

The Poly Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

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District Promises Hotline

LAUSD reacts to teacher suicide over “ineffective” ranking.

By Joel Hinojosa
Staff Writer

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) officials have promised to expedite their planned crisis hotline following the recent suicide of Miramonte Elementary school teacher Rigoberto Ruelas, 39.

“I personally met about a month ago with various staff to set up a hotline to help employees cope with stress,” LAUSD Superintendent Ramon Cortines said, “The system would be set up so employees could call both anonymously and directly to ask for assistance.”

The hotline would specifically handle calls from employees distraught over looming layoffs, drastic budget cuts and a controversial “Los Angeles Times” database released last month that ranked teachers as “effective” and “ineffective” based on student test scores.

Authorities said Monday that they believe Ruelas, 39, jumped to his death from a bridge in the Big Tujunga Canyon area of the Angeles National Forest sometime over the past week. Friends of Ruelas said he had grown increasingly depressed over his “ineffective” rating on the “Times” database.

Ruelas was rated as “less effective than average overall,” “less effective” in math and “average” in English.

The “Times” issued a brief written statement Monday but took no blame for the suicide and noted that the death was under investigation.

“The ‘Times’ published the database, which is based upon seven years of state test scores in the LAUSD schools, because it bears directly on the performance of public employees

[See Suicide, pg 7]

Twisted Tales Due From Play Production

Playwright Glen Philip guarantees plenty of belly laughs for Parrots.

By Mariana Santos
Staff Writer

Oops, he did it again. ASAP’s Glen Philip, who wrote and directed last year’s “High Schools Daze,” has penned another comedy for budding actor Parrots – “Twisted Tales and Ridiculous Rhymes.”

“The play is supposed to be a night of all the Mother Goose fairy tales,” Philip said, “but the narrator, due to his agenda, has twisted and turned these fairy tales into something crazier, funnier and entertaining but no body knows why.”

The idea for the play came from his acting class, Philip says.

“I asked them to write suggestions down after we did “Jungle Book” and one kid wrote



Photo by Alejandro Cadena

DIRECTOR: Former Texan Glen Philip directs “Tales.”

a story about Goldie Locks and the Three Bears and I kind of expanded on that idea,” said Philip. “It took me all summer to write, from June to August.”

How does he know if he’s written a hit or a dud?

“I trust myself,” Philip said. “Whatever I think is funny, I just go for it. I’ve been doing theatre for so long that I could tell myself if it’s bad.”

Philip says Poly drama teacher Katrina Hetrick critiques his writing and gives him feedback.

“She’s like my partner in crime,” Philip said.

A Houston native, Philip says he’s been acting for over 10 years and directing for five. His first acting gig was a high school production of “Romeo and Juliet.”

“I played the nurse and had to wear the dress and all,” said Philip.

Philip attended Sam Houston Texas State University and has a Bachelors in Finance.

“I started writing in my junior year of college,” said Philip. “I have written and completed eight plays and I have at least ten more that are not finished or are still ideas.”

Philip plans to expand “Twisted Tales” and get it published.

“It definitely has potential and I would like to see it on

[See Tales, pg 7]



Photo provided by Sean King

TRIPPIN’: Poly’s College Prep Club members clown for the camera.

Parrots Fly South

College Prep Club visits four campuses on field trip.

By Vanessa Marroquin
Staff Writer

Getting twenty three people to four different college campuses was easy, according to College Prep Club co-sponsor Sean King.

Feeding them, however, was something else again.

“Restaurants aren’t prepared to serve twenty three people all at once at one table,” King

said. “We called ahead to one restaurant, but for the others we had to wait up to forty minutes.”

Breakfast and dinner were group affairs and the Parrots were on their own for lunch.

Twenty members of the Parrot club, accompanied by faculty members and club co-sponsors King and Cesar Felix, visited campuses at the University of Southern California, UC Irvine, the University of San Diego and UC San Diego.

The first stop on Friday was USC. The group then piled in the bus and traveled to UC Irvine, where they stayed overnight.

Saturday the group visited campuses at the University of San Diego and UC San Diego.

Sunday morning the group walked a dozen miles, went to

[See South, pg 7]

FACEBOOK FOR NEWBIES

A how-to for accessing social networking’s biggest player.

By Mariana Santos
Staff Writer

Facebook is a social networking website where users communicate and stay in touch. People use Facebook to talk to friends, look at photos and upload their own pictures.

Facebook has a number of popular features. Walls, for example, are used to post comments for friends.

The news feed feature allows users to display

stories about their friends, post updates or write on a friend’s wall. The news feed also lists any added friends.

Posting status updates or writing on a friend’s wall is easy.

Enter the status update in the proper field and click the Post button. The post will also appear underneath the user’s name in Facebook searches and in the Chat window.

To write on a friend’s wall, access the friend’s Facebook page. In the blank text box field, enter

[See Facebook, pg 7]



Photo courtesy of April Hood

In the land of Leprechauns.

AP April Hood and hubby take a vacation on the Emerald Isle.

TRAVEL - page 5



Mazda USA

Be sharp but be safe.

Going mobile can be fun and safe in any of these first cars for teens.

TECH - page 6

OPINION

EDITORIAL

What's in a Grade?

