



LAGUNA BEACH  
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

# Planning Considerations for Promotion and Graduation

Laguna Beach High School &  
Thurston Middle School  
February 12, 2026





# Background

- **Pre-2020:** End-of-year ceremonies were planned independently by each school, based on site needs and available facilities
- **June 2020 (COVID-19 Pandemic):**
  - State and county reopening guidelines prohibited in-person gatherings.
  - Drive-through ceremonies were held districtwide for 5th, 8th, and 12th grade to ensure students were recognized while meeting safety requirements
- **June 2021:**
  - Some public health restrictions remained in place
  - Guyer Field allowed for physical distancing while maximizing attendance for families
  - The venue supported the needs of both Laguna Beach High School and Thurston Middle School
- **Since 2021:**
  - Collaborative planning model between the middle and high school
  - Logistics planning and associated costs are shared, including audio/visual setup for live streaming and recording of both ceremonies





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# Laguna Beach High School

## Ceremony Design Adjustments Since Transition

### Student Seating and Stage Configuration

- Guyer Field: Students seated in bleachers oriented toward families, supporting a celebratory, community-facing experience.
- Promotion held on the campus students will attend next year (“Future Breaker” concept)

### Ceremony Program

- Student names are read and students cross the stage at both venues.
- Consistent start and end times for the ceremony.
- Music featured in both venues: on-stage procession at the Bowl and field-based performance at Guyer Field, with the addition of a student-performed Star-Spangled Banner to open the ceremony.

### Logistics

- Shift from off-site staging and transportation to on-site staging
- Shared use of livestream and video production equipment, including two large video screens with a live ceremony feed, supported by student production staffing; the ceremony is live streamed and recorded.

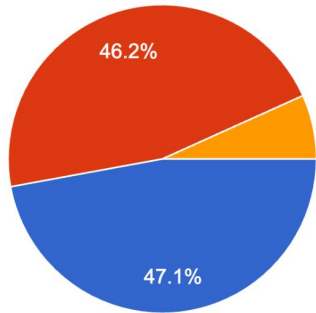




# Laguna Beach High School

## Student Voice: Feedback on Commencement Experience

In response to interest in re-exploring commencement locations, the LBHS leadership team gathered student feedback, which reflected an even split in venue preference and provided qualitative insight into what students value most in the commencement experience. The following slides highlight the key themes that emerged from student feedback. (n = 107)



- Guyer Field (LBHS)
- Irvine Bowl (Festival of Arts Grounds)
- No Preference





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# Laguna Beach High School

## Key Themes

Student feedback helps clarify the elements of commencement that matter most, independent of venue. These themes are used to inform planning and program design, alongside operational, logistical, and accessibility considerations.

### Sharing the Moment with Family and Community

- A dominant theme across responses was the importance of family visibility, proximity, and shared celebration.
- Students emphasized seating capacity, accessibility for grandparents and extended family, and the ability to gather together before and after the ceremony as central to the experience.





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# Laguna Beach High School

## Key Themes

### Recognition of Individual Achievement

- Students consistently emphasized the importance of individual recognition, including walking the stage, hearing their name pronounced correctly, and feeling personally acknowledged for the effort it took to graduate.
- Some students also expressed interest in expanded recognition beyond academics, including leadership, service, club involvement, and personal contributions.

### Setting, Atmosphere, and Sense of Place

- Responses highlighted the importance of atmosphere and presentation, including music, scenery, acoustics, décor, and overall “vibe”
- Students expressed strong connections to settings that feel meaningful to their own journey, whether rooted in school identity, tradition, or personal memories.
- Across preferences, students emphasized that the setting should feel authentic, celebratory, and “like Laguna”





# Shared Planning Model

## Cost & Resource Overview

As part of the shared planning approach, costs and resources associated with end-of-year ceremonies are coordinated between schools.

Baker Party Rental (Seating)	\$4,444.70
BCT (Audio-Visual Production)	\$49,696.68
Security	\$6,160
Total Costs:	\$60,301.38
LBHS:	\$34,623.54
TMS:	\$25,577.84





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# Thurston Middle School

## Key Program Adjustments Since Transition

### Student Seating and Stage Configuration

- Gym (previous): Students seated forward-facing seating and limited flexibility.
- Guyer Field (current): Students seated in bleachers oriented toward families

### Ceremony Program

- Indoor gym setting presented challenges related to acoustics, crowding, and program flow.
- Transition to an outdoor, open-air setting expanded program design options, band participation and additional student performances
- Promotion held on the campus students will attend next year (“Future Breaker” concept)

### Logistics

- Indoor gym setup previously required an extended shutdown (up to 10 days); limited access to space.
- Limited parking and space constraints at TMS restricted guest access in the gym setting.
- Shared planning and collaboration enabled use of Guyer Field, improving:
  - Parking and guest access
  - Stage design and décor, supported through shared costs
  - Live Streaming and recording, extended from the high school ceremony



# Guiding Principles

While end-of-year ceremonies are planned annually, the design of each program recognizes that this moment happens once for our students and families and is intended to honor the hard work, dedication, and journey it takes to cross the stage.

- Honor student achievement and growth through meaningful end-of-year ceremonies.
- Provide a thoughtfully paced and well-structured ceremony that allows students and families to be fully present in the moment.
- Ensure every student is individually recognized, including the reading of names and crossing the stage, regardless of venue.
- Create inclusive, accessible, and celebratory environments for students and families.
- Center student voice and participation to shape a commencement experience that feels personal, meaningful, and reflective of their journey.
- Balance student experience with family participation, safety, and operational feasibility in all planning decisions.





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# Thank you.

Questions?

