

The Poly Optimist

John H. Francis Polytechnic High School

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Politics '10

English, Math Under Revision

By Angel Silva
Staff Writer

New standards for schools nationwide were released by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association on March 10.

The change in standards will allow for standardization of tests and textbooks across the nation, as well as make education easier for students who move from one state to another.

New changes in educational standards include fewer, more thorough standards, and earlier learning targets.

For example, second graders will be expected to add and subtract three-digit numbers, and third graders will learn fractions earlier. Kindergarten students will learn to count to 100.

The shifts in topics across grades for English and math were decided on by studies of state, national, and international student performance, as well as the evaluation of educational professionals, teachers and researchers.

"These are rigorous standards. These standards are as high as the highest standards that any state has," said chairman of the math standards committee William McCallum.

The standards are drafted in plain English, with almost no educational terminology or jargon, making standards easier to understand and apply.

The new standards are endorsed by 48 states (including the District of Columbia) and two U.S. territories. Texas and Alaska are the only two states that are not adopting the new standards.

"Texas has chosen to preserve its sovereign authority to determine what is appropriate for Texas children to learn in its public schools," Texas' commissioner of education Robert Scott wrote in a letter. "It is clear that the first step toward nationalization of our schools has been put into place."

The public is allowed to comment on the standards until April 2, and final K-12 English and math standards will be published sometime in May.

Aca Deca Goes To State

The Parrot whiz kids headed to Sacramento after defeating rival North Hollywood and beat Granada Hills at the State Super Quiz.

By Stephy Menjivar
Staff Writer

Poly's Academic Decathlon advanced to the state competition for the first time in the school's history.

The team flew to Sacramento on March 12th to face fierce competition from the best Academic Decathletes in California.

Parrots beat rival and past Aca Deca champions North Hollywood at the regional level, earning Poly's Decathletes a spot at state.

Senior Aca Deca captain Tam Luu was the team's highest scorer walking away with four individual medals. Luu won three golds for art, music and highest team score and a bronze for his overall score in Division II.

Parrot Karinina Cruz came home with four individual medals: gold for art, silver for Super Quiz, bronze for music and language and literature.

Senior Alexander Lee received a gold medal for his speech with a score of 995 out of a possible 1000.

Freddy Palominos, also a senior, came back with a bronze medal for art and super quiz.

Sophomore Cathy Capalla won a silver medal for art.

In order to reach the state level the team had to come out on top in the regional level. The team waited anxiously for those results at the final ceremony in Los Angeles.

To that end MC Daniel Berdichevsky deliberately withheld Poly's final placement. Berdichevsky announced the first eight schools and made everyone believe that was it.

"Then he said, 'Oh, we have one more school,'" said Cruz. "After that, I just blanked out"



Photo by Karina Muñiz

HEAVY MEDALS: Poly's Aca Deca team show their medals from their State competition at Sacramento.

"I jumped for joy and grabbed and hugged the closest person I could find. I still don't think it has sunk in yet."
-Tam Luu

"I almost cried," said senior Reynaldo Orozco-Lopez. "We were all having a great time thanks to Block and we did not want that time to end, so finding out that we were going to state was like winning the lottery for us."

The Parrots scored 40,617 points out of 60,000, finishing 9th in the regional and scored 51 out of 60 in the Super Quiz relay.

Eight Poly Decathletes won 12 individual medals at the regional competition along with five honorable mention certificates and 22 conference certificates.

They scored 5,075 more points this year than last, earning the Parrots their second consecutive most-improved-in-conference trophy

and just missed taking the most-improved-overall trophy as well.

For the first time ever, Poly's Aca Deca team won the most coveted trophy that has carried rival North Hollywood's name for the last seven years (2003-2009). The trophy is currently displayed in the main office.

Poly's six-year veteran Aca Deca coach Brian Block was named "Coach of the Year."

Poly's Aca Deca team was seeded 34th out of 60 teams at State.

The team came home from the state contest with 22 medals and a plaque finishing third in Super Quiz for Division II and tenth place in the overall Super Quiz relay.

Poly Students' Safety at Risk

By Vivian Araujo
and Christina Balian
Staff Writers

The recent death of Poway High School senior Chelsea King reminds everyone that students may not be safe from sexual predators living near schools.

King went missing on February 25. Her body was found 11 days later in a shallow grave. The man accused of her murder is a convicted sex offender who lived in the neighborhood where she was jogging.

Several years earlier, seven

year old New Jersey girl, Megan Kanka, was raped and murdered by a child molester who had moved across the street from her home.

Kanka's death resulted in the passing of Megan's Law to protect kids from sexual predators near schools and playgrounds where children gather. This law required all convicted sexual offenders register on a national registry with their current place of residence.

California has required sex offenders to register with local law enforcement agencies for the past 50 years. Unfortunately, this law appears to offer little protection

for kids.

An example of the failure of this law occurred near Poly the first week of March. A female Poly student was recently flashed by an unknown Latino adult male. This incident occurred near Poly on Friday, March 5th at approximately 9:30 am.

Poly Principal Gerardo Loera sent letters to all parents concerning this incident, reminding "parents and community members to talk to their children about safety and letting an adult know immediately when a stranger approaches them."

[See Safety, pg 6]



Internet Photo

VICTIM: Chelsea King before her disappearance on Feb. 25.



