

The Poly Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

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SERVING THE POLY COMMUNITY SINCE 1913

FEBRUARY 2012

Loera Takes New Post

Former Poly head now Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction for LAUSD.

By Yenifer Rodriguez
Editor In Chief

Former Poly Principal Gerardo Loera is now Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction for LAUSD.

“The decision to leave Poly was very difficult and I gave it a great deal of thought,” Loera said in a memo to the Poly community. “My final decision was based on my will to serve more students in LAUSD.”

Loera will oversee the district Office of Curriculum and School Support, which includes Beyond the Bell, Student Health and

Human Services, Adult Education, Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education, Language Acquisition, Integrated Library and Textbooks, GATE/AP/Gifted and Avid as well as Arts.

“The new role presents a very broad array of complex challenges,” Loera said. “My typical day now is 11-12 hours at Beaudry and several hours at night and weekends. Twelve people, each with a significant number of personnel, report directly to me.”

Severe budget cuts for LAUSD have created a sense of urgency, Loera said.

“Superintendent John Deasy has established explicit goals on his Performance Meter and we are responsible to get the school district to meet those goals,” Loera said.

[See Loera, pg 6]



Photo by Diane Alvarado

PROMOTION: Former ESL teacher and 9th and 10th Grade AP/coordinator Ari Bennett is Poly's new principal.

Bennett Takes Helm As Poly Principal

Tenth Grade Center AP Ari Bennett replaces former principal Gerardo Loera. Loera is named Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

By Yenifer Rodriguez
Editor In Chief

LAUSD Superintendent John Deasy named Ari Bennett Poly's new principal following the resignation of former principal Gerardo Loera. Deasy appointed Loera Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction in December of last year. Bennett was formerly Assistant Principal for the Tenth Grade Center.

“I feel extremely fortunate to serve you, the students and the community of Sun Valley,” Bennett said in an email to Poly's faculty following his appointment.

Bennett said his immediate goals as Poly's new

principal are to make the transition from Loera as seamless as possible, to support teachers during the CAHSEE and CST testing and to hit an API of 750 or more on this year's CST.

“We've had a lot of improvement over the past few years,” Bennett said. “Now the key is to keep pushing forward, continue to provide the teachers the support they need, continue to provide the support the students need and together we can keep on pushing up that hill until we become the top performing high school in LAUSD.”

Bennett foresees no major changes for Poly in the

[See Bennett, pg 6]



Photo by Diane Alvarado

HEADING NORTH: Poly's Aca Deca squad will compete at state.

Aca Deca Goes to State, Again

By Jessica Flores
Staff Writer

For the second time in three years, Poly's Aca Deca team has advanced to the state competition in Sacramento.

But it almost didn't happen. Poly's final score of 37,602 was 23 points shy of the 12th and final slot.

A last-minute decision by Academic Decathlon Director Cliff Kerr to include Poly as the 13th at-large team in a field limited to 12 saved the day, however.

Here's how veteran Poly Aca Deca coach Brian Block tells it.

“At 9:57 a.m. on Friday, I got a call from LAUSD Academic Decathlon Director Cliff Kerr, who was then in a meeting with the other 12 teams that were going to state. He told me over the phone that we were going too.”

“My screams could be heard by all 12 coaches sitting in the meeting.”

Principal Ari Bennett arranged to have the team meet in his office so he and Block could surprise them with the news.

“Their screams lasted two minutes,” Block said.

The drama started last Saturday.

Super Quiz Saturday is the biggest day of competition in the Academic Decathlon. Sixty-three Aca Deca teams gathered in the gymnasium at Roybal

[See Aca Deca, next page]

Band Wins Competition

First place finish caps months of practice.

By Jasmine Aquino
Staff Writer

Poly's marching band and colorguard took first place at the 38th Annual Band and Drill Team Championships held at East Los Angeles College on December 10, 2011.

“This award is the ultimate ending to a difficult season,” said drum captain Andrew Rodriguez.

The band also captured the first place trophy in 2006.

“There are no words in the

[See Band, pg 6]

Stephen Thatt 1958 - 2011

Veteran Counselor Served 10th Grade Center

By Sandy Barba
Staff Writer

Poly Tenth Grade counselor Steve Thatt, 53, died on Hannukah, December 23, around 8 am of an apparent heart attack.

Thatt had worked for LAUSD since 1984 and joined Poly in 2003 as a counselor.

Funeral services were held at Eden Memorial Cemetery in Mission Hills on Monday, December 26. Over 200 family, friends and co-workers attended the service. Somewhere between 50-70 Poly faculty and administrators attended,



Courtesy of Cheryl Thatt

COUNSELOR: Poly veteran Steve Thatt and wife Cheryl.

including then Principal Gerardo Loera and AP Ari Bennett.

“Stephen Harris Thatt is my personal Superhero,” said stepson

[See Thatt, pg 6]



Google Image

Visiting the City of Lights

Winter break finds six Parrots abroad.

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Photo by Diane Alvarado

Katz Calls It a Career

Veteran varsity coach joins admin staff.

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OPINION

EDITORIALS

From the Principal

Dear Poly Family,

I’m excited to share with you that I have been selected to be the next Poly principal. I can tell you without reservation that I couldn’t be prouder to be the principal of any other school. I feel extremely fortunate to be able to serve you, the students, and the community of Sun Valley. When I met with Dr. Deasy last Wednesday, I shared with him my belief that Poly will soon be the top performing high school in all of LAUSD. This is a tribute to your collaboration and focus around student achievement. However, this goal is only one metric of the school’s improvement. I believe it is equally important to continue to develop the extra-curricular programs and the overall school culture. I hope that every student and family in the East San Fernando Valley will soon know Poly the same way I know Poly; for the outstanding teachers, academ-

ics, athletics, leadership program, and faculty and staff that go above and beyond to serve the educational mission of the school.

As you are aware the economic context that we are presently working in is toxic to our mission. The challenge for us is to continue to work together, help each other, and stay focused on what makes this the greatest job in the world... the students. Poly High School is an extremely special school. It’s your contribution that has created the Poly of today. I only hope I will be able to serve you as well as Mr. Loera has done. I look forward to a fantastic second half of the school year and continuing our mission to provide an outstanding high school education and experience to the students of Sun Valley.

I look forward to seeing all of you very soon!

Principal Ari Bennett

From the Aca Deca Coach

Two things you should know about the 2012 Academic Decathlon Team

1) They have exceeded my expectations

This is a pretty big admission, since my expectations are always very high. However, this team overcame several disadvantages that they were unaware of to make the State competition.

