

# The Poly Optimist

VOL. IV

JOHN H. FRANCIS POLYTECHNIC HIGH SCHOOL

OCTOBER 2006

## As the API Goes, So Goes Poly

Parrots garner award for 121-point increase in test scores.

By Diana Argueta  
Optimist Staff Writer

According to recently released results, Poly raised its Academic Performance Index (API) score an eye-popping 121 points over the last six years, good enough for a special award from the state. Principal Jan Fries-Martinez accepted the recognition on behalf of Poly in a ceremony during a local district meeting.

“The prize is an honor,” said Fries-Martinez. “60% of high schools in L.A. did not make their API scores, but we’ve continued to advance.”

The API was created as part of the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA), introduced in California in 1999, to make schools, students, and local districts responsible for improving test scores.

The PSAA has three parts: the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming School (II/US) program, the Governor’s Performance Award (GPA) program, and the Academic Performance Index (API).

The Academic Performance Index uses students’ scores from the California Standards Test (CST) and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) to calculate academic performance and growth. A poor showing puts a school on the Department of Education’s Immediate Intervention/Underperforming School (II/US) list.

The API scale goes from 200, which is bad, to 1000, which is perfect. 800 is the target score for all California public schools. Some schools start out so low that they receive more realistic target scores to reach. These scores are expected to increase annually until the school reaches the desired 800. In other words, if the score is met, expectations from the state rise too and the district gives the school a higher score to reach.

Schools work hard to reach these scores and constantly remind their students about the importance of passing the CST and the CAHSEE be-

[See API Story Page 6]



Photo By Juan Carlos Sanchez

**EXCITEMENT IN THE AIR :** 59 musicians strong, Poly’s marching band brings more than music to football games.

## Strike Up the Band

Poly goes pop with South Park soundtrack for this year’s games and competitions.

By Leah Tanner  
Optimist Staff Writer

“I’ve always wanted to be a high school music teacher.”

- Steve Isaacs

When band leader Steve Isaacs arrived at Poly six years ago, there were 16 musicians and five drummers in the band and six in the color guard.

“Paul Sims had been here for 14 years and had a very strong program and he left and the guy in between really didn’t have a very good rapport with the students.”

Isaacs tried not to miss a day because he thought the kids might be experiencing abandonment issues because teachers were changing. He tried to stay consistent.

Good students helped.

“I had excellent students. They would literally stand there and challenge me to make them better, which was good.”

This year’s band has somewhere around 59 people, with only four of those being new members. Last year there were about 100. Many band members left because of conflicting AP classes, Isaacs explained, and a number of seniors graduated. Also, the new band director at Byrd Middle School didn’t send over as many students as the previous director had. Poly used to get 40 to 50 new people a year from Byrd.

Drum instructor Mark Kough started this year. The drum line isn’t going to do anything apart from the band this fall, but they might do an indoor drum competition next spring.

“It would be a lot of work,”

said Isaacs.

Drum Major Anthony Bahena rehearses the band and conducts the show.

“He has to be the student director of the band,” said Isaacs.

“The band usually just keeps the crowd excited,” Isaacs said. “The drums play along with the cheers. The cheers usually are real supportive of what is going on on the field. It makes the game exciting.”

Every year, Poly’s band also participates in competitions.

“The band did really well last year,” Isaacs said. “It was

[See Band Story Page 6]

## Small Is Better For Poly

Help from John Hopkins gives Poly big ideas about small learning communities.

By Ana Loera  
Optimist Staff Writer

The Talent Development High School Model is a comprehensive reform model for large high schools facing problems with student attendance, achievement scores, and dropout rates. The model includes organizational and management changes to establish a positive school climate; curricular and instructional innovations to prepare all students for high-level courses in Math and English; parent and community

involvement to encourage college awareness; and professional development to support the recommended reforms.

The model was developed at John Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. Poly has recently incorporated this reform model into its own programs on improving student achievement.

The Optimist spoke with Assistant Principal Ed Trimis recently to learn more about this program. Below is that conversation.

**Q.What is Talent Development?**

A. “We started working with Talent Development High Schools a few years back, before we went to the 4x4 block schedule.

Our principal, Jan Fries-Martinez, was aware of Talent Development from before, from a conference, so we connected with them and they were good enough to want to work with us. We were the first Talent Development High School on the west coast.

John Hopkins University started this Talent Development High School program about 10 years ago. One of their requirements is that schools are on a 4x4 block schedule. And so we hooked up with them and they work with us.

**Q.How did John Hopkins University come up with the program?**

A. “One of the things they did was start with their freshmen academy. They call

[See Talent Page 4]

## Cross Town Traffic For Some Parrots

Early mornings and long commutes are worth it for some who value education.

By Evelyn Lemus  
Optimist Staff Writer

Sinking test scores, high absentee rates, low reading levels. All the news about public education these days seems to suggest that today’s teens don’t care about school or learning.

But not so fast. Poly has 157 students who rise before sunup and spend over two hours of commute time each day just to get here. Why? The Optimist interviewed some bus riders to find out. Here’s what they said.

Mario De Leon, senior, 17 yrs. old, lives in Los Angeles, about 15 miles from Poly.

“I come to Poly High because I don’t like my home school, Belmont, because I want better opportunities for my education. I get to Poly High by taking the school bus or public transportation to Sun Valley.

The hardship about coming to Poly is that I have to get up early. If I miss the school bus, I have to take bus line 51 to



Photo By Erick Robles

**BIG YELLOW SCHOOL BUS:** Picking Up Parrots.

Wilshire/Vermont and from there the Metro to North Hollywood and then line 152 to Roscoe and Whitsett.

I like Poly better than my home school because there are more students at Poly and counselors at Poly can help me take classes that are required. Attending Poly is beneficial to my education because it has better opportunities when it comes to education. The magnet program allows me to take classes that are not taught at my home school.

Attending Poly is worth

waking up early because I want a good education. I knew I would need some commitment such as waking up early and being at the bus stop and being on time.”

Maria Gaona, junior, 16 yrs. old, lives in downtown Los Angeles, approximately 18 miles from Poly.

“I don’t like my home school, Los Angeles High, so I take the school bus every day to get to school. I have to wake up at 5:00 a.m. so that I can have time to eat a quick

[See Bus Story Page 3]



For those who were unable to attend the recent visits to Poly by Dartmouth and USC, sponsored by the College Office, the Optimist has provided summaries of those meetings in the articles below. Meetings with representatives from those schools were held in the Poly library.

## Dartmouth Offers Unique Experience

By Michelle Gonzalez & Meri Sarkisyan  
*Optimist Staff Writers*

Dartmouth College is a private, four-year liberal arts institution located in Hanover, a town of 11,000 in western New Hampshire. Dartmouth is known as an Ivy League college because of its participation in the athletic conference of the same name. The other schools in the conference are Brown, Cornell, Columbia, Harvard, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania and Yale.

Dartmouth College is located outside of the metropolitan area, but bus service to the campus and the airport is available. The college is about 2 hrs. north of Boston and 5 hrs. from New York City.

At Dartmouth, the emphasis is on undergraduate studies. Dartmouth currently has 4300 undergrads and 1200 grad students.