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the
future

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to
perfect
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down
the
rabbit
hole

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EDITORIALS

Choices Besides College

As soon as they start high school, students are beaten over the head with the adage that to succeed in life, one must attend college. So everyone is pressured to graduate from college and get a job, to make something of their lives, if you will.

There's nothing wrong with attending college, don't get me wrong. But the idea that college is the only successful path after high school is a major annoyance.

Most students aren't prepared for the radical shift college life demands. No one's there to wake you up, no one's going to take roll, no one's going to remind you when an assignment's due or when the next test is. It's all up to the individual, as opposed to high school, where you can rely on others to pick up the slack.

On one hand, this freedom is a relief. But on the other hand, this sudden move into independence can be difficult to accommodate.

Yet everyone seems to hurry students to apply

to something that they might not be ready for. Not everyone is ready for university life right after high school.

The point is, students don't have to feel pressured to attend a university immediately. Students have other options for finding success after graduation.

If you're not a senior yet, consider other possibilities after high school, such as taking an internship in something that interests you. There are many paths out there besides the usual, "go to college, get a degree" path.

If you are a senior and have been accepted to a college, see if the university will allow you to take a year off to explore what you want to do after high school.

By all means, do continue with your education, do continue getting a degree, but don't feel tied down to a university. Feel free to explore your options and try different things. There's no rush, you're still young. Live and learn what you truly want in life.

Teens And Hard Times

Money. It's so easy to lose track of. It's even easier to find yourself in need of it. The world really does seem like it runs on money, especially for teenagers. One way or another, the necessity for money creeps into our lives.

Some in dire straits need to help pay the bills or support the family and need to get jobs to do so. Students about to enter college often need truckloads full of money to pay off their tuition and other expenses, books, room and board. What's the average cost of attending a UC school now again? Oh that's right, almost \$30,000. Per year.

Maybe the words 35 MPH mean nothing to you and you've got yourself a nice big traffic ticket.

Others just need money to satisfy wants. You might have a few twenties in your wallet at six and by midnight all that's left is a two dollar bill and fifty cents. Where did it all go? Twelve bucks for your movie ticket, ten for snacks, fifteen for that used video game you got later, five for arcade tokens,

twenty for that one random thing you thought would make an awesome gift for your friend, and so on. Or worse still, you (in a moment of temporary insanity you later regret) treat the whole gang of nine to dinner. That's a big bill.

Those of us who don't have jobs find ourselves stretched thin and have to make decisions on how to manage our wallets.

So how do we manage? What's available for us in terms of money?

The obvious choice would be to get a job. Sites like Monster.com and CareerBuilder.com offer many jobs for anyone looking for them. Also, some internships offer payment, so look for options that can get you money without much hassle.

As for college, there's a lot of money out there in the form of scholarships. There's a scholarship for almost everything nowadays, so it's just a matter of not being lazy and applying for them.

So don't complain about not having money, there's ways to get it. It just takes a bit of work.

UC's In Uproar

Recent racist events have been consuming UC campuses all over the State of California.

For example, an incident at UC San Diego where a noose was hung from at the university library stirred a lot of controversy. An anonymous apology was given later, but sorry can only do so much.

Under state law, hanging a noose is a symbol of lynching. This act is considered to be a misdemeanor that can bring up to a year in county jail and a \$5,000 fine.

Not only that but last month 11 UC Irvine students were arrested for disrupting a speech given by the ambassador of Israel. Despite the fact that the action would be a blatant example of racism, these students went ahead and did it anyway. I thought that the United States was built on the idea of religious tolerance of other cultures, but these students prove that there's people out there who can't tolerate diversity.

Even the Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, is appalled.

"The acts of racism and intolerance that we have witnessed are completely unacceptable and I join with the University of California President, Chancellors and student leaders in condemning these terrible incidents," said

Schwarzenegger.

Now normally the Governor himself is an idiot, but this time I actually agree with the guy - UC's are supposed to be about a higher education, meeting new people and having the best four years of your life.

I thought that the United States was built on the idea of religious tolerance, but these students prove that there's people out there who can't tolerate diversity.

Now I'm not saying that you won't encounter racism in college. To believe that is naïve - there will always be someone with a racist mind somewhere. But with the way things are going at the universities, I wouldn't be surprised that you will come across that someone more often than before.

Who wants to go to a university just to be made fun of your heritage and race? Something needs to be done to make schools better for minorities that worked hard to get into a university to begin with. Just because people have different ideals or religion doesn't mean that they should be treated any different.

How Much Is Too Much?

President Barack Obama believes that one simple way for parents to help their kids learn is by not allowing them to watch television.

Obama does not allow his daughters, Malia and Sasha to watch any television during the week. When his daughters come home from school all they do is their homework, eat dinner, and read until their bedtime. Obama says every parent, regardless of income level, can turn off the TV during the week.

Obama's family has resources most families don't. The Obama children are always watched and supervised. Unfortunately few parents have these resources and can afford live-in child care.

Parents who can't afford child-care may have to leave their kids unsupervised. That creates the chance to watch as much T.V. as they want, without a restriction. Parents use television as an electronic baby sitter, while they are working to earn enough money to support the kids. T.V keeps them out of trouble.

Television keeps kids enter-

tained after school with no adult at home and the kids who don't like doing homework or reading rely on television to fight boredom. If these kids don't have anything constructive to do with their time, they might go out and get in trouble or get hurt.