Educators say some points are worth more than others in preparing high schoolers for the rigors of college.

The problem with traditional grades, said Katy Bainbridge of Align, Assess, Achieve, a Worthington-based company that provides training on teaching and grading practices, is that they focus on the accumulation of points, not learning.

"You can make it through high school and play the game of school and play it well and head to college and really hit a wall," Bainbridge said.

Many education experts agree, arguing that today's grades typically include how often a student has completed homework, sought extra credit and submitted work on time — practices that can inflate or deflate a grade but have nothing to do with whether a student understands the material.

Now, some high schools are reviewing or revising grading models. At one Ohio high school, students receive a report card based solely on their knowledge of the material. Other skills, such as behavior, attitude and effort, are reported separately.

And at Metro Early College High School in Columbus, teachers instruct and assess students until they know the

material. Homework, attendance and extra credit, in many cases, are not counted toward a grade.

Teachers work continuously with students until they fully understand the subject and receive grades — a 90 percent or better — to show they know the material.

Many questions remain, of course, including how colleges will deal with such a new grading process.

"If we ever got to the point where all we're seeing on a transcript is a final grade of A's," said Mabel Freeman of undergraduate admissions at Ohio State University, "where they keep redoing, redoing, redoing until they're at an A level, it may take a few years to be able to interpret how well a new system is working."

But the possibilities are intriguing. If LAUSD adopted such a new grading approach, would more Poly students be more "college ready?"

Educators can't expect students to gulp in information by just giving them a pencil and a paper. Maybe it's time to see if students also understand the content.

The irony behind Obama's Sidwell/D.C. schools remarks

There is some irony behind President Obama's comment that his daughters could not get as fine an academic experience in a D.C. public school as they do at private Sidwell Friends School: His education policies promote some practices that Sidwell wouldn't dream of adopting.

At Sidwell, a Quaker school, teachers don't spend days drilling kids to pass standardized tests, and they aren't evaluated by student test scores. Sidwell has small classes, a wide range of

curricular and extracurricular options, tremendous facilities on two big campuses, etc. etc.

The irony is that Obama's own education policies give standardized testing a central place in public education, though he chose a school for his children that wouldn't see that as a sound way to run an academic program.

- excerpt from a Washington Post blog



LETTERS

Teacher Reaction

The OPTIMIST asked teachers to share their thoughts about Rigoberto Ruela's recent suicide.

Cancelled Subscription

I cancelled my subscription to the Los Angeles Times after they published the database ranking.

Gen Ed teachers who work well with tough kids should not be penalized because their "at risked" students may not perform well on state assessments. Why would Gen Ed teachers want to work with tough kids or those with learning difficulties if those kids could potentially lower their effectiveness?

- Brenda Fishler, Special Ed

* * *

A Witch Hunt

Our eleventh graders who've read "The Crucible" should recognize the L.A. times "bad" teacher list for what it is — a witch hunt. They have no accountability and print whatever they want in order to sell newspaper. This poor man's reputation was besmirched and a dedicated educator was hounded into suicide. It's horrible.

- Evan Rabins, English

* * *

Political Football

My own frustrations teaching in a public high school in the U.S. the past twenty-seven years include the angst of being a political football, tossed from right to left to the cheers and jeers of constituents rooting for their quarterbacks and winning or losing by a score based on contrived ever-changing and partisan-favoring goals.

Now, appropriately here in L.A., the game has changed to Futbol, and, inappropriately, we are no/ longer passed from hand to hand, but kicked soundly downfield from one side to the other.

We've weathered the handling, but this kicking has taken its toll. The soccer ball we have become is rapidly deflating. Rigoberto Ruelas' suicide is evidence enough.

- Thom Savino, English

* * *

Slanted Reporting

"Striving to better, oft we mar what's well" quoth the Bard.

The Times has moved from being a forum for those who bow down at the altar of standardized test results to an organ of lasting and far-reaching harm to the students and teachers of LAUSD. Publishing student test results will shift teachers' focus from helping kids learn to training kids to test. Education will cease to be child-centered.

When teachers realize that what they do to help their students learn (really learn, which means to question, to wonder, and to dream, not simply to do academic "pet tricks" on a cookie-cutter test) does not matter as much as what they do to make their students "perform" on a test, they will adjust their teaching accordingly.

- Larry A. Carstens, English

the OPTIMIST

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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, and follows the Code of Ethics for the Society of Professional Journalists. Editorials are the opinions of the staff.

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THEME PARK

PARROTS IN THE
MAGIC KINGDOM**Happiest Place
on Earth, Rain
or Shine**

The weather in February had been cold and rainy. At first it looked like it was clearing up. The closer we got to Anaheim, though; the darker the skies became. I tried to think “no, no, this isn’t a bad omen at ALL.”

From the beginning I was on a spree. I took pictures despite the drizzling.

We went into one of the shops at Toon Town and left with handfuls of candy, enough to keep us on a sugar high for a while.

We ran through Mickey and Minnie’s house next. I hadn’t known that it eventually leads to actually meeting Mickey. It was an awesome surprise! I don’t think I’ll ever be too old to appreciate those sorts of things. I got a picture and autograph, of course. It was around 47 degrees all day and our hands were numb, but we kept going on.

