

The Poly Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

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SERVING THE POLY COMMUNITY SINCE 1913

SEPTEMBER 2013

Principal Praises Prophecies

Early grad gift for lucky Parrot.

By Christine Maralit
Staff Writer

The Prophecies left Poly in style during their graduation ceremony. At least one of them did.

Just before handing out diplomas, Poly Principal Ari Bennett handed the keys to a shiny new \$18K Chevrolet Sonic to senior Vanessa Umana.

Umana was one of two LAUSD graduates to receive a new car as a reward for perfect attendance. The District hopes the giveaway will highlight the goal of better attendance.

Bennett announced another surprise earlier in the ceremony.

"I'd like to acknowledge a special guest here this evening... our newly elected board member... an accomplished teacher and educator, Monica Ratliff. We look forward to her contributions on the board as we all work to continuously improve educational outcomes for LAUSD students."

Fifth grade teacher Ratliff gained national attention after defeating Antonio Sanchez, whose \$2 million in campaign contributions from wealthy individuals was viewed negatively by voters.

Bennett had plenty to say about the Prophecies.

"In the past 4 years," Bennett said, "we've seen a 133% increase in the school-wide math proficiency, a 79% increase in science, 63% in English, and a 50% in Social Studies. Thanks to your persistence and commitment, and the dedication and hard work of Poly teachers and staff, Poly is the only large, comprehensive public high school in LAUSD to earn a 10 out of 10 similar school ranking as determined by the state of California."

The class of 2013 had its share of success over the last four years, Bennett said.

Boy's basketball finished first in the East Valley League and made the City Championship finals. Baseball and girls track also earned league championships. Girls and boys volleyball made the playoffs, boys track, girls soccer, and boys and girls cross country all made the playoffs.

Poly Cheer earned second at nationals, Color Guard won the LAUSD championship for the fifth year in a row and Drumline earned countless superior ratings. Band took 1st place in the recent Music Awards in the Park sweepstakes.



Photo by Lirio Alberto

FAHRENHEIT 450: No books were burned during a recent electrical fire in Poly's main campus library, which is now open following cleanup work.

Parrots Get Ready

By Yenifer Rodriguez
Staff Writer

Parrot sophomores will take the English and Math Common Core assessment using the new Smarter Balance exam in the Spring of 2014. The new assessment will replace the CSTs.

"We are the only high school that has adopted Springboard to support implementation of the Common Core," said Principal Ari Bennett. "Our curriculum is not perfect, but it gives us better and more rigorous instructional tools than are available at any other high school."

The scoring process has not been determined.

Poly's Common Core online testing is still a work in progress.

"Will we have the technical capabilities to test our entire school online? I can't answer that," Bennett said, "but ultimately they'll all be tested online."

Poly has adopted Springboard pre-AP Curriculum in all grades, English and math. All grades are currently on the SpringBoard curriculum.

"We are taking the approach that we'll be ahead of the district in implementing the common core," said Bennett. "The benefit for us is, it's going to

[See CCSS, pg 6]

Tenth Presents "Day of Change" Speaker Jonathon Mooney and four workshops help sophomores "feel good" about themselves.

By Christine Maralit
Staff Writer

The Tenth Grade Center kicked off the school year with a 'Day of Change' on Wednesday.

Sophomore Parrots attended a talk by author Jonathan Mooney in the auditorium after lunch, followed by four workshops during fourth period.

Counselor Tamika Lewis organized the event to raise campus awareness that Parrots who struggle academically have other strengths they can draw on.

"We all have challenges," Lewis

said. "We want to offer students an environment where they can come and feel supported and work through these things and still pass their classes."

Tenth Grade Center instructional specialist Norma Grimaldo agreed.

"We hope our at-risk students get the support they need, that they feel Poly is here for all students, including them," Grimaldo said.

"There are a range of qualities that are connected with what it means to be successful in life," Lewis said. "It's not just about being academic. Especially when we are talking about students who come from environments where there are a

Poly's API Gains Beat District, State

By Adrianna Garcia
Staff Writer

Poly's API increased seven points to 753, while the District's API rose only three points to 749, according to 2013 statistics released Thursday. The state has set 800 as the API target for all schools to meet.

"For the first time in the API era, Poly's API is now higher than the District's," said Poly Principal Ari Bennett. "Six years ago we were 54 points below LAUSD."

Poly also did better than California, whose API slipped two points to 789, the first time the state API has dropped.

"Poly bucked the statewide trend of flat growth or decline," Bennett said.

The API is calculated using results of the STAR (Standardized Testing and Reporting) program, also called the CST, and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).

The release of statewide API scores is expected to be the last in the No Child Left Behind era. California has adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to replace the STAR component of the API.

Poly's CST scores for 2013 were mostly flat compared to last year, but improved in some areas.

"Math is the biggest gatekeeper in terms of getting kids into college," Bennett said. "That's something we always look at very closely, so we were excited that our numbers in Algebra 1 and Algebra 2 both increased," Bennett said.

Students scoring Below Basic and Far Below Basic decreased in both Algebra 1 and 2 over last year.

"We're just excited to move kids out of those lowest bands," said Bennett. "We did better than, I'm estimating, than 70% of high schools in decreasing Below Basic and Far Below Basic numbers in every subject area."

Tenth Grade English scores slipped. Freshmen and junior scores were flat. Ninth graders scoring proficient in English rose 5%, while juniors saw a 4% drop in Far Below Basic.

"We know that we were very

[See API, pg 6]

Education Expert at Faculty PD

By Yesenia Carretero
Staff Writer

English Language Development (ELD) expert Kate Kinsella presented literacy strategies for Poly's faculty in an all-day professional development session on Monday, August 12.

"I have seen her present many times," said Poly bilingual coordinator Margie Hidalgo. "We were fortunate to get her. She knows all the techniques and strategies to accelerate academic language for English learners, especially for secondary students."

Hidalgo was responsible for contacting Kinsella and making arrangements.

Kinsella made three main points, according to Hidalgo. Students need academic language, teachers have to model academic language for students and students need opportunities for academic engagement, but teachers have to provide the modeling and the sentence frames.

Kinsella also gave very good strategies on how to scaffold the writing process for English learners.

"The feedback from teachers was extremely positive," said Hidalgo. "I got many emails from teachers thanking me for bringing her and asking for her CD. Teachers want to



Photo by Lirio Alberto

CHANGE: Counselor Tamika Lewis organized Tenth Grade Center event.

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[See Kinsella, pg 6]

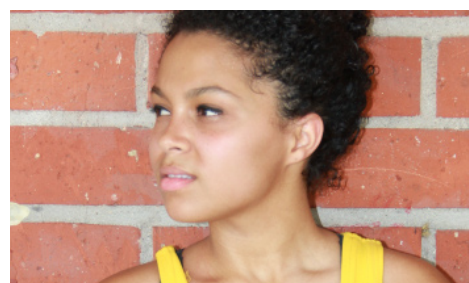


Photo by Lirio Alberto

Mandatory Fun For Engineers

Trust us. His summer was not like yours.

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Photos By Lirio Alberto

The New Look of Wrestling

Poly Idol songstress tries her hand at the mat.

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OPINION

EDITORIAL

What the Future Will Look Like

The OPTIMIST is running the following memo from Principal Ari Bennett as a service to the Poly community. The memo highlights the rapid changes regarding high stakes testing in California.

The latest version of Assembly Bill 484 (Bonilla) will be sent to Governor Brown for his signature in the next couple of days. The bill will suspend most CST exams this year. The immediate impact for Poly will be as follows:

CST ELA 11 will continue for Early Assessment Program college readiness (to be replaced next year by the Smarter Balanced Assessment [SBA]).

