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SOUTHWEST

Japanese students get fond farewell

CULTURAL EXCHANGE:

They visit Vista Murrieta High and spent the past two weeks in the area.

BY CLAUDIA BUSTAMANTE
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

An array of talents were on display Friday at Vista Murrieta High School, half of which hailed from Japan.

Calligraphy. Kendo sword fighting. Traditional songs and martial arts.

The Murrieta students put on a farewell talent show for a group of 38 Japanese students who spent the last two weeks in the area as part of a cultural exchange.

Next month, Murrieta students will visit the same high school students during Murrieta's spring break.

Ko Haraguchi, 16, said he enjoyed his visit, especially the



PAUL ALVAREZ/THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Students Maki Fujimura, left, and Satomi Kojima show their calligraphy skills during a talent show at Vista Murrieta High School in Murrieta. Improving communication skills was the main goal for a cultural exchange at the school.

trip to Disneyland.

"I don't want to go back to

Japan," said Ko, who goes to school in Sasebo, in southern

Japan.

One of the biggest culture shocks for the students was their American hosts' school system.

For Mamiko Nakao, 16, Vista Murrieta is much bigger than her Sasebo Minami High School and the students here have much more freedom.

Nancy Loeschmig, the group's coordinator, said the primary purpose of the trip was to enhance communication skills, but also to get to know what life is like on both sides of the Pacific Ocean.

Lisa Crespin said she learned how similar the two cultures are.

"She plays music. She likes to draw. She giggles and laughs like regular teenagers do," said Crespin, who decided to host a student as a learning opportuni-

ty for her homeschooled children.

Vista Murrieta junior Nina Tyler said she chose to host a student because she wanted to be a little more familiar with Japanese culture before she travels abroad in April.

After two weeks and a list of words and catch phrases, the 16-year-old said she has a better understanding of what to expect.

But she's still not completely prepared.

"They have these little (electronic) dictionaries" that Nina said her student would always pop out whenever there was trouble communicating.

"My mom's thinking about getting me one," she said.

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