We went on the Indiana Jones ride five times, maybe more. We had so much fun. Nonsense is the most fun.

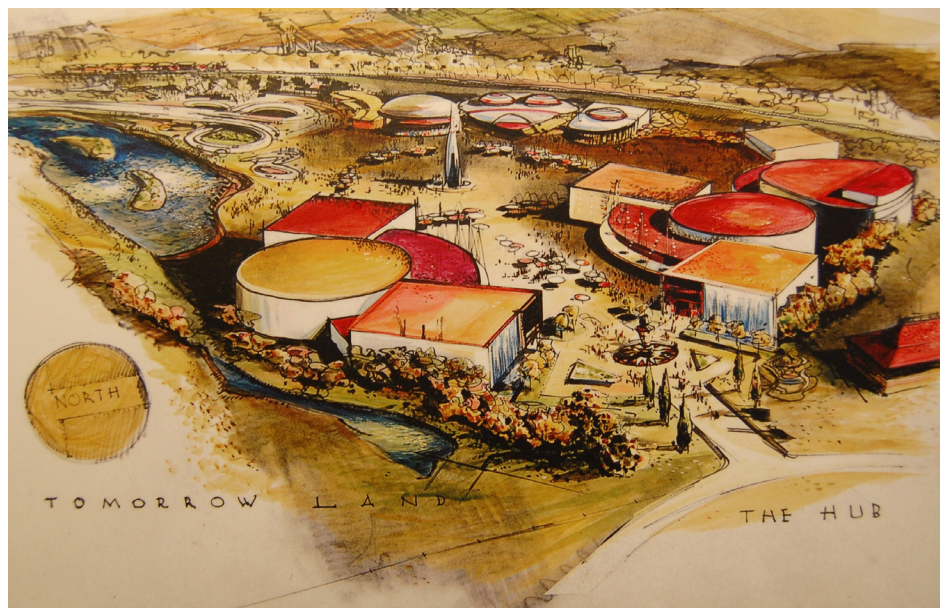
For lunch we went to Downtown Disney on the train. The windows had been left open and the rain was getting in. But rain or shine, Disneyland has the ability to make anybody happy.

My day at Disneyland concluded with the fireworks show. Sitting up front in the cold made it fun. I felt like a kid again, you know? I’ll even admit I got into the entire princess theme and “reaching for your dreams.”

That’s all it really was, I think. Childlike innocence being influenced

by the park, combined with ability to appreciate wherever you go. I was happy at Disneyland because I had forgotten about any work I had. Who needs drugs and other stuff when you have Disneyland?!

- Angelica Flores

**Dreams Can
Come True**

During my summer vacation, my mother and I went to Disneyland. Since school was about to start in July, I decided that I would like to have an exciting adventure one last time.

I rode on a thrilling roller coaster ride called California Screamin’ three times in a row! My head was spinning like I was going to faint. Next, we rode the Grizzly River Run and got splashed and wet at the end.

One of my favorite rides was Soarin’ Over California where we got to hang glide in front of a huge, wide screen that shows areas moving forward, which makes everyone think they’re gliding in real life.

At Tomorrowland, we rode Star Tours, Finding Nemo Submarine Voyage, Autopia, and the Innoventions. Finding Nemo Submarine takes people underwater for encounters with fish characters from the Finding Nemo movie, such as Nemo, Marlin, Dory, and Crush.

Our last adventure was the “It’s a Small World” ride. Even though I felt too old for the ride, my mother really loved it, and if she’s having fun, then so am I.

My mother and I spent a lot of time bonding and having fun. I will always remember the excitement and thrill. Like they say, “Dreams can come true.”

- Charlie Thongthavikiat

**Mickey’s World**

The first ride I got on was Star Wars. After that we had to wait a long time because the lines were super long. Then we ate hamburgers and fries with soda. When we were buying the food my little sister got lost. She went to look for a table and we couldn’t find her. When we found her, she was sitting at the table. Everybody was relieved. So we ate and then we started to take pictures again, and we made the line to get on the submarine. The submarine was so cool. We got to see mini-flicks of the movie Nemo and fake people swimming.

After that we went to Mickey’s World, where we took pictures with Minnie Mouse and Pluto. Then we went to the other side of the park to get on Space Mountain, my favorite ride! It is so fast and you see a lot of lights inside the ride; it’s the best one in the park.

The fireworks were so pretty, a lot of colors and a lot of sounds and different kind of music. We also saw Dumbo flying and Tinkerbell doing her magic up in the air. Before we left we stopped to buy some souvenirs. It was 11:30 p.m. when we got in the car and left. On the way home I went to sleep.

- Keilin Lemus



WEEKEND

Hot to Trot? Try These Experienced runners and rookies alike can find a place to fit their exercise needs in LA.

By Vanessa Marroquin
Staff Writer



Google Image

HILLY: Griffith Park is a popular LA locale to run, jog, hike or people watch. Runyon Canyon Park and the beach run from Santa Monica to Venice are also recommended.

Combining LA's beautiful views, great weather and diverse population with a little exercise can make for a great weekend. Here are some popular places to enjoy a run or hike, walk your dog or just people-watch this Saturday. Lace up those running shoes, grab your shades and iPod and get busy.