### Activities:

Dartmouth is located in a small town, so most activities take place on campus.

The college is located between the Green and White Mountains. There are lakes and students can take classes to learn how to ski.

Dartmouth has a Greek system. Girls can't rush sororities until their sophomore year. There is no dining in the fraternity houses and most students don't live in the houses.

Parties are open to everybody and students don't have to be a member to participate in them.

### Academics:

Students have a close relationship with their professors. The student/teacher ratio is 8:1. Out of 200 classes, only about 13 have over 200 students, and even then the professors will break the class down into smaller groups.

25% of the students are in independent studies. 42% of students do research with their professors before they graduate. 58% study abroad, with the school picking up the tab for students doing research or something productive. Dartmouth alumni also have the option of studying abroad.



Dartmouth has four three-month terms in the fall, winter, spring, and summer. This schedule helps interns because they can go in the winter term instead of in the summer like most students from other colleges.

Dartmouth accepts AP

scores for college credit.

Dartmouth offers no scholarships because they are an Ivy League school. But this year they gave \$28,000 on average to freshmen. Last year they gave \$44M in financial aid, all in federal funds.

Students can participate in almost every kind of sport and there are over 350 student-run organizations.

Over 500 performers come to Dartmouth every year, including such artists as Chappelle. The tickets are typically around \$5 dollars, far less than the hundreds of dollars for a ticket in NY.

### Interviews:

Interviews are not required, but are recommended, because applicants get information on the school. Either a senior on campus or an alumnus will usually interview the applicant.

Dartmouth is looking for people who have curiosity, a desire to learn, and passion.

### Personal Statements:

Dartmouth does require an essay. A pre-application is necessary to get a student in the system and a peer evaluation is used to see another side of the student.

The average SAT score ranges from 650-750 math and 650-720 English.

Last year 14-15% of the people that applied were accepted. Of those, 24-25% were early applicants and 13-14% were accepted from the regular application date. November 1st is the deadline for early admission and January 1st for normal admission.

The WISP program (Women in Science Department) was created in 1990 to insure a balance of men and women in the program. In many cases, women drop out of science and math at a faster rate than men. Dartmouth offers special lectures, events, financing, and advisors for this department.

The school has \$200M in funding.

## Academic Rigor At USC

By Jennifer Rivera  
*Optimist Staff Writer*

The University of Southern California is a private four-year university located in downtown Los Angeles, the heart of the Arts and Education Corridor. The university is in an urban setting with population of over 500,000.



Known for its costly tuition and difficulty getting in, school representatives say "USC is accessible" despite tuition costs and rigorous requirements.

USC is the oldest private research university in the West with a strong emphasis in architecture, communication and medicine. The school is home to 16,000 undergraduates and 17,000 graduates and professionals.

### Academics:

Student to faculty ratio is 10:1. A typical class size is about 10 to 19.

Students have the opportunity to study abroad for a semester.

Many students have access to internships, thanks mainly to the school's location and the need for workers by everybody from the *Los Angeles Times* to local museums in the area.

The school offers independent studies and honors programs as well as double majors. A double major is highly encouraged, but many students opt out because of the coursework.

Students have access to over 2,700 workstations.

There are 4 art galleries on campus and a media center for the digital media students.

A marine center is located in Catalina Island.

The school offers Bachelor's, Masters', Doctoral and First Professional degrees.

### Activities:

With its convenient location in one of the world's most well known cities, there are many activities to enjoy both on and off campus. Students can go hiking in the mountains, visit museums, or go to theme parks.

On campus there are many student-run organizations such as government, a newspaper (*Daily Trojan*), Concert Band, Yearbook and Fraternities and Sororities.

There are 30 fraternities and 20 sororities on campus.

USC is known for its football team but there are many other sports for men and women to join.

Basketball, volleyball, water polo, tennis, and indoor track are some of the choices.

### Admission Requirements:

USC requires what most other schools do, including a personal statement. The school believes this and recommendation letters are the most important as a deciding factor for admitting students.

The personal statement is to give the student a chance to express himself in a unique way that he is not able to on the rest of the application.

Applicants need to fulfill the A-G requirements as well as demonstrate the drive to pursue more classes to make the schedule more rigorous and challenging.

Students are strongly encouraged to get involved in extra curricular activities and show leadership skills.

The school requires students to submit SAT I or ACT plus writing exam scores. Average ACT score is between 28 and 32.

The average SAT score ranges from 620 to 710 verbal and 650 to 730 math.

## Counselor Says There Is A College For Every Parrot

By Ana Loera  
*Optimist Staff Writer*

The Optimist sat down recently with College Counselor Leona Warman to discuss her role in getting Parrots into college. Below is that interview.

**Q. So what does a college counselor do?**

A. "1. Help students become aware of post secondary options. 2. Coordinate visitations by college representatives. 3. Write letters of recommendation. 4. Provide information regarding PSAT, SAT, ACT. 5. Administer PSAT and interpret results to students."

**Q. As a college counselor, what is the number one myth you would like to dispel?**

A. "All students can go to college if they want to. You do not have to be an 'A' student. There is a college for everyone."

**Q. Are there unique chal-**

**lenges that the typical Poly student presents that one might not find in some other schools?**

A. "The majority of students are first generation going to college. As a result, they do not have the guidance and information regarding college."

**Q. A number of colleges come to Poly to present their programs. Have these meetings been well attended?**

A. "All meetings are very well attended. UC San Diego had 50 students. USC and Dartmouth were very popular this year."

**Q. How does a college counselor know when he or she has been successful?**

A. "When students meet application deadlines and financial aid deadline. Also, when they come back and tell me they are happy at the university."

## THE OPTIMIST

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# Foreign Correspondence With Grads Inspired By WWII Vet

Writing memoirs helped Ron Mendoza see today's soldiers need home support too.

By Adam Aguirre  
Optimist Staff Writer

To understand how Special Ed teacher Ron Mendoza began a lengthy correspondence with a couple of Poly grads in Iraq some months ago, you have to know the story of Mendoza's uncle.

"My uncle Ruben was always my favorite uncle when I was a kid, but he was always somewhat of a recluse," Mendoza said. "He lived in the back of my grandmother's house in a converted garage and I would visit him out there while all my other relatives would congregate in the house."

One night in 1998 Mendoza and his wife saw Steven Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan." They came out entirely numb from the impact of movie.

"For some reason that movie impacted me like nothing ever did before," Mendoza remembered. "I had to find out if what I saw was what really happened. I read a lot about it including, a book called 'D-Day' by Stephen Ambrose, but then I remembered some of my relatives saying something about my Uncle Ruben in Normandy."

A few weeks after Mendoza saw the movie, he stopped by to talk to his uncle. Mendoza was stunned by everything he learned from Ruben.

"Ruben was 76 yrs. old and totally coherent, just as I had known him as a kid."

"Ruben actually landed at Normandy on the same beach shown in 'Saving Private Ryan' (Omaha Beach) with the third wave of soldiers making the invasion. He participated in five campaigns: Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes, Rhineland and Central Europe. He lost most of his friends in the Battle of the Bulge at Ardennes. When he first arrived at Normandy in June 6, 1944, his company was combined with another company to add up to 233 men. When he left the European Theatre to go home in November of 1945, 33 of those original soldiers came home alive."