CST Algebra 2 and Summative Math for 11th graders will continue for Early Assessment Program college readiness (to be replaced next year by the SBA).

CST 10th Life Science for NCLB will continue (until other science assessments have been developed).

All other CSTs are permanently eliminated.

All 9-11th grade students will take an online pilot assessment in English or math (due to cost, no student can take both).

These are NO stakes tests to give students practice and to accelerate regional scaling of assessments. No individual student data will be available from these assessments.

AB 484 will, for all intents and purposes, end the present Academic Performance Index (API) as we know it.

Poly's 753 API will stand until a new API is put in place following Smarter Balanced testing in the spring of 2015. The new API, the

details of which haven't been determined yet, would be released at the earliest in the fall of 2015 and at the latest the fall of 2016.

Only 60% of the new API would be based on student assessments. The rest would rely on some combination of graduation rate, reclassification rate, and other non-assessment data indicators.

Other important news:

Based on the District's NCLB waiver, Program Improvement no longer exists. There are some schools that are now "Focus" schools or "Priority" schools. We are not on the list, which is a big positive.

LAUSD made a very positive decision (in my view) to eliminate Core K-12 and the periodic assessments as we know it.

The District will transition to two interim assessments in math and ELA this year. Both assessments will be aligned to the Common Core, with a large emphasis on argumentative writing in ELA and constructing viable arguments and critiquing the reasoning of others in math.

Common Core Science Standards were adopted today by the California Department of Education, which will lead to new science assessments

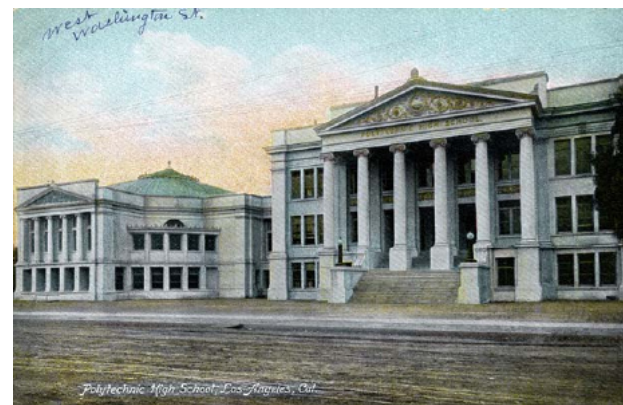
New assessments will be developed for grades 9 and 10 in English and math.

Based on all the above information, I believe our school is validated in moving ahead with the SpringBoard curriculum.

As hard as it is to struggle with new standards and curriculum, we have embraced the change. As a result, our students and our school will be far more prepared to tackle the new assessments when they become high stakes in 2015.

As always, I'm proud to be a Poly Parrot!

Ari Bennett
Principal



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Poly's new wrestling team has much to recommend it, not the least of which is newbie Audrianna Wilson.
By Jesus Venegas

8 TALKING TENNIS
More is better when it comes to tennis squads, says Poly head coach Evan Rabins, who is in his fourth year with the strings.
By Ricardo Bugarin

Where are the Standard Kids?

Standardized testing is a stress to everyone in late March. The tests are given before the term is even finished. So are they really necessary?

Their purpose is to show students and their parents how much students understood the subject.

But isn't that what we have finals for in our regular classes?

Teachers say CST's are for the state to see the students' progress, but I think that is covered when we pass our regular classes.

Seniors don't have to take CST's. Wouldn't that be the most important year to take the tests? If the state really checked our progress they would want to know what the student has learned up to their last year in the district.

If a student scores an advanced on the CST but fails the class, the student will still have to retake the class. Why should we care about the

CST test if it has no effect on our grade?

The worst part of the CSTs is the fact that they are given before the semester even ends.

This stresses out teachers who try to cover two months of information in two weeks.

Then we get stressed trying to learn everything in that short time. So in the end, do we really need these stressful state tests?

Last year was supposed to be the end of CSTs.

But now we have CST's with a new name, "Common Core."

So LAUSD says the CSTs weren't so good after all. And my teachers say they don't know what the Common Core test will even look like. I do.

It will look standardized..

What to Wear

Figuring out what to wear where is part of growing up.

Every day at Poly, you see students wearing unusual outfits. Some are just weird, others are too revealing. We see droopy, we see sloppy, we see dopey, slutty, shabby, angry and grungy.

Young girls are dressing like they are in their late 20's with tattoos and piercings. They seem to be in a rush to grow up and every day it seems to get worse.

Expressing yourself is part of being young. After all, most students would say they find themselves and their interests while in high school.

Students should be free to express themselves, but there is a time and place for that and school isn't the place.

Students and parents can share some blame. But should parents get stricter or loosen up? They say that strict parents create rebellious children. And what about the billboard ads and the fashion icons in today's

society that tell teens sexy is the look?

In other countries, young women are not allowed to expose their bodies like females do in America. In some Muslim countries, girls get killed if they show a shoulder, even by accident, so why are young American teenagers exposing themselves on social networks, and more importantly in school?

There is a time and place to dress however you desire. It can be a concert, the mall, or even a party. But school is where we come to gain knowledge.

Gossip about who looks good in those Doc Martens, who looks good in those jeans or whose tattoos and piercings are nicest, but don't do it at school

Get focused on learning instead.



the
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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 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.

Join the
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Fall 2013



INTERVIEW



KEEPING BUSY

By Mayra Benitez
Staff Writer

The OPTIMIST interviewed Poly standout magnet senior William Lopez-Cordero about his summer. Here's what he told us.

This summer I attended two summer programs. One was the Summer Science Program (SSP) at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California. I stayed there for about five and a half weeks.

The other program was the Engineering Experience at MIT (E2@MIT) program. I was at MIT for one week.

During the programs we went to visit research labs and facilities and learned astrophysics, about the Mars rover. All of this was a great benefit to me. I learned a lot.

When I first arrived at Westmont, I was kind of shy because I didn't really know anybody and most of the people there, from what I heard from other students, said it was a difficult program and the people in the program would be very smart. That intimidated me a bit.

I got to MIT two days before the program started. I stayed with a friend of mine called Fernando Juarez, who graduated from Poly last year. Right now, he's doing research at MIT.

My friend Kevin Escobar also attended the program at MIT. We wanted to roam the city because when we're in the program we don't have time to go in the city.

The program keeps you're really busy. They have a set schedule for you, the daily schedule. You wake up, have breakfast, you go have a lecture, go to lunch.

After lunch, we would get separated into groups. Each group got assigned an engineering project. The five groups covered Fluid Mechanics, Aero Astro, Engineering Design, Underwater Robotics and Architecture. I got placed in Fluid Mechanics.

I wished I could've gotten assigned into the Aero Astro program because that is what piques my interest the most. My program was actually pretty fun. We used our knowledge to understand the homework problems they gave us. We had to get into a group to actually do one problem, that's how hard the homework was.

We had to build an underwater submersible. We had to make it out of clay. You could design it anyway you wanted. We called ours The Aqua Taco, because it looked like a taco.

In some of our lectures, we had guest speakers. Some are students who attended MIT, and some are current students at the campus.

My favorite guest speaker was Mr. Plarth. He spoke about how black holes work and what they do. He also spoke about astrophysics. Some of the guest speakers were working on building prosthetic limbs, some were working on building

futuristic cars.

The first day at MIT we went on a tour of the campus, which was pretty cool because the school buildings are connected to each other since it snows in the winter. They also have underground tunnels for the students, which is pretty awesome.

I met a lot of new people the first day. I was surprised because I didn't expect to see as many Hispanics as I did. The program focused on Hispanics females, so there were more females than males. There were about 75 students attending the program, and about 40% of them were Hispanic. The rest were Caucasian, African American, or Asian. I roomed with a guy from Colorado. He was my roommate for the whole week.