Griffith Park, LA's answer to New York's Central Park, is the number one hot spot to run in the City of Angels. The paths are a small sample of what the park has to offer. Griffith is great for long runs too. With plenty of running space (4210 acres), retracing steps should never be necessary. A steady stream of runners, joggers, walkers and horses will keep you company and provide more visual interest.

The park, located at the junction of the 134 and the 5, is open 6:00 am to 10:00 pm. All hiking trails and mountain roads close at sunset. Free parking is available on the south side off of Vermont Canyon Road inside the park. The parking lot next to the Greek Theater is open until 10:30 pm, even though the park gates are closed to entering cars at sunset.

Runyon Canyon Park is located near Hollywood. The park contains stunning views of the L.A Basin. Take a three-mile loop run or hike different views for a new experience each time. Many people walk their dogs without leashes here, so runner beware.

A run from Santa Monica Beach to Venice Beach is the perfect extra strength workout. This stretch never gets boring, with bikers, skaters, skateboarders and sculpted Muscle Beach types everywhere. The pedestrian path is a perfect beginning spot for the run. Work on extra strength by running in the sand close to the water. The path is about six miles.

San Vicente Boulevard is near Brentwood. This hot running spot is shaded by a wide grassy median that separates the two sides of the road, but watch out for the occasional large tree root. From Ocean Avenue to the end of Goshen Avenue is around four miles. San Vicente Boulevard is good for an easy run, while the connection between the median and Ocean Avenue adds distance.

Woodley Park in the Sepulveda Basin is an in-spot in Van Nuys. The park is good for a breezy run and an exploration of what the Basin has to offer. One running trail provides a view of the dam and the Los Angeles River. Run the 400 meter loops in the grassy fields or



Google Image

SCENIC ROUTE: The run from Santa Monica beach to Venice is filled with bikers and skaters on weekends.

head past the loop to run small hills. About ½ mile down is a loop just over a mile long. Proximity to the LA River makes this area cooler than other locations. Woodley Park's grassy fields are perfect for easy runs or recovery runs.

UCLA's Drake Track Stadium is the place for those who don't like to run on grass. The nine-lane, 400-meter track is great for runners who want a professional course but don't want to run indoors. And of course the length of the run (a mile equals four laps) is up to the individual.

Arroyo Seco in Pasadena offers paths north or south of the Rose Bowl with plenty of nature views. Courses north of the Rose Bowl are uphill. Arroyo Seco's southern dirt trail leads to Highland Park, its channel and woody areas. Beautiful homes that surround the hills come with the scenery.

The city has plenty more where these came from, so Google some on your own and see the sights while you do a little cardiovascular. Then have a smoothie and pity all the couch potatoes missing out.

TRAVEL

We flew from LA to Newark, New Jersey – 5.5 hours; and from there we flew to Dublin – 7 hours. We flew business class and my flight was free because I had accumulated 100,000 miles with Continental Airlines and qualified for the overseas trip.

We arrived July 2nd. The weather was in the 60's and it rained intermittently six of the 12 days we were there. Despite the rain, the weather was pleasant, and we were able to do everything we had planned.

Both my husband and I wanted to visit Ireland. It came highly recommended and neither of us had been there. Although my heritage is primarily French, my great, great grandmother was from Ireland. I had hoped to research her birthplace before we left for the trip, but I did not have time. I plan to do that in the future. Maybe another trip?

My husband planned the trip by researching places to visit. We rented a car and had reservations at “bed and breakfasts.” We did not have enough time to tour the entire country. We primarily visited the South: the towns of Kilkenny, Waterford, Kinsale, Kilarney and Gallaway and Dublin.

Ireland is largely rural, slow-paced and simple, with small cars and old, old houses and field after field of lush green. However, we were surprised to see many lovely newer homes and new cars. The nation's largest industry is tourism and it has boosted their economy in the last 10 years.

When you drive through the countryside you see cows and sheep everywhere. We were fortunate to see a demonstration of a sheepdog rounding up sheep. The dog is trained to listen for his master's whistle and then he knows what to do.

Dublin is a bustling city. Places to visit: Trinity College, Book of Kells, St. Patrick's Cathedral and Christ's Church. Tourists and locals eat at sidewalk cafes, drink at pubs and browse the shops. You can grab a “hop on & hop off” bus tour - \$25 for two days to see all the sights.

All of the people we met were friendly and helpful. Everyone spoke English which helped us when our GPS was wrong.

Christ Church Cathedral was founded by the Vikings in 1037. It is the oldest cathedral in Dublin, a good example of the Gothic and Romanesque styles. St Patrick's Cathedral is connected with Ireland's patron saint, St. Patrick. Both churches are magnificent in their architecture, stained-glass windows and sculptures. It makes you think about the talented builders and artists who created the churches and made it their life's work.

We did have dinner in a pub. The beer is not warm, but not ice cold either, like in the U.S. (or so I'm told).

The Ring of Kerry is beautiful countryside and mountainous peninsulas near the Atlantic Ocean and lakes. The Cliffs of Moher are 203 meters high cliffs in the Atlantic. Both sites are famous for their natural beauty.

We rented a Hyundai. It was more expensive than we anticipated – for 10 days it cost \$600. We never adjusted to driving on the left side of the road. However, everyone was kind and did not yell at us for our terrible driving.