First and foremost, at the district competition, they were in the morning session for speeches and interviews. Team scores for speech and interview scores for morning participants are always hundreds of points lower than the afternoon participants. It’s just human nature to “hold back” on scores until one sees all participants. No one wants to give a “perfect” score to the first participant of the day, and two of our best speakers were the first students up. By the afternoon, since the judges are more comfortable in assessing, scores are generally higher. While I did not point this out to the students prior to the District match, it made our path to the State competition much more difficult.

Second, six of the team members had no Academic Decathlon experience. This disadvantage cannot be understated. The team that went to State in 2010 had six members who had been on the team the year before, and five of them were the high scorers in the year we made state. Many competing teams talk of “rebuilding years” in order to acquaint students with the competition. This team didn’t rebuild; they built from scratch.

Finally, this year’s team, at the start of the year, lacked a “superstar” – a student that would score so phenomenally high, that his teammates could ease up a bit on studying. Last year’s team was probably the strongest I had in terms of college acceptances: Of the six seniors, four went to UC’s (two to Berkeley), one to Carnegie-Mellon, and one to Harvard... and they DIDN’T make it to state. This year’s team surpassed them, by, top to bottom, working harder than any other team I have ever coached. This year’s success was not the success of a single individual, but of a team. Everyone worked, and everyone put in a top effort, and every member of the team has great pride in their accomplishments.

2) Parents are going to attend the State Competition

Four students have informed me that their parents are going to drive or fly up to see the Super Quiz relay and awards ceremony that will be held in the Memorial Auditorium in Sacramento on March 17 and 18. This marks the first time that a Poly contingent will be at State to cheer us on. Hopefully, we can have some banners made to display in Memorial Auditorium.

I am most proud of the fact that all three varsity students have indicated that their parents are hoping to attend. Every Academic Decathlon team must contain three varsity students. Varsity students must have Academic GPA’s of below 3.0 (electives such as gym, band and health are not included in the computation). To me, these parents always believed in their sons and daughters intelligence, and were waiting for the proper environment for them to shine. Their desire to witness and cheer their child’s achievement will make the State Competition a celebration.

The parents’ involvement will also make the event more special for me. So much of academic decathlon is achieved without much fanfare or notice. Studying is not a spectator sport. But as I teach, I often wonder whether I am connecting to my students and the community. For example, when we prepare for speeches and interviews, I emphasize the fact that you connect on emotions, not circumstances. You might have nothing in common on the surface with a 60 year old, white, balding administrator judging your interview, but you have both laughed, you have both hurt, you have both done things you are proud of, and you have both done things you regret. In other words, while your interviewer might never understand what it is like to be a 16 year old in Sun Valley, he or she does understand what it means to achieve great joy, deep sadness, or strive to greater heights. When my varsity students informed me that their parents wanted to drive six hours to attend, it kind of hit me that I had achieved this type of emotional connection with their parents. I cannot imagine a better thank you, or a more fulfilling coda to this year.

Brian Block

Aca Deca Takes Last Minute Slot

[From Aca Deca, Front Page]

Learning Center downtown for a day of testing.

An Academic Decathlon team must have three students with GPAs 3.75 and higher, three with GPA’s between 3.0 and 3.75 and three students with GPAs of 3.0 and below. This year’s three students in the lower level were very bright.

Poly’s team wore cardigan sweaters. Underneath were superheroes t-shirts. For the speeches and interviews they wore suits.

The testing lasted from 8 a.m to 3 p.m. and included multiple-choice tests on history, science, economics, literature, math, art and music.

Coaches are not allowed in the testing room. “I have to stay in an area where they all meet,” Block said, “make sure they have study materials, make sure they all focus on the next quiz, make sure they have food to eat during the break.”

“I try to be encouraging at the time and handle any problems that might arise.”

Next, the Parrot team lined up in front of the administrators and parents where each member answered 10 multiple-choice questions. Time to answer: 7 seconds.

This “Super Quiz Relay” counts for about one half of a team’s history score, only a small fraction of the team score. But the Relay is usually a good indication of how well the team did on the day. It’s also nerve-wracking and emotional.

Poly scored 41 in the Relay, 7th overall out of the 63 schools that participated.

Poly finished one point ahead of El Camino and tied with Taft, both of whom are prior national champions.

The finish was the highest for any Poly team ever, a strong indication Poly’s Aca Deca program continues to excel.

When it was all over, Poly’s Aca Deca members had answered some 335 questions in addition to their essay speeches and interviews.

“This year’s quiz was incredibly hard,” Block said. “Few people ever get 10 right. Yet for each of the previous three years, we’ve had a person get 10 right. This year, Antonio Rodriguez missed just one question.”

Teams learn their Super Quiz scores the following Thursday evening at the banquet.

However, many schools in the rest of the state get their scores before Thursday.

“As a coach, you start looking at how the other teams did and see whether or not our team has an opportunity to make it to state,” Block said. “Based on what I saw before the banquet, a team needed 38,185 points to make state, 200 points higher than last year. We were definitely in the ballpark.”

Thursday

The names of the teams going to state were announced at the Thursday banquet, held at the Convention Center downtown. Poly didn’t make it.

“There was some crying on the car ride home,” Block said.

Friday the tears were gone, replaced by the furrowed brows of a Poly Aca Deca team already deep in preparation for the state competition.

Reflections

“The toughest day emotionally for me is never the day of the Super Quiz,” said Block. “It is the day after the Super Quiz, which is when I start working over the PSAT scores to recruit for next year’s team.”

“For me, this is year-round. The day after the competition is the first day in months in which I have nothing to do for the team. I just collapse that day and usually go into a depression thinking that we are never going to make it, thinking oh this person should have studied harder. I get a little grouchy. I try not to do that in front of the students but it does happen occasionally.”

“Nothing that they will experience in college is going to be as hard as what I put them through. So I am very pleased with what they have done.”



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the
OPTIMIST

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TRAVEL



Photo by Diane Alvarado
EX-PARROT: Actor Danny Trejo visited Poly to talk about the importance of education.

Parrots Get the Message

Actor Danny Trejo pushes education during Poly visit.

By Jasmine Aquino
Staff Writer

Danny Trejo, better known as El Machete, visited Poly on Tuesday to speak to Poly ninth and tenth graders about the importance of education.

Trejo, one of the most recognizable actors in the world today, has starred in nearly 200 films. But his life wasn’t always marked by success. Trejo spent his early life as a criminal and drug addict until turning straight.

