Dark Night” director Christopher Nolan’s world of dreams and the future in his latest epic.

Joel Hinojosa  
Staff Writer

Director Christopher Nolan, who won over critics, Batman fans and studio execs with his box office hit “The Dark Night,” is back, this time with a movie as maze game called “Inception.”

Like 1999’s “The Matrix,” “Inception” creates an alternate world where physical properties are distorted. But while “Matrix” was a computer-simulated program, the alternate world in “Inception” is the world of dreams.

Advanced technology enables users to enter a person’s sub-conscious or dream. The technology was originally used in the military to train soldiers for pain immunity, since the dream world is not pain-free.

The movie unfolds much like a maze, requiring a lot of thinking and putting puzzles together, but giving the movie a nice kick mostly missing from simple action stories.

Nolan’s script revolves around Leonardo DiCaprio’s Dom Cobb, the leader of a team of thieves that specializes in stealing ideas from people’s subconscious by entering their dreams. A Japanese billionaire named Saito (Ken Watanabe) hires Cobb to implant an idea called an “inception” into the brain of business rival Maurice Fischer (Pete Postlethwaite).

Marion Cotillard plays DiCaprio’s dead wife, who complicates Cobb’s mission by entering his dreamscapes and “Juno’s” Ellen Page is brilliant scientist and team member Ariadne. Veteran Michael Caine is Miles, Cobb’s father-in-law and mentor and Ariadne’s college professor.

“Inception,” has the look and feel of a video game with the action unfolding in a system of three “dream levels.” The last of these is called “Limbo,” a location where people can get trapped for 50 years or even forever.

Levels can become unstable to stay in, so the “dream” team took a special drug for sleeping.

Anyone who dies in “Limbo” stays there.

Time is longer in the dream world than in the real world, where five real-time minutes could be an hour in the first level of dreams. On each dream level, time slows down more dramatically.

The movie uses extravagant CGI effects, including the bending of a London town, strange maze stairways, anti-gravity scenes and falling buildings.

“You see some things that are pretty amazing, and amazingly pretty: cities that fold in on themselves like pulsing, three-dimensional maps; chases and fights that defy the laws that usually govern space, time and motion,” wrote New York Times reviewer A. O. Scott.

So don’t feel strange if you’re feeling confused on whether anything is real or not when you walk out of the theatre.

“Dreams feel real when we’re in them. It’s only when we wake up that we realize that something was strange,” Cobbs tells Ariadne.

## Tay Runs Marathon

[ From *Tay in China*, pg 5 ]

I usually travel abroad at least once a year and have for the past twelve years. So far, I have been to thirty-three different countries on four continents.

**Q. How was the marathon?**

It was a beautiful experience. There were almost 1,800 participants from 65 different countries.

The terrain was challenging, as we had to climb about 6,000 irregularly-shaped steps on the Great Wall of China. We ran uphill, downhill and next to crop fields while the summer sun was beating down on us. The locals were cheering on the sides of the road singing the Oscar winning song “Jai Ho,” which means to be victorious.

My favorite part was all the high-fiving from the little kids along the way and accepting the flowers they gave us. Also, I enjoyed the waving and smiling welcome from the Chinese people as we ran the course, and of course the breathtaking views from the Great Wall.

A morning drum ceremony performed by the locals got us all pumped up for the long run that day. We saw the sun rising over the Great Wall and the mist

was evaporating near our footsteps on the ground. The winner of the female group was part of my team!

It took me six hours to finish the run but I stayed on the wall for another thirty minutes to enjoy the view. It takes an hour and a half longer to finish this type of marathon compared to a normal, flat-surfaced marathon because of the demanding terrain.

After the marathon, I enjoyed a twenty-minute massage, which was organized by the event sponsors.

**Q. And then what?**

I spent a total of twenty-six days in China. Apart from six nights in Beijing, I traveled to Xi-an to visit the Terracotta Warriors, climbed Huashan, a 2.5 km high mountain, hiked in Jiuzhaigou National Park and explored Tibetan villages. I also took a boat ride to see the Giant Buddha in Leshan, patted baby pandas in the Panda Conservation Base in Chengdu, visited the world expo in Shanghai. Finally, I visited the world-class, modern Chinese city of Hong Kong, which is a former British colony.

## CST Test

[ From *CST*, pg 1 ]

for students and the expectations students have of themselves are very critical for continuing.”

“We believe we’ve hit a tipping point. The school is now building momentum. However, a lot of hard work remains. For us to maintain and continue this growth over time is a real challenge, but we’ve been real good so far.”