We did have some problems

understanding the Irish accent and expressions. Also, they know Gaelic and learn it in school starting in first grade. We did not understand anything about that language. They also had trouble understanding us and our American idioms.

If you are traveling to Ireland, an umbrella and raincoat are the most important items! We packed for hot and cold weather, but we didn't need any of our hot weather clothes.

I did not buy any souvenirs, only postcards to send to my family and a small doll for my granddaughter.

The food was very good. Fish and chips, Irish stew and lamb are very popular items, but you could also order pasta, hamburgers, seafood, sandwiches and salads. They cater to American tastes. The portions were huge, so I sometimes ordered an appetizer for dinner. Ireland is the most expensive country in Europe and most dinners were about \$30 (average price).

Ireland is not that different from the U.S. when it comes to technology. Everyone has a cell phone and a computer.

The selection of restaurants is great and most are individually owned, not part of a chain. We did see McDonald's and Starbucks.

But there are differences too. The architecture is not modern; there are few freeways, roads are scaled for smaller cars and people drive more leisurely. There are few stop signs. Instead you enter a “roundabout” which is five or six lanes coming into a circle and you exit on another lane. It would be simple driving on the right side of the road; not so simple driving on the left.

When I told people I was a high school administrator they were very interested in our school, the students, and what kind of problems we have. They have the same problems we do.

We did visit the Blarney Castle, but did not climb to the top to see or kiss the Blarney Stone.



Photo courtesy of April Hood

WATERFORD: Poly AP April Hood toured the Waterford Crystal factory during her recent visit to Ireland.

April in Ireland

AP April Hood talked to the OPTIMIST about her recent trip to Ireland. Here's Hood in her own words.



LIFESTYLE

AUTOMOTIVE

Safety First

Ask dad for one of these and get home safely.

2010 MITSUBISHI LANCER – \$14,955



Engine: 2.0L in-line 4 double overhead cam with VVT,
Multi-point injection fuel system.
Transmission: 5-speed automatic or 6speed manual
Horsepower 152
Torque 146
MPG: up to 33

2011 FORD FIESTA – \$13,320



Engine: DOHC 4 Cylinder engine
Horsepower: 120
Torque: 112
Transmission: 5 speed automatic or 5speed Manual
Mileage: up to 34

2011 JEEP PATRIOT – \$16,365



Engine: 2.0-liter 4-cylinder Dual Overhead Cam 16-valve dual Variable Valve Timing
Transmission: 5speed Manual Transmission
Horsepower: 158
Torque: 141
MPG: 28

2010 TOYOTA MATRIX – \$16,500



Engine: 1.8-liter DOHC 16-valve dual VVT-i 4-cylinder
Transmission: 4speed Automatic or 5speed Manual
Horsepower: 132
Torque: 162
MPG: up to 32

By Daniel Martinez
Staff Writer

While car experts vary in their brand and model choices for a teen's first car, all agree that the vehicle must rate high on safety and reliability.

"Teens overestimate their skills and underestimate their risks," said the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's Russ Rader. "They are more likely to speed, more likely to tailgate and they are less likely to wear their seatbelts," said.

The number one safety feature to look for is electronic stability control, according to Consumer Reports.

"These systems sense when a vehicle begins to slide in a turn and applies the brakes to one or more of the auto's wheels to keep the car on course," said Jim Travers, the magazine's associate autos editor.

The Highway Safety institute says electronic stability control reduces the risk of fatal single-vehicle crashes by 50% and fatal multiple vehicle crashes by 19%. Moreover, it slashes the potential for fatal vehicle rollover accidents in cars and SUVs by at least 72%.

All 2012 model-year vehicles must have electronic stability control, Travers said.

Consumer Reports and the institute both said teen drivers need vehicles with as many safety features as possible, including antilock brakes and curtain air bags. Teens' cars also should have good crash-test results.

The crash risk is four times as high for 16- to 19-year-olds as for older drivers, per mile driven, according to the institute. At age 16, the crash rate is double what it is for 18- to 19-year-olds.

Consumer Reports picked late-model or new vehicles because they are more likely to have safety features and less likely to break down.

The Highway Safety Institute, a nonprofit that analyzes auto safety and driving issues, preferred "big, boring and slow" cars over small, lightweight cars.

Auto Club recommends a mid-size car with a four-cylinder engine, automatic transmission, Antilock Braking System (ABS) and high safety crash test scores.

"A mid-size car is big enough to protect a novice driver in a crash, but small enough to be manageable for a novice driver," said the Automotive Research Center Manager Steve Mazor.

"The four-cylinder engine limits acceleration capabilities and generally provides better fuel economy. Automatic transmissions are easier to drive and allow the novice to focus on the road as well as steering, acceleration and braking. Electronic stability control helps prevent roll-overs."

Kelley Blue Book editors chose fun and affordable vehicles. Their choices combined new and used vehicles and kept key financial criteria in mind. The 2006 Honda Civic topped their list.

Below are the OPTIMIST's choices for the ten cars that best meet the experts recommendations.