I really liked Boston a lot. I would live there. Boston is a huge place. It's very humid. Once you step out the door, you're literally sweating. That's how humid it is. There were a lot of Dunkin Donuts and the doughnuts were good.

For SSP, we had our own building called Armington Hall. But I did dorm with a student from Alaska. We had an apartment to ourselves. The girls got the second floor and the boys had the third floor. The first floor was the lounging room, where we could just hang out and play games.

The program itself was pretty tough, the courses too. It was a science program where they taught calculus, astronomy, python programming and physics.

At SSP, I woke up at nine, had breakfast, attended a three-hour lecture on math, science, python programming or physics. After lunch was another three-hour lecture.

Dinner was usually formal, so you had to wear a spiffy suit or dress. After that you had "free time," but it's not technically free time because they give you a lot of homework so I would do my homework and fall asleep at three in the morning. Our homework was that they gave us an asteroid in the sky, and we would take pictures of it using a telescope. We had to go out every night to our observatory, usually from one to three in the morning, to examine our asteroid, take pictures and figure out its location in the sky. Then we had to figure out the orbits and elements of the asteroid.

At Westmont, we had "Mandatory Fun Time," where they would take us out once a week to the store to buy supplies. There was a beach that we could go to. We would go to the pier, to the movies, just explore the city.

We also had Ramen Parties, where we would boil water and eat Ramen, socialize and play games. It was pretty fun, and it was a break from all the hard work and homework.

For the first few weeks, I did miss home. I felt like I didn't belong there because the place and people were so new to me. I was struggling a lot to be comfortable.

But as the days went by, I got closer with a few friends and I felt like it was my actual home. You're basically living there for a month and a half, and you just become close with the people in your surroundings. You pretty much share everything with them, your life, your struggles, your problems. Everyone is struggling, some more than others, but it's definitely an experi-

ence and a good one.

Westmont has a lot of chicken, fried chicken, barbeque chicken, breaded chicken, they had almost every type of chicken you could possibly think of. It was pretty cool.

For lunch they had a variety of food. Sometimes they would have Mexican food, Italian food, Chinese food, it was really nice. My favorite food from there would have had to be the hamburgers, I love hamburgers.

I made friends with Asians, Caucasians, Egyptians, people from Pakistan, Hong Kong, Spain, Mexico and Venezuela. It was pretty cool.

I learned a lot. Every day we would learn something different. I learned that it's good to cooperate with others, even when you're shy. The homework couldn't be done alone. You had to team up to actually understand how to do a problem. There were like a total of seven homework problems.

From MIT, I learned how much people struggle to do an engineering homework problem. Engineering is all about teamwork. Most of the time if your solution doesn't work you have to keep trying until you find a solution.

I was the first person to leave E2@MIT, I thought school began on the following Monday, so I left, I wanted to be prepared for when school began. It was very sad. An MIT alumus dropped me off at the airport. From here to Boston is five hours.

On my last day, we tested out our submersibles. Ours wasn't the best, but we constructed a decent project. We did not receive a letter or point grade, we just got an evaluation. I believe everybody in the group did well because everybody was smart. We all helped each other.

We went to the MIT Water tank, a huge water tank where you can test anything that has to do with fluid mechanics. There were people there testing huge walrus whiskers. I can't recall the purpose for the testing but it had to do pretty much with human health.

The Summer Science Program was my favorite because I made a lot of new friends and I learned a lot of new things I didn't know.

When I got home, I just caught up on sleep. I probably slept 3 or 4 hours each night, since we had a lot of homework.

Right now I am thinking of applying to MIT, Stanford, Columbia, Harvard and Dartmouth.

I'm thinking of majoring in Aerospace Engineering. Both programs I attended were based on Aerospace Engineering and Astronomy. I learned a lot from them. It was a great benefit for me.

After my summer programs, I would say school is more manageable. Before, I would struggle with my sleeping schedule. Now I feel like I could actually stay up really late, I usually go to sleep at 3 am.

The summer programs helped me get a better view of what college is really like, and I feel like I can manage.

CAMPUS

NEW ASSIGNMENTS



By Danny Lopez
Staff Writer

Chun is Ninth Grade Coordinator

The OPTIMIST talked with Poly's new Freshman Center Coordinator to get her thoughts on her new job. Here's what she told us.

I got a text message from Jeppson that said "Me and Mr. Bennett would like to meet with you." And 1000 things went through my head. When I met up with them, they told me Mr. Katz had moved on and Mr. Jeppson was taking Katz's position and they wanted me to take this position.

As Freshman Center Coordinator, I am responsible for everything. There are a lot of operational duties. For example, I come and make sure that all the facilities are open. I make sure that the building is up and running.

There is a bit of deaning. If necessary, I will help out with discipline. That's only if Dean Juan Campos needs help.

I'll do a little programming, because on this side there is only one counselor. So if a student needs classes changed, I will assist with that.

There's also a lot of manual labor, a lot more than I expected. The

first few days, I was delivering 50 pound boxes of papers and books. So I'm the jack of all trades I guess.

I'm just going to take it day by day and see if this is the right fit for me and so far it has been fun and really interesting. Anything is possible and that's kind of my personal take on it.

Personal

I graduated from UCLA in 2002 with a BA in American literature. I went to teachers college at Columbia University in New York. Then I got my masters in English education in 2004.

As part of my masters program, I did some student teaching in New York City and the Bronx.

My post graduate plan was to go to law school. I had taken the LSAT and done all that. But while I was studying I realized that that's not what I wanted to do.

Two teaching assistant jobs really got me into teaching. One was at an elementary school while I was an undergrad at UCLA. The other was a part time TA position at a private special education school called Summit View.



By Mayra Benitez
Staff Writer

Stuckey Is Tenth Grade Coordinator

The OPTIMIST interviewed new 10th Grade Center coordinator Royce Stuckey about his new job. Here's what he said.

I am the Tenth Grade Center Coordinator and also the School for Advanced Studies (SAS) college class coordinator.

As 10th Grade Center Coordinator, I run the center. I make sure that peer counselors are assigned to teachers for tutoring. I make sure that we have TA's in the office. I assist the counselor in scheduling our classes. I also assist the dean if he's not able to meet with a student for discipline issues, or counseling issues. If the assistant principle, Ms. Grimaldo, is not available, I'm the next person in line.

As the SAS coordinator, I make sure that students who are taking college classes on campus are enrolled in those classes. I also work with the professors that come from LAVC. I make sure that the college classes have textbooks. I'm also in charge of accepting students who apply to the SAS program.

I taught Geometry and Algebra 2 for seven years, I was attendance dean for one semester, and then I was the senior class advisor for two years, while teaching.

At that point, I was ready to see other parts of the school that were

outside of the classroom, and have other experiences, as well as help the school out.

I've been testing coordinator for the last two years. When Mr. Alatorre left, I took over his testing coordinator position to keep the testing going smoothly for the school.

Personal

I was born and raised in Oxnard, California and attended Channel Islands High School.

I attended Cal State Hayward, now known as East Bay Cal State, from 2000 to 2005. I participated in the National Student Exchange (NSE) program my third year of college at the University of South Carolina from 2002-2003.

I majored in business administration, with an organization communication/ public relations degree.

I had many jobs after college. My first job was as a substitute math teacher for the Oxnard school district in 2006.

I also worked for Bugle Boy Jeans, a jean store that went out of business. Then I worked at the Radisson Hotel, iHop and Enterprise Rent-A-Car.