“We said three years ago that we were going to aim for 800 API in six years. We have three years to grow another hundred points and the question is, will we do it?”

“I believe that it is definitely possible. Six years ago when we said we were going to go from a 600 to an 800 it seemed like an unattainable goal, but we are about to get to seven hundred, in three years.”

“If we were able to do that in three years, shouldn’t we be able to do another hundred in three more years?”

“The outlook for those goals seems a lot more reachable when you’re able to make that much progress in just three years.”

“When this is all said and done, when the numbers are all finished being published, we will be in the 30th percentile or possibly even the 40th percentile. Within the next few years we should at least hit the 50th percentile.”

Loera had an easy explanation for why Poly did so well despite a shorter school year and larger class sizes.

“Improved quality of instruction,” said Loera.

“By having teachers look at student data, they are better able to understand students needs and adjust their curriculum accordingly,” said Loera. “In the end, teachers are the ones that make it happen in the class room and we need to acknowledge and recognize that.”

“Poly’s faculty and students should be proud,” said Loera.

## Daysi at Fullerton

[ From *Odds*, pg 3 ]

mother because my country was not able to provide me with the same education the U.S has done. It was a culture shock since I did not speak a word in English and had never met my father until I came here.

**Q. When was the last time you were in El Salvador? Describe the country for us and your life when you lived there.**

The last time I went was about three years ago. Life is peaceful. I wish my country offered what the U.S offers so that I never had to separate from my mother. Being home is the best feeling because being here on my own gets me depressed sometimes.

**Q. Your mother lives in El Salvador? Does she want to come to the US to be with you? How often do you communicate with her?**

She calls me almost every day. I plan to submit an application in order to ask for residency for my mother to come to the U.S. when I turn 21.

**Q. Only about 10% of foster teens attend college and less than 3% earn a bachelor’s degree. Why have you been successful when most others aren’t?**

I think it’s the support from my mother and the fact that I’m far away from her. When I miss her the most, I remember that education is the key to my own success. Education will lead me to a better life than the one I’ve had.

“Inception,” has the look and feel of a video game with the action unfolding in a system of three “dream levels.”

## SPORTS

# Hooked On CrossCountry

By Vanessa Marroquin  
Staff Writer

**Q. How do you keep your interest up after all these years coaching cross country?**

Passion. I can't imagine myself not running, it's in me. I always loved to run, and jump ever since I was a kid. Running gave me the opportunity to go to college. At college I was an independent runner. I ran the L.A. marathon ten times.

I pass on my passion to my athletes. I practice with them every day. I don't say "today you are," I say "today we are." I make an effort to do better each day. I want to be a role model for my athletes. My passion is what keeps my interest up.

**Q. Where does your love of cross country come from?**

I came to the U.S. at twelve years of age. I felt left out. I did not speak English. I joined track in high school. The track members were a group of English learners and we all developed an identity. I wasn't in Cross but I did run 10 k or 5 k. I loved running. It gave me an identity. I was not made fun of or known by nicknames but as a good runner. Who doesn't want to feel good?

**Q. What's the secret to putting together a successful cross country squad?**

There is no secret. It's about having good athletes. Cross athletes are disciplined and responsible. The athletes are not selected by me. They come because of the announcements. I have been in Cross for more than ten years and students who love to run are the ones who come to join.

**Q. Give our readers a quick history of Poly's cross country team over the last decade.**

Poly has an undefeated varsity record. We have been champions for 12 consecutive years. Cross has been in state finals more than three times. Every year Cross makes city finals. The Cross team holds the record at Mt. Sac for fastest freshman ever. Also Cross are league champions.

**Q. Talk about your coaching strategy.**

My coaching strategy is divided into three parts. The first part is condition and form. The athletes run only with 60% ability. They develop strong lungs, cardio



Photo By Alejandro Cadena

**ENTHUSIASTIC:** Cross Country coach Mario Rivera readies his team for the 2010 season.

and heart. The second part is in mid-season. I extend mileage. It could be twelve miles a day. I require athletes to give 80-90% of effort. The training is intense. We have people throwing up and getting dizzy. I never make athletes give me 100% of effort unless in a competition. The third phase is reducing the quantity without reducing the quality. They develop strong mentality and they go to championships. I don't care about going to league because we always get there. I care about city finals.

**Q. What do all sports have in common that makes participation important for high school kids?**

All sports should teach responsibility, leadership, teamwork, self respect and respect for others. All sports should teach that the most important thing is education. Coaching isn't for money, it's to change kids' lives.