Mendoza wrote down the unit history so there would be a record about Ruben so others could read it. After 3 years of interviewing and researching, Mendoza finished the book.

"This sort of made him a celebrity amongst his family and friends for the last years of his life," said Mendoza.

The book was Ruben's personal story and included his



Photo By Erick Robles

**MEMOIR AUTHOR:** *Special Ed. teacher Ron Mendoza holds unit coin, a gift from Iraqi vet and Poly grad Javier Rios.*

discharge papers, unit record pictures, and maps.

"During all my interviewing with Ruben and writing the book, I was always struck by how much Ruben talked about his buddies he was in combat with. I began to appreciate what these soldiers did for us and what they went through. It was because of what I learned from my Uncle Ruben that I felt it was necessary to support any soldier I knew personally in any way possible. That's why I wrote to Javier and Isaac," said Mendoza.

Mendoza emailed both Alatorre and Rios daily. Email was fast and Mendoza could get emails in return the same day.

"I really didn't even know Isaac before that. I just saw his photo in the main office with a letter that he had sent to our principal. Funny thing is that I could never get Alatorre to stop calling me Mr. Mendoza."

Mendoza has a family with quite a few soldiers so he knew not to ask certain types of military questions. He just asked about how Alatorre and Rios were and their family, how they got to where they are in life now, education and things about Poly.

"The main thing I told Javier and Isaac is that I wanted them to know that I was supporting them and was praying

for them to have a safe return home to their family and friends," Mendoza said.

The saddest stories Ruben told Mendoza were about some firefight or other incident where one or more of his buddies were killed.

"My uncle told me that one time he was getting ready to go on patrol in the small German town but he wasn't feeling well this particular day. A friend of his offered to go in his place and Ruben's C.O. consented.

The patrol went into the town, got ambushed and his friend was killed.

Ruben talked about the soldier as if he was his real blood brother, not just some guy he knew.

Fast-forward many years later to March of 2004. Ruben was in the hospital and not doing very well. He told his sister he wanted to be buried with his brothers. Since Ruben came from a large family of 14, we thought he meant his blood brothers. However what he really meant is that he wanted to be buried in a military cemetery with his brothers-in-arms.

Ruben's story made me realize that it only takes one moment, one wrong thing, and anyone near the firing line or war zone could be gone. This helped to form my commit-



**GERMANY, MARCH 1945 :** *Pvt. Ruben (right), Mendoza's uncle, shortly after his unit fought in the Battle of the Bulge.*

ment to write Rios and Alatorre."

Mendoza ran into Rios, his wife and son in the main office one day after Rios returned from duty. He received the unit coin about 2 weeks later with a warm handshake and a short speech.

"A unit coin identifies its bearer as a unit member and is a symbol of pride, respect and fellowship. Once you are given a challenge or a unit coin you have to carry it at all times, and you may be challenged at any time by another individual who is carrying a unit coin as well. If the challenger challenges you and you fail to produce your coin, then you have to buy the challenger a drink."

The coin Mendoza received



Photo By Erick Robles

**SYMBOL OF PRIDE:** *Coin given to Mendoza by Rios.*

## Bus Ride Worth the Trip for Early Bird Parrots

[Bus Story from Page 1]

breakfast after I'm done getting ready. I have to leave my house at 6:13 a.m. to take bus 28 down Olympic and Western and get to my school bus stop by 6:40 a.m. Recently, since I've been going to sleep by 10:30 p.m., I've been waking up at 5:30 a.m., so I have no time to eat. If I miss the school bus I get late to first period or sometimes I don't even get to class.

Attending this school helps me to stay out of trouble, plus it doesn't hurt that teachers here care a lot more for their students.

I personally think that at the end of the day waking up early, not getting enough sleep and not having the chance to eat breakfast are all going to pay off sooner or later in my life."

Whitney Ixchop, junior, 15 yrs. old, lives in downtown LA, about half an hour away.

"I come to Poly to get a better education, to get away from my hometown and have

is about the size of a 50-cent piece. It is made up of different colors and has a map of Iraq on one side and an outline of Baghdad on the other side with a tiny Iraqi flag and an American flag next to each other on both sides. The soldiers also receive them.

"When I received the unit coin from Sergeant Rios, it was truly an honor, I was blown away," says Mendoza.

Mendoza, Alatorre, and Rios are still good friends today. They talk whenever they have a chance.

"I probably see Alatorre every day or at least hear him on the walkie talkie. I don't see Javier as much as I used to because he is now in a classroom teaching an ROP class and not running around Poly as a computer tech anymore. Nevertheless, I feel a certain camaraderie towards both of them that wouldn't have been there had I not communicated to them while they were in Iraq."

Mendoza did a service not only to his country by supporting the troops overseas but he also did service to his friendship to Lieutenant Corporal Isaac Alatorre and Sergeant Javier Rios.

Uncle Ruben would be proud.

new experiences. When I am ready, I take bus 26 to Beverly and Virgil where I wait for the school bus to pick me up.

Getting up early is the hardest part. I have to be up at 5:00 a.m. to leave at 6:00 a.m. If I miss the school bus then I have to take the Metro to North Hollywood and then bus 166 to get off at Lankershim and Roscoe. The ride is about one hour and a half.

Attending Poly is beneficial to my education because the teachers are better and they educate you way different than my home school. I think that it's worth it because I am getting a better education, a chance to see a different environment, meeting new people and just better stuff that I'll be getting from my home school."

The stories of these three students are typical of those who commute to Poly by bus. They represent the other students, the ones that don't show up in the statistics. They'll do whatever it takes to get a good education.



# Talent Development Puts Poly on the Right Track

[Talent Story From Page 1]

them “freshmen success academies.” Their freshmen academy concept is a big part of what a Talent Development High School is.

For the upper grades, they have upper grade academies. Now I think there are about 50 around the country, but there were only a few for a long time.”

**Q. Who at Poly made the connection with John Hopkins? Did they find us?**

A. “I think Jan Fries-Martinez, our principal, had heard about them at a conference and then she connected with the head of Talent Development and then we did the connection that way.”

**Q. Does this overlap with other programs already at Poly? Are we approaching overkill on poor kids performing poorly?**

A. “One of the reasons we liked Talent Development High School is they really work with us. They were good enough to give us the flexibility to continue some of the things we’re doing plus work with them and do some of the program. It is just a really good fit.”

**Q. Why was Poly the first school in California to be introduced to the program?**

A. “I think we’re pretty easy to work with compared to some schools. We’re pretty low-maintenance. We’re easy-going and we want to do the right thing for kids. I think also because we were already on the 4x4 block schedule, we already had a freshman academy, it was an easy fit.”

**Q. What parts of the program are in place at Poly now?**

A. “We have the freshmen academy, we have the career academies with most grade 11 and some in 10th, the 4x4 block schedule, the transition to advanced mathematics class, which is basically an eight-week diagnostic math class before students take algebra. There’s also another class that they take for eight weeks before they take geometry, the Geometry Foundations class.

We also have the freshmen seminar class that encompasses college prep and life skills in the 9th grade.

