

The Poly Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

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SERVING THE POLY COMMUNITY SINCE 1913

APRIL 2013

New Books New Looks

By Walter Linares
Staff Writer

Poly's main library has 1000 volumes, well shy of the 3000-book LAUSD high school average.

"The State says we should have 14 books per student," said Poly librarian Dee Mason, "but we have 5.4 per student."

But all that is about to change.

Poly principal Ari Bennett has committed to \$10,000 per year for the next few years to enlarge the library's holdings and replace old books.

"\$10,000 will buy 400-500 books," Mason said. "\$10,000 is a good start for the library."

An LAUSD team is scheduled to begin removing outdated materials in June, Mason said.

"The District team will figure out which books need to stay and which ones need to be discarded," said English teacher Lisa Blackwell, who is assisting Mason with all aspects of the library modernization.

"I think it's good because choosing books is challenging," Blackwell said. "If you get too much money at once you sometimes just buy stuff with no clear goal."

The lack of modern books, especially in the technology area, affects students.

"The information they need isn't there," Blackwell said. "They don't know if they can trust the books since they're old. If a class comes in to do a project on computers, we wouldn't have enough books for them."

Blackwell, Mason and Bennett also plan to write a Target grant. Big-box retailer Target works with schools on projects and funding.

"The grant is going to rebuild the whole library," said Blackwell. "New furniture, new shelves, new carpet, new paint."

"The grant is competitive," Blackwell said, "so we have to prove that we are the library that needs it the most."

The modernization includes a new paint job and removal of the bungee cords.

"The color of the wood shelves is really old," Blackwell said, "and the bungee cords that keep the books safe from an earthquake are just annoying."

The ninth grade center library does not have bungee cords.

Library modernization will improve Poly's ability to teach information literacy.

"That's a really important component of the common core state standards that are coming", Blackwell said "Teachers bring their students to the library and the teacher teaches the students a lesson. If we ever get a teacher librarian again, the T.L will teach them."



Photo by Lirio Alberto

ACA DECA: (from left) Armen Aslanyan, Evaristo Capalla, Reymundo Cano, Jihae Snyder, Hannah Almonte and Andrew Koh competed at state.

Heavy Medal

By Maureen Kang
Staff Writer

Five Poly Aca Deca members brought back seven medals from the Sacramento Academic Decathlon State Competition.

"Seven is an impressive amount to get," said Coach Brian Block. "At State, there's only one gold, one silver and one bronze medal for each division. Only three medals are given out for every 93 people in each subject. To come out with seven medals is nice."

Five teammates—Luis Miranda, Armen Aslanyan, Hannah Almonte, Jihae Snyder and Reymundo Cano - won medals. Miranda won a silver for Speech and bronzes for Music and Mathematics. Almonte took the gold for Interview, Snyder the bronze for Speech and Cano a bronze for Music. Aslanyan won the medal as Poly's top overall scorer.

"It's much harder to win a medal in the state competition than in the district because you're being compared to everyone," said Almonte.

"To earn a subject medal takes countless hours of studying and countless tests to make sure you know everything about that one little section," said Miranda. "To earn a speech or interview medal takes a lot of practice with

[See Aca Deca, pg 6]

What's For Breakfast?

By James Torres
Staff Writer

Nothing goes better with breakfast than a CAHSEE, the California High School Exit Exam.

Poly tested 636 comprehensive tenth graders, 102 magnet sophomores and 70 Special Ed kids, including resource and special day class students.

But before the test came breakfast.

"We fed over 800 students," said Tenth Grade Center Instructional Specialist Pia Damonte.

Each student received a drink (water or juice) and two snacks, including fruit snacks, crackers, or string cheese.

"We had packaged the snacks a few days prior to the test so that everything was ready to go," said Damonte. "The teachers had the snacks the day before the test and distributed throughout test day."

"We wanted everybody in the classroom, reading the instructions and about to start the test at about 8:30," Damonte said.

Students could eat while testing.

"We tried to avoid them wasting time in the cafeteria," said Damonte.

ria," said Damonte.

The snacks were in addition to cafeteria breakfasts provided for test takers.

"Before school, students were escorted to the cafeteria area," Damonte said. "Students had already been told by their teachers where to line up."

"To make the lines run smoother, students were given their pin numbers on cards just in case they didn't know them."

"Teachers took attendance first so we knew all the kids who weren't at school. Then we called home to get them here. We needed to get the highest attendance possible."

The pin number only allows for one breakfast meal. "That is why we added the additional snacks," Damonte said.

The majority of the snack money comes from whatever is fundraised at the annual Teacher Lip Sync. This year's take was over \$2,000, well over last year's \$800.

[See CAHSEE, pg 6]

Poly Cleared for Takeoff

By Yenifer Rodriguez
Editor in Chief

The LA School Board unanimously approved Poly's Pilot proposal during a meeting Tuesday at LAUSD headquarters downtown. Principal Ari Bennett and a group of Poly parents and teachers made the final presentation to the school board.

"I was very proud of our team," Bennett said. "I think people saw we were united in our effort to support our students. It appeared as if the board saw that too."

"The board gave us three minutes to talk. We had our parents speak, then Bob Scott, then Evan Rabins, Kim McEwen and then I got the last 10-15 seconds."

"We spoke about the collaboration that went on, the process that we take very seriously about getting everyone on board, the reason why we believe the Pilot model will benefit the school and communities."

"Our parents talked about their support and their belief that the Pilot program was going to be good for student achievement. Our teachers talked about the process, the collaboration and the culture of the school."

"My main message was at Poly we believe that together adults are working for kids. That's ultimately what makes good schools."

Bennett said LAUSD Superintendent John Deasy and board member Nury Martinez were extremely complimentary.

"The other schools that were there about their Pilots were complimentary of our process," Bennett said. "They liked the fact that all the

administrators, teachers and parents were together but there was no opposition to Poly's Pilot."

Poly is at least twice as big as any other Pilot school. Mostly Pilot schools have around 500 or 600 students.

"We are by far the largest comprehensive high school and the only large comprehensive high school to convert," Bennett said.

Bob Scott comments:

We spoke first at the board meeting. We talked about the process.

[See Pilot, pg 6]

What's for Lunch?

By Yesenia Carretero
Staff Writer

Yearbook's Chili Cheese Fries won first place in Poly's annual Multi-Cultural Fair on the Polygon last Friday.

Criteria included food choice, booth attendants' apparel and expression of culture. Judging the fare were Parrot Principal Ari Bennett, Spanish teacher Mario Quinteros and math teacher Royce Stuckey.

"I thought having the fair was phenomenal," said Bennett. "I think we've had the best booths yet. When I got there, it was packed. I saw a lot of positive energy."

Bennett also saw the fair as a learning opportunity.

"I really like the idea of using a rubric to make expectations for kids so that they know how to impress the judges," Bennett said. "When the kids know what their standards are, they do their best."

"The judging was based on food, display, and attire," said Bennett. "I judged by 'is it clearly authentic to that country or city.'"

Twenty-one clubs and organizations competed for student taste buds in this year's fair, including Senior Council's Thai Town LA, Play Production's New Orleans Gumbo and Magnet's Salvadoran Pupusas at la MacArthur Park.

"I snacked at the fair and then realized I couldn't eat because I was judging," said Bennett. "If I eat at one, I'd have to eat at all of them."

The Cooking Club did well with their New York Stir Fry and Cheesecake Cupcakes, grossing about \$400 in 30 minutes.

[See Multi, pg 6]



Photo By Alberto Moreno

They Got In Did You?

Many colleges want these four.

CAMPUS - pg 4/5



Photo by Tracy Salcido

Attention Grappers

Take it from a man who knows.

SPORTS - pg 7

OPINION

EDITORIAL

Unintended Consequences?

America's teachers are always trying to find new ways of preventing cheating among students. But what about when teachers get caught cheating? Will they get detention?

Thirty-five Atlanta school officials were caught in one of the nation's biggest cheating scandals in recent years. Teachers fixed their students' standardized test scores by correcting bubble sheets, often under direct orders from their principals, who were in turn under orders from their superintendent.

Any district with low scores is bound to feel the pressure. The my-way-or-the-highway approach leaves few options, and one of those is cheating. After all, what could be easier to fix than bubble sheets done in pencil.

If that isn't a recipe for inappropriate behavior, what is?

An Atlanta newspaper launched an "investigation." But any layman would be skeptical of an 80 percent improvement, which is what happened in Atlanta. These guys weren't good at cheating because that's not what they were trained to do.

Standardized testing in public schools went national in 1965, the brainchild of Democratic President Lyndon Johnson.

The law, known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was modified in 2001 by Republican president George W. Bush and another liberal, the late Democratic senator Edward Kennedy. "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) turned up the pressure by mandating that every public school student be proficient by 2014.

Every student must be a "B" student or better? Okay, we all know that's not going to happen no matter what. Not to point any fingers, but you have to wonder if Bush could have met his own criteria.

NCLB is both comedic and extraordinary. Comedic because even with all the effort, all students won't make the grade. Never have, never will. Extraordinary because how could Congress have thought this was possible? No one thought to themselves that maybe this was a bad idea?