ADMIN DESIGNEES



By Sarai Mejia
Staff Writer

Jeppson Responsible for Facilities and SLCs

Former Ninth Grade Center coordinator Kirk Jeppson will serve as Administrative Designee in charge of facilities and SLCs while Poly seeks a replacement for instruction specialist Brad Katz, who has taken a new position in the Conejo Valley School District.

Principal Bennett came to me and said he needed someone to assume some of Brad Katz's responsibilities. I didn't want to take it. I asked Mr. Bennett to let me teach one more year and he can move me where ever he wants to. But I was the only who had some dean experience and he really just persuaded me to take it.

I've never thought about being an instructional specialist like Mr. Katz was. I had always wanted to be a teacher.

I would like to be a teacher again. Or actually do both. Both are fun but I'd like to teach again.

I have much more responsibility in this position than as Ninth Grade Center coordinator. As Ninth Grade Center coordinator, I was responsible for 600 kids and about 30 staff members. Now, it's over 1,000 kids and about half of the staff here. At lunch, there's a lot of kids to watch over now compared to only watching 120 kids when I was teaching.

Since becoming an Administrative Designee, I have learned more about schools, a lot about schools. The way they work and the responsibility it takes.

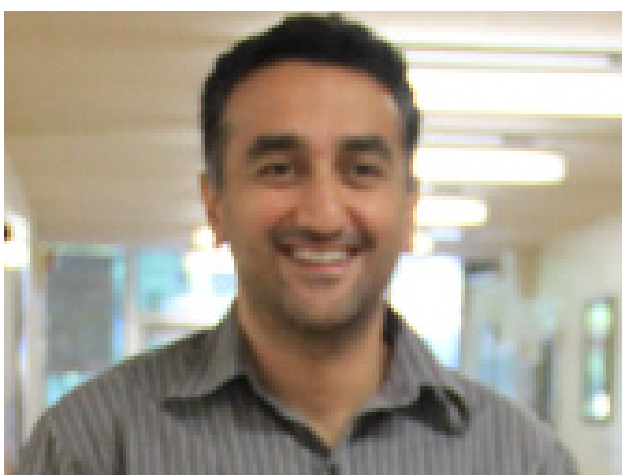
I used to only get to speak for the voice of the students I taught, but now I get to represent the kids outside of the classroom. I get to be the voice for them.

At the same time, it's unpredictable. At lunch, you never know what's going to happen. I have less control of the kids, it's not like I can tell them "Take your stuff and go sit outside." I have many more kids to look after, so each day is just something new.

Personal

Before becoming a teacher, I was a software developer in Burbank. I also worked at Moby Disc as a clerk, at the B Dalton bookstore as a clerk. I was 15, young when I worked these jobs.

After finishing high school, I didn't have anything in mind. My dad said to me "Either work or go to school. Or do both. Or get out."



By Yesenia Carretero
Staff Writer

Arhanian Handles Special Ed and Discipline

Former Intervention Coordinator Artin Arhanian will serve as Administrative Designee in charge of special education and discipline while Poly seeks a replacement for instruction specialist Elidia Vasquez, who has taken a new position at LAUSD headquarters.

Elidia was awesome. I'll be taking over her special education responsibilities.

Elidia had a lot of responsibilities that were not on paper. She just knew everything there was about this school.

Most of my day will be visiting classrooms and making sure that the instruction is up to par with the general education classrooms. I will assist teachers with IEPs and talk to parents to make sure they are happy with how their kids are progressing.

As coordinator, I was in charge of the special education population. I was their counselor. I programmed their classes and made sure their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) were done on time and correctly.

I've been teaching 14 years, the last seven at Poly.

I was a resource teacher for six years and last year served as the Bridge Coordinator.

I taught special education at Glendale High School before coming to Poly.

Before that, I was a waiter at a Citywalk restaurant that isn't there anymore called KWGB. It was where Johnny Rockets is today. That's what paid for college.

Personal

I was born and raised in Bulgaria. I came here in 1990, when I was fifteen. My parents wanted to have a better future. Bulgaria was a Communist country at the time, so there weren't many opportunities.

I graduated from North Hollywood High in 1993 and then Valley College and CSUN.

I got my bachelors in 1998, then my credential and my masters in special education and my administrative masters in 2002.

My undergraduate major was psychology and child development and then my credential was in special education.

I'm married and have a daughter, 9, and a son, 5.

I love playing sports and I play too much. I injured my leg and that's why I'm on crutches. I tore my ACL ligament and had surgery."

I grew up playing soccer and basketball. I play or watch sports and of course play with my little kids.

CAMPUS

Vasquez Takes Textbook Services Post

Veteran admin and math teacher ends 13 years at Poly.

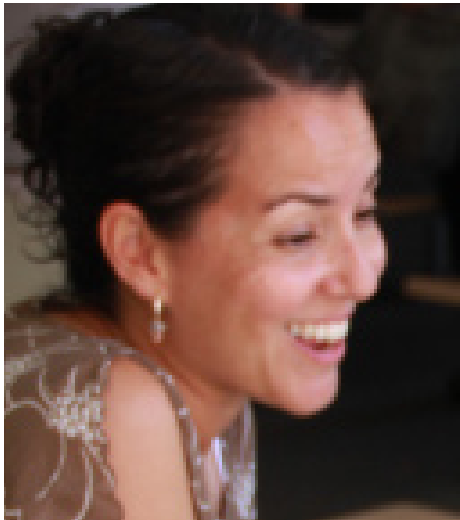


Photo by Lirio Alberto

BOOKISH: Former Poly veteran Elidia Vasquez is LAUSD textbook specialist.

“THE FAVORITE PART OF MY JOB HERE AT POLY WAS DEFINITELY THE CONNECTION WITH THE KIDS. WHEN THEY COME UP TO YOU AND JUST THANK YOU AND ARE GRATEFUL THAT YOU’RE AROUND HELPING THEM, I MEAN, THAT’S THE BEST PART.”

By Yesenia Carretero
Staff Writer

The OPTIMIST interviewed Instructional Specialist Elidia Vasquez about her new assignment and her time at Poly. Here’s what she told us.

I will be working in the department of Library and Textbook Services downtown, making sure that every student in the District has the materials they need to be successful in their classes. My title is Specialist in the department of Library and Textbook Services.

Mr. Gerardo Loera, who was the principal here and who interviewed me when I got the teaching position here, called me and said there was a position that he thought I would be a good fit for and asked me if I was interested in applying and so I did and with my family pushing me, I accepted.

Art Arhanian, who was the special ed coordinator last year, will be taking over. I expect a smooth transition because we worked a while together.

When I was going to college, I was a TA and office assistant. I started working for LAUSD in 1996 when I graduated. So I was first the assistant to the Title 1 coordinator. Then I became the Title 1 coordinator. During that time, I also worked with textbooks and I made sure we kept the textbook room organized and helped teachers get their supplemental books. Everything I did helped me later on. I was also an office assistant for the special ed office at an elementary school. Then I came here to be the Special Ed administrator. I did everything as an assistant, then later on I became the person.

I started here in July 2001 as a C track math teacher. I taught algebra I, geometry, algebra 2 in Spanish and English of course because I taught the ESL students.

I became math department chair. Then I was Title 1 coordinator. Other positions included Beyond the Bell administrator and administrator of safety and supervision. My current areas of responsibility as an instructional specialist are special ed, senior activities and of course textbooks.

I will always love teaching math, so building that connection with the students in the classroom is one big accomplishment of mine. I think I had a good relationship with them and it was hard to leave the classroom and be out so long because of that.

I feel that I did a great job with senior activities, really tightening up the requirements to make sure that we are safe and have fun at things like prom and grad night.

The biggest accomplishment and the reason I’m leaving is because since I took over textbook compliance, we have been sufficient every year, which means that every student has had the textbook and learning materials they needed every single year. And that’s what I’m going to go do, but for the district.