**Q. How will the program benefit Poly and how will these benefits be measured?**

A. “Largely due to the 4x4 schedule and Talent Development High School, our 9th graders and 11th graders are doing well. 93% of 9th grade went to 10th grade for 2 years in a row, and then last year

the 10th grade went to 11th grade. 85% of them went to 11th grade. This year we have 944 seniors, the most seniors we’ve ever had. We only have 910 freshmen. Most schools in the nation don’t have a larger senior class than freshmen class. It’s really unusual. Last year we had the lowest dropout rate in the district of all the high schools. For the seniors, it was only 0.6% dropout rate.

In over 4 years, it was 3.6%, which was absolutely better than any other school. So this kind of coincides with what we’re doing with Talent Development High School on the 4 x 4 block schedule, our academies and things. We’re always doing so many different programs that are helping our attendance office, but the 4x4 block schedule and the Talent Development High School are definitely a huge part of it. Also the test scores are going up. Our API (Academic Performance Index) keeps going up. And the test scores have gone up every year. They’re continuing to rise so that’s also good.”

*“93% of 9th grade went to 10th grade for 2 years in a row, and then last year the 10th grade went to 11th grade. 85% of them went to 11th grade. This year we have 944 seniors, the most seniors we’ve ever had. We only have 910 freshmen.”*

- Ed Trimis

**Q. Who will track the statistics on improvement? Them or us?**

A. “We work with them. We collect a lot of the data ourselves and they help with the data. There’s an external evaluator for the small learning community with the grant that also looks at data and so we all kind of work on it together. Ultimately it’s our responsibility, but they’re kind of anxious to get their information so we work with them on that.”

**Q. Will this program add new courses to Poly? Will special teacher training be required?**

A. “We’ve actually had lots of professional development with them coming in. They’ve



Photo By Erick Robles

**HONEY, I SHRUNK THE COMMUNITY:** Assistant Principal Ed Trimis is responsible for the 9th Grade Centre, Talent Development and other programs affecting the Poly campus.

worked for the classes we currently have; they do training for that. If we have some new talent classes, they’ll provide training for that. A lot of what we’re doing is the new courses are going through the academies, which are not really in Talent Development High School classes, they’re classes we’re developing, but it all fits together. The newer classes will be added to the upper grades.”

**Q. What kind of classes will be added?**

A. “The ones I’m familiar with are for the sport academy. But the other academies are working on new classes also, so they’re going to have a good introduction to their academies plus some specialized classes like that as electives.

I’d imagine next year the 11th and 12th grade are going to look quite a bit like the 10th grade this year, their office and everything set up, and I think 11th and 12th are probably going to be that way next year. That’s the goal.”

**Q. What curricular and instructional changes or new programs will be created?**

A. “Well, quite a bit of what we do in the 9th grade I think the other small learning communities are looking at. We’re doing these five instructional strategies and then each of the small learning communities are developing other techniques and things. One of the other things we’re doing now in the 9th grade is really pushing the homework on the website. You can go and get your homework and the teachers post homework.”

**Q. Will parents or the community be involved? How?**

A. “We look at parent involvement and how to bring more parents in. We’ve been

conferencing with lots of parents of students that get, in the 9th grade, two or more fails. We’re meeting with parents and that’s been really helpful. I think through the “coffee with the principal” and through parent meetings, the parents are getting more involved. We have pretty good parent participation with the 9th grade, but I think everyone’s working on that. That’s always a goal. Every school has a problem with that.”

**Q. What are your responsibilities with this program? Are any others in the 9th grade center involved?**

A. “Talent Development High School is a school-wide program, so I have two jobs at Poly. I do some things school-wide and then I do my job with the 9th grade. It’s really two different things. I’m over here doing work for 9th grade but probably half the time today, I’ve spent working on school-wide things that are going on with the school that I need to help with, even though I’m over here.”

**Q. How often do the John Hopkins representatives come to Poly?**

A. “It’s about 20 to 30 days in the year. They come for like three or four days and then three or four weeks later they’ll come another three or four days. But for the freshmen seminar, I think he’s coming for 20 days and for that time they do professional development. They run training for the teachers and they visit classes and work with the teachers in the classes. They do the same thing for the math and for the other programs.”

**Q. How long has the John Hopkins Talent Development been going on?**

A. “Formally we started in July of 2004; that’s when we

went on the block schedule and we started the freshmen center. Informally, we were talking about talking with them and doing some training before the year started. Just like before we went on the block schedule, the year before, we did a lot of training for the teachers in how to teach in the block. Talent was working with us starting them also.”

**Q. How has the program done at other schools?**

A. “We’re the benchmark for California. It’s working really well here. Other schools that are not as developed as we are don’t really have any data to show how it’s working yet because it takes at least two years until you see your base data and where you’re going.

Other Talent Development High Schools are generally not as large as we are. They’ll have a freshman academy with 300 kids in it where we have 900 to 1,000. We’re looking at three freshmen academies, one for each track.”

**Q. Is there statistical data available that indicates academic improvement or is the program too new to tell?**

A. “Because we’re doing so many things, it’s hard to tell exactly if the talent stuff is entirely why we improved, but the test scores have improved every year and the 9th grade, especially, has improved.”

**Q. Anything else you would like to add that’s important?**

A. “We really, as a school, do very good in hanging together and working with each other and I’m very excited, of course, that we’re far along with the 9th grade, but I’m really thrilled with all the other work that the upper grade academies are doing now, kind of getting ready to finalize our whole program. It’s really very exciting.”



# Halloween From Celtic To Candy

Irish and Roman rituals become candyfest for modern-day ghouls and goblins.

By Gaby Herrera  
Optimist Staff Writer

Most Americans celebrate Halloween, but how much do we really know about this holiday?

Today Halloween is celebrated most commonly in the United States, Ireland, Puerto Rico, the United Kingdom, Canada, and New Zealand.

Halloween comes from the Celts, who lived in Ireland, the United Kingdom, and northern France 2000 years ago. For the Celts, the end of summer marked the end of the year. Celts celebrated their new year on November 1. The new year marked the end of the summer and harvest and the beginning of the dark and cold winter.

A day before New Year, October 31, the Celts celebrated Samhain (pronounced ‘sow-en’). This was the day when the spirits of all those who had died during the past year would come back to earth. The goal of these spirits was to inhabit

the bodies of living persons. According to the Celts, this intermingling of the real world and the spirit world only happened on this one day.

To escape these roving spirits, Celtic villagers dressed up in costumes that made them look like ghouls and goblins. They left their homes to roam the neighborhood, making all sorts of noises that might frighten away the spirits. They even put out the fires in their homes so the spirits would stay away.

Celts also thought that the spirits made predicting the future easier for the Druids, or Celtic Priests. These predictions were important because the people felt comfort and relief during the cold and dark winter.

To celebrate this event the Celts made immense bonfires. People gathered around the bonfires and threw sacrifices such as crops and animals into the fire. During this celebra-



LETS GET CREEPY: Celtic villagers dressed up as ghouls.

tion, the Celts wore homemade costumes using the skin or the heads of dead animals.

By A.D. 43, Romans had conquered the majority of Celtic territory. In the course of the four hundred years that they ruled the Celtic lands, two festivals of Roman origin were combined with the traditional Celtic celebration of Samhain.