Trejo’s career as a drug counselor led him to an unexpected part in Edward Bunker’s “Runaway Train”. Trejo has since taken drugs and alcohol out of his life and dedicated himself to helping others, especially students.

“I want to give hope to kids who don’t think they can make it,” Trejo said.

Trejo reinforces common sense into kids’ minds two or three times a month at San Fernando Valley schools. At Poly he spoke about education, drug and alcohol addiction and the importance of giving back to the community.

“Education is going to be the key to anything you do, no matter what it is,” said Trejo. “Society is a process of elimination and you eliminate yourself.”

The opportunities in a person’s life reflect their past decisions, such as continuing school, Trejo said. He also reflected on his involvement with drugs and alcohol. He emphasized the negative impact drugs and alcohol can have on an individual’s life.

“Drugs and alcohol make things worse, I don’t care who you are,” Trejo said. “Not drinking will make anything better. That choice is yours to make. You make a good one, great! You make a bad one...good luck.”

Poly sophomore Butch Dacuag got the message.

“It inspires me when I find out a guy just like us grew up in the Valley doing the same things we all did,” said Dacuag, “like drugs, fighting, partying, slanging, moving schools and helping a cause. If anything, Danny Trejo is a role model.”

Trejo’s last message to the students was the most conveying to the audience.

“The three words I hate the most are ‘Where you from?’ It doesn’t matter! Where you come from doesn’t matter, the only thing that matters is what you do now to better yourself and your community.”

Trejo and his wife ended his speech with a pitch for K9 COMPASSION, his dog foundation. The foundation gives pet owners free services for their dogs, including neutering, grooming and vaccinations.

MY EUROPEAN VACATION

By Gabriela Melendez
Staff Writer

Six Parrots spent winter break abroad. Here’s what they said about their whirlwind adventure from England to Italy.

— Senior Eve Huerta

Our group was Ramses Lemus, Kathy Silva, Mara Calderon, Giselle Linares, Dianna Galvez and me, with two graduates and Ms. Elam and her daughter Emma. Larger groups from other schools in California also went. The cost of the trip was over \$2000 and kept changing due to flight and destination adjustments. I thought about it for months before actually deciding to go.

I love traveling. I like to step out of my comfort zone and experience all I can, so when the opportunity presented itself I knew I had to go. In every trip you learn something about yourself, others, cultures, art or anything, and I was anxious to see what I’d learn this time.

Preparations included getting passports and making copies of important documents just in case something happened. We had to get adaptors and the travel essentials. But what we really had to prepare for, and I didn’t, was the cold. We are used to warmth and sun and over there that’s rare. We went in winter. My umbrella was too weak for the wind, sweaters were too thin and the my coat was soaking wet the next day.

We visited London in England, Paris in France, Florence, Assisi and Rome in Italy.

To get to London we had to take a three hour flight to Minneapolis and then an 11-hour flight over the Atlantic. To get back we took a two-hour flight to Amsterdam and an eight-hour flight to New York, then five more hours to LA.

The airports were gorgeous, but when the flight to Amsterdam from Rome was delayed and we had to stay 24 hours to get a connecting flight, saying we were irritable is an understatement.

To be honest, I didn’t know what to expect, I know things aren’t always what they are portrayed to be. I was expecting very fashionable people, lots of tourists and very hostile locals.

For the most part, my expectations were right; every street was like a fast-paced runway. The people selling us our gelato would curse us for being slow Americans and we had to elbow our way through a hoard of amateur photographers in order to snap a zoomed-in picture of the Mona Lisa.

It took me a while to really understand London and its people. Now I would love to see more of it. London was modern and energetic and easy to understand.

Paris, I had trouble with; language, people and all. I didn’t understand the hype, but I guess we needed more time to appreciate it.

Italy was by far the best. Its culture, people and art were just glorious.

We traveled quite a bit, walked a whole bunch. We didn’t have to search for food, since dinner was planned, but if we were hungry, we ate whatever looked good that was near us.

There was always a bus tour and a walking tour. We had to pack all the important sites into a couple of days, so it was a very hectic schedule, but we got a lot of free time where we could get lost and find a great pub or go shopping. We were given quite a bit of freedom. If we told the tour director our plans, we could be out all night and see the lights, go to a club, try to reach a closing museum, anything, but really we were beat by the end of the day.

Our rooms took some adjustment in terms of working the electricity. They were good though and kept getting better and more



Photo courtesy of Wendy Elam
CITY OF LIGHTS: Parrots Dianna Galvez, Giselle Linares, Emma Elam and Edgar Rivas at Les Invalides in Paris. The Poly sightseers visited England, France and Italy in 11 days.

“You turn one corner and see the arches near the river and the locks of love, then next you see Perseus defeating Medusa, a great fountain and you turn around and see a Disney or Chanel store snugly fit in stone buildings.”

luxurious with every passing city. The pizza was amazing. I was traumatized by cramps for a while but got over it. Personally, the gelato coffee and pastries were best. I missed my family, and the sun.

Every city had different people. In Paris people were quite scary, but I think that had a lot to do with the language barrier. There was one guy, though, in the Eiffel Tower that seemed to hit on every girl who seemed a bit clueless and American. That was entertaining.

In Italy, it was a lot easier to talk to people because we spoke Spanish and words were similar. We met this really friendly man named Vincent in Florence who kept us from bawling like lost kids. We had an entire conversation with him talking Italian and us Spanish. They were friendly and affectionate and we really aren’t used to that.

As for asking directions, in every city many were lost so it wasn’t hard to find someone with a map and play charades to let them know where we wanted to go.

What really got to me was how the old sculptures and architecture, the rich, old culture was integrated with the modern world, especially in Florence. You turn one corner and see the arches near the river and the locks of love, then next you see Perseus defeating Medusa, a great fountain and you turn around and see a Disney or Chanel store snugly fit in stone buildings. It was both small and large, old and modern; it’s something you just don’t see everyday.

My most memorable moment was the moment I set foot in Assisi, Italy . Paris had taken a toll on me, the language seemed to slur into gibberish. The city was so large and it was getting to me. Assisi was a breath of fresh air. There were no modern stores, there were endless mountains of green, it was warm enough I could take off my coat; the city was small and intimate. The feeling after we climbed to the castle and saw nothing but nature was indescribable.

— Senior Ramses Lemus

I made sure to buy and pack the essentials, such as toiletry, clothes, shoes and a few over the counter drugs.