Some kids do their homework and try their best to do well in school but still use television to relax. T.V tends to relieve the stress kids have from living in such unsafe neighborhoods. Of course kids need to have self-discipline to limit how much television they watch. If not, they will not have enough time for their school work.

Eliminating television may help kids succeed in school. But television can teach kids as well. Kids can learn about events going on around the world and even necessary basics for reading, such as their ABCs.

Parents should control how much television their kids watch. Too much television can indeed fry the kid's brain. But shutting off the television set for the whole week is not realistic for many households.

THE OPTIMIST

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

EDITORIAL
POLICY

The OPTIMIST is the voice of the Poly community and accepts the responsibilities of a free press. The OPTIMIST follows the Code of Ethics for the Society of Professional Journalists. Editorials are the opinions of the staff.



"Bryan is an emotional, sincere and simple young man. He wants to go back to the 80's and see how school was then, hoping maybe there he would be cool."



Photos by Karina Muñiz

THEATRE TROUPE: The cast of "High School Daze," Poly's latest play production, featured students from Katrina Hetrick's Drama class and written and directed by ASAP teacher Glen Philip.

I've Seen That Movie Too

Poly play borrows film storyline to make its point about accepting who you are.

By Anthony Mandujano
Staff Writer

"Back to the Future," a 1985 comedy starring Michael J. Fox and directed by Robert Zemeckis, was about a dorky kid who got to travel back in time, only to find his real life was actually better.

Flash forward to February 2010, "High School Daze," the latest play production from Poly's drama department. Guess what happens?

Yup. Senior Jesus Cruz plays Bryan, a dorky kid who travels back in time, only to find out now is cooler and that he should be happy with his life. Written and directed by ASAP teacher Glen Philip, "Daze" features some enthusiastic acting in an unoriginal story. Poly drama teacher Katrina Hetrick served as technical director.

The cast includes Cruz and fellow nerd Darnell (Eduardo Ceron), love interest Gabigale (Diana Jauregui), bully and football player Jeff (Javier Mar-

mol), Old Lady (Valeria Jimenez) and Christina (Tina Flores).

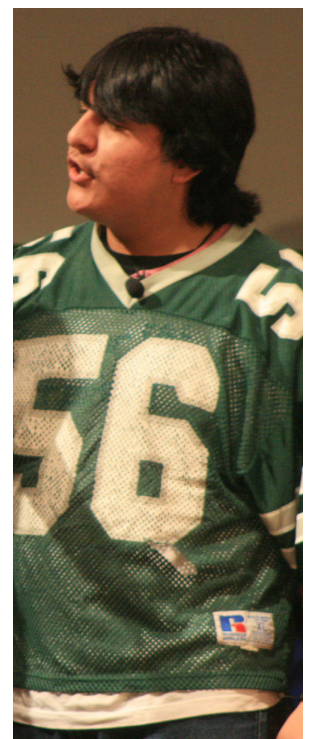
Bryan is an emotional, sincere and simple young man. He wants to go back to the 80's and see how school was then, hoping maybe there he would be cool.

Bryan's wish comes true when he and his pal Darnell, get stuffed in a locker by Jeff the jock and end up in 1986. However, Bryan soon learns that the past is not all it's cracked up to be.

Sitting on wooden bench crying, Bryan is approached by the Old Lady, who tells him that it was best he return to the future and stop suffering.

"Daze" made good use of music to go along with the story, especially "You're A Jerk" by New Boys. Bryan and his classmates danced "The Jerk" to the tune, a perfect choice for Bryan the school "jerk."

"Daze" is the first Poly Play Production since 2009's "Adios Mis Queridos" directed by Sharon Teeter.



CAST FROM THE PAST: From right: Bryan (Jesus Cruz), Darnell (Eduardo Ceron), Old Lady (Valeria Jimenez), and Jeff (Javier Marmol).

Behind the Brains – Poly’s Aca Deca Squad

By Stephy Menjivar
Staff Writer

The OPTIMIST interviewed Poly’s Academic Decathlon team for the 2009-2010 season, the first team ever to make it into the California State competition in Poly’s history. Here’s what they said:



Brian Block

Academic Decathlon Coach Brian Block talked to the Optimist about this past year’s success. Block said; “The best part is helping students learn over an extended period of time. For me, it is difficult to form a strong student-teacher relationship in a brief eight-week mester.

“I admire the way the team has developed an ability to work without instruction. Don’t get me wrong! There are still a great many things to help them with, such as economics, English, essay writing, and speech preparation.

“However, this year’s team, and last year’s team as well, study at home, even after a long day’s study session. I can tell this by their success on the practice quizzes and tests I often give them on the return. It’s truly remarkable.”

When asked what made this team a winning team, Block said, “Because THEY want to win and THEY want to win as a team. Obviously, I have many treasured memories from this year, but one of the most telling had to be on the day after we made it to the State competition. I handed out the individual scores to the team, which were hundreds, and in some cases thousands of points higher than they had ever achieved. I couldn’t believe that every student looked disappointed at his or her individual scores. I thought the team should be celebrating, but each individual looked at their scores feeling they should have scored higher. These students used this as motivation to study harder for the State competition.”

Reflecting in the study habits of the team Block said, “While school and home are the places we most often study, the team can pretty much study any time or any place. We had a contest this year challenging the students to take a picture of them studying in the most unusual location. I have photographs on my classroom wall with students studying while on Black Friday shopping lines, in restaurants, even when playing drums. On a recent trip to Big Bear, the students studied on the way up, and were even quizzing each other while making Freddy the Snowman!”