So who has more explaining to do? The cheaters in Atlanta or the knuckleheads who thought up ESEA and NCLB?

I know my answer.



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Norway Knows Scheduling

Scheduling seems to be a recurring problem for LAUSD.

For example, just last month the CAHSEE exams were scheduled during quarter 3 final exams. Tenth grade teachers had to work exams around the CAHSEE. Juniors who hadn't passed the CAHSEE yet were pulled out of final exams to try again.

The next LAUSD blunder was starting quarter 4 one week before spring break. Does LAUSD's administrative braintrust really think any kids will remember anything they were taught in that week before a nine-day break?

Now, The CST exams have been moved up a full month to conflict with, you guessed it, quarter 4 midterm week. As you probably know, LAUSD chose to move midterms up a week rather than push the CST tests back a week.

The result? Parrots will be taking midterms in week three of quarter 4.

Does LAUSD really need to be so inflexible? Must District officials always make the worst choice?

We have only to look at Norway for the answer.

Five school's in the Alesund region outside Oslo are scheduled to move their midterm exams dates so that students can

attend Justin Bieber's Believe tour stops at the Telenor Arena on April 16 and 17.

School officials are just trying to avoid the madness Bieber fans caused in the streets of Oslo last year.

Bieber was scheduled to play a free show outside the Oslo Opera House last year. Thousands of fans stormed the site. Eventually the show went on as scheduled but not before 15 fans reportedly passed out.

"I am concerned that students should be concentrating when they take tests and midterms," said Norway education minister Kristin Halvorsen. "The local schools have the responsibility to schedule the local midterms, and if they think there is any reason to change the dates, they have authority to do so. We've all been 14 years old and know that interests can be intense."

The 500 students in that region will now take the exams on April 10 and 11.

"This is a battle we could not just win this time," Blindehim secondary school principal Roar Aasen said.

So LAUSD, get a clue. These calendar catastrophes aren't really necessary. Next time, call Norway for some help.

Got Senioritis?

The sunlight slowly creeps into my room. The morning birds chirp melodiously. The golden hands of my wooden clock strike six.

And I groan.

It's the worst time of the day in my world. I hate waking up for school.

I wasn't like this freshmen year. And I didn't have this problem as a sophomore. Junior year was OK.

But once senior year hit, so did Senioritis.

For all the underclassmen reading this, I won't tell you to beware of this condition. You'll have a case of Senioritis, mild or severe, one way or another. Senioritis cripples performance and saps motivation.

As soon as seniors get their college acceptances, they don't have to worry about getting A's. Even the geeks and nerds can

get B's.

But a word of caution. If you slack off too much, you might get notices from colleges taking back the acceptances.

So learn to live with Senioritis. I have.

For example, I got prettier. Now I have time to put on makeup.

I spend more quality time with my unsentimental dad and my workaholic mom.

I'm not scolded for being late to school.

Food is my best friend.

Best of all, I don't feel pressured to do my best. I can do mediocre and everything seems fine.

So don't fear Senioritis. Embrace it. It's pretty worthwhile.

Just make sure you maintain a C average. Then take the rest of the day off.

3 IT WAS FIFTY YEARS AGO TODAY
They may look straight outa Stanley Kubrick's "Clockwork Orange," but they're really the Adicts.
By Jeannette Buenrostro

3 LIKE CLOCKWORK
Four lads from Liverpool huddled in a studio. Nine hours later, a legend was "in the can."
By Lisa Guardado

3 PUNKS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN
Small town Brits who made it big, the Adicts brought their working class punk sound to Anaheim.
By Jeannette Buenrostro

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Like Cirque de Soleil with horses, "Odysseo" is an equestrian showcase under that big white tent.
By Jasmine Aquino

7 FOUR FOR POLY
When it comes to getting into college, nobody does it better than these four magnet scholars.
By Octavio Tapia

7 MAT TALK
Parrot veteran faculty member Hector Colon first came to Poly as a wrestling coach. Who knew?
By Danny Lopez

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Coach Brian Block's tennis squad streaked through four wins in six days. We smell playoffs.
By Adrianna Garcia

8 IN A HURRY
New hire Sira Aghassy had to get up to speed in a hurry with Poly's volleyball boys. The season opener was right around the corner.
By Alfredo Quezada

8 REVENGE IS SWEET
Pride was on the line when the lady Parrots played Arleta in the second half of a back-to-back. An 11-1 loss had to be avenged.
By Dalia Marquez

8 SPLITTING HEADACHE
Poly baseball head coach Gabe Cerna needed a double dose of Lipitor after splitting back-to-backs.
By Dalia Marquez

8 NEW MAN, NEW PLAN
Terry Gillard, Poly's new wrestling coach, was on campus recruiting boys and girls interested in doing mat time.
By Danny Lopez

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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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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Correction: English teacher Erin Hunt did not perform a mini lap dance at the Teacher Lip-Sync as reported in the March OPTIMIST. The OPTIMIST regrets the error.

ON THE TOWN

“Please Please Me” – Fifty Years On



By Lisa Guardado
Staff Writer

The Beatles recorded their first album “Please Please Me” in February of ’63.

The session lasted nine hours and forty-five seconds, produced fourteen tracks and cost approximately \$800.

“It was amazingly cheap, no messing, just a massive effort from us,” Paul McCartney later recalled. “At the end of the day, you had your album.”

The album’s eight originals included “I Saw Her Standing There,” “Misery” and “There’s a Place” by John Lennon and Paul McCartney and “Do You Want to Know a Secret” by George Harrison.

“Love Me Do” and “P.S. I Love You,” released as a single in October of ’62, were also included, as were “Please Please Me” and “Ask Me Why,” released in January of 1963.

The six cover tunes included “Boys” and “Baby It’s You” by the Shirelles, “Anna [Go to Him]” by Arthur Alexander, “Chains” by the Cookies and a Broadway show tune, “A Taste of Honey,” first recorded by Lenny Welch.

The final number was one of their most notable “Twist and Shout.”

No one really knew what to do for the track. Someone suggested the Isley Brothers’ hit. It was decided Lennon would sing lead.

Lennon, suffering from a cold, had already been singing for hours. His throat was shredded.

“The last song nearly killed me,” Lennon said. “Every time I swallowed it was like sandpaper. I was always bitterly ashamed of it, because I could sing it better than that; but now it doesn’t bother me.”

“Please Please Me” captured the Beatles at their freshest and clearly showed the massive talent that was to come.

The album would influence an entire generation and hundreds of artists.

No matter the age, gender or musical preference, fans continue to buy Beatles albums, including the first masterpiece, recorded fifty years ago.

“Please Please Me” covers included:

“Anna (Go to Him)” was written and originally performed by Arthur Alexander. His version was released as a single by Dot Records on September 17, 1962.

“Chains,” written by Carole King, was released by the Cookies, Little Eva’s backup band, in November 1962.

“Boys,” written by Luther Dixon and Wes Farrell, was originally performed by the Shirelles and released as the B-side of their “Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow” single in November 1960.

“Baby It’s You,” by Burt Bacharach (music), and Luther Dixon (credited as Barney Williams) and Mack David (lyrics) was also recorded by the Shirelles in 1961.

“A Taste of Honey,” written by Bobby Scott and Ric Marlow, was an instrumental written for the 1960 Broadway version of the 1958 British play of the same name. Lenny Welch did a vocal version in 1962. Lee Morris got a writer credit on Welch’s version but other covers credit only Marlow and Scott.

“Twist and Shout,” written by Phil Medley and Bertrand Russell Berns (credited as “Bert Russell”), was originally titled “Shake It Up, Baby” and recorded by the Top Notes. The Isley Brothers cover was released in 1961.

Punk On St. Paddy’s

By Jeannette Buenrostro
Staff Writer

English Punk rockers the Adicts headlined the House of Blues’ 35th anniversary celebration on St. Patrick’s Day in Anaheim.

The Adicts, in white suits, black boots and black bowler hats, opened with “Joker in the Pack” and continued with classic tracks like “Bad Boy,” “I’m Yours,” and “Straight Jacket.” Lead singer Monkey, wielding a white glitter and party streamer-embellished mike stand, took command of the stage, showering the audience with confetti, balloons, bubbles, beach balls, joker cards, hats, stuffed animals and his own shirt.

“Thirty-five years ago in England some punks decided they had the balls to be ‘The Adicts,’” Monkey told the crowd before the band encored with “Viva La Revolution” and “You’ll Never Walk Alone.”

The Raptors, formerly known as Death Punch, opened with a one-hour set, jumping head first into tracks off their new EP “Destroy, Pain, Survive,” including fan favorite “Stick to your Guns.”

Next up, The BillyBones sauntered on stage exclaiming “Happy St. Patrick’s Day.”

“We think The Adicts are one of the coolest bands, and we are lucky enough to count them among our friends and grateful to have the opportunity to play with them,” said the band.

The Adicts, from Suffolk, England, were popular and often on the indie charts during the 80s.