One of the main reasons I went was to see these place in person, places that I’d only read about in books and seen in pictures. I also

wanted to see how life was in Europe, listen to differenaccents and dialects.

Interacting with the locals was fairly easy. The only difficult part was the language barrier.

The Roman Coliseum, the Eiffel Tower and Big Ben made the biggest impressions. To be able to stand in front of them and in them was really great. Being under the Arc de Triumph was an awesome feeling, to know the German army marched through it. History is the most amazing part of everything, because without history the architecture wouldn’t have much meaning.

Spending New Year’s in front of the Eiffel tower and seeing the crowds all around us and the tower lit up was really great. We ate pizza in a restaurant right near the tower.

— English teacher Wendy Elam

I love to travel, and I wanted to share it with my students. My goal was to take students out of the country, give them the experience to travel, have them see the world and see themselves in the world differently than they did before. I believe travel teaches you more about yourself, with your ability to handle situations, your flexibility, how you handle certain issues and your adversity. It’s extremely important to develop your own sense of independence.

The trip was planned about a year and a half in advance so students who are interested can sign up. Also, it’s much easier to start saving money early rather than up front.

The trip itself wasn’t planned exactly. We went with EF Tours and were given a lot of free rein.

This was my second trip to Europe with students. We went to England, Italy and France.

Some things went awry. We were at the Eiffel Tower. It was late and we were headed to the train station that would take us back to the hotel. It was too crowded, and one of my students (Edgar) found out about another train station that could take us back. But by the time we got there, the last train had gone and it was past midnight. We went all the way back to the other station and caught the last train. We got back to the hotel around four in the morning.

The trip was wildly successful. Everyone had a great time. I think everyone got exactly what they wanted from this trip. A trip for 2013 is already being planned.

INTER



Poly Math and Science Magnet seniors Javier Castillo and Cathy Capala have been accepted to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge. The OPTIMIST talked to both and here's what they told us.

Why MIT?

Javier: MIT has held a special place in my heart for quite a while now. But I think spending the past summer there really solidified my passion for the school. I fell in love with the atmosphere of the campus and the life at Boston. Furthermore, it is MIT! It will be challenging but I like challenges and when I'm learning what really interests me the challenge gets a bit easier and more manageable.

Cathy: My life goal is to find something new in the field of cancer research that would greatly benefit mankind. And MIT has one of the best resources that would aid me in achieving my mission. For example, the David Koch Cancer Research Institute and the Whitehead Institute are both in Boston and affiliated with MIT. Furthermore, Professor Robert Allan Weinberg (who found one of the most important genes for cancer pathways) works as a teaching professor and researcher at MIT! To actually imagine that you will have the privilege to learn Biology under him is just freaking amazing and makes you want to go to MIT even more. It's like a place of academic heaven and freedom. You can talk to people, both professors and students alike, about research and science without feeling weird at all, and you're encouraged to do something new and creative without having anyone restricting you!

How long have you planned to go to MIT? Was it your first choice?

Javier: Well ever since middle school I kind of figured that I wanted to do something involving science when I was older. At my freshman orientation for Poly, the summer before I entered high school, there was a speaker who talked about great students who were being

accepted to top universities around the country and MIT was mentioned. Sure there was Princeton, Yale, Dartmouth, amongst others, but the fact that the speaker said that MIT was more science and technology orientated I made it then and there my goal to get accepted there. Since that freshman orientation I have wanted to go to MIT, soon after I learned about other universities such as UCLA and other great schools but my mind was set on MIT and I wasn't going to let anything get in my way.

Cathy: MIT has been my dream school since 9th grade. It is definitely my first choice.

How did you get in?

Javier: I had to apply online through MIT's application which is located on their website. I had to create an account and from there the grind started. There were quite a few essays that I had to write, but with my peers and teachers lending a hand they did not seem so daunting. Overall I think that the essays were probably the hardest part of the application since they were about me and I really tried to open up so that the admission officers could see the real me and hopefully that would be enough.

Cathy: I got in by being a dreamer, by stepping out of my comfort zone, by thinking how MIT would help me in my life goal, and by acting like a college student while still in high school. Honestly, there are no specific guidelines on how to get in MIT, and one shouldn't be trying to find one. It's not about how many club activities one does and how many leadership roles one has. It's the effort one has put in them, and how it affected one as a person. Yes, being academically apt is still a great factor, but if you have a dream, genuinely love math and science, and have an affinity to help mankind, the

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By Alex Kang
Staff Writer

academic grades should come along the way.

Did you intern there in the summer?

Javier: Not exactly. The past summer I was enrolled in the MITES program which exposes high school juniors going into their senior year of high school to the life of a college student and to some extend the level of difficulty where MIT stands.

Cathy: No, I did not.

What did you write in your personal statement in your application?

Javier: For one of my personal statements I talked about a morning in my life where I came to the realization of how much my parents had sacrificed for me and all they ever wanted for me was to have a better life. The essay starts from the moment I wake up and I end it midway through one of my bus rides on the way to school.

Cathy: I wrote about what professor I would like to work with in college, my dream to be a scientific researcher, my cancer research internship at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, and my personal hardships.

What got you into MIT - community service, high SAT scores, extracurricular activities, minority status, high GPA, number of AP classes and scores, personal statement, hardships overcome, etc.?

Javier: I'm not sure! But if I had to make an educated guess I think it was due to a bit of everything honestly.

Cathy: [look at "How did you get into MIT?"]

Have you visited the campus?

Javier: Yes, I spent six wonderful weeks this past summer while in MITES.

Cathy: No, I haven't visited the campus.

Do you know what courses you'll have in the fall?

Javier: Although I'm not sure what my exact schedule will be I know it will probably include Biology and Chemistry among other classes. MIT has a policy which requires all incoming freshmen to stay in one of the dorms, however I do not yet know which of the twelve dorms I will be residing in as that decision has not been made yet.

Cathy: I will definitely get the GIRs out of the way. I plan on taking 7.012 Introductory Biology (I can't wait to learn under Professor Weinberg!! I'm currently learning more about the pathways he's discovered!), 5.111 Principles of Chemical Science, 5.12 Organic Chemistry, 7.03 Genetics, a humanities/arts/social science, and 7.02 Lab Requirement.

What will you major in?

Javier: I am hoping to be able to major in Chemical Engineering and possibly pursue a minor in Brain and Cognitive Science at the same time.

Cathy: I'm planning on going into Course 7 (Biology).

Do you know of any other Poly grads at MIT?