2010 HONDA FIT – \$14,900



Engine: 16-Valve SOHC i-VTEC®
Horsepower: 117
Torque 106
Transmission: 5-speed Automatic or 5-speed Manual
MPG: up to 35

2011 KIA FORTE – \$13,695



Engine DOHC, 4 Cylinder engine (CVVT)
Transmission 4speed Sportmatic or 5speed Manual
Horsepower: 156
Torque: 144
MPG: up to 34

2011 MAZDA3 – \$16,095



Engine Type: DOHC 16-valve inline-4, aluminum block and head, port fuel injection
Transmission: 5-speed automatic or 5-speed manual
Horsepower: 148
Torque: 135
MPG: up to 33

2010 VOLKSWAGEN BEETLE – \$18,690



Engine: 2.5l, five – cylinder, in line engine
Horsepower: 150
Torque: 170
Transmission: 6speed Automatic or 6speed Manual
Mileage: up to 29

2011 HONDA CIVIC – \$15,805



Engine: 16-valve SOHC i-VTEC
Transmission 5speed Automatic or 5speed manual
Horsepower: 140
Torque: 123
MPG: up to 36

2011 SCION XB – \$16,230



Engine Type: DOHC 16-valve 4 Cylinder with Dual VVT-i
Transmission: 4speed automatic or 5speed manual
Horsepower: 158
Torque: 162
MPG: up to 28

CAMPUS

Teacher Crisis Hotline

[From Suicide, pg 1]

who provide an important service, and in the belief that parents and the public have a right to judge the data for themselves,” said “Times’ Vice President of Communications Nancy M. Sullivan.

Miramonte is a large school in an impoverished, gang-plagued neighborhood about six miles southeast of downtown Los Angeles. About 60 percent of the students are Spanish-speaking English-language learners.

The school was a big part of Ruelas’ life. He lived just blocks away and started working there at age 22 as a teacher’s aide. Four years later, he became a teacher.

Some District officials expressed serious concerns about rising anxiety levels among teachers and staff in recent weeks.

“There is a dominant narrative that holds teachers and school employees solely responsible for the problems in the public education system,” said LAUSD board member Steve Zimmer.

The motive for Ruelas taking his own life is far from clear. But officials with the United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) union said he had been upset since August, when the “Times” published his district ranking as a “less effective” teacher based on his students’ standardized English and math test scores.

Poly’s UTLA rep Robert Scott said the “Times” was wrong to label Ruelas as ineffective.

“I was so saddened that the LA Times maliciously libeled a good teacher,” Scott said, “citing a methodology that the paper admitted was flawed.”

“The pressure to perform with declining resources,” Scott said, “the continual wave of ‘improvements’ dictated by the district, the larger class sizes, watching good teachers be displaced, these things are stressful.”

Facebook

[From Facebook, pg 1]

a message and click the Post button. The message is now posted on the friend’s wall.

To add photos, click on the Profile button and select the photo tab or access photos from the photo icon in the Applications section or toolbar. Uploaded albums and photos or “tagged” photos from friends are displayed.

Create a photo album by clicking the appropriate button. Select the photos to include and click the Upload button. Then enter the album name, comments and privacy settings.

Adjust the privacy setting by clicking Album Privacy. Each album is displayed. Select who should view each album and click the Save Settings button.

Another Facebook feature is “poking.” The poke feature “nudges” or attracts the attention of another user. Use this feature to say “hello” to friends. Be careful – some users consider this process “flirting.”

Those are the basics. Use the guide to set up an account, road test the cool features and join Facebook nation.



Photo by Alejandro Cadena

DRAMA: Play Production teacher Katrina Hetrick is co-producing “Tales.”

Twisted Tales

[From Tales, pg 1]

Broadway,” Philip said.

Among Philip’s influences is Thornton Wilder.

“‘Skin of Your Teeth’ is one of my favorite plays and Wilder inspires me a lot,” Philip said, “because he breaks a lot of rules of theatre and he’s not afraid to take risks.”

“Twisted Tales” is a collaboration between ASAP and Poly’s drama kids, 39 students in all.

The ensemble cast includes Javier Zamora as the narrator, Yesenia Herrera as his wife, Patrick Johnson as Papa Bear, Karina Perez as Mama Bear, Gabby Melendez as Baby Bear, Ana Almasri as Humpty Dumpty, Franklyn Sihamaya as talk show host Murry Spovitch, “Dating Game” host Amber Gonzalez and Monica Sagastume as Mother Goose.

Rehearsals started the first week of school and will last about seven weeks.

Poly students have two opportunities to see the play on October 28. Additional performances on October 20-23 and November 4-6 are open to the public. A faculty show is slated for Oct 20.

Parrots Visit San Diego

[From College, pg 1]

Mission Beach for a few hours and then came home.

The most memorable part of the trip was the University of San Diego’s ocean view campus.

“We took votes for what campus kids like most and it was San Diego,” King said. “It’s like a country club.”

The club fundraised for two months last spring at Shakey’s, Cold Stone and Big Boys and sold churros at September’s Open House to pay for the trip.

Money wasn’t the only obstacle the college prep club faced. District officials canceled the trip one day before the club’s October 1 departure because the paperwork wasn’t turned in on time

“We had the bus lined up. We had paid for the hotel. Felix had already changed all his plans and I changed mine. And the campus tours were all set,” said King.