**Q. Tell us a little bit about you.**

I was born in Puebla, Mexico and came to the U.S. at twelve. I graduated from Poly.

I worked in the fields. During vacation, I would work with my father because I wanted to help my family. I used to pick spinach in Coachella Valley. I learned responsibility from my family. My family let me work in the fields on the condition that I stay in school.

I am proud of my Mexican roots. I don't let go of that. I tell my athletes never to be ashamed of their roots.

Poly is the only school that I have taught at.

# Faer Surfs the Web

Faced with four open coaching slots in March, varsity football coach Scott Faer went global.

By Kelsey Cruz  
Staff Writer

**N**eed a coaching staff? Try the internet. Poly varsity coach Scott Faer did just that, running a help wanted ad on the City Section and Southern Section football websites after assistant coaches Evan Nunez, Corey Johnson, Carlos Castro and Steven Herrera quit early this year to take other coaching jobs.

"I was looking for years of experience," said Faer. "It depended on the position the individual put. Some roles are more demanding than others... they needed a certain background."

After extensive interviews, Faer chose varsity assistants Chris Myrick and Santiago "Coach Santi" Velasquez. Johnny Gonzalez, Fred Covarrubias and Kurt Fritzenkotter will handle the JV chores.

Myrick and Velasquez grew up together, went to Wilson High in LA and later coached for rival teams.

Myrick attended the University of La Verne, coached at Wilson for four years and at Pasadena High for two years. He is the new defensive varsity coach.

"I decided to coach here because this was an opportunity to move from JV to Varsity," said Myrick.

Velasquez also went to Wilson High LA, but coached at Franklin High for three years. Velasquez is working on an AA program at Cal Poly. Velasquez is the varsity middle line backer and tight end coach.

"I was the JV head coach and wanted to move up," said Coach Velasquez. "Myrick asked me to help him out."

"I'm planning to bring aggressiveness here at Poly. Defense is all about not wanting to give anything up."



Photos By Jennifer Martinez

**COACHES:** New hires Chris Myrick and Santiago Velasquez look forward to their new assignments.

Gonzalez played quarterback and safety for Bell High. He coached at South Gate and Maywood High for two years. Gonzalez is the JV assistant coach.

"Different coaches told me about Poly football and they said it was a great program," said Coach Gonzalez. "I want to bring aggressive defense to Poly, dominate the opponent, and win. It's the art of war."

Fred Covarrubias played safety, receiver, wide receiver and tight end (1993) at Poly and attended Valley College. Covarrubias is offensive coordinator for the JV team.

"I decided to coach here because I grew up here," said coach Covarrubias. "This is my hometown. If I find a job as a full time coach, then I would consider coaching somewhere else, but for now this is where I want to coach."

Poly won nine games in 2009, the most since 1991, and finished second in the East Valley League.

Senior running back Kevin Ervin had a stellar season last year, scoring 35 TDs and gaining nearly 2300 yards. He was all league and made Division II's All-City first team.

"We have 11 returning starters this year, and that says a lot," Faer said.

# Rabins Will Coach Tennis

By Mariana Santos  
Staff Writer

**Q. Did you volunteer to coach or were you asked?**

I volunteered after hearing about the opening on the announcements. I wasn't thinking about it. I only did it because no one else stepped up. I needed exercise and I like to play tennis.

I met the girls on the team. They impressed me because they were a really nice group of girls. I wanted them to have a season and they can't have a season without a coach.

My challenge will be balancing my time as a teacher and a coach. Coaching will add six more hours to my week, and my teaching comes first.

This is my 6th year at Poly, all teaching English.

**Q. Do you play tennis?**

I started playing tennis in grade school. In high school and college I played football and ran track, but I also played tennis in my free time.

**Q. Tell us about a typical day at practice.**

Practice will be Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 3-5 pm. And we will start by stretching and

light weight training, running and playing tennis. I'll show them a short tutorial lesson and have them play each other.

**Q. What are reasonable goals to set for the season?**

I'm hoping that they win more than they lose and that the girls have fun.

**Q. Talk a little bit about what makes a good player.**

I think it takes the will to play, and passing grades to be on the team.

A good player will be someone who doesn't get discouraged easily, who could keep it cool and not lose their temper because in tennis sometimes the players make mistakes that can discourage them.

**Q. Is it more important to be competitive or more about the fun and the experience?**

I think it depends on the person. Some people are competitive, some aren't. But I'm hoping the girls have fun this season.

**Q. What about new tennis uniforms?**

The girls are picking them. I don't really mind as long as they are appropriate and have Poly colors.