Javier: I do not know them personally but I know of a few people who are current students there and I am planning on getting in contact with them shortly after arriving there since one cannot have too many connections!

Cathy: I have contacted Juan Fuentes and Steven Huynh. Their tips really helped me out. I'm very grateful to have met them.

What do you expect to do after graduation from MIT?

Javier: After getting my degree from MIT I plan on attending graduate school. I want to pursue a doctorate but the idea seems pretty daunting at the moment. I also want to do research in the field of cancer or something relating to cancer.

Cathy: After graduation, I'm thinking of taking a year or two off of school to spend time working on a research project either abroad or in the US. I want to build up a strong resume for medical school. After that, I will go into graduate school. I'm really interested in Harvard Medical School's MD-PhD Health Sciences and Technology (HST) program. I know it's going to be really hard to get into. That's why it's going to be one of my motivations to work hard at MIT.

Have you been at Poly for four years? If not, where else did you attend?

Javier: Yes, Poly was actually my choice, my parents wanted to send me to another high school but I vouched for Poly. I'm glad I did.

Cathy: I have attended Poly for four years.

VIEW

These two Parrots have high expectations and big plans for the future.

Cathy and Javier

Any teachers that were particularly helpful, or administrators? Who and how?

Javier: All my teachers starting from 9th grade physics teacher to my final teacher on my last day here, which will probably be my psychology teacher, have been extremely helpful and supportive. They are just amazing people and I am truly grateful for having been able to learn under their supervision. I was nurtured by their guidance; they nudged me in the right direction and didn't shove. But they did push my brain, a lot!

Cathy: Dr. Jeffrey Hunt changed my whole life. Up until junior year, I have always felt inferior. I have always felt that anyone who was older than me was always correct and that the dogma was absolute. But Dr. Hunt gave me the permission to be selfish, to dream BIG, and question/change the dogma. He told me that it was okay to do things that are beneficial to myself and not for others. Without Dr. Hunt, I wouldn't have been able to fully pinpoint my dream and go against what 'normal high school students' would do by continuing my cancer research internship while being a senior in high school. It's like he took the dirt off of my eyes and showed me the endless possibilities I could do with my life. With his counseling, all the restrictions placed on me by my family and peers seemed to diminish.

Were you in any special activities at Poly?

Javier: I was part of the school's soccer team in my 10th and 11th grade. In retrospect, I realize that I learned persistence and determination. At first the daily running was tough, but slowly the days passed and the miles grew shorter, the days seemed to grow shorter, and eventually it came naturally. It was just a matter of getting used to the difficult task, even if scary or exhausting at first.

Cathy: AcaDeca, I've been on the team in 9th and 10th grade. This activity taught me how to be more confident when speaking for an interview or in front of an audience.

Where were you born, where did you grow up? where do you live now? (what city?)

Javier: I was born in Sylmar but I moved around a lot with my parents as a child. However, all that moving around was eventually leading me back to where I reside now which is in Sylmar.

Cathy: I was born in the Philippines and moved to America when I was six. I currently live in Panorama City.

Brothers and sisters? Who and how old?

Javier: I only have one sibling and he's currently 10 years old going to be 11 in April.

Cathy: I have a brother who is in his 30s and a

sister who is 27.

Anyone in your household who is in or has attended college?

Javier: Since I am the oldest in my family there is nobody in college and my parents did not receive anything higher than a middle school or high school education.

Cathy: Everyone in my family has attended college.

What are you especially good at that helps explain your academic success?

Javier: I have actually thought about this question inwardly and I've come to the conclusion that I just seem to understand concepts rather easily. And I think that more than anything else is why I am able to do well in a lot of my classes. The ability to be able to wrap your mind around a concept and fully grasp it I think is very important in school.

Cathy: My perseverance and desire to use knowledge that I'm learning in school to help those who are sick with cancer and need a second chance in life.

In what ways are you like your mother and/or father? Have those qualities helped you in school?

Javier: Well my mother tells me that my father is a very bright man, that he was really good at manipulating numbers and he could do simple arithmetic quickly in his head. That aspect has helped me in a lot of ways in and out of school.

Cathy: Everyone in my family says I'm a lot more like my dad than my mom. My dad loves technology and science. When I was little, he used to tell me stories about how the discoveries of Galileo and Aristotle established something new in science. He's also very persevering and will work for any goal he sets his eyes on. Those characteristics of his grew on me, and I feel that they're one of the most important key things that helped me in school.

What book are you reading, who wrote it and what is it about? What was the last book you read?

Javier: I am currently reading "A User's Guide to the Brain" by John J. Ratey. It is psychology based and it attempts to describe the processes and mechanics, as well as the development, of the human brain through a lexicon which is simple to understand. The book I read before that was titled "The Man Who Knew Infinity" and it is a biography of the Indian Mathematician Ramanujan.

Cathy: I'm not really reading books. Right now, I'm reading scientific articles of cancer pathways, such as PI3K and mTOR, for my internship. They're really interesting.

Are you a geek, and if so, what do you do that is geeky?

Javier: Well I certainly do not go around biting heads off of chickens for the entertainment of other people, although seeing that would probably be pretty spectacular. I do not know if I

am a geek but I like to make references to random things that only a few people would actually understand. I guess that's a bit geeky?

Cathy: Yes, I am geek. I will definitely look at a leaf and imagine the scientific processes happening in that leaf. And I play video games and watch anime. Yep, I'm definitely a geek.



CAMPUS

Bennett Is New Principal

[From Bennett, Front Page]

short term.

“Mr. Loera has done a great job,” Bennett said. “One of my jobs at least for the rest of the school year is to make everyone feel Mr. Loera is still here. I don’t want the transition to affect anyone in a negative way.”

Loera made many contributions to Poly, according to Bennett.

“He helped develop and embrace the culture of the data-based decision-making through the implementation of the data team,” Bennett said. “He continued the emphasis on leadership development. And he set up a tracker system on an android platform. Any teacher can access a student’s schedule or contact information. Every teacher has the ability to store info on the Poly server. His tech support inside and outside the classroom helped the school but was not always obvious to everyone.”

Bennett said LAUSD’s current budget

shortfall will affect Poly, however.

“Like all the other LAUSD schools, our budget looks grim,” Bennett said. “The district will be sending out 10,000 riff letters on March 15. My goal is to support the teachers through that time.”

Bennett first worked for LAUSD in 1998 as a substitute teacher at Millikan MS and came to Poly in 2000, where he taught ESL 3 and 4.