FIRST PERSON

Backstage Diary

By Valeria Jimenez
Staff Writer

It’s that time again. Play production time. I walk into the auditorium and I see new faces, refreshing.

Also old faces. Comforting. Director Glen Philip and Technical director Katrina Hetrick are both standing in the pit of the auditorium.

So the audition process begins for “Twisted Tales and Ridiculous Rhymes”. Everyone in for auditions is given a paper to write down personal information such as name and telephone number.

Also on the paper is a list of characters. Auditioning students can pick a character based on what they are interested in playing. A box at the bottom is for those who only want to be part of the technical crew. I checked it off.

My name is Valeria Jimenez. I’ve been part of Play Production for the previous productions, “High School Daze” and “The Jungle Book.”

I want to study the performing arts in college and major in Drama. When Philip and Hetrick saw my audition paper, they were surprised. They expected me to pick an acting part. In the end, I suppose they were right and after the ups and downs of Audition Time, I am Ritchie the Rabbit.

This time around we have more rehearsals and more scheduled performances. Usually, we run four evening performances. But this time we’re doing eight performances.

The first is a Faculty Invitational on October 20, 2010. Then performances go from October 21st till the 6th of November 2010. Not continuously of course.

After the “familiarize and memorize” stage with the script, Philip has had us go through the play from start to finish with minimal interruptions. Sometimes cast members don’t show up so it’s difficult to run the play with a bunch of stand-ins. So far I’ve played a rabbit, a mouse, a child and a bachelor.

The three blind mice have had the toughest time so far with their scenes.

They are transition characters. So they have to run their scenes very fast. And with two of the cast members being first timers, Philip has had to be patient. The mice have had to show up to rehearsal earlier than everyone else to perfect their scenes. And it has paid off. They’re looking very good.

So rehearsal rolls as expected.

Long, boring, annoying, fast paced, fun. We get a little of everything. But now, with show time so near, everybody’s stress level is at a maximum. Hetrick has begun to build the set and has recruited everyone in the cast to help. We’re doing this while Philip is out of town.

Everyone in the cast is showing progress. The first-timers are looking very good. And even though some of them are still stiff with their lines and actions, they’re coming along. But because they need extra help, those of us who have been through this process before need to chill out and sit around or rehearse on our own sometimes when Philip is dedicating his time to them.

But that’s okay, because we want our production to flow as nicely as possible.

And like Philip says, as fast as possible. We’re running this thing very slow.

Some actors trip over their lines or haven’t quite memorized them yet. Some forget their cues and come in late, or early and freeze a scene.

We’ve got two weeks to fix mistakes. I believe we can do it.

If all the cast and crew members show up with a bag full of dedication and a good attitude.

SUDOKU October 2010

			4	9			2	
	4	3		5		6	1	
				6	2			8
		5		1			4	
			5	3	8			
	8			4		1		
4			9	7				
	5	2		8		3	9	
	7			2	3			

September 2010 Solution

8	4	2	7	5	6	3	9	1
6	3	9	8	1	2	7	5	4
5	1	7	4	3	9	8	6	2
9	6	3	2	4	7	1	8	5
7	5	8	9	6	1	4	2	3
1	2	4	5	8	3	6	7	9
4	9	1	6	7	5	2	3	8
3	7	5	1	2	8	9	4	6
2	8	6	3	9	4	5	1	7

SPORTS

Verdugo Breaks Tennis Streak

Lady Parrots lose to Dons and Vikings.

By Kelsey Cruz
Staff Writer

After a record-setting 5-0 start, Poly lost back-to-back matches against Verdugo Hills and Monroe, the former a bagel defeat.

"The schools we played against were good," said Poly varsity coach Evan Rabins. "They practiced more and their girls turned their paper work in on time."

Poly senior and #4 singles Wendy Keo and #3 doubles Diana Melendez and Perla Juarez were the only girls to win in the 2-5 loss against Monroe. Keo won in 8-2 and Melendez and Juarez won 8-7 in a 7-4 tiebreaker.

Rabins said they just need to practice more.

"We need to practice like it's a game," said Rabins. "There is no shame in losing, especially if you're playing against a better team. They played to their full potential."

"I think they're capable of great things. They just have to believe in themselves."

The Lady Parrots were coming off a 4-3 victory over visiting Grant last Thursday that had run the tennis girls' perfect record to 5-0.

Poly senior and #1 singles Cindy Keo's 8-4 win gave Poly the margin of victory.

"I think they're capable of great things," said Rabins after the Grant match. "They just have to believe in themselves."

Keo won her match with her strong forehand, blasting winner after winner. Co-captain and #2 singles Brenda Gonzalez played catch-up in a heated match that she ended up winning 7-2 in the tie break.

Poly senior and #4 singles Wendy Keo, and #3 doubles players Diana Melendez and Perla Flores also won against Grant.



Photo by Alejandro Cadena

STROKE: Senior singles player Cindy Keo's two-handed backhand.

FOOTBALL

Errors Mar Poly Win Over Huskies

Running back Kevin Ervin's three TDs make up for defensive miscues.

By Kelsey Cruz
Staff Writer

Head Coach Scott Faer was mightily displeased with his team's effort in the Parrots close 28-21 road win over North Hollywood Friday night.