Their music has catchy melodies and lyrics, and

* * * *

Droogs Til the End

The Adicts - Keith ‘Monkey’ Warren, vocals; Mel Ellis, bass; Pete Dee Davison, guitar; and Michael ‘Kid Dee’ Davison, drums - formed in their hometown of Ipswich in late 1975. They still have the original line-up. Newer members are John Scruff Ellis (Mel’s brother) guitar & Dan Gratziani on violin.

The Adicts became known for their distinctive Clockwork Orange ‘Droog’ image, which, along with their urgent, uptempo music and light-hearted lyrics, set them apart from the rest of the genre.

“‘Clockwork Orange’ had been a major influence on us, though not for the violence, more the teenage angst,” said Kid.

“At the early gigs we just used to wear punk clothes, but never anything bought, like those posers who went down to Kings Road,” Monkey said.

The band spent several years gigging and building up a strong local following.

“We wrote songs about unemployment, disillusionment, and all that happy stuff, but that was really a conformity with the non-conformists,” said Monkey. “We just did what punk bands did until we developed our own style and voice. It was, and is, all about the band as a concept, not just the music, but the look, the attitude, the essence of the Adicts, that is not found anywhere else.”

“I remember the early days as a time of discovery, adventure, and intellectual and artistic awakening. Punk Rock encouraged people from small towns all over the UK to think differently and to take a different path. My mum wasn’t too pleased when I quit my job and came home with purple hair, but it was a personal revolution. I may have been a fashion victim, but I was also a liberated mind ready for anything.”

“The gigs were also a strange mix of freedom and fear. Punks from different towns united together at shows and vented while the band was on. But as



often features extra instruments and sound clips, such as carousel music in “How Sad” and a violin in “Joker in the Pack.”

Singer Keith “Monkey” Warren wears joker makeup, wildly patterned suits, flared trousers, colorful dress shirts, bowler hat and gloves.

The band released their debut album, “Songs of Praise,” in 1981 on their own Dwed Records, funded by the band’s then-manager Geordie Davison. In 1982, the album was re-released on Fall Out Records, along with their first single, “Viva la Revolution,” which became one of the band’s most iconic songs.

soon as you stepped outside and went your separate ways, you had to watch your back for lads looking for a weirdo to kick in.”

“All in all though, it was the most fun anyone could have because we weren’t part-time punks; we were true to the cause.”

“Songs of Praise’ is my favorite release, not just for the music, but for the way that we did it all ourselves. I can still remember being in the back of the van just after we had picked up the first pressing and the LP sleeves. I think we were all getting off on the fumes from the glue. I took the first record and put it in the first sleeve and we all cheered as I held it up. I wish I knew what happened to that one!”

In May 1983, the band signed to the Warner Bros. offshoot, Sire. It was the start of troubled times for the band, as both they and their label struggled to find a commercial compromise somewhere between easy listening radio hits and deviously daring punk rock.

“That was a bit of a dodgy period for us,” said Monkey. “Sire was going to make us big, and we were taken in by it. They did nothing for us and we were left to pick up the pieces.”

“We always regarded ourselves as a punk band,” said Monkey. “I had big arguments with Geordie, our manager at the time, when he put ‘New Wave’ on the posters. I also had a big argument about selling out when the price to get in went up from 35p to 45p! I don’t think we have ever had conscious aspirations or agendas. We get together, the songs come out. If we like it we’re happy.”

“Our message, such as it is, has always been, have fun,” Monkey says. “That’s timeless and appeals to everyone.”

*NOTE: The Adicts wrote, rehearsed and recorded all nineteen cuts for 2002’s ‘Rise And Shine’ in Earles Studio in Ventura, California.

Cirque on Horseback

By Jasmine Aquino
Staff Writer

“Odysseo,” Cavalia’s 50-horse homage to the equestrian arts, is now playing in Burbank.

The lavish production, which also features breathtaking acrobatics and high-tech theatrical effects, premiered in October 2011 and has since logged over 2,000 performances in 55 cities and three continents to date.

Under a distinctive 12-story White Big Top, the largest of its kind, sits an enchanted forest where horses frolic under a sky of rolling clouds and a setting sun displayed on a stunning video backdrop the size of three IMAX screens.

The two-hour performance takes audiences on a journey around the world - through African deserts and savannas, the American Southwest, the Northern Lights, an ice cave, verdant fields and Easter Island.

The show features a real spinning carousel and hoops tied to the

ceiling serving as a playground for dancers and acrobats.

Multiple stallions explore the 8,200-square-foot stage for an oasis to quench their thirst. A 302,000 liter “lake” then appears before the majestic creatures where the water’s surface ripples around their feet as they dance.

Frenchman Benjamin Aillaud, 33, trains Cavalia’s 69 versatile horses. Aillaud began riding horses at six and has acted as equestrian director for Cavalia since 2009. He and the rest of Cavalia’s horse trainers ensure that the stars of the show are well cared for.

Normand Latourelle started the performing arts company, based in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, in 2003. Latourelle was one of Cavalia’s four cofounders. Today, his Cavalia is often compared to Cirque.

“Odysseo” continues through April 21.



GETTING IN

What's in Yo

College acceptance letters are overflowing. The OPTIMIST recently interviewed four of Poly's



Valentina De La Rosa
MIT

How did you decide on the school you chose?

The process for deciding the schools I wanted to apply to was very difficult. I am very indecisive and I couldn't decide on which schools to choose.

I learned about schools through the information colleges sent me by mail. I found out about MIT when I took the AP Chemistry class. Even during the fall of my senior year, I couldn't decide which colleges to choose, so I chose the UC's and CSU's I would apply to from recommendations from the UCLA EOAP representative.

The private schools I chose were the Questbridge partner colleges. During the week of Homecoming, I got so sick that I couldn't come to school. I was sick until several days before my interview with MIT in November. I lost a month that I could have been working on the applications and my time was shorter because my family was leaving for Mexico on December 15 and we wouldn't be back until January 4.

I chose my other schools based on their requirements. I applied to some schools because the application was short or they would accept my Questbridge application in place of their own application. Out of the schools I got accepted to, I considered UCLA, UC Berkeley, MIT, and USC my top four choices. I prefer MIT because it has great research opportunities, it's my dream school and it'll help me become more independent, since I'll be far away from my parents.

Are you the first in your family to attend college?

I am the first in my family to attend college in the United States. I have an older brother in Mexico, who just graduated from a university in Mexico with a degree in engineering. Obviously, there's a big difference in the application process and the requirements. His applications weren't as stressful as my own. The application process seems similar to that of community college.

Did you receive support from family or friends?

Yes. For example, my parents needed to go to Mexicali in November to visit my aunt, but she had no computer, so my parents took me to a store in a nearby town to use their internet. My friends kept telling me "you'll get in for sure." My friends gave me more confidence.

Did you apply for grants or scholarships?

I applied for the Questbridge scholarship and was accepted as a finalist. I chose to apply through the Questbridge regular decision process. Questbridge gave fee waivers for its partner colleges. Most of the privates I applied to were Questbridge partner colleges.

What made you want to succeed?

I believe my parents were the origin of my success. Ever since I was little, they were really strict with me. They expected me to finish my homework before relaxing and watching TV and they expected the best grades. My mom never liked B's so I got A's to avoid her nagging. Later, it became a habit to get straight A's and to always do my homework and pay attention in class.

At the end of eighth grade, I went to Boston with the Sun Valley MS Leadership group and visited Harvard. Mr. Franklin told me "I want you to go to a school like this." After visiting Harvard, I wanted to attend a prestigious university.

What will you major in?

I still am undecided, but my interest lies in science and mathematics. If I had to choose a major right now, I would major in biochemistry. I took AP Chemistry and AP Biology and learned that I was good at science and I enjoy it. Since MIT does not allow students to declare their major during their freshman year, I plan to take advantage of this to explore other possibilities.

What are your hobbies/interests?

I play the accordion and the saxophone. I have played accordion for nine years and I have played saxophone for a year and a half.

I like to read. I usually read fantasy books like the Vampire Diaries, Twilight, the Percy Jackson series, Secret Circle, etc. I also like to watch anime and read manga.

Define yourself as an individual.

I seem like a quiet, socially awkward girl, but I am a different person on



At the end of eighth grade, I went to Boston with the Sun Valley MS Leadership group and visited Harvard. Mr. Franklin told me "I want you to go to a school like this." After visiting Harvard, I wanted to attend a prestigious university.

the inside. It just takes me a while to become comfortable with a person before I can open up to them. I can be a bit quiet at first, but once I really know a person, I can joke around with them and show them who I really am.

What are your goals in life?

I am a really ambitious person. It was my goal to go to a prestigious university and I accomplished it when I was accepted to MIT. I don't really have an idea of what I want my future to be like, but I know that I want to be satisfied with what I do in life. I also want to do something exciting like visit other countries, especially Japan.

Talk a bit about your background.

I was born in Mexico, but my parents brought me to the U.S. before I was a year old. My mother left my older brother in Mexico with my grandmother. I have two younger sisters and a younger brother.