Bennett became Assistant Principal in 2007.

Bennett was born in Encino and grew up in the San Fernando Valley. He attended Birmingham High School and UC Santa Barbara, where he majored in English.

After graduation, Bennett worked as a commodity broker and helped manage well-known pop band Tears For Fears.

“I thought I was going to be a business major,” Bennett said. “But I realized my heart was not in it.”

AP Lourdes De Santiago is Bennett’s replacement in the Tenth Grade Center.

Counselor Serves 10th

[From Counselor, Front Page]

Ernest at the service. “Feelings of emptiness, sadness, confusion, disorientation and emotional nausea have been with me the past couple of days, yet their presence validates his importance in my life.”

“He is not my stepdad but my dad, and we couldn’t have picked a better man to let into our lives.”

Thatt was born in 1958 in New York City. His family moved to California when he was two and he grew up in Culver City. His father owned his own lamp business and his mother helped out with bookkeeping. His father also owned racehorses, so Thatt spent a lot of his youth at the racetrack.

Thatt’s family moved to the San Fernando Valley when he was a teenager, where he attended Portola Middle School and Birmingham High School (now Birmingham

Charter). Thatt studied communications at Cal State Northridge.

After college, Thatt traveled extensively, including Europe, South Africa and Israel, where he lived and worked on a kibbutz for a summer.

Thatt’s first LAUSD position job was at Portola Middle School in Tarzana as an ESL teacher. He then attended Cal Lutheran and got his Masters in Pupil Services so he could be a counselor. Next came a stint at Holmes Middle School and then a transfer to Poly

In 1999, Thatt met future wife Cheryl at Portola. They were married in 2001.

“At first, he would stop by my room to discuss a particular student,” Thatt’s wife said, “but soon the students caught on to the fact that Mr. Thatt was visiting my room every day.”

Thatt is survived by his wife, daughter Betsy, 8, and stepson Ernest, 20.

Loera Moves Downtown

[From Loera, Front Page]

“Our superintendent gets to work daily at 4:30 am and sets the tone for the rest of the leadership in the district.”

Loera, 39, was born in Los Angeles to first generation Mexican immigrants.

“I started elementary school only speaking Spanish,” Loera said. “I am an English Learner.”

Loera attended John Burroughs High School in Burbank and graduated as a Seal Bearer in CSF with a 4.2 GPA. He majored in mathematics of computer science at UCLA and earned his teaching credential at CSUN and his masters degree at Cal State LA.

“After college, I went right into teaching,” Loera said. “While off track, I worked as a Systems Analyst for Evolving Resources, a subcontractor for the Navy in Port Hueneme near Oxnard, California.”

Loera started with LAUSD as a math teacher and came to Poly in 1997. He held positions as technology coordinator, Title I coordinator, Assistant Principal and Principal.

“Former Poly principal Dr. Fries-Martinez was instrumental in encouraging and supporting my career in administration, Loera said. “She is a brilliant woman committed to improving education for all students.”

Loera called new principal Ari Bennett smart and passionate.

“I am pleased he took the helm as Chief Parrot,” Loera said.

Poly had many successes on Loera’s watch.

- These included:
- achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for a second year in 2008 and became 1 of 3 high schools in California to ever exit Program Improvement Year 5.
 - gaining 116 API points in four years (2008-2011) and was in the top 3% of improved schools statewide. Poly’s A-G Completion rate is among highest in LAUSD.
 - recording the third highest number of UC Admissions in 2010 for all of LAUSD for non-magnet/non-charter schools. Poly also expanded the College Concurrent Enrollment program.
 - a six-year accreditation term from WASC in 2008.
 - the second highest Academic Growth Over Time rating for Local District 2 in 2010
 - an innovative Balanced Traditional Calendar that helped minimize the summer learning loss and extended learning opportunities for students.
 - an Academic Decathlon team that is going to the state competition this year and did in 2010.
 - participation in the California Academic Partnership Program to increase Poly’s leadership capacity.

Band Wins Competition

[From Band, Front Page]

English language to describe how all of us felt about the victory,” said senior co-drum major and four-year saxophone player Eddie Ortega. “It was simply indescribable.”

The band practiced from August until December during period four and after school from 3 to around 5pm. Saturday practices were held at least twice a month, with a final 9am – 9 pm practice the day before the competition.

“During the last Saturday practice before the competition, I felt we could actually win,” said co-drum major and four-year trumpet player Jose Reyes, “and sure enough, our hard work paid off.”

The annual LAUSD band competition, first held in 1973, features more than 300 student musicians from 45 LAUSD high schools.

School bands are arranged into divisions - 1A Red, 1A White, 1A Blue, 2A, 3A, and 5A - according to the number of performers. Poly’s 90-piece band competed against South Gate in the 3A division.

For the awards ceremony, Granada Hills’ band performed first, followed by the LAUSD

All City Honor Marching Band under the direction of Anthony White, coordinator of Visual and Performing Arts for the district’s Beyond the Bell Branch and an LAUSD graduate who marched 26 years ago.

The leader retreat was next, with all band drum majors, drum captains and guard captains marching onto the field to receive their awards.

Bands were scored on musical and visual excellence. The competition was broadcast on Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) several times during December.

“The season was interesting,” said drum instructor and Poly alumni Noel Medrano. “A lot of people stepped up to the plate and showed leadership. They worked hard to achieve what this music program is about - to learn musical skills to take with you through life.”

Poly’s drumline won new drumsticks and mallets for the upcoming 2012-2013 marching season.

The first-place trophy, two plaques and a banner from the competition are on display in the main office.

Poly’s concert band is currently preparing for a competition in San Francisco in late May.



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MEDIA

The 84th Academy Awards:

predictions, snubs, surprises.

By Shean Santy
Staff Writer

BEST PICTURE NOMINEES
“The Artist,” “The Descendants,” “Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close,” “The Help,” “Hugo,” “Midnight in Paris,” “Moneyball,” “The Tree of Life” and “War Horse.”

Surprises and Snub:
The shocking nominees were “Extremely Loud” and “War Horse,” both of which got mediocre reviews from critics and audiences. The disappointing snub was “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2.” A nomination for the final film of one of the best film series ever would have been an appropriate adieu.

Prediction:
“The Artist.” This one swept the majority of the critics’ awards and its respectful portrayal of the silent-film era was the zenith of this year’s releases.