A favorite moment of mine is when I first took over special ed, when Ms. Hood retired. I felt so welcomed into the special ed department that around my birthday they threw this big surprise party and everybody was a part of it. I just felt so lucky and loved and wanted and just excited to be a part of that department.

Bio

I was born in East L.A. I grew up in LA and the San Fernando Valley. I went to elementary in LA. Then I came here to go to Byrd Middle School and Poly High School.

I attended Cal State Northridge and majored in mathematics.

I got my credential at CSUN. All the classes were offered here at Poly after school, so I would teach and then walk over to my class, which at the time was at the freshmen center. I went once a week for two years.

I am the middle child of three sisters. I’m married. My kids are two dogs, one boxer and one lab. And the real reason I went into administration is my husband, he pushed me to get my credential and now he’s the one that really pushed me to move on to this position just for the experience if nothing else. I have family all around me. I have two nieces right now that come to Poly.

I like to go hiking. Easy hikes, nothing too difficult, and that pushed me to get a little house up in the mountains where I get away on weekends and take nature walks, snow boarding in the winter, shoveling snow.

Last Thoughts

I know it’ll sound cliché, but the favorite part of my job here at Poly was definitely the connection with the kids. When they come up to you and just thank you and are grateful that you’re around helping them, I mean, that’s the best part. That’s that part I’m going to miss the most. This is not the last of me, you’ll see me at the games, at prom, and maybe I’ll chaperon grad night.

What I’ll tell people at my new position is that Poly is innovative and filled with staff that collaborate and are willing and motivated and they really want the kids to do well. The District cut back a lot of the budget but others really step it up. We just collaborate; we work well as a team, every member of Poly helps out. It’s difficult to find that in any other school.

Coach Katz Takes Conejo Valley Dean Position



Photo by Lirio Alberto

DJ COACH: Poly basketball Brad Katz’s squad broke records during the DJ Gay era.

By Ricky Bobby
Staff Writer

Former Poly instructional specialist Brad Katz has taken a position as attendance dean at Thousand

Oaks High in the Conejo Valley School District.

Katz came to Poly in 1999. He coached basketball from 1999 to 2007.

“We had some pretty good teams,” Katz said. “We won league championships in 2006, 7 and 8. In 2007, our basketball team was ranked number three in the city, and we were high ranked in the state too. Glory years.”

In 2007, Katz coached at Pierce College while continuing to teach history at Poly. In 2009, he coached women’s basketball at Valley College.

Katz returned to head Poly’s varsity basketball squad in 2011.

Katz also coached girls softball from 2001 to 2007 and from 2009 to 2012.

Katz was born in Los Angeles and attended Reseda High, where he played varsity basketball.

Katz attended Pierce in 1996, transferred to CSUN in 1997 and graduated in 1999 with a social studies degree.

Katz has a son who is ready to enter elementary school and a daughter who will start pre-kindergarten.

Peralta Remembers

“I’ve known Katz 16 years,” said Social Studies teacher and Softball Coach Manny Peralta.

alta. “I originally met him as a coach working at the Canoga Park High School.”

When Poly Basketball Coach Jay Werner stepped down, Katz applied for the job.

“In the earlier stages of our teaching careers, we worked on the same topics and did lesson plans that tied our classes together,” Peralta said.

“We did competitions. We gathered our kids in the cafeteria and did a Jeopardy-themed competition between his class and mine.”

Katz moved to Thousand Oaks High without losing any rank or administrative status, according to Peralta.

“So it’s real good for him to be there,” Peralta said. “Plus he’s closer to his house.”

“We’re still great friends,” Peralta said.

Tenth Grade’s Damonte Goes Downtown



Photo Courtesy of Yearbook

PERKINS: Former Tenth Grade Center’s Pia Damonte heads up Perkins downtown.

By Laura Martinez
Staff Writer

Former Poly Tenth Grade Center coordinator Pia Damonte is now the Perkins-Career Technical Education Coordinator at LAUSD headquarters in the Beaudry building downtown.

Damonte will use a six million dollar budget to help improve, initiate and modernize CTE programs to over 130 high schools with a current Perkins CTE funded pathway.

“I also manage a staff of 14 schools and central advisors as well as fiscal techs and office technicians,” Damonte said.

“My 13 years at Poly have been the most memorable,” Damonte said. “I still keep in contact with my students. They have always

been my fuel. This is what I will miss most.”

Damonte served in many capacities at Poly, including Spanish teacher, Foreign Language Department Chair, club sponsor for college prep and peer mentors, and dean.

In her most recent assignment in Poly’s Tenth Grade Center, Damonte did operations, discipline, counseling, teacher, parent and student support, fundraising and CAHSEE prep.

Damonte was instrumental in bringing the School for Advanced Studies (SAS) program to Poly. She also wrote the grant that funded the new lighting and sound system in the auditorium.

Other key roles for Damonte included instructional specialist oversight of the small learning communities (SLCs) and College Class articulation, where her duties included scheduling, books, professor orientation, regis-

tration and enrollment, articulation with middle schools and SAS orientation.

Pre-Poly

Damonte was a foreign language major at CSUN.

“When I graduated, I didn’t know what to do,” Damonte said. “My sister was in education and she said ‘get your teaching credential and teach.’ I had never thought of that.”

Damonte got her teaching credential, masters and administrative credential and came to Poly.

“I wanted to be that person who will impact a student’s life,” Damonte said.

Private sector jobs included managing two medical workers compensation facilities and jobs as an X-ray technician and medical assistant.

CAMPUS

NEW FACULTY



Michael Corley

By Tanneshia Acosta
Staff Writer

I got into teaching as a way of having a job until I figured out what I wanted to do with my life. I loved studying law, but the day-to-day reality of working as an attorney wasn't for me.

My first teaching assignment was sixth grade ELA and Social Studies.

Once I started working with kids on a daily basis, I realized that teaching didn't feel like a job but more like a calling. I have never looked back.

Before coming to Poly, I taught primarily eighth grade history at Sun Valley Middle School for 14 years, although last year I taught both seventh and eighth.

I have some of my former students in my class and while they have matured some they still feel like "my kids."

I have had the privilege to work with many of the students currently here at Poly and the best part of being here so far is when they poke their heads in my room and say hello or see me on campus and come up for a quick fist bump or handshake. For teachers, that quick acknowledgment that their students appreciate them is gold.

I teach World Geography now. My students will be learning about people living in different places and how and why they live there, important monuments that they might or might not ever visit.

I have never taught geography as a course before, but I went over it in class for seventh and eighth graders. My main point this semester will be how people interact with the land and each other.

Most of us have one or two special teachers in their lives who made a difference. Mine was my third grade teacher. I reconnected with her while I was in college just prior to her passing. Being able to just say thanks meant everything to me, and I suspect a lot to her.

I'm hoping that in the next few years I will be able to teach a criminal law and procedure elective.



Wanda Bello

By Jesus Venegas
Staff Writer

Former Arleta faculty member Wanda Bello is a new Social Studies teacher in the Tenth Grade Center. The OPTIMIST sat down with Bello to get her views on Poly and teaching. Here's what she told us.

I like forming relationships with students and seeing them grow. They come in as 9th graders and physically look like children. When they become seniors they are adults.

In that four-year process I see them form opinions and become more passionate about things and just seeing that growth is inspiring.

I remember when I first started teaching, Mr. Cooper was my high school teacher in my senior year and he became my mentor teacher my first year. He told me our students stay the same age but we age. We keep getting older and older every year.

I didn't understand that until probably a couple years ago when I started seeing some of my old students as adults. I see them grow in their four years here and see them move on to bigger and better things. I think that also motivates me to strive for more.