When I came to Poly, I had a choice between the Advantage program in the comprehensive school and the magnet. I chose the Advantage program because I could be with my friends from middle school. I was really shy and quiet.

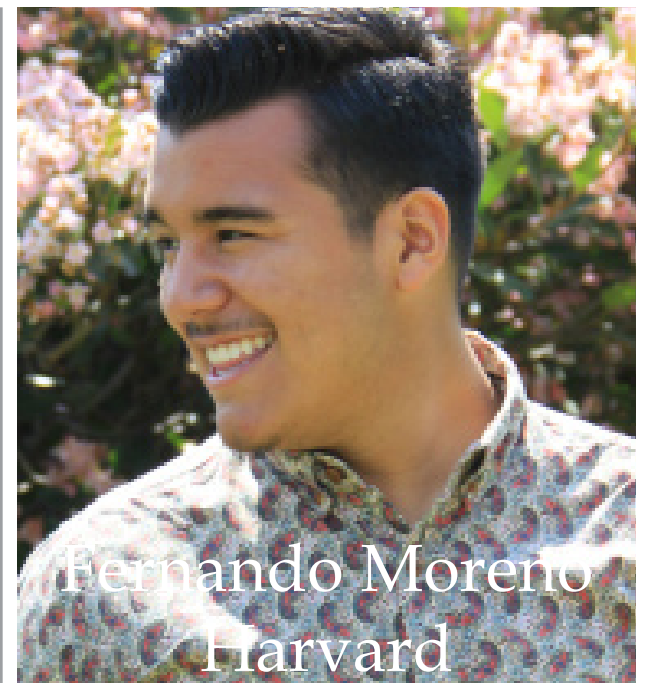
After taking AP Biology, Ms. Maliwan gave me the opportunity to take AP Chemistry with the magnet. Although I did not know anyone, I joined the class. This was a really huge step outside of my comfort zone. The thought of being in a magnet class where I did not know anyone intimidated me. I took this class along with Ms. Richter's calculus class. In my senior year, three out of my five classes were with the magnet. Ms. Couchois offered to accept me as part of the magnet, so I joined.

My strength has always been in academics, but I took a few extracurricular activities.

Since I was the first child in my family to go to high school in the U.S., my mom felt scared and didn't let me stay after school. I couldn't join a sport or any other afterschool activity. In my junior year, she agreed to let me join band if my sister joined with me. I think this was when I really started to enjoy high school.

What does your average day consist of?

On a school day, I stay after to practice with band. Then I go home, eat, relax and watch videos with my brother. After this, I usually do my homework. If I have time or I don't get lazy, I practice music. On the weekends I like to relax, but I make sure to have my homework done before I go back to school on Monday.



Fernando Moreno
Harvard

How did you decide on the school you chose?

I made my final decisions based on previous acceptance rates to make sure I had backup schools in case Harvard did not admit me.

I had really supportive friends and teachers that facilitated the actual application process, such as essay revision. The night before the deadlines was fairly stressful because I felt I could redraft my applications and make them better.

I got admitted to Stanford, the University of Pennsylvania, Williams College, Carnegie Mellon University, Notre Dame University, Rice University, Tufts University, UC San Diego, UCLA and offered full scholarships to UC Berkeley and Johns Hopkins University. I chose Harvard based on prestige, international rankings and its world-renowned medical school.

Are you the first in your family to attend college?

I am a first generation college applicant. My parents were not provided the opportunity to graduate from high school. But they always provided an archetype of work ethic and stressed the idea that education was the paradigm of success.

Did you receive any support from family or friends?

My family and friends were supportive during the process. I have a pretty big group of friends and they kept me humble and happy throughout the last couple of months. If it wasn't for the dream team, the football team, and especially the magnet, I would not have been the student nor the individual that I am today, and I mean that with the utmost gratitude.

Did you apply for grants or scholarships?

I didn't apply for any scholarships because I come from a low-income family and financial aid was very supportive, but if I could offer any advice to the upcoming seniors it would be to look into them now. I was offered a full scholarship to Johns Hopkins University and was selected as a Regent Chancellor to the University of California, Berkeley, which offers a full scholarship as well as certain academic and social benefits on campus.

TO COLLEGE

our Mailbox?

Parrot seniors' mailboxes once again. s best and brightest. Here's what they said.

By Octavio Tapaz
Staff Writer

How did you decide on the school you chose?

Choosing MIT was simple for me. Since ninth grade, MIT has been both my dream and goal. I got accepted to UC Berkeley as a Regents' and Chancellor's Scholar with full tuition financial aid. But MIT has more research opportunities and personalized care as a private college and provides me with an "east-coast culture" that is totally different than my experience here.

Are you the first in your family to attend college?

No. Both of my parents attended college in South Korea.

Did you receive any support from family or friends?

I was very fortunate to have very supportive family and friends. My parents would support me in any way for me to become successful. Their bold decisions and willingness to sacrifice themselves for the sake of my education were what brought me to the United States and provided me with numerous opportunities. My brother's willingness to hear my concerns helped me relieve my stress and stay focused on what I had to do.

In addition to my family, I have amazing friends. My friends in Poly's magnet were always there for me whenever I had concerns. Most importantly, I thank all of the friends I had at the Summer Science Program (SSP) for being a source of motivation for me to study more and a family that supports and listens to me every time.

Did you apply for grants or scholarships?

I applied for the Best Buy Scholarship, a Korean Ancestry Grant, the Lowe's Scholarship and the Brendan M. Kutler Scholarship.

What made you want to succeed?

I think the vision and ambition I had made a difference. Throughout high school, I participated in several math competitions and different research opportunities. I met people who were competing in different Olympiads and competitions. While many of my friends saw the competitions as "within" Poly, I saw the competitions internationally. Instead of being satisfied with what I have accomplished at Poly, I wanted to do more to quench my thirst for knowledge and compete against students of privileged background around the world. This drive to succeed intensified even more when I went to SSP, where I met many bright scholars who were at totally different levels than many of the successful individuals I had met before. My gap in knowledge compared to many of the friends I met in different places made me strive to study more.

What will you major in?

Biomedical engineering.

Define yourself as an individual.

I am an intrinsically motivated individual who is always curious, continuously pushes himself to reach higher potentials and loves to learn and help others in need. If anyone seeks and wants my advice and help, I will always be there for him or her.

What made you want to succeed?

Certain crucial events in my youth really developed this intrinsic motivation. Growing up, I wasn't endowed with this initiative to attend a top-tier school. However, the magnet really instilled this idea that I actually had a chance. I was finally seeing other students succeed who had upbringings similar to my own and it made me realize I could succeed as well.

What will you major in?

Harvard doesn't have "majors." I plan on attending Harvard as pre-med with a concentration in neurobiological science.

Define yourself as an individual.

A lot of people call me a Renaissance man because I have a lot of hobbies. I love music and I've been composing for a large portion of my life. Lifting weights and sports have played a huge role in my academic success, and I'm addicted to the internet.

I'm competitive and driven when it really counts. If I'm really focused on getting better at something, I will literally separate myself from everybody and often give up sleep. I'm passionate when it comes to my family and friends. I will never say no to a friend who needs help if it really is important, even if it is at a cost to me. In short, I'm a super rad dude.

What are your goals in life?

I have always aspired to be involved in the medical field. In the coming years, I hope I can get involved with internships overseas, such as providing free medical assistance in third-world countries. I have always



Gihun Choi
MIT

What are your goals in life?

I want to be a person who can change the world. Instead of studying for jobs or because I have to study, I want to study so that I can engineer the world to be a better place. I want to work with renowned scientists such as Dr. Weinberg, Dr. Lander, and Dr. Langer at MIT to discover solutions to some of the unsolved biological mysteries, such as a cure for cancer, genetic diseases, and various viruses. With my new biomedical inventions and discoveries in different areas, I hope to alleviate some of the sufferings of families who lost loved ones to diseases.

Talk a bit about your background.

I came to the United States with my brother about seven years ago without my parents who are staying in South Korea. I went to James Madison Middle School. I have taken almost all the AP's that were offered at Poly, scoring 5's on most of them, and as a result, I was acknowledged as the National AP Scholar. I established a math club in which I hosted some of the math competitions, such as AMC12 and Math Kangaroo, and was involved in some online math research programs, as well as devising a research plan with the professor I met at the online math research program.

I also went to the Summer Science Program (SSP) last summer and studied astronomy, physics, multivariable calculus and programming.

What does your average day consist of?

Chatting with my friends, doing homework for my classes, studying for the upcoming tests or quizzes, listening to K-Pop, talking to some of my college friends for their advice and reading some books both scientific and non-scientific before I go to sleep.

wanted to experience the world first hand and I hope I can study abroad as well.

I plan on attending Harvard or UCLA's med school and really succeed while I'm there, which includes playing intercollegiate football and rugby.