BEST DIRECTOR NOMINEES
Woody Allen (“Midnight in Paris”), Michel Hazanavicius (“The Artist”), Terrence Malick (“The Tree of Life”), Alexander Payne (“The Descendants”), and Martin Scorsese (“Hugo”)

Prediction:
Michel Hazanavicius. “The Artist” takes the award and so does its director. This category is a duel between Hazanavicius and Scorsese, who won the Golden Globe.

BEST ACTOR NOMINEES
Demián Bichir (“A Better Life”), George Clooney (“The Descendants”), Jean Dujardin (“The Artist”), Gary Oldman (“Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy”) and Brad Pitt (“Moneyball”)

Snubs:
All the actors were well-deserved nominees, but the acclaimed performance of Michael Fassbender in “Shame” was ignored by the Academy. Artists such as Michael Shannon (“Take Shelter”), Joseph Gordon-Levitt (“50/50”), and Leonardo DiCaprio (“J. Edgar”) also deserved recognition, but the limit is five.

Prediction:
George Clooney. The dad who dealt with family problems in “The Descendants” gets the award but Jean Dujardin (“The Artist”) could just as easily go home with this one.

BEST ACTRESS NOMINEES
Glenn Close (“Albert Nobbs”), Viola Davis (“The Help”), Rooney Mara (“The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo”), Meryl Streep (“The Iron Lady”) and Michelle Williams (“My Week with Marilyn”)

Prediction:
Viola Davis. The popularity of “The Help” was a boost for the cast, and Davis takes the statuette while the losing streak for Meryl Steep (“The Iron Lady”) goes on.

Adele Sweeps 54th Grammy Awards

By Shean Santy
Staff Writer

Three years ago, Adele won the “Best New Artist” Grammy. On Sunday night, the English recording artist and songwriter fulfilled that early promise by sweeping the major awards in the pop genre. “Rolling in the Deep” won Record of the Year, Song of the Year and Best Short Form Music Video, while “Someone Like You” snagged the Best Pop Solo Performance. “21” got Album of the Year and Best Pop Vocal Album.

Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band opened the show, but the death of pop icon Whitney Houston was quickly acknowledged with a prayer led by awards show host LL Cool J. And Jennifer Hudson sang Houston’s signature tune, “I Will Always Love You.”

Taylor Swift sang “Mean” and Kanye West did not interrupt, but the hip-hop artist’s “My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy” album and song “All of the Lights” ruled the rap categories.

Dance/Electronica dominated much of the proceedings, Skrillex’s “Scary Monsters and Nice Sprites” being one example.

Foo Fighters’ dominance of the rock category got a mixed response from the audience. Coldplay and Mumford and Sons were strong contenders but Foo’s “Wasting Light” won Rock Album and “Walk” was named Best Rock Song.

The Best New Artist category is often a surprise, and this year’s choice, alternative indie Bon Iver, shocked the audience much like Esperanza Spalding did last year.

All the nominees, including Skrillex (2002) and Bon Iver (2007),

have been active for years, so the authenticity of the award seems questionable. But Bon Iver’s self-titled sophomore effort and intoxicating “Holocene” deserved the recognition. Left out were Foster the People, Death Cab for Cutie and Radiohead in the Alternative tier.

This year the Grammys were all about the performances. Bruno Mars did his retro James Brown groove, including the splits. Rihanna and Coldplay teamed up for “Princess of China,” and a blue-haired Katy Perry sang her new single.

For ridiculous, Nicki Minaj performed “Roman Holiday,” an exorcism-themed number that brought to mind Madonna. But it’s getting harder and harder to shock audiences, and Minaj managed mostly just to irk viewers not already confused by her rambling rhymes.

The 50th anniversary of the Beach Boys was celebrated with a live appearance by the remaining members, including pop legend Brian Wilson. Youngsters Maroon 5 and Foster the People accompanied the Whittier natives on “Good Vibrations.”

Other oldsters honored included Etta James, who died this year, and Glen Campbell, who romped through his “Rhinestone Cowboy” with gusto.

Former Beatle Paul McCartney crooned his new Valentine’s Day-themed single, and capped off the night with the closing medley to “Abbey Road.” Springsteen, Dave Grohl (Foo Fighters) and Joe Walsh (Eagles) joined McCartney for the dueling riffs at the medley’s close.

The night clearly belonged to Adele, but quality performances and tasteful tributes added some upbeat notes to the 54th Grammys.



Google Image

RED HOT: Adele’s “Rolling in the Deep” took three awards. Her “21” took two more and “Someone Like You” won a sixth award.

SPORTS

VETERAN COACH, ROOKIE PLAYERS

By Maria Valles
Staff Writer

The OPTIMIST spoke with head varsity coach Tremeka Batiste about the just-finished regular season. Here’s what she said.

ON the SEASON –

This was not a typical year. I never expected to have that record (9-18), but I knew it was going to be a challenging season. I lost two starters at the beginning of season, and my "6th man" a few weeks later.

My team is a class act. I've always told my players that it's not about the win or loss, but it's about the way they play. As long as we learn from our mistakes and improve each game, our win/loss ratio will improve.

When we lost three key players, it changed how we did everything. We no longer had leaders on the court. The team consisted of a lot of inexperienced players. We had to simplify everything and go back to fundamentals. After all, six of the 10 players had never played varsity ball before.

We weren't a team early on. I kept telling them there were five individuals on the court. They finally bought into my system and it started to pay off.

We had four players return this season, and six new ones, including three sophomores and two freshmen.

Bella Lopez had an outstanding year. She's a freshman who starts. She has an amazing work ethic and she's a fast learner. I relied on her defense and her high shot percentage.

Three seniors are graduating in June, Sonia Flores, Jocelyn Hernandez, and Nicole Willkomm. We will have most of the team returning next year.

Two games stand out this season: Arleta and North Hollywood. Arleta was an important game because it was our first big win. We were finally a team.

The second NoHo game stands out because we redeemed ourselves. We lost to them by 20 the first time we played, and that shouldn't have happened.

The team was more focused and applied what they'd learn the second time around. NoHo left the gym humbled after we beat them in overtime. It was a great game with an amazing crowd.

We don't get a lot of fans. Although I must say, it has been improving. Nicole Willkomm's brother and a few other football players have been to our home games. They cheer loudly, and show the team much love. I really appreciate their support because the girls respond well to their energy.

Next year will be much better. The girls will be more familiar with how each of them plays and more experienced on the court. We're climbing our way back to the top.

I expect Kennedy to play an inside game, looking to feed their post. They also run plays for their 3 pt shooter.