Block was born in the Bronx, New York, and lived on the east coast until moving to California in 1987. My parents were born in Brooklyn, New York.

I began teaching at Poly in 1997 or 1998. I became Aca Deca coach six years ago, at the request of Dr. Fries-Martinez, the principal at the time. She thought that my background would fit well with the requirements of an Academic Decathlon coach.

I have been married almost 19 years and have two children, a daughter in 8th grade and a son in 9th grade.

My children are incredibly understanding of the hours I have had to spend working with the team.

I became the tennis coach about three years ago, partly to encourage some of the competitive tennis players to use their drive to try out for Academic Decathlon. At least seven tennis players studied for Aca Deca during the year and three are members of this year’s team.



Tam Luu

For the state competition, Senior Tam Luu won a gold medal for art and music. He was also the highest scorer on the team and earned a bronze medal for his overall score in Division 2 for scholastics.

Luu sees the team as a family that has gone through all of the ups and downs of the season, failing together and succeeding together.

“The people I met here will resonate with me throughout my life,” said Luu

Luu describes going to state as an amazing experience and absolutely surreal.

“It just feels so amazing to know that something you have worked for so hard has actually come to you,” said Luu.

Luu came to the US from Vietnam with his family in 1996. He has one older brother.

For fun, Luu plays tennis. He is the captain and #1 singles of the Poly tennis team

In addition, Luu enjoys going to parties and meeting new people.

Luu does not have a particular favorite subject at school, but rather he enjoys any class that drives his curiosity.

After high school, Luu plans to pursue a degree in business administration and work for a large investment firm before enrolling in business school for his MBA.

“I want a career in the public sector as a public servant, like a state congressman, senator or governor,” said Luu



Karinina Cruz

Senior Karinina Cruz earned a gold medal for art, a silver medal for super quiz and bronze medals for music, language and literature.

For Cruz, the best part of Aca Deca is being able to spend months with perhaps the most remarkable and marginally crazy individuals she has ever met.

“Winning medals is great, but I would not trade the time I had with my teammates and with our coach for any award,” said Cruz.

Cruz said that Mr. Block is more than just a teacher or a coach, but rather like a second father. He gives dedication and passion a whole new meaning, which can be seen in his willingness to put up with their crazy antics like staying at school from nine in the morning until nine at night.

Cruz grew up with her maternal grandparents in the Philippines, and came to the United States in 2006, and has a 6 year old brother.

For fun Cruz goes to the movies, the mall and watches marathons of Law and Order: SVU and House.

“I like English and writing, as I have the freedom to write technically or artistically,” said Cruz on her favorite subjects. She has also been a writer on the Poly Optimist for the past 3 years.

Cruz plans to attend a four-year college and wants to major in English or journalism.



Reynaldo Orozco-Lopez

Senior Reynaldo Orozco won a bronze medal for interview and three other certificates in the regional level.

“Although each member is totally different from the next, we have come together as a family and we can trust each other for pretty much for everything,” said Orozco.

Orozco believes that Coach Block is a teacher that will do everything so that the student succeeds.

“Block is a person that really cares and someone you know you can count on to be there whether its day or night,” said Orozco.

Orozco is the number one doubles on the Poly tennis team. He also played basketball in 10th and 11th grade and water polo at Fernangeles Pool.

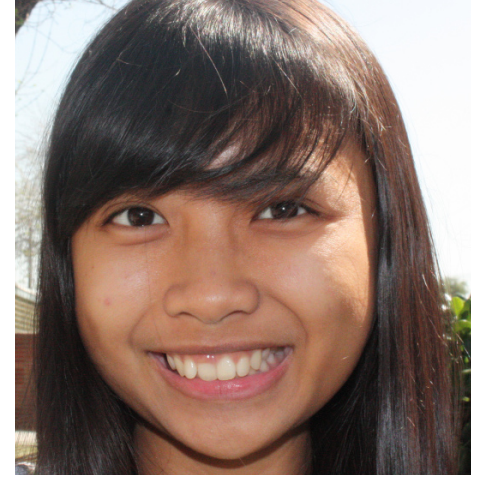
Orozco was born in Jinotega, Nicaragua. He has an older brother and two younger sisters.

Orozco’s favorite subjects are Math and Science.

“But because I want an ‘A’ I will have to say that Physics is my specific favorite subject,” Orozco added.

Orozco plans to go to a four year university after high school.

“I have no clue what career path I want. When the time is right and I have experienced more things, I am sure I’ll know exactly what I should do,” said Orozco.



Jizel Emralino

Junior Jizel Emralino won two medals in the regional level, a bronze medal for the interview and a silver medal for essay. She also received two certificates for Art and Essay.

According to Emralino, knowing that the team made it to state feels like a blur. “Literally, it was blurry, because Kari was so overjoyed that she knocked my glasses off,” said Emralino. Emralino says that going to state was one of the most memorable events in her life.

Emralino thinks of Mr. Block as the most supportive coach, who was there for the team 24/7.

“His intuition is scary good. Eight months ago he told us that we were going to state and he was right, we made it,” said Emralino.

Emralino was born in the Philippines and came to the United States in 2006. She has a younger sister.

Her favorite subjects in school are Biology and Chemistry. “I’m a very curious person, and these two fields of science explain most of the queries about the human body, nature, and life in general,” said Emralino.