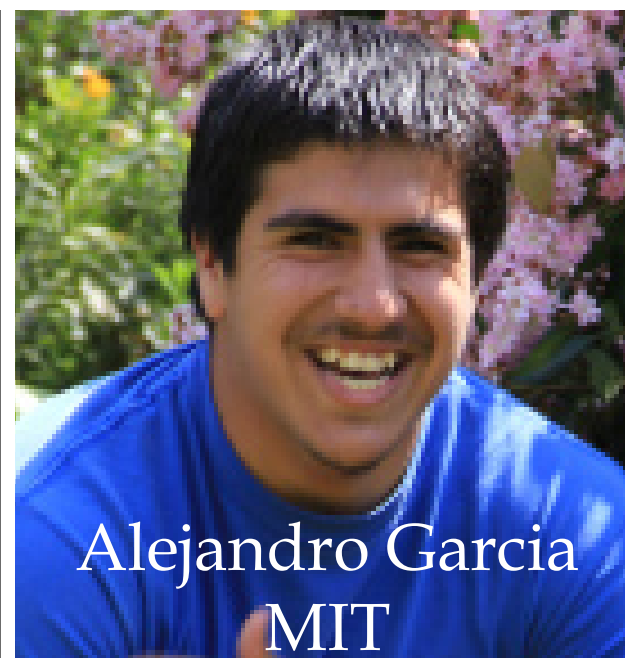
One day I want to change the world by making advancements in modern medicine and extending human longevity, as well as be an example of academic success for impoverished youths.

Talk a bit about your background.

My background is pretty average by the standards of my peers. I come from a low-income immigrant family whose only wish for their children was to have better opportunity than they did. My parents don't speak English very well and every meal at home is eaten with tortillas, exemplifying how emblematic to the valley my family really is. I live with seven people other than myself.

What's a typical day like?

I wake up at 5:30 and get in the weight room at 7:00. After that school starts and I go from my Political Science class, to my AP Calculus class, and finally my AP Physics class. Before that I used to finish the day at practice but my last season at Poly already ended. During all that I really try to find any excuse to make my day a good one, from talking to my friends or just listening to music. However my senior year is exceptionally laid back. The best advice I could give to underclassmen about school is to really treat it like their job because it is. When it comes to education you reap what you sow. The harder you try now, the more it will pay off in the future. That doesn't mean you can't set things aside once in a while to have a good time.



Alejandro Garcia
MIT

How did you decide on the school you chose?

I visited MIT last summer for the Engineering Experience program. That week, I knew MIT was the college I wanted to attend, because the students, teachers, and environment were just amazing. I was accepted to Harvard, Stanford, Duke, Carnegie Mellon, John Hopkins, Cornell, the University of Michigan, the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia, UCLA, UCB, UCSB and UCSD, but I chose MIT for its strength in engineering, its liberating environment, and its amazing facilities.

Are you the first in your family to attend college?

I will be the first to attend college in my family. Unfortunately, my parents did not receive the opportunity to pursue an education in Mexico, and my brother and sister didn't continue their education after high school.

Did you receive any support from family or friends?

My parents always supported my pursuit of an education. They have always been there for me when I needed moral support. And of course my friends from football and the magnet always pushed me to do better in every aspect of my life. It was easy to pursue a college education when many of my friends in the magnet held similar goals.

Did you apply for any grants or scholarships?

I applied to the Gates Millennium scholarship, which will pay for my entire education. I am a finalist and will be notified in late April if I receive the scholarship.

What made you want to succeed?

At first, my motivation was getting rid of all the financial issues my family had at home. I worked hard because my parents told me one day it would pay off. After time, I immersed myself in my studies because I gained a passion to learn and succeed.

What will you major in?

Mechanical engineering, with a minor in business.

What are your hobbies/interests?

My interests are building contraptions, hiking, lifting weights, playing sports and looking for new things to experience.

Define yourself as an individual.

I am a well-rounded individual who immerses himself in everything he does and attempts to succeed. I am one-of-a-kind and don't fit the stereotype of what a smart person or football player would be. I have an unmatched curiosity for the secrets of the world.

What are your goals in life?

I dream of one day designing exoskeletons, such as the Iron Man suit, to enhance human abilities. I aspire to be at the top of my field of study as I change the world with my inventions.

Talk a bit about your background.

My parents came here from Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico looking for a better life for me and my siblings. I was born in Sun Valley. I have a brother and sister.

Since I was a child, I have worked with my dad welding fences, and fixing cars.

My father is currently unemployed, so school will be a way to get out of these troubled times and find a better future for me and my family.

What does your average day consist of?

After school I have sports practice, then I go home, do homework, and take care of my niece and nephew and tutor them. I sometimes work with my father.

CAMPUS

Poly Pilot is Approved

[From Poly, front page]

dures, the three years that it took us to figure out exactly what we wanted to do to include everybody's voice so that everybody would be on board and we could have just one school all pulling the same way. We talked about the fact that 92 percent of our teachers voted for this. We said that the people that wrote the plan did ten revisions to include everybody's voice so we could all be in agreement.

I represent the teachers at Poly. I am the UTLA chapter chair, so my role in the whole process is as a facilitator. I talked to people about this over a long period of time. We had committees. I was the point of contact but Mr. Rabins wrote up the main agreement with help from others. All I did was facilitate.

When we went down there I spoke as the person representing the teachers. I said the teachers' idea of the Pilot program is that teachers run it.

The Board's reactions were positive and we got a sense that they appreciated what we were doing and that they approved and that they thought it was a good idea and we were a good school and we would continue to get better under this program.

Other schools thought that we had done a very good job. We heard a lot of schools that wanted to contact us to see how we did it and see what they could learn from us.

Next, I hope to see more counselors here because 800 students to every counselor is ridiculous. I hope to see our psychologist be here full time and other health and safety workers too. I hope we bring in more maintenance people to do a better job with our school. We hope to go back to our balanced traditional calendar. We hope to continue on being ahead of the curve for the new common core standards.

Evan Rabins comments:

I only had a minute to speak so I didn't have a chance to say much. I said I was very confident that we're going to be successful going Pilot and it's because we already have a Pilot atmosphere here. How well the Pilot program works varies from school to school, but to make it work the ways it's supposed to work, the teachers need to be involved and the teachers are very involved here.

Poly administrators have very open attitudes about accepting input from teachers and everybody's cooperating, everybody has

the best interests of the kids at heart and we do things that make sense. We do things that best serve kids and we feel like we know what best serves the kids because we're the ones who know them. People downtown who've never met our students don't know what our kids need better than we do. We have a very cooperative attitude at Poly and that's the message I gave to the board.

The first thing we're going to do is elect who's going to be on the governance council. Teachers and administrators on the council are going to be the ones making decisions on behalf of everybody else. That's the next step. I may run. I haven't made up my mind yet.

In terms of things I'd like to see done, I have a very insular view of things because I exist in the English department, specifically within the 10th grade. I went to go talk to Mr. Bennett one day to tell him 'Hey you know our classes are too big in the 10th grade. We need more teachers.' He explained to me 'Well listen we're short a couple teachers in our history department, we need ninth grade English teachers because we're down there.'

So I don't really know what's going on in different parts of the school. This governance council will have different people from different parts of the school in different departments to decide and prioritize. If it was up to me, I'd build some new tennis courts.

Multi-Cultural Fair

[From Lunch, front page]

"We use the money to buy things for the club," said Cooking Club president and senior Jasmine Sandoval. "We cook every Wednesday. We buy supplies like spatulas and things for the kitchen."

Everything in the Cooking Club booth was homemade.

"We made stir fry by cutting up the vegetables and cooking them," said Sandoval. "Then we bought those little Chinese boxes and put it in there."

"We prepared the cheesecake cupcakes the day before. We bought fortune cookies and chopsticks with forks wrapped in napkins so if someone didn't know how to use chopsticks they could use the fork instead."

Planning for the fair took about six weeks, according to Multi-Cultural Fair coordinator and senior Victor Sanchez.

"Mr. LeClair said it was one of the best fairs we've had," said Sanchez, "so I was like 'wow.'"

Psychology teacher Brian LeClair is a Leadership sponsor.

Aca Deca Parrots Get Medals

[From Aca Deca, front page]

others, making sure you have the right tone, the right emphasis basically you need to dedicate a lot of time to perfect everything."

Most medalists were surprised when they received their medals. They did not expect such results.

"I never thought Interview was my strongest subject," admitted Almonte. "I never really felt like my answers were the best, I always thought they were just decent."

Her attitude and sincerity might have won her the Interview gold medal.

"I answered their questions sincerely, I smiled, I maintained professionalism and composure like we were taught, but more importantly I just enjoyed answering all of their questions. I guess they saw that I enjoyed what I was doing," said Almonte.

"I was pretty surprised when I received my first medal and in the end clinking with all of them felt pretty amazing," said the multiple-medalist Miranda.

He was the first decathlete in Poly to ever win a Math medal.

"Math has always been a tricky subject in decathlon, giving us questions that are too time consuming to finish. I went over the necessary equations to memorize and had some of my teammates show me quick ways of solving problems. I found that it was not studying that I needed to do but rather learning how to approach a question with the minimum time given," said Miranda.

Cano's interest in playing and writing music and his knowledge of music theory helped him get the highest score in the music category on his team.

