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Baldwin Park Unified Seniors Thank Elementary Teachers and Inspire Younger Students

BALDWIN PARK – Clad in their graduation regalia, seniors from Baldwin Park and Sierra Vista high school hugged siblings and former teachers, and cried a little, as they visited their elementary schools for a triumphant Senior Walk in the days before their commencement ceremonies.

The events – the first for Baldwin Park High and the second for Sierra Vista High – were intended to inspire younger students to strive for college and career dreams and to give the students a chance to thank the teachers who helped guide them on their first steps of their educational journey.

Some 93 students from Baldwin Park and 177 from Sierra Vista were scheduled to visit each of the District's 13 elementary schools on May 24 and 25, but numbers topped even those expectations.

At Vineland Elementary, 30 students showed – five more than expected.

"I love this school," said Baldwin Park High senior Lizette Gomez, who will enter the U.S. Army after graduation. "I met my best friend here."

Baldwin Park High senior Natalie Ramirez, who will study sociology at Cal Poly Pomona in the fall, said her Vineland teachers were the best, fostering a family-like atmosphere.

Ramirez said it was a great reunion with her Vineland classmates, too, who now attend both Sierra Vista and Baldwin Park high schools.

Baldwin Park High senior Oscar Barragan, who will study accounting/business at Cal Poly, said Vineland teachers set him on his path to college.

"They motivated us to go to college and not settle for anything less, to always be better," he said.

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Seniors arrived at the school to cheers from hundreds of students lining an outdoor walkway. Students high-fived the seniors and handed them congratulatory posters. Then, the seniors announced their college and career plans, which included Cal State campuses, local community colleges and all three branches of the military.

Finally, seniors shared advice with Vineland students, many of them tearing up as they thanked teachers for inspiring their love of music, science and for making them feel part of something bigger.

At Kenmore Elementary on Friday, more than 40 Sierra Vista graduating seniors walked down the center aisle as students and teachers celebrated their accomplishments with cheers and chants of support. The seniors were presented with “koalas forever” certificates, as a reminder that they will carry into the future the lessons learned from their alma mater.

“This means a lot to me,” Sierra Vista senior Samantha Sandoval said. “It’s amazing to come back here and see the teachers who inspired us from the beginning.”

Donning red and black caps and gowns, the seniors shared their post-secondary plans before walking back down the aisle to high-five and hug Kenmore teachers.

“It is wonderful welcoming back the Kenmore class of 2012 and we are delighted to celebrate the future with them,” Kenmore Principal Jane Sattari said. “It’s especially meaningful that our seniors can say goodbye to a few of our teachers before they retire this year.”

PHOTOS

BPUSD_WALK_1: Baldwin Park High School seniors walk down a corridor lined by Vineland Elementary Students on May 24, snagging high-fives and receiving posters/

BPUSD_WALK_2: Baldwin Park High School seniors bask in the cheers of Vineland Elementary School students during a Senior Walk event on May 24 before urging the students to enjoy their time at the campus and thanking teachers for helping inspire their love of learning.

BPUSD_WALK_3: Sierra Vista High School seniors visit Kenmore Elementary School on May 25, receiving high-fives from students and teachers for their high school success before inspiring students to do their best.