In the lasts days of October the Romans commemorated the passing of the dead. Romans called this day Feralia.

The Romans also had a day to honor Pomona, the goddess of trees and fruit.

In the seventh century, the Christian religion spread to Celtic territory. Pope Boniface IV designated November 1 as All Saints’ Day to honor saints and martyrs. This celebration was also called All-hallows, or All-hallowmas, meaning All Saints’ Day from the Middle English. The night before All Saints’ Day, Samhain, was called All-hallows Eve and,

later, Halloween.

Ireland’s potato famine of the 1840s drove many Irish to emigrate to America in the 1840’s, and they brought Halloween with them. “Mimicking the malignant spirits who were widely believed to be abroad on Halloween, gangs of youth blocked up chimneys, rampaged cabbage patches, battered doors, unhinged gates, and unstabled horses,” according to Nicholas Rogers, author of Halloween: From Pagan Ritual to Party Night.

One explanation for the custom of trick-or-treating says it dates to a ninth-century Christian custom called souling. On All Souls Day, Christians went begging for “soul cakes,” which were square pieces of bread with currants. The beggars promised to say prayers for the dead relatives of those donated food. These prayers could hurry a soul’s passage out of “limbo” and into heaven.

## Pluto In Doghouse

Planet X gets axed by astronomers.

By Heriberto Jauregui  
Optimist Staff Writer

After seven decades of considering Pluto a planet, the Members of the International Astronomical Union decided to put Pluto out of the planetary club.

“Science is self-correcting eventually, even when strong emotions are involved,” explained Dr. Mike Brown of the California Institute of Technology said. “It’s been a long time coming.”

“The new ruling will stand up under the highest scrutiny,” Dr. Alan J. Boss, a planetary theorist at the Carnegie Institution of Washington said.

Pluto stood apart from the previously discovered planets right from the start. Not only is it much smaller – only about 1,600 miles in diameter and smaller than the Moon – but its elongated orbit is tilted with respect to the other planets, and it goes inside the orbit of Neptune on part of its 248-year journey around the Sun.

The Optimist asked some members of Poly’s Science department about the Pluto decision.

“Now scientists and astronomers have a rigid classification for what a planet is. Now this classification can help to map out other solar systems in the universe,” said Hannah

Gabriel.

“It benefits science. Brings consistency to the order we have given to the universe.” teacher Peter Johansson agreed. “But I have many mixed feelings about it,” he said. “It’s been known for many years for not fitting the definition of a planet.”

“It provides a more clear definition about a planet. It will benefit astronomers,” said Jim Schwagle.

“I am going to miss it, but science changes,” said Carmen Dongo.

New generations will easily adapt to Pluto’s new status. But for people who had known Pluto as a planet for so long, it will be a bit difficult.

“The decision might be confusing, because for so long it has been considered a planet.” Schwagle said.

“I will keep teaching about it,” said Johansson. “I will tell about its background and the reasons why it is no longer a planet.”

“Yes, I will keep teaching about it because it’s part of our history,” Dongo said.

The hunt for Pluto began in 1905 when Percival Lowell (of Martian Canal infamy) hypothesized about the possibility of a Planet X in the outer solar system.

Lowell died before Pluto was discovered. Clyde Tombaugh found Pluto on Feb. 18, 1930.

## MySpace For Dummies

By Gaby Herrera  
Optimist Staff Writer

MySpace, a social networking website, has become very popular. How popular? Every day, 3.23% of all the people on the planet log on to MySpace. 100 million people have profiles on the site. If you don’t have one, people look at you weird.

But don’t worry. Setting up a MySpace profile is so easy even, well, even a dummy can do it.

Here are the four basic steps to create a MySpace account.

The first thing is to sign up. Go to Myspace.com and look where it says create an account. Here you have to choose a name. This can determine if you have thousands of friends or just Tom and two or three others. Choose your name based on who you are – something that sets you apart from everybody else. The name could be anything you want. Just make sure that when people read it they have an idea of your personality. The name will represent you, so choose wisely.

Now that you have a name, create your profile. You can make it as cool and fun as you want, or boring and dull. You can put movies, pictures, music and videos on it. Most people on MySpace want to have hundreds and hundreds of friends. If you want to have lots of friends and be popular,

create a colorful, fun profile.

Next is the quote. Everyone has a quote under his or her name. The quote allows people to have an idea of what kind of person you are, one more reason to figure you out. To make your quote more interesting, pick a quote from a book, a song, or from a famous person. It always works.

The last step is to up load your picture. Once you are in “home,” look for where it says “add or edit pictures.” Now, click “browse” and choose the picture you want. Click OK and that’s it. Remember that people always want to be friends with good-looking people. If you want to have lots of friends, take a good picture of yourself. Create a fantasy about yourself. Be glamorous.

Now that you have all four steps, you’re ready to make lots of friends at MySpace. But remember that these are only four basic steps. There are many other activities that you can do on MySpace. For example, you can put comments in your friends’ pages, and send bulletins to have lots of friends.

Lately, however, MySpace has become more than just a place for making friends. Several new MySpace users are using the site for commercial purposes.

Jesse Metcalf, the star of “John Tucker Must Die,” set up a MySpace profile just be-

fore the movie was released. When fans noticed that the actor’s studio paid for the site and Metcalfe wasn’t answering their comments himself, they got very mad. Girls would ask John to leave messages on their personal sites, and they would not get a response.

Many MySpace users are now getting a “friend request” from “Yaris.” Those who “accept” the request find themselves reading an advertisement profile from Toyota Motors about their new car, the Yaris.

These commercial uses of MySpace are unpopular with many users. The Wall Street Journal recently reported that “. . . the rapid growth of MySpace is slowing.”

Some MySpace users are experiencing problems with their own profiles as well. College graduates looking for jobs are finding that prospective employers are looking at their MySpace profiles. Employers tend to not hire those with inappropriate material, such as pictures of the job hunter drunk at a party.

Despite these recent uses of MySpace that seem to spoil the experience for some, the website remains incredibly popular. Having your own MySpace account is lots of fun. You just have to be cautious about what you post and whom you add as your friend.



# Animal Lovers Are A Special Breed

This club looks out for all creatures great and small.

By Michelle Gonzalez & Meri Sarkisyan  
*Optimist Staff Writers*

When three Poly students found an abandoned kitten in Fernangeles Park, they decided to take the animal home and care for it. The three girls named the kitten Princess Kia.

The students quickly realized how difficult caring for the kitten would be, so they took it to Karen Daneshvari, sponsor of Poly’s Animal Lovers Club, to nurture it.

After a visit to a veterinarian, Daneshvari bought antibiotics, special milk and a baby bottle to feed the kitten. For the first week, Daneshvari and her husband fed Princess Kia every two hours. The kitten slept on a carrier with a heating pad and a blanket to keep it warm. After 10 days, Princess Kia finally opened up her eyes.

“The kitten is making really good progress,” Daneshvari reported.



Photo By Karen Daneshvari

**ON THE BOTTLE:** *Found feline gets special care.*

As an original member of the Animal Lovers Club, Daneshvari has rescued and cared for many an animal over the years. She started the club five years ago, along with Poly teachers Leslie Wolfson and Karen Worle.