"I play various instruments—clarinet, percussion, piano, cello and Tuba," said Cano. "I found that being able to write down your own ideas and recreate certain music is just dumbfounding."

Knowing compositional technique is the first part of the guide to a medal in Music. That is what Cano was most experienced in.

The music category consists of music theory, history of select Western music, Russian folk and classical music, Romantic music and modernist-type Russian music.

Cano may have gotten the highest music score but other members are in touch with their music side as well.

"Jihae plays the violin well and Armen

knows music history spot on," said Cano.

The hardest tests for Snyder were speech and interview.

"I had a weird experience with the interview," said Snyder. "There were two judges at District but this time there were three judges at State. There were more similar questions between the different people.

At state, they asked me more less similar questions.

Snyder might have earned more medals if the Art and Language subjects had not come out harder this year at State.

"The best subjects were the hardest," Snyder said.

The students arrived at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on March 14.

"For many of the students, going to a different city and spending four days in a luxury hotel are not things they normally do," said Block. "You don't get to lounge by the pool and study. You don't hear students saying, 'Let's go to the hotel Jacuzzi and study.'"

"There's a fun culture shock that occurs," said Block. "A couple of members didn't even know how to use the coffee machine in the hotel rooms because it was something they never experienced before."

Poly Aca Deca members may have stayed in their rooms most of the trip, but the members bonded.

"I truly got to know the other members because of this experience," said Synder.

The competition started the next morning with the Multiple Choice Questions Test. The students were tested on seven of the ten subjects in the Aca Deca curriculum from 9 am to 3 pm at the ballroom of the hotel.

"It was interesting to see 500 students taking the MCQ tests at once," said Block.

On the third day, the students left the hotel site for the speech and interview testing at Sacramento High School and the Super Relay Quiz at the Memorial Testing.

The students were allowed to use their same speeches and interviews from their district interviews.

It took approximately four hours including the bus rides. After the speech and interviews, the students had three hours to do last minute studying for the Super Quiz Relay.

The Super Quiz Relay may have been the same kind of Super Quiz Relay. But, according to Block and the members, it was the hardest Relay Quiz ever said Block.

"Everyone's scores went down, even the smartest students," said Block.

"This year the judges asked us nit-picky and very specific questions that students usually would overlook," said Miranda. "Our Honors people felt horrible. Even the coaches from different schools argued."

But getting into the State Competition wasn't easy. The students worked hard to get into State.

"There is a joke that spreads in decathlon that the top teams don't even sleep because they know absolutely everything about the material," said Miranda.

"I think the people at Poly and this Aca Deca Team are getting spoiled," said Block. "Three out of the four years, Poly Aca Deca team made it into the state, so they act as if it's a given. It's actually really hard."

"The amount of the work I had to read and study for Aca Deca is as tall as my leg if I had to stack it up," said sophomore and Scholastic member Hannah Almonte. "This is what I figured out halfway through the preparation. It's not a test of intelligence but character because there's so much work involved."

"Brains alone and efforts alone don't make a champion. You need both," Block agreed.

The team was rewarded for their hard work. The students didn't have to pay a single penny for the lodging and food.

"The school district responds to their efforts and helps with the expenses of the trip," said Block. "It's one of the ways the District says, 'Thank you.'"

But the best part of the competition might have been the freedom after all the tests and quizzes.

"After all the testing, we were let loose," said Miranda. "At the dance, it was a lot of fun. I saw a lot of my teammates in a different light."

"You would think Aca Deca students are very studious, but we were goofing off and being silly at the dance," said Snyder.

Team members were given their medals on the last day of the competition at the awards ceremony, ending this year's Aca Deca effort.

"It's bittersweet for me," said Miranda. "Even though I'm happy the studying is over and my backpack is practically empty, my teammates have become my family. I really hope we can stay in touch."

Block is currently recruiting new Aca Deca members to replace the departing seniors.

CAHSEE

[From Breakfast, front page]

Tickets for this year's lip sync were in strong demand.

"I don't know how many kids were turned away," Damonte said. "We still had some seats available inside but we had to get the show started because of the time constraint."

But the Lip Sync ran over its allotted time anyway.

"The principal sent out an email apologizing for the time missed from third period," Damonte said. "We had an extended lunch, but next year we need to have fewer acts."

Poly has had a Teacher Lip Sync and served CAHSEE snacks for the last six years.

The CAHSEE is a non-timed test. CAHSEE prep is done in both English and Math, with test prep incorporated into student schedules.

So do well-fed students score higher on the CAHSEE?

"In education, it is rare to find a single factor that leads to an effect because in almost all cases there are multiple factors at play," said Poly Principal Ari Bennett. "Isolating one factor is statistically very hard. That being said, our scores have continued to go up. We think it's a good thing for kids anyway. I think the experience of it is good. We will continue to do it even if it's not necessarily worth any points because I think it's good for the kids."

"Last year we remained moderately flat in terms of first time pass rate. We're still in the top five in LAUSD. We did go up in proficiency more in Math than English. I am excited to get the scores this year."

CAHSEE results are expected in 4-6 weeks. "Scores have been improving," Bennett said. "It's the acceleration that slowed down a bit, but I think that's normal. The higher you go, the harder it is to continue to raise the numbers."

"The goal is to get up to at least a 90% first time pass rate on both English and Math. We are at 84%. I would like us to get to 86% or 87% this year.

Bennett believes the snacks help.

"I think big picture," Bennett said. "We're communicating something to the students. Yes, students can go to the cafeteria and get their food. But I think it means something different when the teachers or faculty members are there and hand or give snacks to the students, It demonstrates care and support that hopefully kids take to heart."

SPORTS

When Parrots Were Wrestlers

Former wrestler, wrestling coach and wrestling referee Hector Colon recently spoke with the OPTIMIST about Poly's rejuvenated wrestling program. Here's what he said.

By Daniel Lopez
Staff Writer

When I came here, the wrestling program was declining. One problem we had was the conflict with facilities, because wrestling is the same time as basketball, a winter sport. And we had so many basketball teams. We had a B basketball team, a C basketball team, JV, and that was just boys. The girls only had JV and varsity but that's six basketball teams that needed to practice. Where was wrestling supposed to practice?

When I first came in, the wrestling coach had practice in the morning at 6 o'clock. You tell me what boy wants to practice at 6 in the morning. Even the guys who were really good would come late and we'd only get about an hour's worth of practice before school started. You can't have a program like that. Any coach will tell you, you practice when you're going to play. Football practices in the afternoon because that's when they're going to play.

I tried the best I could to keep the wrestling program going. I changed the schedule so we wouldn't practice in the morning. For years we practiced in the cafetorium, but there were always conflicts. Somebody else wanted to use the cafetorium for testing or meetings or stuff like that.

We had to practice indoors. We couldn't practice outside because wrestlers keep their weight in check. And you're not gonna lose weight outside when it's cold. If you go in a wrestling room, it smells and it's hot because the heater is on. They have to lose weight and sweat.

People would come in the cafetorium and complain about the stink, but there was nothing we could do about that. The administrators who are responsible for getting rid of the program are all gone now but I'm sure they had lots of reasons for doing so and I'm sure the smell was one of them.

Poly cancelled the wrestling program in 1992. They cited budgetary concerns. That was a big disappointment for me and other guys on the wrestling team. So they haven't had wrestling here in about twenty years.

When they first cancelled the wrestling program, a lot of the students and the teachers didn't want to see it cancelled. We wrote a petition, but it wasn't enough. They just said no. So they got rid of the program. I think they still have the wrestling mat.

At the time there wasn't that much interest in wrestling. Poly football had just won the city finals the year before and a lot of guys wanted to play football. Back then a lot of the coaches didn't want any of their players to wrestle. They wanted them to only concentrate on football during the season.

Wrestling's a winter sport and the football coaches wanted the kids to weightlift instead of doing another sport. I think some of the football coaches just didn't want their boys involved. A lot of the guys wanted to join wrestling. Football's a natural sport to wrestlers and wrestling's a natural sport for football players. You watch any NCAA football game and when they're talking about the players you'll hear that they wrestled in high school or they're on the wrestling team in college. It's a natural progression for them. They learn balance and they get a lot stronger.

But the football coaches back then didn't agree. They didn't want their guys to go out for wrestling. They had just won the city championships so a lot of weight was placed on what they said.

I don't know what sparked the renewed interest in wrestling. I'm sure the popularity of UFC has something to do with it.

I wrestled in high school and college and I refereed wrestling for 25 years. I just got out of it about five years ago. So I know all the coaches in and around the valley. San Fernando and El Camino have always been really good. All of them have good programs. I know the coaches and they always ask when we're gonna bring wrestling back to Poly.

The new mat is going to be expensive. Around \$20,000, maybe more. That's the most expensive part of wrestling. It's not like other sports where you have to keep getting baseballs and footballs. You don't need that in wrestling. All you need to get started is a wrestling mat and the uniforms.

The equipment is minimal. The only thing that wrestlers wear is their uniform and their head gear for their ears so they don't get cauliflower ear, inflammation of the ears. Some wrestlers like it though. It's like a badge of honor. Guys usually buy their own wrestling shoes.