Emralino plans to pursue a career in Medicine or Biomedical engineering. “I want a career in Oncology or Biomedical Engineering,” said Emralino.

Emralino plays for the Poly Girls’ tennis team and is also on the Poly Optimist.

Before And After

By Angel Silva
Staff Writer

The OPTIMIST interviewed returning AcaDeca member Cathy Capalla, who earned a perfect 10 in the Super Quiz Relay for this year's competition. Here's what she said:

Why did you decide to join the Aca Deca team? Why did you stay?

During the summer before my 9th grade year, Mrs. Couchois had a conversation with Mr. Block in the Magnet office. I stayed because of the bonds I had formed in AcaDeca and because of my motivation to do even better this year.

What do you enjoy about being a member of the Aca Deca team?

There is never a day when something unusual or funny would happen in class. Sometimes Tam would ride a bike in class or Freddy and Alex would nearly hit a nearby object while playing Frisbee in the room. Although at times everyone can be a bunch of jokers, there is an equal amount of time where the whole team is serious and motivates each other.

What awards did you receive for this year's Aca Deca competition?

Perfect 10 in Super Quiz Relay, Music Conference Certificate, Music Honorable Mention, and an Art Conference Certificate.

What changed from last year? Have you improved from last year, and how so?

Last year, I was a clueless freshman who just stepped into the world of high school. I got an embarrassing score of 2/10 in the Super Quiz Relay. But this year, I have improved my score by at least 1,200 points and redeemed myself in the relay by scoring a perfect ten. This isn't enough. I am still a guppy in a sea of sharks, but I know that every year, I will keep improving and improving.

What are some of your hobbies? What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

When I feel that I have too much time in my hands, I would sit and play the piano for a couple hours. I like to do little improvisations once in a while and practice my pieces.

What subjects interest you the most?

I think every subject is interesting in one way or another, but I enjoy Physics the most. At first, it was the most aggravating class because I could never get the gist of the subject, but once I got the hang of solving the problems, it became the most enjoyable.

How often do you study?

I study everyday! There is never a day where I do not pick up a packet or read a textbook for my classes.



Photo by Diane Alvarado

What are your plans after high school?

I plan to go to a four year university and pursue electrical engineering. I hope that these dreams will become reality. But with perseverance, I know it will be possible!

What people do you see as an inspiration?

I look up to Kari's perseverance and wit, Jizel's compassion, Tam's passion and desire, Steven's strength, Rey's intelligence, Freddy's originality, Alex's conviction, and Luis's growth. I have become the person I am because of these people.



Alexander Lee

Senior Alex Lee is born in the United States, and his mother is from Mexico and his father is from Korea. He has two older sisters.

Lee likes playing Frisbee, base guitar, drumming, biking and reading.

His favorite subject in school is Decathlon because it allows him to work independently.

For the regional and state competition Lee won two gold medals in speech, a bronze team metal and lots of certificates.

"He knows how we work best and allows us to do it," said Lee on what he likes the best about Coach Block.

Lee enjoys being with the rest of the team and having fun.



Freddy Palominos

Senior Freddy Palominos was born and raised in California with parents from Nueva Italia, Michoacán. He has two brothers and a younger sister.

Palominos enjoys playing Modern Warfare II. "I am a 3rd prestige," said Palominos.

Palominos won a total of four medals: silver for speech, bronze for art, bronze for individual super quiz and a team medal for super quiz.

"Aca Deca, it's a sport that works out the brain," Palominos said.

"Meeting new people that you would usually think are nerds, but turn out to be really cool," said Palominos when asked about the best part of being in Aca Deca.



Luis Miranda

Freshman Luis Miranda was born in the United States and his parents are from El Salvador and Guatemala.

Luis's favorite subjects are Math and Physics.

"I enjoy numbers," said Luis.

He enjoys playing video games like Call of Duty - Modern Warfare II.

"I can't believe that as a Freshman I won a medal," said Luis on winning a team medal for super quiz.

Luis plans to attend an out-of-state college.

Luis's older brother Steven is also a member of the Poly Aca Deca team.



Steve Miranda

Steve Miranda, a senior was born in Los Angeles and his parents are from Salvador and Guatemala.

For fun, Steve enjoys fixing cars. He likes to read, especially scientific and philosophical books.

Steve won a gold medal for speech in the regional competition.

Steve said on Coach Block, "He likes to give us a lot of freedom and that's why we got to state, because of his liberal thinking."

Steve wants to major in biomedical engineering.

"I already got accepted to UCLA and I'm still waiting for other UC's," said Steve.



Internet Photo

TEA PARTY, ANYONE?: From left, the Red Queen, the Dormouse, March Hare, the Mad Hatter, Alice, the Blue Caterpillar, the White Rabbit, Cheshire, and the White Queen.

Curiouser and Curiouser

Tim Burton's "Alice in Wonderland" presents a mad twist to a classic tale.

By Joel Hinojosa
Staff Writer

Tim Burton has always been notorious for twisting and darkening seemingly whimsical, lighthearted children's fare as in, "The Nightmare Before Christmas," "James and the Giant Peach" and "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory." He has now done the same with his new addition "Alice in Wonderland."

"Dark and sometimes grim, this isn't your great-grandmother's 'Alice,'" said New York Times reviewer Manohla Dargis.

Burton sets "Alice" in a bleak and damaged land, which has been utterly demolished by the tyrant Red Queen (Helena Bonham Carter).

