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Baldwin Park Unified Independent Learning Program Targets High School Student Needs

BALDWIN PARK – As a sophomore at Baldwin Park High School, Brianna Rodriguez struggled with anxiety, which coupled with the pressure and distractions from everyday classes brought academic instability.

The summer before her junior year, Rodriguez was referred by a friend to apply to Baldwin Park High's Independent Learning Center (ILC), a program that provides personalized instruction for students who seek alternative approaches or who face challenges with a traditional school setting.

"A lot of students in ILC are here for different reasons – you have people like me who have anxiety and problems focusing in class. And this program helps so that my obstacles don't get in the way of learning," Rodriguez said. "Being in one class and working independently has really helped me with my anxiety, and now I come to school every day ready to succeed."

Since its inception in 2015, the innovative independent study program has offered a rigorous, blended online learning curriculum with flexible hours. Students progress toward graduating at their own pace, with teachers and counselors providing academic and emotional support.

ILC is ideal for learners who excel with one-on-one instruction, have a credit deficiency, poor attendance or extenuating circumstances such as health or home issues.

Through the program, students explore career and college opportunities, and participate in a six-week financial planning series led by Southern California Edison's Federal Credit Union on saving money and ways to pay for higher education.

ILC requires students to meet once a week with an instructor. Out of the 80 students enrolled, more than half of them attend class multiple days a week, which many attribute to strong relationships with the program staff.

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The ILC staff consists of two outreach teachers and one counselor, all of whom are Baldwin Park High School alumni. Bryan Sterling, lead outreach teacher for ILC, has a background in coaching that he uses to teach the individualized learning program.

“We help students through the process and options of education. Our relationship with the students is more like a mentorship because we help them assess their goals and provide the support for them to meet those goals,” Sterling said. “I know each of my students, I know their stories and this helps me to respond and teach them according to their individual needs.”

For Rodriguez, another benefit of ILC is the ability to participate in Baldwin Park High School electives, clubs and sports. This opportunity allows her to pursue her passion for theater – something she has been involved in during her four years at Baldwin Park High.

Now a senior, Rodriguez plans to take community college classes in December and earn a degree in theater arts from New York University.

ILC boasts a graduation rate of 93.7 percent, with a majority of the students participating in Baldwin Park High’s commencement ceremony.

“ILC offers alternative learning options for students who benefit from customized instruction, and through the program, we ensure that every student is given the opportunity to succeed in high school and prepare for the next step in higher education or the workforce,” Baldwin Park Unified Superintendent Dr. Froilan N. Mendoza said.

PHOTO

BPUSD_ILC_1: Brianna Rodriguez, a senior at Baldwin Park High School, is in her second and final year of the Independent Learning Center (ILC), a program that provides personalized instruction for students who seek alternative approaches or who face challenges with a traditional school setting. Rodriguez has flourished in ILC with one-on-one instruction, a blended online learning curriculum and flexible hours.

BPUSD_ILC_2: Miguel Solis (right), a senior at Baldwin Park High School, enrolled in the Independent Learning Center (ILC) during the summer and has since excelled with the opportunity to access online courses from home or school, and progress toward graduation at his own pace. ILC provides a rigorous, online curriculum with flexible hours and the opportunity for students to participate in traditional school activities.

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