Wrestling's been around since the time of the ancient Greeks. It's not a new thing. It's one of the first Olympic sports and LA Unified has had wrestling for a long time.

It's a big thing in California. Here in the San Fernando Valley they don't really consider it a big thing. It's not as popular as football and the other big sports. But you go anywhere else in Los Angeles and outside

like Ventura and Orange County and San Bernardino County, it's a big sport there.

If you go to a small town like where only a few thousand people live, when they have any sports game at night but especially wrestling, the whole town is there. I've gone to referee matches and I'm just like "Oh my God" you know, I'm scared for my life. Everybody's there. You make a bad call and they all see it. Here, most of the games are in the afternoon like 3 or 4 o'clock and everywhere else the games are at night for the parents and community to come.

I've been involved with wrestling for most of my life. It's a great sport. The best thing about wrestling is even the little guys get a chance to show what they can do.

The best wrestling matches are the little guys. The big guys are the most boring matches because they're heavy and slow and so there's not much happening. It's mostly trying to out-muscle each other. But the little guys are quick and fast and they know their moves and it's just amazing to watch. When you referee little guys you really have to be watching because they're all over the place. They're scoring points every five seconds and with heavy weights they can go the whole period without anyone scoring. It's boring.

But wrestling's a great sport. That's why I've been involved in it my entire life. It did a lot for me. It got me a college scholarship for wrestling. It paid for my education and it taught me a lot of discipline and strength.

You never see wrestlers getting in fights. They know what they can do. They don't need to prove it to anybody. They wrestle a hundred matches a year and they go through high school and college doing that, they don't need to show anyone. They know they can take care of themselves.

Wrestling is considered a martial art. Every fight in the world comes down to the ground. No one stands there and lets you hit them.

Unlike any other sport, the wrestling official, the referee, has complete control. If a coach says one thing, if he's getting out of hand, the referee can kick him out. The referee doesn't even need that much reason for it.

Wrestling's a combat sport. You got two teams, thirteen weight classes, six minutes each, that's a lot of wrestling. And the fans are there and you got relatives and friends and it's a fight. It's a controlled fight, so tempers can get really out of hand. And if a coach isn't careful, he can incite the crowd and then you'll have a full blown fight with the fans and everything. So a referee is given a lot of control. If a coach or a wrestler or even a fan is doing something, the referee can kick them out and the match is over if that person's not taken out.

That's what I like about wrestling. I think I kicked maybe four or five people out in my lifetime because they were getting out of hand. The main thing is to make sure nobody gets hurt. That's all I cared about. I just wanted to make sure that the guys that I was refereeing got off the mat with nothing broken. That's my main thing and if I made a bad call because I wanted to protect a kid from getting his arm broken, I don't care. That didn't matter to me. So that's one thing of wrestling that I really liked was the control the referee has and it's still like that today from what I understand. They really have to maintain control.

I wrestled for Cal State Northridge. My senior year was the last year they had wrestling.

Maybe that's my problem. I'm like a curse for wrestling. Wherever I go, they end it.

I went to Alemany High. They still have a very good wrestling program. I grew up down the street. My brothers and sisters went to Poly but I went to Alemany because they had a wrestling team.

Poly had one too but back then in the early 70s Poly wasn't really known for wrestling. I mean they always had an okay team.

I remember when I was in high school I never saw Poly in any tournaments or anything. Back then San Fernando was the best team LAUSD had and they weren't even that good compared to the other schools.

So I went to Alemany because they had a really good wrestling program and then I went to Pierce for two years. Northridge saw me and they gave me a scholarship. I did okay. I won my conference and I went to the NCAA nationals. I got my butt kicked by some guy from Lehigh College.



Photo by Tracy Salcido

MAT MEN: Parrot Hector Colon has a green thumb now but back in the day he was pinning shoulders for fun.

Back east wrestling is a big thing. Iowa, Oklahoma, it's cold out there. It snows, so most guys wrestle.

Around here most guys want to play basketball or something because they want to be outside with the nice weather.

You haven't seen anything until you've gone east or the midwest and gone to a wrestling match. They've got the kids wrestling at three years old. They're starting to do that out here now but it's really big back east.

They got girls doing it now, too. When I wrestled, no girls were into wrestling. Through high school and college I never saw a girl wrestle. I can't even remember when it started to change, maybe the late 80s when girls wanted to wrestle. They were on the boy's team.

I remember the first few years of girls wrestling. Boy, that was hard because you're afraid for them, but they did pretty good. I don't remember any girl winning state or anything and I don't think I've ever heard of a girl winning a state championship in California, but they've won their leagues and stuff like that, so they are good. I think CIF now requires schools to have a girls wrestling team, girl on girl. But I think they can still wrestle on the boy's team if they want to.

I'm not interested in coaching again. I got offered a job at Jefferson High School but it was too far, like an hour and a half drive to get there in the morning. I said, forget it, my coaching days are over.

All my life, I wanted to coach wrestling and when Poly cancelled it, it broke my heart, I tried to go somewhere else but I didn't want to go that far away. There was nothing closer so I just accepted it. My wrestling days are over. Wrestling's a sport for a young coach because you gotta get down there and wrestle with the guy and I don't think my b**** would handle it because these guys are tough nowadays.

I wrestled at every weight class. I started high school at 123 pounds and then I went up gradually over the years. I ended up at college at 177 pounds.

I'll tell you one thing. I paid a price for wrestling. Anybody who's ever wrestled paid a price. I destroyed my knee, so I wear a knee brace now. I've had two operations on my knee, an elbow surgery, you name it. I've probably broken every finger on my hands.

That's one thing about wrestling. You're grabbing each other's hands and the fingers get twisted and broken. As you learn, you know how to control your body and not get stuck in things. That's one thing about wrestling, you really learn the body.

I've had guys come and pick a fight with me and just with a couple of moves they realize "forget it, this guy knows something." I don't need to punch anybody. You try and touch me, I can grab your hand and twist your wrist and break that or your arm.

I graduated in 1979 but I wrestled all the time with the coaching and stuff. I got out of it about five years ago, 2007 or 2006.

I also played football and I did track. In college the only thing I did was wrestling. You only have time for one sport in college, but in high school I wrestled and played football.

When I went to Alemany, I went to play football first. The requirement for any freshman was if you wanted to play football the next year, you have to play sports all year round as a freshman. I sucked at basketball. The only thing I could do, and they made me do it when I was in high school, is wrestle.

I hated it when I first went into high school, because you're wrestling some guy and he stinks and you stink and you're both sweating. And it was a lot of work because you're practicing the moves again and again and then you're having practice match after practice match. There was dieting. You had to lose weight every week to wrestle in a match and I hated dieting. I weighed maybe 128 pounds and I had to lose five pounds every week to wrestle at 123. It doesn't sound like much, but when you're skinny already, losing five pounds is a lot.

But I grew to love it because, my God, when you learn these movements and you practice them and you go to a wrestling match and it actually works, it's a great feeling.

SPORTS



#1 Jae Choi
Poly def Monroe 4-3

Monroe 6-1, 6-0
Verdugo 6-0, 6-0
Verdugo 6-4, 6-1
Grant 6-0, 6-0



#2 Gi-Hun Choi
Poly def Verdugo 5-2

Monroe 6-3, 6-0
Verdugo 6-2, 6-3
Verdugo 6-4, 4-6, 6-0
Grant 6-1, 6-0



#3 Kevin Chung
Poly @ Verdugo 4-3

Monroe 6-1, 3-6, 6-4
Verdugo 7-6 (7-0), 6-1
Verdugo 6-2, 6-2
Grant 6-3, 3-6, 6-4



#4 Richard Lee
Poly def Grant 6-1

Monroe 6-2, 6-2
Verdugo 7-5, 7-5
Verdugo 6-3, 6-0
Grant 6-1, 6-0

Six Days, Four Wins

By Adrianna Garcia
Staff Writer

In a recent six-day stretch, Poly's tennis squad beat Monroe on Monday 4-3, Verdugo twice, on Tuesday 5-2 and again on Thursday 4-3 and Grant 6-1 on the following Monday.

"And we were short-handed in all three of last week's games," said Parrot head coach Brian Block. "It was one of my best weeks of coaching."

The Parrots are 8-3, 6-1 heading into their final regular season contest against North Hollywood at home Monday.

"We had a good pre-season and we've been winning the games we need to win for the playoffs," Block said.

Poly has made the playoffs the past three years.

The Parrots won three of five pre-season matches and two of three regular season matches, beating

SOCES and Fairfax 6-1 before losing to El Camino 3-4 and Birmingham 2-5.

In regular season, the Parrots topped Grant 7-0 and Monroe 5-2 before losing to North Hollywood 6-1 on the road.

Block says his players are even better in the classroom than on the court.

"Many of my players are top stu-

dents," Block said, "and academics come first. One player will be going to John Hopkins University and Gi, one of the top players, will be going to MIT."

That's fine with Block, even though academics sometimes cuts down on practices.

"I like having students on my team going to top schools," Block said. "NH can beat us on the court, but certainly not in the classroom."