"The colors are often bilious, though the palette also

turns gunmetal gray, bringing to mind 'Sweeney Todd,'" said Dargis.

Alice (Mia Wasikowska) is a 19-year-old girl sought out by the White Rabbit (Michael Sheen) to restore Wonderland. In pursuit of the rabbit, Alice runs away from her real life problems like Charles Kingsleigh (Marton Csokas) and into another quandary in Wonderland.

Burton's well-chosen cast includes heartthrob Johnny Depp as the Mad Hatter, Paul Whitehouse as the March Hare, Barbara Windsor as the Dormouse, Alan Rickman as the Blue Caterpillar, Matt Lucas as Tweedledee and Tweedledum and Stephen Fry as Cheshire.

Alice also makes friends with the White Queen (Anne Hathaway), sister of the Red Queen, but soon realizes she has to save Wonderland by killing the Jabberwocky, a dragon-like fiend.

"'Alice' is about a girl finding herself and her journey," says director Burton. "It's like what happens to all of us, how you use your dreams and your fantasy life to deal with everyday problems. Some people say this is fantasy and that's reality but all that stuff really blends in our minds and in our hearts together."

Adapted from Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking Glass," the movie also incorporates characters like the Jabberwocky, the Jubjub bird and the Badersnatch from Carroll's poem "The Jabberwocky."

Burton takes his audience on a mad and tender journey of self-awareness, his "Alice" a personal reflection on the world. As Alice's father is fond of saying, "You've gone absolutely mad, but I'll tell you a secret - all the best people are."

Safety at Poly

[Safety, from pg 1]

The website www.familywatchdog.us shows locations of convicted sex offenders living near any given address, school or park. By law, registered sex offenders are obliged to live two miles away from a school zone.

Poly school police patrol five blocks in all directions from the school and are allowed to go further if needed. Though they are not allowed to monitor registered sex offenders directly, they are able to speak to a registered sex offender who is on parole.

School psychologist Frank Mendez talked to The OPTIMIST about how sex offenders tend to keep a low profile.

"They are good at looking normal and many have normal lives," said Mendez. "Sex offenders are good at lying and deceiving students who are either alone or look vulnerable."

There are some basic rules and precautions a student can take to protect themselves.

"A good way of protecting yourself is to use the buddy system," said Glen Lamos, who works within Poly's security system.

Be constantly aware of your surroundings by staying away from dangerous or unknown areas. This includes back allies that surround the residential areas around Poly. Take the headphones out, you cannot hear a possible attacker if your iPod is playing, says Lamos.

Administrators will go up to 500 yards outside of the school to monitor students or any activity that might take place before and after school. But no direct supervision is provided during school hours off campus.

Poly administrator Dallas Blair adds, "The administrators are responsible for students all the way home unless a student decides to stop somewhere along the way."

So the question remains how to protect students from threats involving convicted sex offenders. Be aware.

By going to www.familywatchdog.us both adults and teenagers can see who lives in their neighborhood or any surrounding areas of their choosing.

Sudoku

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

Using the numbers 1-9, fill in each box. Use each number only once per box. Good luck!

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

Solution To February's Puzzle

Life with Letty: Grades





Photos by Karina Muñiz

New Players, Same Results

10-2 in league,
second-round
playoff run
caps winning
season.

By Jose Torres
Staff Writer

Lady Parrot head basketball coach Tremeka Batiste reflects on her players and the 2009/2010 season.

Q. Coming off a perfect regular season and the dominating play of Sara Villanueva last year, did you expect this year would be as successful as it turned out to be?

I never expected to have such a good season. How could I? I only had one returner, and everybody else was so raw. The way they played in the fall didn't instill any confidence in me either. They were very, very rough around the edges. But what I love most about this team is the way they listen. None of them think they know enough to do whatever they want, and they're all eager to learn more. Once they started applying what I taught them and working together as a team, we started winning.

Q. Lorraine seemed to be the team's workhorse, the one who kept you guys in a lot of games and did more than the stats show. What's your assessment?

Lorraine is a beast on the court, which is ironic because she's such a mild-mannered person off the court. I really enjoyed watching her play. She did everything that was needed to win, especially when no one else seemed to have the fire lit within. Her game play motivated her teammates on a number of occasions to step up their game. I would say she is the glue that held this team together. I wish she had joined the team three years ago.

Q. Vicki was a fearless shooter and Ruby played with confidence and smarts. Tell us what their roles were and how they did.

Vicky is my defender. Anytime we need to shut a player down, Vicky is my go to girl. She did an exceptional job holding Vanessa Aguilar of Grant, who averaged 26.7 points a game, to 2 points in the first half of our season closer. But Vicky is not just a defender; she ended the season as the team's second leading scorer.

Ruby is the team's shooter, and she can also make beautiful passes. When I asked her to take over as point guard, her shot percentage went down. She was asked to play a position she was not used to, a position I consider the hardest spot to play, and it made other parts of her game suffer a bit. But she still found a way to get the ball through the hoop while improving doing a very good job in her new position.

Q. Tiffany played the point, ran the floor game and put up some

good stats. Talk about her season a little bit.

Tiffany accomplished a lot this season. Her confidence skyrocketed, and her game improved quite a bit as a result. I didn't know if she really wanted to be a point guard at the beginning of the season. Her actions contradicted her words. I moved her to the shooting guard position and made Ruby the p/g. As the season progressed, Tiffany's confidence kicked in and she started to take the helm. Teams even thought she was left-handed because she can handle the ball so well. By the end of our season, Tiffany had earned back her point guard position.