ON COACHING –

This is my eighth season as the varsity coach, but this is my first season with such a young team. The freshmen and sophomores



Photo By Diane Alvarado

HOOPS AND HOLLER: Veteran varsity coach Brad Katz.

By Julia Ruiz
Staff Writer

Veteran Poly basketball head coach Brad Katz coached his last game Friday at the Cage, a by-the-numbers 63-45 win over visiting Sun Valley.

“It was fun to see the bleachers so full for a basketball game,” Katz said. “It hasn't been like that in a few years.”

The game marked the end of a 20-year coaching career for Katz, who started coaching in 1992.

"Twenty years go by really fast," Katz said.

Katz started off here in 1999 as Poly’s varsity basketball coach.

“I was 27, a walk on coach,” Katz said. “Poly was willing to take a chance on me as a walk on coach, hoping I would be a good fit. Thirteen yeas later it is still a great fit.”

This year was a special one, Katz said.

“It felt different,” Katz said, “because I knew that when this season was over there would be no more high school coaching for me.”

The fact was a well-kept secret on campus.

“Nobody knew tell the end of January,” Katz said. “None of the players or coaches knew that a change was going to be happening.”

The years taught Katz some lessons, he said.

“at the end, we’re all human and I'm still coaching young men and at the end of the night,” Katz said, “We still go home to our family's and it’s just a game.”

It took me a long time to realize this and when I did, it made me a better coach, dad and husband."

Katz also cautioned against giving a coach too much credit.

"How much credit should the coach get when his team wins?" Katz said. “Very little. If a coach does his job and the players are prepared, the players will win the game."

Katz said his best coaching experience was the 2006-07 season.

“We won our third straight league champions and made it to the Division 1 final and the state quarter final,” Katz said. “All those kids were local. They lived in Poly’s area and they all grew up together playing in the parks, stayed together throughout high school.”

Balancing coaching demands with family time was always a factor, Katz said.

“I met my wife in 1996. First thing I told her was that I was a high school coach and I'm committed to that,” Katz said. “She played basketball too. She understands that during basketball season I don't have much time."

Katz coached men's basketball at Pierce for two years during 2007-09 and girls basketball for the 2009-10 season.

“I was approached and given the opportunity to coach at a higher level,” Katz said. “It had always been a dream of mine, and I believe you should always follow your dreams".

Katz returned to the head coach slot in 2010, a rough stretch for Poly. The Parrots went 6-25 on the season and 4-8 in the East Valley League, finishing in fifth place.

on the team play major roles. In some ways, I have to simplify practice and treat them like a frosh/soph team. But their skill level is definitely at the varsity level, so they pick things up a lot faster.

This may be a losing seasoning for us, but my girls are tough. Our main focus has been to improve, and we've done that. This is almost a different team compared to how we started. I'm so proud of them.

I'm definitely a pep talk coach. I try my best to motivate them because when they believe in themselves, they're amazing.

It's never too late to talk about fundamentals. You'll hear me talking about them throughout every game. Fundamentals will

overcome flash any day.

I still scrimmage with the girls. That's kind of my one-on-one time. While I'm guarding someone, I usually talk to her. I'll try to get her to recognize it when I'm giving her too much room or over-playing her, and what she should do in those situations.

My shot is not much of a threat since I never practice shooting. I let Ashley handle that part. She works them with her game, while I talk them through it. I used to play hard against my team, but I don't need to prove myself to them anymore. It's more beneficial for me to help them recognize things while they're happening then it is for me to try to outplay them. I'm getting too old for that. But I can still

Katz: the Exit Interview

After 20 years doing x’s and o’s, 13 at Poly, varsity basketball coach Brad Katz has turned in his final stat sheet.

This year the team improved to 11-16 and 6-4, making the playoffs. Coaching, Katz said, is also about what the fans don’t see.

"Coaching is not just what you see on the court," Katz said. “The amount of work behind the scenes, the fundraising and parent interaction, most people don’t know about.”

Katz maintains contact with many of his former players, including Mike and John Mgdesyah, Mike Guerra, Dennis Garcia, Andy Guerra, Joe Hampel, DJ Gay, Ruben and David Lopez, Ivan Luna, Mike Rojas, Juan Mariscal, Ever Lopez, Gerardo Zuniga, Razi Haq and Tommy Cruz.

Katz said coaching led him to teaching.

“Coaching on a high school campus persuaded me to take another chance on my own education,” Katz said. “I wasn't even going to school when I first started coaching at Poly, but I soon enrolled at CSUN.”

Katz, who also taught social studies and was department chair, said coaching and teaching are similar.

"In both areas, you re educating and teaching young students,” Katz said. “There's discipline. Both include tests. Coaches score based on how you perform during the game.”

Katz, however, leaves teaching at the office.

“When I go home at night,” Katz said, “I’m either watching sports or playing with my kids."

Katz first teaching assignment was teaching life skills in 2000 in the agriculture area,

“My first day was really good,” Katz said. “I had already worked on campus and had begun to grow relationships with the students and faculty, so I already knew how things ran."

Former assistant coach Alan Woskanian, who started off as a volunteer, will take over the head basketball coach position next year, Katz said.

“Alan is very qualified and will do a great job,” Katz predicted.

Katz, meanwhile, is now an administrator, and also out of the classroom for good.

“I thought about administrating years ago, when my son was born,” Katz said. “It had always been an idea of mine, but I never knew when it would come."

Katz started his new position February 5.

“I see this job as an opportunity to help more people,” Katz said, “and take my 20 years of coaching experience and help athletes as a whole.

Katz said long-time Poly Athletic Director Kim McEwen oversees all paperwork for Poly’s sports programs.

“Kim and I will be working together on athletic supervision and improvement of athletic faculty and fundraising,” Katz said. ”I will oversee all teams and coaches. It will be my job to ensure that we will be putting the best possible teams and coaches out there to compete.

In general, Poly’s sports program has good coaches that work hard, Katz said, but budget cuts have made everyone’s job harder.

“We also do a good job at keeping athletes eligible,” Katz said. “Less than 10% become ineligible due to poor grades.”

knock them down a notch when/if they get too full of themselves.

Ashley Burch is my assistant. She's amazing. I can focus on certain things in a game and let Ashley focus on others. It works because that's how we do it at practice.

Ashley is turning out to be a fantastic coach. I no longer feel like I have to see and do everything. I have a very competent assistant who is my second set of eyes.

I learned how to coach from anyone who ever coached me, and the advice given by my colleagues. I use what works from them, and try to learn from what doesn't.