“In the first meeting, everybody connected to one another,” said Daneshvari.

“The club was created to help people understand how to make animals a part of the family, and how it is important to do so,” said Daneshvari. The Animal Lovers Club currently has about 25 student members.

Although not a rescue organization, the club does take lost animals without identifying collars or microchips to the

animal shelter. If possible, the club tries to contact the owners. Sometimes the club will find an animal another home or a club member will adopt it.

Daneshvari believes students who belong to the Animal Lovers Club have gained more respect for animals and the survival of the planet.

The club raises money to provide for visits to the vets, medication, and other needs of the found animals. Money is also used to pay for field trips and guest speakers, who come to talk about all kinds of programs that exist to help the animals.

For the past two years, Poly’s senior class has donated \$1,000 to the club.

This money is used to rescue and help lost animals like Princess Kia.

The club also contributes to the Humane Society and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) every year.

The Animal Lovers Club meets Fridays during lunch in room 72.

“New members are always welcome,” Daneshvari said.

# Isaacs Leads the Band at Competitions

*[Band Story From Page 1]*

one of the biggest bands Poly’s had since the 1970s. I don’t know if the band will ever get as big as it was last year but I know quality wise the students are capable of having the band be as good. A lot of it is going to depend on the kids’ attitudes and how much extra time they want to put in.”

This year’s competitions, including those against North Hollywood and Van Nuys, will be difficult. The LAUSD competition is also important.

Isaac doesn’t plan to do anything differently than he has in the past.

“You do the same thing you do every year. You fix your shows, you hope the kids concentrate and do the amount of work. It’s a lot of extra work and a lot of extra time and you do what you have to do. You do the best you can,” said Isaac about this year’s competitions.

This year’s competitions are at Heart High School, Granada Hills High School, Savanna High School and the LAUSD competition at Santa Barbara.

Practicing for competitions include learning the music, learning how to march, learning the show and perfecting the show. This year the band will perform songs from the South Park movie for the competitions.

“I thought it would be a fun

show to do. Something that another band hasn’t done and just to have a sense of humor.”

The band competes in division 2A (A division is determined by how many students are in the band.) North Hollywood and Van Nuys are Poly’s main competitors.

Fundraising provides most of the money the band needs to pay for expenses, including uniforms, travel expenses and instrument repair and replacement.

“Instruments are not cheap,” said Isaacs, noting that a tuba costs \$4,000-5,000. Color guard flags cost \$1,500-2,000.

This year Isaacs bought a popcorn machine, so band members are selling a lot of popcorn. Isaacs expects to raise about \$4000.

Isaacs went to USC, where he was TA of the marching band. He also played in marching bands and taught his own youth group. Then he worked in the film industry for 20 years. But he knew someday he would make a career change.

“I wanted to teach, so I just did it,” Isaacs explained.

He taught one year at an elementary school and three at a middle school before coming to Poly.

Isaacs believes strongly in doing good work.

“There are a lot of benefits,” Isaacs said, “for doing a



Photo By Erick Robles

**USC GRAD:** *Steve Issacs.* piece of music or doing any art where you actually work on it and perfect it, doing anything that doesn’t come quickly that you have to work at and perfect.”

“Your attitude towards your performance and your professionalism and yourself and being able to make a commitment and showing up everyday and following through and doing the performances is really good as far as helping students mature.”

“The music that we’re playing, when you first pass it out, it is really hard for everyone to play, but it isn’t beyond their abilities. It just takes a lot of commitment and a lot of work on their part.”

“Putting in the effort and actually being able to realize the accomplishment and not being afraid of doing something and doing it well has the same educational value as learning to do anything well.”

Spoken like a true bandleader.

# Parrots Sync the Singing As ‘N Sync Turns Girls To Men

Crowd favorites “Hips Don’t Lie” and “Barbie Girl” power lunchtime songfest.

By Julio Aquino & Rimon Elkotbeid  
*Optimist Staff Writers*

Hips may not lie, but lips did as Parrot performers mimicked and danced their way through eight tunes by artists such as ‘N Sync and Shakira during the annual Student Lip Sync while the real thing blasted over the PA system.

This year’s lip sync was sponsored by the Peer Mentors and the College Prep Club.

‘N Sync (Gerbis Gamez, Esmeralda Gutierrez, Perla Hernandez and Antonieta Urrutia) got the party started with “Tearin’ Up My Heart.” Junior Karen Aguilar played teen idol Justin Timberlake. More than the music was faked on a performance that featured girls

dressed up as guys.

“I’m amazed people thought we were real guys from beginning to end,” said the lanky Aguilar.

Other “performers” included the Pussycat Dolls doing “Beep,” Shakira (Kelly) and her hips, Aqua singing “Barbie Girl” and Gloria Trevi, the 80s singer recently taken into custody by Mexican authorities.

The show closed with “Calculus” by 2gether (Cindy Contreras, Susy Gonzales, Lucia Herrera, Michelle Lazo, Cynthia Ramirez and Roxana Reyes). Then all the performers joined “Justin Timberlake” for a dance mix that rattled the rafters.

The student sync show brought in over \$1,300.

“This was an event for the clubs to raise money for trips, t-shirts, scholarships and other things,” said sponsor and Poly dean Pia Damonte.

# Poly “Socio-Economically Disadvantaged,” says PSAA

*[API Story from Page 1]*

cause of the other two parts of the PSAA: the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools program and the Governor’s Performance Award. These two parts decide how much funding a school will get and if the state needs to get involved in improving school performance.

The II/US program is for schools that fail to meet their target scores. Telltale signs of a school on the II/US list are a sudden change of principal or administrators, new rules, enforced old rules, or new programs and classes to tutor students for the CAHSEE, CST or other state test.

Included in “Immediate Intervention” are funding for improving student academic performance and the creation of programs to help students pass the test.

Poly avoided this designation with its remarkable showing on the API.

Meanwhile, many LAUSD schools have seen their scores continue to decline year after year.

LAUSD officials have reported that the total growth in achievement over the six years since the PSAA became official has generally declined.

The API scores of schools near Poly fit that profile. San Fernando High went down 15 points from last year and Sylmar High went down 26. Neither school met its target score. Poly was part of the 22% of

high schools in the LAUSD that did.

San Fernando, Sylmar and Poly all have similar demographics, described as “socio-economically disadvantaged” by PSAA. So what did Poly do right?

“We’ve built into our master program many academic interventions,” explained Fries-Martinez. “These ‘academic interventions’ include Saturday school to prepare for the CAHSEE, the Beyond the Bell office, and the 9th and 10th grade Centers.”

Even tardy sweeps and harder penalties for excessive absences are considered interventions and important for the academic well-being of the school.

“Good attendance means more kids in school learning,” said Fries-Martinez.

Six years ago, Poly was at the very bottom of the rankings. Its test scores were among the worst in the district. How to explain Poly’s success?

“Hard-working teachers, a dedicated staff, and cooperative students all add to the growing success of Poly,” said Fries-Martinez. “It is a whole operation and results have truly become the entire school’s responsibility.”

Can Poly continue improving?

“We’ve gotten better at it, but it’s going to take a lot of hard work,” said Fries-Martinez. “I know that the Poly Parrots can do it.”