Q. This year's team seemed to be pretty well-rounded. You had post players, outside shooters, rebounders, defenders and good team captains. Talk a little bit about the team as a team this year. How did you keep them thinking team and what did you do to get them back on track?

The girls knew we worked best when we worked as a team. Before they stepped on the court to play a game, we always did our "Team Work!" cheer. If the game got sloppy and communication stopped, we regrouped with the same cheer.

Q. The playoffs are definitely a level above the normal season. Going in to the playoffs, were you confident, apprehensive or concerned that your girls didn't have enough experience to ramp it up quickly?

I was concerned that the girls didn't have enough experience to handle the pressure of the playoffs. Only one player on the team this season had ever played varsity basketball, so we essentially went into the playoffs blind. I prepared them for the other teams' strengths and weaknesses, but I wasn't very successful at preparing them for the pressure.

Q. Who returns next year and who looks good coming up from JV?

Luckily, nine players will be returning. Anyone else interested in playing varsity next year will have to outplay at least one of them.

Q. What does it take to achieve consistent success as a high school girls basketball coach?

It takes knowledge, patience, time, resourcefulness, and a little bit of luck to succeed as a girls' basketball coach. Maybe when I have all the ingredients, we'll become big fish in the big pond. But for now, I am very proud of how this program has made a 180 to consistently lead our league. It felt really good being the only female head coach in the league running things. Now there are two more women coaching in the league trying to dethrone us. They can try, but the Lady Parrots will continue to squawk at their attempts.





Photo by Karina Muñoz

RUNAROUND: Poly junior Ruby Ramirez works her way around Grant ace Vanessa Aguilar in the Lady Parrots' scrappy 57-52 defeat of the visiting Lancers, leaving the two teams in a tie for first place in the East Valley League. Ramirez had nine points while Grant's Aguilar had a double double with 22 points, 13 rebounds and seven steals.

Birmingham Blasts Lady Parrots

Poly out in second round after 54-29 Patriot romp.

By Jose Torres
Staff Writer

Birmingham played the passing lanes well, forcing 21 turnovers and getting easy layups in their 54-29 blowback of the visiting Lady Parrots, eliminating Poly in the second round of the playoffs on Tuesday February 23.

"A lot of our passes were easily picked," said Poly head coach Tremeka Batiste. "It looked like our girls weren't even trying."

The Patriot's up-tempo playing got them 14 or more points in each of the first three quarters, with Poly down 29-16 at the half. Birmingham scored off many turnovers that transitioned into fast break points. Birmingham senior Charne Thomas dominated the inside, scoring 19 points on 9 for 13 shooting that included a three-pointer.

Birmingham did a good job of preventing Poly from getting the ball across the mid-court stripe. The Lady Parrots would get a steal and the Patriots would steal the

ball right back. Poly grabbed 12 steals but Birmingham had 17.

Poly's offense met with little success all night, except for a 5-0 run. The Lady Parrots got good looks but the shots didn't go down.

Poly senior guard Vicki Meza had 10 points, the only Poly player in double digits. Guard Ruby Ramirez grabbed nine defensive rebounds and five offensive rebounds.

But Ramirez got no help down low. Poly's centers were boxed out of the key. Senior Lorraine Figueroa, who had 11 rebounds against San Fernando, was held to four and senior Leah Pike, who had eight rebounds against the Tigers, managed only three against the Patriots.

Poly ended their season at 15-14 and finished tied for first in the East Valley League at 10-2 after their dramatic win over Grant to end the regular season. Birmingham (17-9) will face Monroe (23-7) on Saturday, March 6.

Lady Parrots Zone Out, Then Zone In

Poly offense is MIA until a high-scoring fourth seals 44-33 win over San Fernando

By Ivan Salazar
Staff Writer

Fans waiting for the Lady Parrots' offense to show up against visiting San Fernando got plenty of squirm time before a 16-point fourth quarter sealed the deal and a 44-34 Poly playoff win Thursday night.

"Too many of our players were trying to make a statement," said Lady Parrot head coach Tremeka Batiste. "I reminded them that we got this far by playing as a team, not as individuals."

San Fernando came out aggressively in the early going, forcing Poly into bad shots and turnovers (15 on the night) as the Lady Parrots struggled offensively.

Poly led by one after one, two at the half and three after three, but only because the Tigers missed so many easy two-footers under the basket. San Fernando was patient and executed well, but couldn't get the ball through the hoop. Call it home court advantage.

Lady Parrot senior Lorraine Figueroa single-handedly kept Poly in the game in the second quarter, at one point getting a basket, a steal and two free throws in as many seconds. Figueroa continued her strong game throughout, finishing with seven points, 11 rebounds, three blocks and three steals.

One Lady Parrot not missing from Poly's offense was junior Victoria Meza, who led all scorers with 16 points, all of them on smart plays well executed. Meza also had an efficient defensive game.

Playmaker point guard Tiffany Mejia had 11 points to go with six rebounds and two assists.

Poly had a good rebounding night with 35 boards and their 12 steals led to some easy layups.

Tiger Ana Nunez led San Fernando with 8 points and senior guard Nancy Mijarto had 6. Five others Tiger players scored.

Poly (15-13, 10-2) travels to Birmingham for a second round playoff game next Friday (see story this page). San Fernando closed their season at 9-14.