The poor and neglected condition of Poly's courts hasn't helped. The courts had cracks so dangerous that Athletic Director Kim McEwen declared them off limits before the season even started.

Temporary repairs were done last week.

"The only thing they fixed was the giant cracks," Block said. "They covered them with tar. That caused practice to be delayed almost a month. That and bad weather."

The courts will be fully repaired over the summer, according to instructional specialist Brad Katz.

Meanwhile, Block stresses serving.

"The biggest thing our players need to work on is a consistent powerful serve," Block said. "That's the key to tennis."

"I always want more consistent serves," Block said. "Most players just want to hit hard. I don't care how hard

you hit, accuracy is more important."

Block says there's always room for improvement.

"A lot of matches have been harder than they need to be," Block said.

"The best players are the ones that take the practices seriously. If they goof off then it shows on the court."

Payback For Lady Parrots

By Dalia Marquez
Staff Writer

The Lady Parrots had all the motivation they needed to play visiting Arleta Tuesday – an 11-1 drubbing six days earlier by the 1-2 Mustangs.

"We took this game as a pride issue," Lady Parrot head coach Manny Peralta said. "We had never lost to Arleta in our history. Our biggest rival has been Grant for the last five years. I guess we didn't take Arleta as serious in our first game."

Pride was good enough for a 6-1 win. Poly senior Monica Mendoza picked up the victory, allowing three hits and striking out four.

"Monica pitched very well," said Peralta. "She kept the ball down and made very few mistakes. Arleta hit fly balls and we managed to take advantage."

Poly got on the scoreboard in the fourth when Lady Parrot junior Alexis Serafin hit a double down the line, driving home sophomore Desire Ibarra from third. Ibarra had a triple to open the inning.

Arleta used a lead off walk, two sacrifice bunts and a single to get their only run in the top of the fifth.

But Poly blew the game wide open with a four-run sixth, thanks largely to Mustang throwing errors.

Junior Alexis Serafin took first on an Arleta error and scored on junior first baseman Vanessa Carlin's double.

Carlin scored on a single by junior Erica Tzic. Tzic scored on another throwing error when Arleta's third baseman overthrew first on a Mendoza line drive. Sophomore Pricilla Loredo's single brought in Mendoza for Poly's last run. "We made adjustments from the first game," Peralta said. "I was very pleased. I thought we made an effort."

Arleta seniors Anna Belle Guillen and Mariela Hernandez each drove in three runs to lead the Mustangs to an 11-1 romp in the first of the back-to-back at Arleta last Wednesday.

Lady Parrot sophomore starting pitcher Priscilla Loredo gave up eight runs in three innings and took the loss.

"We made some mistakes on defense that forced our pitcher to pitch more than

Volleyball Gets New Head Coach

By Alfredo Quezada
Staff Writer

New boys volleyball head coach Sina Aghassy says his goal is to get into the City Division I playoffs.

"To do that we would have to finish strong in the second half," Aghassy said. "We are hoping to get an at large bid since we can not win league."

Poly (5-9, 4-2) is tied with Arleta (8-8, 4-4) for fourth place in the East Valley League behind Verdugo (9-3, 8-0), North Hollywood (7-4, 5-2) and Grant (5-2, 4-2). Three of Poly's last four games are against North Hollywood, Grant and Arleta.

"Being thrown into the season with two weeks to prepare has really been a learning experience," Aghassy said. "Having to rush tryouts, put teams together (Varsity and JV), deal with fundraising and all the other things has been a handful to juggle."

This year's squad is also short on players.

"Nine players on a varsity roster is a bit on the low side," Aghassy said. "I would like about 12-14 guys for a varsity roster, but to start the season we had about 15 players for JV and Varsity. We did not have much of a chance to recruit guys."

Aghassy said many of his players are



Photo by Lirio Alberto

COACH: Sina Aghassy is Poly's new boys volleyball head coach.

new to the game.

"I had two returners from last year when I first got the job," Aghassy said. "So a lot of the players who came out were new guys with no volleyball experience."

Assistant coach David Reynaga is the JV coach. Reynaga was an All-City setter at El Camino High School in 2008 and involved with the Taft baseball program before coming to at Poly.

"He has been involved with volleyball his whole life, just like me," Aghassy said.

Aghassy, currently a Kinesiology major at CSUN, is a Northridge native who played three years of volleyball for Taft.

From 2010 to 2011, Aghassy coached sixth-ninth grade girls at Sierra Canyon School and was a volunteer assistant for boys varsity at Crespi High (27-9) under Raissa Adalphe.

"He has a great resumé," said Parrot athletic director Kim McEwen. "He played division one college volleyball (University of Hawaii), he played in high school for one of the most accomplished coaches in the city (Arman Mercado). He's the whole package. We are very lucky to have him."

Coach Mercado has had a lot of influence on Aghassy.

"Mercado was my coach during my sophomore and junior years at Taft," Aghassy said, "and is one of the best coaches, if not the best, in the city. He was the best coach I had during my whole playing career, and is a big reason for a lot of my successes as a player."

"A lot of what I do here at Poly is based on Arman's coaching philosophies that I picked up as a player and coaching with him, with my own style and twist to it."

Wrestling Coach

By Danny Lopez
Staff Writer

Former Pierce College two-time league champion Terry Gillard will coach Poly's new wrestling program.

Gillard met with interested Parrots at the SLC Center today to discuss Poly's new wrestling program. Thirty to 40 students came by at lunch to hear what Gillard had to say.

"I've coached the last 23 years at the boys and girls club and three years at San Fernando High," Gillard said.

Gillard wrestled three years for San Fernando beginning in 1974 and three years at Pierce College.

"Hopefully we'll start coaching next fall," Gillard said. "We have an after school program at the boys and girls club from 6-8pm, so we're going to start immediately. Hopefully with a lot of recruits."

"I love the sport," Gillard said. "I was 94 pounds in high school. The football coach told me I was too light to play football. He introduced me to the wrestling coach. I've loved the sport ever since. That was in 1974."

Baseball Splits

Poly two for four vs. Arleta, NoHo.

By Dalia Marquez
Staff Writer

Fielding mistakes cost Poly the second half of a back-to-back Thursday after

holding on for a 9-8 win at home the day before.

With the bases loaded, two out and two strikes in the bottom of the seventh and Poly up 2-1, Arleta hit a grounder between third and shortstop that skimmed off sophomore third baseman Javier Vazquez's glove and rolled in to left, allowing two runners to score and give the Mustangs a 3-2 win.

Nobody was more shocked than Parrot head coach Gabe Cerna.

"We are a better team and we all know that," Cerna said.

Poly was up 2-1 going in to the bottom of the seventh. Right fielder Alex George dropped a routine pop fly, putting a man on first with one out. A flustered Moreno then walked the next two batters to load the bases with one out before Cerna brought in reliever Jay Cisneros.

"Moreno dealt today," Cerna said.

"He was on. Cisneros came in and got two ground balls. He did his job."

"In the end, we came up short," Cerna said. "We will bounce back."

All three Arleta runs were charged to Moreno, who was tagged with the loss.

In the first contest, Poly spotted the Mustangs five first-inning runs before taking the lead back with a four-run third to go up 6-5 and holding on to squeak by Arleta 9-8 at home.

The Parrots faced a similar scenario the previous week, pounding North Hollywood 5-0 at home before dropping the road game 6-5, mostly thanks to a five-run Huskie fourth that sealed Poly's fate. The Parrots came up empty in the top of the seventh.

Poly spent most of the season winning, however, and came back from the Vegas tournament sporting a glowing 11-3 record.

"It's been about pitching and defense," Cerna said, "but lately our bats have been coming around. This team is a more cohesive unit than last year's."

Oscar Romo, who is 6-0 and second in the city in wins, got the 9-8 Arleta win, with Alex George credited with the save.

"Arleta put up five runs in the first, but we never gave in," Cerna said. "We always believed we could come back and win."

Tavo Marquez had a good Arleta series, with a double and a single in each game. Marquez drove in both runs in the second game and scored one run in the victory.



Photo Courtesy of David Simms

DELIVERY: Parrot senior Monica Mendoza held Arleta to one run.

she should have," said Parrot head coach Manny Peralta. "We also made some mistakes on offense."

Mustang junior Sabrina Acosta held Poly to one run and five hits to pick up the win, walking one and striking out one.

"We just weren't hitting the ball," said Peralta. "It seemed like every time we did hit the ball it fell right into their gloves and every time they hit the ball, it seemed like it would go the opposite way from us."

Arleta took control with a 7-run, 8-hit third inning that included extra bases from Arleta seniors Marissa Ortiz and Mariela Hernandez.

The Mustangs picked up three more runs on four hits in the fifth off Poly senior reliever Monica Mendoza for an 11-0 Mustang lead.

Poly's lone run came in the top of the seventh. Parrot junior Vanessa Carlin singled up the middle and scored on sophomore Jetzany Gutierrez's triple to deep left.

Poly (11-9, 5-1) will play Grant Wednesday. Arleta (7-9, 2-3) will host Verdugo (4-7, 2-3) Friday.