# Leftie Linares Backhand Fools Opponents

Poly’s #1 singles discusses the game, her game and her future.

By Karen Aguilar  
Optimist Staff Writer

Vanessa Linares, Poly’s No. 1 singles girls’ tennis player, does not come from a long line of tennis players. In fact, she didn’t know anything about the game.

“I was clueless,” she admitted.

Nor had she played any other sports.

“Not in a team, just playing around like soccer and basketball,” Linares said.

But she was intrigued when she saw a couple of tennis players volleying one day.

“I was walking by the tennis court when I was in 9th grade and I told myself ‘Oh I wish I could learn how to hit like that.’”

The next year she joined Poly’s girls’ tennis team.

“I started in JV and I lost my first match ever. Mr. Lee saw that I improved a lot in my first season so I quickly moved to playing #3 doubles. I played #1 doubles with Megan Ceja in my second year and this season I am playing #1 singles.”

From the beginning, Linares had fun.

“That’s why I stayed,” she said.

Coach Jerry Lee helped her get started.

“He taught me how to get the ball over the net,” Linares said.

Then he sent her out on the court.

“It was kind of exciting, even though sometimes I forgot to keep the score during a match, but it was good,” Linares remembered.

Since then, she’s worked on her game a lot.

“I have gotten a lot better; I have improved pretty well,” she said. “I couldn’t hit the ball over before; I rarely miss them anymore. Now I have faster legs and I run more quickly. I also have a better focus on the



Photo By Erick Robles

**SINGLES :** *Vanessa Linares plays her final season as Lady Parrot’s #1 singles.*

ball.”

And being left-handed helps, Linares noted.

“My backhand is my main strength. I am left handed, so my shots catch my opponent by surprise,” she said.

Linares, now in her third year, still gets coaching from Lee.

“He still gives me lessons. He helps all of us,” Linares said. “He usually sees me play and tells me to be more consistent after hitting the ball.”

Like all tennis players, Linares has aspects of her game she wants to improve.

“My forehand is pretty weak,” Linares noted. “My backhand is stronger than my forehand. And being left-handed helps.”

The mental aspect of tennis is a part of the game that sometimes affects Linares, especially when she first meets her opponent.

“Sometimes, if they are tall, I get a little nervous because I am short,” Linares said.

But Linares also tries to keep the game in perspective.

“I just come out here to have fun and keep myself in shape,” she said.

Some people see tennis as a rich kid’s sport, but Linares isn’t one of them..

“A lot of people play it. Tennis is no different from the other sports. All kinds of people can play it,” she believes.

Linares has enjoyed her years with the Poly tennis team and coach Lee.

“I got to learn how to play a new sport and I also got to meet a lot of people,” she said.

After graduation, Linares will attend UC Riverside and major in medicine or business.



Photo By Christian Faundez

**ALL SMILES:** *Cheek-to-cheek cheerleaders proudly display the Parrot blue and gold before performing at another game.*

## Huskie Workhorse Perez More Than A Match for Parrot Tacklers

Go-Go NoHo out kicks, outruns and outscores mistake-plagued Poly.

By Juan Carlos Sanchez  
Optimist Staff Writer

Reading North Hollywood’s running plays Friday night was pretty easy. Expect running back Rudy Perez to take a handoff and then it’s catch him if you can. Poly’s tacklers couldn’t and Perez torched the Parrot defenders for 257 yards in 28 carries as the Huskies won 27-12.

Despite its ongoing failure to make tackles or protect its quarterback, Poly was still in this one for much of the contest, however, and scored two touchdowns before losing.

But Poly’s problem with closing out quarters continued. With eight seconds left in the first, Huskie workhorse Perez took a handoff from quarterback Lopez and ran the football 70 yards for North Hollywood’s first touchdown of the night. Along the way, he broke three Poly tackles, another issue for Poly Friday evening and so far this season.

Poly’s possession stalled early with a quarterback sack, but an interception and a 20-yard run put the Parrots on the Husky 40 with 8:28 to go in the half. A 23-yard pass by Sanchez to Daniel Mendiola in the end zone capped the 40-yard Poly drive and the Parrots were on the scoreboard.

But the Huskies answered with an 80-yard march to the end zone, with their second score coming on a quarterback sneak by Chris Lopez. Along the way North Hollywood managed to eat up most of the clock for the second quarter. Only a Poly interception by defensive end Ernest Walker (the first of two) in the end zone with 18 seconds left in the half prevented a third NoHo score. Poly escaped to the locker room behind 14-6.

Another sack of Sanchez and a weak punt put the ball back in the Huskies’ hands to start the third. Four plays later, QB Lopez launched a high arching pass to Pedro Montelongo for a touchdown. The play was called back on a penalty, however, and the Huskies’ bad luck continued with a fumble 8 yards from the goal line.

The error-filled 3rd stumbled on with a Poly fumble that North Hollywood recovered. But a costly holding penalty forced the home team to settle for a 30-yard field goal attempt. It went wide of the mark.

The last quarter started with Poly receiver Terell Cable watching a 47-yard Husky kick bounce past him to the Poly 9. But he followed that mistake with a 34-yard run to the 43, dragging Huskie tacklers with him for yards. Then miscues began to plague Poly. A penalty (illegal man downfield) followed by an interception put the Huskies at midfield. Perez raced 39 yards to the 11 and followed later with a plunge up the middle for the touchdown to put North Hollywood up 21-6.

With 5:40 on the clock, Poly had a thread-the-needle pass from Sanchez called back on another illegal-man-downfield call. North Hollywood’s Lopez then threw his own spectacular 35-yard aerial on first down and bullied his way into the end zone on a quarterback sneak on the next play. Time passed: 30 seconds.

But Poly’s Parrots still had some fight left. Sanchez went to the air and Poly drove 80 yards for its second touchdown on Ernest Walker’s 25-yard catch in the end zone. The two-point conversion failed and the clock ran out.

Poly’s game stats improved over the previous week. Cable rushed for 94 yards on 14 carries and Sanchez’s passing accuracy was more efficient, making 16 of 32 attempts for 138 yards.

## Unchivalrous Knights Beat Lady Parrots And Grant’s Lancers Too Sharp Too

#3 singles Genalyn Reyes and # 2 doubles win their second but team loses.

By Heriberto Jauregui  
Optimist Staff Writer

Still looking for their first victory of the year, Poly’s girls’ tennis team found themselves one match short this time, with visitor Sherman Oaks taking home a 4-3 win.

“It was a very close game,” said coach Jerry Lee. “We could have won this one. The difference was a swing match. We must beat them next time.”

#3 singles Genalyn Reyes and #2 doubles Cynthia Alvarez and Debbie Guevara continued their winning ways with their second victories in a row and #3 doubles Julissa Delgado and Adriana Soto also got in the win column.

But Poly’s #1 singles, Vanessa Linares, had a tough



Photo By Karen Aguilar

**2 WINS AND COUNTING:** *#3 singles Genalyn Reyes.*

match against one of the league’s undefeated players, Valerie Garcia.

Garcia’s serve served her well. Linares answered with a strong game of her own, forcing Garcia to commit errors.

But it was the only game Poly’s #1. would win. Garcia took the next seven with an accurate first serve and a strong forehand for an 8-1 win.