Varsity Players Vanish, JV Takes Up the Slack

Poly ends a lackluster season on a sour note.

By Jose Torres
Staff Writer

Parrot JV members Eric Figueroa (freshman point guard), Manny Sanchez (junior center), Ernesto Barbosa (junior forward) and Roman Meza (sophomore guard) helped fill out a six-man varsity squad in Poly's 54-26 playoff loss against Narbonne in the first round of the playoffs. No-shows Arthur Rivera (suspension), Eric "Cheeto" Martinez (quit), Jose Tinajero (quit), Miguel Zapien (quit) and Ben Luis (injury) failed to dress for the contest.

"Our seniors played hard, but we couldn't keep their big guys from scoring and rebounding. We were over-matched."

- Dave Bonino

"Our seniors, as usual, played hard, but we did not have enough size or strength to keep their big guys from scoring and rebounding," said Parrot head coach Dave Bonino. "We were overmatched."

"The four newly arrived varsity players gained valuable playing time, though, and learned what it is like to compete at a varsity level," Bonino added.

The outcome was never really in doubt. The Gauchos pressured the ball and got easy fast break points. Senior Victor Solano, the only Parrot scorer in the first quarter, managed to sneak in two layups but Narbonne swished 21 points.

Oscar Aguilar had five points in the second, but the Gauchos led 42-10 at the half. The Parrots had dug a hole and stayed there.

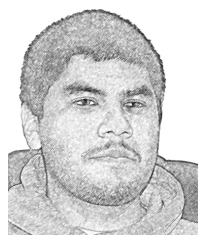
Poly came out after the break with some energy, as senior Christian Torres got an open layup and followed the next time down the court with an alley-oop. Parrot junior Luis Vargas added a fast break layup. Narbonne, however, was never in danger.

Poly ended its season with just four wins in 28 games and finished last in the East Valley League with a 2-10 record.

Sports Talk

Crucial Draft Choices

Ivan Salazar



As the NFL Draft approaches, teams are looking for picks that can have a positive impact. Top ten draft picks always have high expectations. Some live up to them but many do not, leaving many people wondering why that person was drafted

Players are expected to play and perform at a professional level. So how do we explain the wide division between teams. Aren't all NFL players "professionals"? Fans always point the finger at coaches, but aren't the players the ones on the field. A team can have the best coaches and still have players not performing at a high level.

Saints' quarterback Drew Brees found himself in the worst possible situation, an injured player with an expiring contract. The San Diego Chargers, Brees' former team, were unwilling to take the risk and didn't resign him.

Fortunately, Brees was given a second chance to showcase his abilities with the Saints and went right to work, leading the Saints to their first Super Bowl title in franchise history, a 31-17 win over the Indianapolis Colts. Saints' fans never gave up on the team, even after the devastation of hurricane Katrina and years of losing seasons. Brees is an example of a player who did not quit when all hope seemed to be gone.

The Raiders' number one overall draft pick, Jamarus Russell, is a classic example of an underachiever. Russell, along with other top busts, failed to meet the expectations of fans and coaches.

The NFL is a completely different level than college. A player is expected to produce more to justify his huge salary. Scouts see physical abilities, but attitude and passion for the game are much more valuable.

History shows that successful players are always the ones who put their career first and the money second.

GIRL TALK

with
Michelle Nolasco
and
Diana Olmedo

must haves

Every wardrobe needs essentials hanging in the closet that are good to have around and easy to mix and match - clothes you can't be without.



Plain White Tee

The PLAIN WHITE TEE is an essential, crisp, clean, a classic. A white tee shirt can really be the cherry on top of any outfit, casual or not. Paired with a great jean, the plain white tee is perfect when you feel like accessorizing all out. When worn under a bold cardigan, jacket, vest or blazer, the plain white tee gives an effortless yet cool look.



Men's Vest

Wearing a VEST is a cool way to show some personality through your outfit. If you're not feeling the printed scarf to make your plain tee look a bit more interesting, the vest is a great alternative. Vests come in all colors and textures and will make it easy to pick your type. They are also perfect for dressing up a look while still keeping a casual feel.

3

Skinny Jeans

SKINNY JEANS have been trendy for a while, but they are here to stay. They go with almost every casual look and are easy to wear. Just make sure that they fit. Comfort should be at the top of your list when shopping for your skinnys, but always remember - a muffin top is a major fashion faux pas.

The Versatile V-Neck

V-necks are versatile and fit any girl's personal style. For fun ways to wear v-necks, try these:

Baring too much skin: When you wear a top with a low neckline, don't add a super short skirt or shorts. When it comes to showing skin, revealing less is always more.

Classic white: Although white is the classic, different colored v-necks will give your whole outfit an edge. If you can't decide what color suits you best, try them all until you find the one that best compliments your overall look.

High-waisted skirts: If you want to make a simple white v-neck go from comfort to high fashion, add a high waisted pencil skirt with the v-neck tucked in. If you're going out on the town, black the more classic look.

Casual jeans: Feeling lazy? Don't feel like dressing up? Toss on a pair of casual jeans and a v-neck. You'll be fashion forward and comfortable at the same time. Accessorize with shoes or a bag that stands out.

Experimenting with Jewelry: Figuring out what jewelry complements a low v-necks can be challenging. The trick is to wear minimal jewelry, such as a cute necklace and a few bracelets. Too much jewelry will give your outfit a tacky look.