I hope that when I tell them my stories it helps them realize that they can accomplish whatever goals they have. At times it can take longer than expected but they can get there. So it keeps me motivated to do bigger and better things all the time.

I think it's a great time to be a teacher because things are changing, technology is being incorporated. There's the new Common Core, where the United States wants to be competitive with other countries and be on the same standards, so I think this is a great time, a huge change in education. Right now is a great time to be in the forefront of that change.

I taught Government and Economics and did counseling at Arleta High for seven years, since the school first opened, before coming to Poly.

I left Arleta for a change. Everybody needs a change, to learn new strategies.



Robert Benson

By Joanna Rosales
Staff Writer

Former Sylmar faculty member Robert Benson has joined Poly's Social Studies department. Benson will teach US History.

"This school is awesome," Benson said. "Everybody from the principal, the clerks, the custodian, everybody has been helpful. And the students here are really cool."

Benson taught U.S History, government, and economics at Sylmar High for 14 years. Benson also taught at Van Nuys Middle school and at Kennedy HS.

"I thought it would be good for my career to try something else," Benson said. "You don't want to be the same thing forever. When you're a teacher you have to move and try something else or do something else."

Like many teachers, Benson believes knowing how to write well is important.

"I think students need to know how to write a paragraph or an essay or whatever," Benson said. "When you go to college, you have to be able to write."

Benson also says technology sometimes gets in the way of learning.

"There are too many distractions - iPhone, Pandora, all that kind of thing," Benson said. "Their technology takes kids away from reading and understanding. The more you read the more you understand."

Benson was born in Inglewood and grew up in Santa Clarita. He attended Hart High, Canyon High School and graduated from Saugus High School.

Benson was in the Air Force for two years and the Air National guard for 10 years. He decided to become a teacher while in the military.

"I knew I wanted to go to college," Benson said. "I didn't know what I wanted to do. When I was in the military, I had to train people. I was good at it and I found out I liked it. So I decided to become a teacher."

Benson graduated from CSUN with his teaching credential in 1995.

API is Up

[From Poly's, front page]

similar to other high schools in advanced and proficient," Bennett said.

"We didn't see much growth in proficient and advanced this year. But we've seen a lot of growth in proficient and advanced over the last few years."

CCSS Test

[From Parrots, front page]

give us this year to feel more comfortable with the curriculum and the shifts in the instructional approach compared to the rest of the school district."

Although all grades are on Spring Board, seniors will not be assessed.

Bennett sent out resources and had a representative from the College Board present their curriculum, which is Spring Board.

The English and Math department had a meeting in which they had a rep present their curriculum.

"The presentation was not a great presentation so we talked with teachers, asked what else they wanted to see. They said they wanted to see a teacher come in who was teaching the curriculum so they could get a better idea of what's going on," said Bennett.

Thirty-five Math and English teachers attended paid training to decide what curriculum Poly would buy.

According to tenth grade English teacher Jeff Herrold Spring Board was the best curriculum available for Common Core

"The Book doesn't give us everything we need. That's where the professional experience of a teacher comes along," said Herrold. "We have everything in an easy-to-use package in a single workbook and the workbook recommends strategies. But we still have a number of things that we have to support from our own practice."

Kinsella

[From Education, front page]

use the same strategies with their students."

Kinsella is all about promoting academic literacy for English learners, Hidalgo said.

"Kinsella's message was that teachers need to do everything they can to accelerate achievement for English learners," Hidalgo said, "because while it seems students are fluent in English, they are not academically fluent."

All students are academically English learners, Hidalgo said, not only English learners.

"All students need academic strategies."

Kinsella is a faculty member in the Department of Secondary Education at San Francisco State University. Consultant on READ 180, ReadAbout.

Kinsella provides consultancy nationally to school districts and state departments to increase instruction and achievement of Grade K-12 English learners and less proficient readers.

Kinsella has extensive experience teaching high school English learners and bilingual first-generation college students.

As a teacher-educator, Kinsella maintains active involvement in Grade 4-12 classrooms by regularly coaching teachers and administrators and co-teaching lessons across grade levels.

Dr. Kinsella is co-author of Scholastic's READ 180 intensive intervention program for 4th-12th graders that includes the English language development companion, the LBook.

BE AN OPTIMIST

Lewis Brings "Day of Change"

[From Tenth, front page]

lot of different challenges."

Perseverance, controlling impulses and the ability to set long term goals are also correlated with success and maturity, Lewis said.

"The problem for many of our students, because of what they deal with at home, is that they can't readily access those qualities because they're on survival mode trying to figure out how to get through the day," Lewis said.

"So I thought about having this day where we all take some time to stop and acknowledge all of our hidden talents and strengths and the qualities that we do have deep inside that sometimes we are not able to use in school."

Mooney told students he was labeled an

ADHD kid early on. Classmates and teachers predicted that he was either going to be a burger flipper or a convict solely because he was a different learner.

Instead, Brown University graduate Mooney has published "The Short Bus" and continues to prove his skeptics wrong by speaking across the U.S. about his success story.

"We do students who learn in different ways a disservice by writing them off just because they can't subscribe to what we think of as normal," Mooney said.

Being intelligent can look different for different students, Mooney said.

"Before we just write students off who have different ways of learning, different ways of

thinking, we should accept that everyone is different and equally intelligent and capable," said Lewis. "Don't let people define who you are."

After Mooney's speech, students attended workshops by Home Boys Industries, Now & Forever, Street Poets and Teen Valley Clinic. Students chose two out of the four workshops they wanted to learn about.

Students participated in the workshops by asking questions and sharing their own personal stories and experiences.

After the workshops, students were surveyed about "Day of Change."

"The results were very positive," Lewis said. "I think today put things in perspective for many of our students."

MEDIA



Google Photo

1963: "Wall of Sound" LA producer Phil Spector and backup singer Darlene Love in the studio.

Stardom in the Shadows

"20 Feet From Stardom" puts six backup singers in spotlight

By Emily Pintor
Staff Writer

In the early sixties, backup singer Darlene Love put her signature vocals on hits like "He's a Rebel" and "He's Sure the Boy I Love." Those sessions were produced by Phil Spector, who put the songs out under the name of the Crystals, a group he controlled.

Spector kept Love's talent under wraps. Even her well known Christmas hit, "Christmas Baby Please Come Home," was released under another group's name.

After years singing backup, Love was reduced to cleaning houses to earn extra money. She felt cheated out of her success. Not until 2011, when Love was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, did she finally get the recognition she deserved.

In his new film, "20 Feet From Stardom," director Morgan Neville ("Johnny Cash's America") tells Love's story and that of five other talented backup singers and their careers out of the spotlight.

All deserved much more credit than they got, some had short moments of fame and others never wanted it.

Most of Neville's choices are African-American women with roots in the gospel tradition. They recall what it's like to sing in front of millions of people but never be recognized. Their repertoires range from soul to rock n' roll. The artists they backed up include Ray Charles, the Rolling Stones, Joe Cocker, Lou Reed, Michael Jackson and many more.

Merry Clayton was a feisty backup singer with a tremendous voice and a personality to match, seemingly destined for stardom. A former backup singer for Ray Charles, Clayton also sang on classics like "Sweet Home Alabama."

Clayton's time in the spotlight came when she was called over in the middle of the night to record "Gimmie Shelter" with the Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger. Neville's documentary captures the night's key moment well. After a vocal take, Clayton and Jagger smile as they listen to the playback, her powerhouse voice shredding the monitor speakers in the studio. "Shelter" became a signature hit for the Stones, thanks largely to Clayton's duet with Mick.

