



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 24, 2017 CONTACT: William Diepenbrock PHONE: 909-206-5304

Baldwin Park High Science Instructor Named District Teacher of the Year

Raquel Viramontes is known for her project-driven approach

BALDWIN PARK – Raquel Viramontes, a nine-year science teacher at Baldwin Park High School, has been named Baldwin Park Unified’s 2017 Teacher of the Year for her commitment to students and colleagues.

Viramontes teaches biology, forensics and human anatomy, and brings the lessons to life with a focus on project-based instruction that goes beyond the mechanics of the science.

“She truly is an educational leader,” Principal Anthony Ippolito said. “She makes the content of her courses come to life for her students, and shares her ideas with her colleagues. So not only is she improving the instruction in her own class, she’s improving instruction throughout her entire department.”

Viramontes, for example, created a genetics lesson in which students must create designer babies. Students must examine all the technical aspects of their choices for character and physical traits, as well as the implications behind why they value specific traits and the impact of breeding other traits out of the gene pool.

“She takes it the extra step,” Ippolito said. “She will have a conversation with the students where they talk about the ethics, the morality of those choices. This is true critical thinking. And isn’t that what we want our kids to do?”

Viramontes holds a Master of Arts in education from Claremont Graduate University, a Bachelor of Arts in biology from Pomona College and an associate degree from Rio Hondo College.

She has been teaching at Baldwin Park High since 2008 following a stint as a student teacher at Chaffey High School.

She also serves as Youth Career Connect student mentor, an assistant coach for the Pomona-Pitzer Women’s Basketball team and a member of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Committee. She formerly served as head girls varsity basketball coach for Baldwin Park High.

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Viramontes likens her class to an amusement park ride.

“Being a student in my class is like riding a rollercoaster; there are plenty of ups and downs, twists and turns, but waiting in the long line to ride it is worth the wait,” she said. “Every day that a student comes to my class, the student can expect something different, interesting, challenging, impactful, and something to look forward to.”

She strives to create an inclusive environment where students feel free to ask any question, she tailors her approach to each student’s needs and pushes students to see the scientists in themselves.

“To help students care and understand, I have to show them real-life scenarios in order to connect their reading material to actual substantive examples. I believe that the most significant learning occurs in situations that are both meaningful and relevant,” she said.

The result: A freewheeling, idea-rich environment where science isn’t just a class, but an enjoyable and inspiration journey of discovery.

“Raquel’s hands-on, project-oriented approach to instruction exemplifies Baldwin Park Unified’s focus on engaging our students in real-world applications,” Superintendent Dr. Froilan N. Mendoza said. “Congratulations to her for an honor so very well deserved.”

PHOTO

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