Poly’s league record is now 0-4 and overall is 0-7. The Parrots play Verdugo on the 19th and Sherman Oaks on the 23rd.

### Grant Match

The Lady Parrots gave visiting Grant High a run for their money but managed only three wins against the Lancers.

“I am a bit disappointed because Grant is a weak team. We have to improve and beat them next time,” said coach Jerry Lee.

Poly victories came from #2 singles Megan Ceja 8-6, #3 singles Genalyn Reyes 8-4 and # doubles Cynthia Alvares and Debbie Guevara 8-1.

Poly’s #1 singles player Vanessa Linares made a stand at 7-0, hitting three winners to take the next two games before losing 8-2 on a tight game that also went to deuce.

After losing the first game, Linares fought back, taking four of the next six games to deuce, but the visitor’s strong serve was too much for the #1 Parrot.

“We have to practice our basics, group drills and strategies,” said Lee.



## Strong Poly Defense Puts The Muscle On Mustangs, While Sanchez Delivers Passes In Poly Scoring Spree

### Aerial bombardment by Parrot QB leads victory over smaller Mustangs.

By Juan Carlos Sanchez  
Optimist Staff Writer

Poly used an early first quarter touchdown to help set the tone for their game with Salesian's Mustangs last Thursday and cruised to a 38-26 victory.

A 70-yard touchdown pass by Parrot quarterback Wally Sanchez to receiver Ernest Walker put Poly on the scoreboard first at about the six-minute mark. A fumble recovery by Poly's Daniel Saldivar began the 81-yard touchdown drive by the Parrots.

Mustang quarterback Chris Flores came right back with 12 of his 149 passing yards for the night with a touchdown pass. Poly's defense blocked the extra point attempt, leaving the score at 7-6 Poly with 2:27 in the first quarter.

Poly's kicker Napoleon Guerrero pinned the Mustangs at their own 20-yard line and the home team was forced to punt from their own 19. Poly

*An errant Sanchez pass, tipped by receiver Daniel Mendiola and caught by Ernest Walker on third and thirteen, set up the third Parrot touchdown.*

The 54-yard drive ended on a 3-yard run by running back Terell Cable.

With 2:30 remaining in the first half, the Mustangs began their drive from their own 35 yard line. After a pass interference penalty on Ernest Walker, Salesian had possession at Poly's 39. A Flores pass in the end zone to Mustang receiver Salazar resulted in their second TD. Poly's defense saved two more points with a sack of



Photo By Erick Robles

**TRIPLE SCORING THREAT** : Receiver Ernest Walker (left), quarterback Wally Sanchez (center) and Terell Cable did the heavy lifting for Poly's offense in the Parrots' Thursday win.

Flores on the Mustang conversion. Poly led 21-12 at half-time.

A stalled Poly drive to start the third quarter put the Parrots on the Mustang 25. Poly

kicker Napoleon Guerrero made the field goal and the Parrots were up 24-12 with 1:44 gone in the third.

A hard hit by Jose Sarceno forced a fumble and defensive end Leo Perez recovered, but Poly gave the ball back at their own 20 yard

line. The Mustangs converted a crucial fourth and one play with a breakaway run into the end zone by Joseph Salazar. Poly's once comfortable 24-12 lead was now 24-20 with 2:17 left in the third quarter.

Cable got 20 of his 70 yards rushing to set the stage for Sanchez's 30-yard touchdown pass. Ernest Walker put six more points on the board for the Parrots with one of his five receptions.



Photo By Juan Carlos Sanchez

**CELEBRATION:** Parrot players raise their helmets after their 38-26 victory over Salesian's Mustangs Thursday night.

After being held by the bigger Parrot defense on three downs, the Mustangs looked deep into their playbook for a way to get on the scoreboard. A fake punt was just the trick and led to a Salesian touchdown, keeping the home team close at 31-26.

On Poly's next drive Sanchez injured his left ankle scrambling out of the pocket as he looked for an open receiver. Backup quarterback Edgar Barron replaced Sanchez for the remainder of the game.

The Mustangs had the ball at their own 20-yard line when

Lee Reyes came up with the defining play for Poly. A hard sack by the Parrots forced a fumble that Reyes recovered with 3:03 left in the game.

Barron's pass put Poly on the one-yard line. A quarterback sneak and an extra point by Napo completed the night's scoring.

Poly forced a Salesian turnover right before time ran out. It was a fitting finale to a night in which Poly's defense forced punts and turnovers, giving Sanchez plenty of freedom for his aerial fireworks display.

## Tough Game, Tough Girls Play Poly Volleyball

Coach Johannsen emphasizes passing as the key to winning more games.

By Jennifer Rivera  
Optimist Staff Writer

Science teacher and coach, Peter Johannsen is in charge of the girls' volleyball team. And to hear him tell it, it's a tough job.

"It takes three years to learn passing, which is the key to having a good volleyball team," Johannsen said.

So where is the team at now?

"They are good at serving and returning the ball," Johannsen said. "The areas that need improvement are court positioning and defense at the net."

The volleyball team is currently using a 5-1 formation, with one setter who rotates into all six positions on the court.

"If and when we train more setters, we will use the 6-2," said Johannsen, "which means we only set from the back court position."

But that's not all the Poly coach wants from the girls.

"The team requires more consistency on the court and the ability to play defense, not make many serving errors," said Johannsen. "That would make the team stronger."

The ideal serve, Johannsen said, is the "floater."

"It's hit hard, but only a few feet above the net, and has no spin," Johannsen explained. "This makes it move like a knuckleball in baseball."

Like most coaches, Johannsen stresses teamwork.

"The team must work as a cohesive unit," Johannsen said, "moving and shifting quickly in the proper direction without error. Effort and communication are also key. But the most important skill is passing. Without excellent passing, nothing else happens. 'It begins with a pass.'"

What's the bottom line?

"Volleyball is a true team sport," Johannsen said. "It requires all team members to play well in order to win. It is important not to rely on only one or two players."

This year's team has ten players, all of whom have been with the squad for at least two years. Most are in their 3rd or 4th season and half are seniors.

Poly plays in the Sunset Six league, where the playoffs begin in early November.

## Frosh Beats Canoga Park In OT

By Michelle Gonzalez & Meri Sarkisyan  
Optimist Staff Writers

Poly's freshmen needed overtime to edge by Canoga Park last week, getting eight points after regulation for a 59-55 victory. Poly guards Victor Solano and Michael Covarrubias and forward Joe Martinez got the OT baskets.

With 25 seconds left in regulation, Poly center Emmanuel Herrera made two clutch free throws to put Poly up by 2. But Canoga Park countered

with a jump shot at the 8-second mark and the clock ran out at 51 all.

Solano led all Parrots with 23 points, 12 of those in the first half. Emmanuel Herrera had 13 and Covarrubias had 10.

The sophomores had worse luck.

Playing from behind all night, the sophs finally shut down the Hunters' defense in the fourth. But the comeback was too late, and Canoga Park escaped with a 43-41 win.



Photo By Ana Loera

**THE GIRLS OF VOLLEYBALL:** From left, Claudia Corral, Candy De Loera, Jenny Castellanos, Karina Mendez.