Claudia Lennear began her career as an Ikette, touring with Ike and Tina Turner. Her stunning good looks later got her on tour with The Rolling Stones

and other rock bands. When work started fading and her solo career didn't take off, Claudia left the music scene and became a Spanish teacher.

Lisa Fischer, whose beautiful breathy voice won her a Grammy for her 1991 hit "How Can I Ease the Pain," has worked with Tina Turner, Sting and Luther Vandross. Although recognized as a solo artist, Fischer decided fame was not for her and happily continues to sing backup for Sting and The Rolling Stones.

Judith Hill, a young vocalist who has backed up Elton John and Michael Jackson, hopes to achieve success and step out of the shadows.

Tata Vega, who has sung backup for Stevie Wonder and Madonna, has had little success with a solo career but continues to sing backup for Elton John.

In the end, the walk from the back of the stage to the front "is a long one," Springsteen explains in the film. Not many backup singers make it to the front.

Talent wasn't the problem. These six women had plenty. But when they tried to venture out as solo artists, their careers never took off.

Neville offers the industry's deep-seated racial and gender prejudice as one reason for the ladies' inability to break through to the next level. All six were looked down on to some extent and taken advantage of.

Jagger, Springsteen and Sting, the old guard of rock, all agree with Neville's premise that the backup singer is just as important as any other instrument in the band, vital to the song's "sound." Each of these rock legends has benefited from the work of soulful backup singers on their records.

But things change. The days of the backup singer as a vital element of a song's hit potential may be over. Many new artists don't understand the role backup singers can play, or choose to keep the sound and spotlight on themselves.

In short, Neville's film, gracious as it is, may be too little, too late.

Still, "Twenty Feet from Stardom" is a story that needed to be told. Before there was digital, there was raw, soulful singing and these ladies left a huge impression on pop music. Their voices are forever ingrained in the memories of American pop music fans around the world.

Opposites Attract

By Emily Pintor
Staff Writer

Most high school coming-of-age dramas fail to capture teenagers accurately, opting instead for artificial stories of superficial popular kids that usually include cheesy Hollywood endings. "The Spectacular Now," directed by James Ponsoldt ("Smashed", "Off the Black") from Tim Thrap's novel, is not one of those. For once, audiences get a realistic view of teen angst.

Fresh-faced Miles Teller is Sutter Keely, a charming senior who is enjoying the good life until beautiful girlfriend Cassidy (Brie Larson) dumps him because he lacks ambition and seems to have a budding alcohol addiction.

Sutter blocks out the pain the only way he knows how, by drinking and partying. After a long night that he can't remember, Sutter wakes up on a lawn with Aimee Finecky (Shailene Woodley) standing over him. She knows who he is, but this is the first Sutter has heard of her.

Aimee is kind and forgiving, a good student with plans for the future. She reads science fiction and has never had a boyfriend, the opposite of Sutter, who doesn't study, has no plans for the future and lives for the moment.

The unlikely pair are quickly drawn to each other. They later find out they have more in common than they know.

Sutter's desire to meet his alcoholic father (Kyle Chandler) and his strained relationship with his mother (Jennifer Jason Leigh) are hardships he deals with daily. Aimee helps him face his problems and overcome his demons.



Google Photo

PALS: Miles Teller and Shailene Woodley.

Teller and Woodley both give outstanding performances in this extraordinary film about typical teenagers. The chemistry the two actors have is real and the audience wants to like them.

"The Spectacular Now," with no vampires or zombies, works because its characters struggle with real problems and imperfect love. Sutter's flaws and Aimee's are embraced and the characters help each other grow.

Ponsoldt's effort is sincere, capturing the heart of Thrap's novel with subtlety and grace. Not all their problems are solved, but Sutter and Aimee finally realize that there's plenty of time to figure out the future.



A Day in the Life

By Adrianna Garcia
Staff Writer

"Fruitvale Station" proves that a simple depiction of one day can be compelling and awakening.

"Fruitvale" tells the true story of Oscar Grant, the 22 year old black man who was shot and killed by a Bay Area Rapid Transit police officer in 2009.

Johannes Mehserle was the officer who shot down Oscar Grant at Oakland's Fruitvale Station. Mehserle claims to have reached for his taser, but accidentally pulled out his gun. Grant died the next morning at Highland Hospital.

Writer and director Ryan Coogler created a moving film that depicted Grant's last day alive and his struggle to do right by his family.

"I was most interested in his domestic relationships, and who he was to the people he had value to before he was killed," said Coogler during an interview.

"Fruitvale" opens with the actual cell phone footage of Oscar Grant's shooting. The movie then proceeds with the beginning of Grant's last 24 hours, from December 31st to early in the new year.

Oscar and his girlfriend Sophina share their new year's resolutions. Sophina, also the mother of his child, mentions cutting carbs from her diet and Oscar hopes to stop selling drugs.

Coogler did not attempt to hide Oscar's flaws for the movie's sake. Grant cheating on Sophina and his firing for tardiness are details included in "Fruitvale" that show he was not a perfect man.

Oscar's good nature is also seen throughout his last hours. Oscar charmingly helps a young woman with dinner ideas by calling his Grandma Bonnie and asking her to share her fish fry recipe. Oscar also picks up crabs for gumbo for his mother's birthday celebration and promises his daughter Tatiana he'll take her to Chuck E. Cheese soon.

Oscar and Sophina go out with some friends after the birthday dinner and Oscar's mother suggests they take the train to avoid driving.

Each detail that follows moves closer to the tragic ending.

"Fruitvale" cast includes television star Michael B. Jordan as Oscar, Melonie Diaz as Sophina, and Oscar-winner Octavia Spencer as Oscar's mother.

Coogler says Grant's incident hit home. "The cell phone footage was available the next day and it was kind of like watching something happen to yourself or to your friend or to your brother."

But Coogler's film was not made to produce justice. "I don't look at myself as a social justice filmmaker at all. I'm a guy who wants to tell stories that are important to me."

Coogler aimed to walk audiences through Oscar's day and have them decide what kind of person he was. "What I hoped to do was spend enough time with this guy on this day to the point that the audience has a relationship with him. Everybody knows what that's like, when you're hanging out with somebody."

The film is Coogler's first major directorial work and is produced by Oscar-winning actor Forest Whitaker (The Last King of Scotland).

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Fall 2013



SPORTS



Photo by Lirio Alberto

ELUSIVE: Poly senior Eric Manriquez eludes Bernstein tackler in Parrots 26-13 win at home.

Poly Slays Dragons 26-13

By Danny Lopez
Staff Writer

The Parrots evened their season record at 1-1 with a comfortable 26-13 win over visiting Bernstein High (Hollywood).

“Our running game now is pretty much unstoppable,” said Poly head coach Jose Campos. “I think we prepared a lot better this time.”

Campos credited his defense with keeping Bernstein in check so the Parrot offense could get in sync. The contest started slowly.

Bernstein had the ball first, but their drive stalled at Poly’s 48 yard line.

Poly gave the ball back when senior running back DJ Jones got stripped.

Bernstein junior running back Navin Khenkaew ran 63 yards for a TD, but the play was called back for an illegal chop block. The Dragons punted and Poly took over on their 40.

Senior running back Kamilo Tongamoa then took the first call from scrimmage and ran 40 yards for a TD, getting Poly on the scoreboard with 2:55 left in the first quarter. Poly’s two-point conversion attempt failed.

But the Parrots only needed 10 seconds of the second quarter to get six more when Jones rushed 45 yard run for a TD. Poly again failed to make the two-point conversion.

The rest of the second quarter was a series of failed third down conversions and an interception by Poly junior wide receiver George Willkomm.

Poly led 12-0 at the half.

Poly got 30 yards from senior running back Isaiah Solorzano and 10 more from Jones to get its third TD of the night. This time Poly converted the two point and went up 20-0 with 8:20 left on the clock.