"If we make this many mistakes against Arleta next week, they're gonna really run up the scoreboard on us," Faer said.

Big penalties on pass interference and personal fouls plus a key fumble by the Parrots allowed the Huskies to stay in the game until an errant NoHo pass on fourth and long yardage ended the scoring with 1:20 to play and Poly up by a TD.

Fleet-footed Parrot senior running back Kevin Ervin, quiet so far this season after a stellar 2009/10, got off to a quick start, scoring early in the first on a short drive after Poly recovered a NoHo fumble on the third play of the game.

Ervin's 11-yard run up the middle early in the second put Poly up by 14. Senior running back Edgar Alejandro had a nice gain to set up Ervin's score.

But then Poly's defense started getting careless. Two 15 yard penalties help the Huskies get close and NoHo running back #7 ran four yards for the score with five minutes left before the break. Poly carried a 14-7 lead into the locker room at the half.

A Poly fumble led to a second Huskies score with 3 minutes gone in the 3rd, but Anthony "Speedo" Pruitt answered by scampering 60 yards down the right side with a pass from backup quarterback Moises Ramon to put Poly back in the lead. The Parrots were up 21-14 after three.

More Poly penalties put the Huskies in the red zone and NoHo scored on a 1-yard quarterback keeper to tie the score early in the fourth.

But the Huskies make the mistake of giving Ervin a kickoff to run with and he put Poly in scoring range with a 23-yard return. Two plays later Ervin swept around the left side for the touchdown that handed the Huskies their fifth straight loss.

"A win is a win," said Faer.

Ervin had 109 of Poly's 290 rushing yards and three touchdowns on 17 carries. Alejandro added 91 yards on 15 carries after a strong showing against Locke the previous week that included 201 yards rushing and two TDs.

Poly (3-2, 1-0) will host nemesis Arleta (4-1, 2-0) next Friday.

INTERVIEW

GALLARDO TALKS VOLLEYBALL

The freshman coach tells the OPTIMIST why volleyball is complicated.

By Kelsey Cruz
Staff Writer

Q. Is it all about winning or all about having fun?

It's supposed to be about having fun, but there's always that drive to win. You always want to be number one, you always want to be on top, you always want to show that you're better than other schools you're playing against. And so in a sense, to me, the program that I want to run is yeah I want them to be able to have that drive, that 'want-to-win' drive, but I also want them to be able to enjoy it and have fun. To get their minds away from any issues, stress, problems that they have, but if they're not having fun, then they don't want to be here.

Q. So which one comes first?

I would say win. I want to win.

Q. Can anybody beat Poly?

In our league, the only team that would give us a little challenge is Verdugo Hills, but honestly what I want to do with them is work on things that I think we need to get better at, so when we go into playoffs and tournaments, I want us to be ready for that. I want to be ready for L.A. schools.

Q. Your top three players?

My libero, Ana Aparicio. She's pretty much who does all the defense, all the dirty work I guess you can call it. She's all over the floor, she's awesome. She's willing to go to the ground, she's willing to sacrifice her body to be able to make sure that nothing hits the floor. She's willing to pretty much go all out every single day at practice and during games.

The second is my middle, Jocelyn Lopez, who has come a long way from when I first started with her. She is coming out of her shell slowly slowly slowly, and right now at this point from when we started, she's a huge impact on this team. She's a great player, she's a great blocker, she's pretty much able to play all-around if she could, and she's a huge part of this team as far as talking, and as far as inspiration.

The last person would be my sister, Viri Gallardo. She's a very good all-around player, the only all-around player that pretty

much never gets out of the game. She's a very good defensive player, she hits the ball, she's one of those people who sacrifices her body to save a ball, to help, to motivate the other girls on the team. She's a huge impact on the team as well.

Q. What areas do you stress?

Teamwork is always a big issue with me, to be able to work together no matter what. The second would be to respect each other, to be able to get along, to trust each other. The last thing is responsibility, something to take with them after high school.

Q. How is volleyball different from other sports?

Volleyball is a little bit complicated. It's not the same as basketball where you could pretty much get a basketball and play on the court anywhere. Volleyball is harder because it requires different skill, coordination, hand-eye. You could probably find a net at a park, but it's not an official net size. The equipment is different, you can't just put it in your bag or walk around and play anywhere.

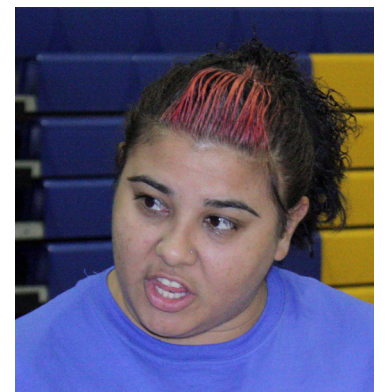


Photo by Jennifer Martinez

COACH: Volleyball head coach Gabby Gallardo at practice.

Q. What makes volleyball unique for the players?

The pressure. The pressure that you get if you're a hitter, the kill, if you're a blocker, the block, if you play defense, when you dig a girl that's pounding the ball, the setter, when you give a good set. It's just different variations of all the positions.

Q. Do smart students make better athletes?

Honestly, I don't think being smart school-wise makes you a better player. I don't think it makes any difference.