The Dragons answered with a 90-yd drive capped by Khenkaew’s score.

Up 20-7 after three, Diaz threw an interception, but Poly got the ball back later when senior wide receiver Luis Zamora grabbed an Alvarado throw on the Dragons’ 42.

Taking no chances, Diaz kept the ball on a quarterback sneak for Poly’s final score of the night and a 26-7 lead with 9:26 left.

Bernstein helped their stat line when senior George Gomez rushed for a TD at the 3:00 mark, getting the Dragons closer at 26-13. But the buzzer sounded with the same score.

Alvarado was 7 for 18 and 83 yds, including a 28 yd pass. The Dragons had 223 rushing yds, with workhorse Khenkaew rushing for 122 yds on 18 carries.

Diaz was 2 for 4 and 47 yds. Poly did their damage on the ground, picking up 359 rushing yds. Jones had 143 yds rushing and senior Isaiah Sorolzano had 97 yds on 15 carries.

Poly’s Willkomm and Zamora had interceptions. The Parrots visit San Fernando (2-0) next. The Tigers beat Chatsworth (Chatsworth, CA), 55-24, in a non-league contest.

The Dragons play Monroe (0-2) in a non-league contest on Friday. The Vikings lost 37-7 to Torres (LA).

Wrestling is not for Wimps

By Jesus Venegas
Staff Writer

Parrots who know Audrianna Wilson as a singer might need to reconsider.

Wilson has joined Poly’s new wrestling team.

“I like to be aggressive and it helps me calm my anger issues,” Wilson said. “I can take it all out on the mat. I think it’s really fun.”

And aggressive?

“Yeah and I love it too,” Wilson said.

“When an opponent is aggressive towards me, it makes me more aggressive, so I’m aggressive back and the coaches love the tension. They love it. Coach even says it himself “don’t be a wimp about it or else you are going to lose. You got to be aggressive.”

Like any sport, wrestling is competitive, Wilson says.

“I’m very competitive,” Wilson said. “I’m willing to beat down other girls. Even if they are bigger than me, I still take a chance.”

Wilson says things are fine with the guy wrestlers.

“They don’t treat boys or girls differently,” Wilson said. “We all learn the same things and get the same discipline.”

Some practices are coed.

“Sometimes we wrestle with the boys,” Wilson said. “One girl wrestles with the boys because no one is in her weight class.”

Wrestling injuries are equal too.

“I hurt my back really bad,” Wilson said. “I had to stay out of practice for four days. The girl I was wrestling moved my body to the right while I was moving it to the left and we both moved my body different ways.”

Wrestling, of course, also concerns a delicate subject for some girls.

“We need more big and bulky girls,”

Wilson said, “because I’m sure other schools have them. But then again, we have some really good skinny girls and they know a lot of techniques.”

Wilson, who says her weight class is between 120 and 130, is working on technique.

“I think I have more strength than technique,” Wilson said, “so that’s why I’m still working on it. I’ve seen a skinny guy wrestle a big guy and the skinny guy won because he knew how to trip him and how to hold him on the ground. Just because you’re big doesn’t



Photo by Lirio Alberto

GRAPPLER: Junior Audrianna Wilson.

mean you’re always going to win because you have to have some technique.”

A typical day for the wrestling squad is to run around the school, then go to the cafeteria and do drills and spar.

“Spar is when you wrestle a person in your weight class,” Wilson said. “It doesn’t matter if you know anything, you just wrestle. You have to do whatever you can to pin them to the ground.”

A match lasts two minutes each round. The goal is to get the most points.

“There are different positions that you can do,” Wilson said. “If you can hold them in that position you get points. An automatic win is when you pin them on their backs for three seconds or when you score 12 points.”

“Holding them in a position is two points, but if the person escapes they win two. If you just build up those two points up to 12 you win. If the match ends before anybody scores anything whoever has the highest point’s wins.”

“We need more big and bulky girls because I’m sure other schools have them. But then again, we have some really good skinny girls and they know a lot of techniques.”

Wilson wasn’t concerned about what her friends would think about her new passion.

“I’m doing this for me, not them,” Wilson said. “My friends weren’t worried. In fact, I got some of my friends to join me.”

Wilson’s parents weren’t quite as enthusiastic.

“My parents don’t like it, especially my dad,” Wilson said. “He doesn’t want his little girl to get hurt. But my mom thinks it’s good. She wants me to be strong just like her.”

I’m pretty sure by the end, while I’m into it and learning more, they’ll be more into it. They will definitely go to matches. My brother is not doing any sports and he graduated, so they have me.”

What about that first match?

“I think I’ll do pretty well,” Wilson said. “Coach makes us believe that we are going to win.”

Wilson has a message for all the Lady Parrots.

“If you know you are aggressive and you know you can pin any girl, than I think you need to be in wrestling. You absolutely need to.”

Lady Parrots Have High Hopes

By Ricardo Bugarin
Staff Writer

The Lady Parrots have all the ingredients in place to do well this season, according to the players and their coach.

“This is my fourth year as girls’ tennis coach,” said head coach Evan Rabins. “This team is the best of my years.”

Last year’s focus was on getting experience and getting more girls on the team, Rabins said.

“Now we’re experienced and we’re going to have a pretty good record,” Rabins said. “Taking first is my goal.”

Senior singles player Jade Lim agrees.

“This year’s team is definitely better than last year’s,” said Lim. “We honed our skills over the summer.”

“El Camino will be tough to beat,” said senior doubles Pia Ros, “but we’re definitely prepared for league.”

Poly was scheduled to open against El Camino, but that game has been moved to Sept. 25.

“All the newcomers are looking very impressive,” said Lim. “They have improved a lot in a short amount of time and they seem very promising.”

Practice is critical to developing a tennis game, Rabins said.

“The girls have to get their swings in, that’s how they become good tennis players,” Rabins said. “You get a thousand swings in and something clicks. You start figuring out on your own what you’re doing wrong.”

Lim says she hits with topspin, has a nice slice return and is currently working on her dropshot.

“A friend from the boy’s tennis team and Coach are helping me,” Lim said.

Lim started playing tennis as a youngster in the Philippines and took private lessons twice a week.

Ros is self-taught.

“I use a two handed forehand and back hand,



GOT GAME: Senior doubles Pia Ros and senior singles Jade Lim promise plenty of wins.

which is really uncommon,” Ros said. “It’s just the way I was brought up.”

Rabins says it’s a bad habit Ros has to break.

“Coach tells me to stop,” Ros said, “But if I do I lose control of the racket and my balance. It’s a habit I’ve learned to control.”

More than technique, winning is most about being competitive, Rabins says.

“The girls don’t have that testosterone,” Rabins said. “We’ve got some pretty competitive girls, but they’re not aggressive and they’re not as naturally competitive.”

Ros agrees

“I really need to work on confidence and not psyching myself out,” Ros said. “I’m not competitive.”

But Ros knows how to get pumped up for a game.

“I get up for a game when I think of my coach



Photos by Lirio Alberto

yelling,” Ros said. “Because if I’m losing a game and not doing my best, Coach hates that the most.”

Rabins says the two keys to winning are first serve percentage and getting in position to hit the shot.

“You want to hold serve,” Rabins said. “That’s the key to winning a match.”

“And you need to be on location for the ball at all times,” Rabins said. “All the green parts are in. You have to put yourself in the correct position to hit a good shot. You can’t be glued to the baseline. If the ball bounces really high and really deep, you have to run back.”

Ros has a different bottom line.

“Tennis is all about the friends you make,” Ros said. “Even if it’s hot as hell and you don’t want to practice, you still want to hang out and laugh with the girls on your team.”