FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 05, 2026 | PR: *2526-040*

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Banning High School Celebrates the Class of 2026 at Commencement Ceremony

BANNING, CA — Surrounded by family members, friends, educators, alumni, and community supporters, Banning High School celebrated the graduation of the Class of 2026 during its Commencement Ceremony on Thursday, June 4, 2026, at the Banning High School Athletic Stadium. Hundreds gathered to honor the accomplishments of the graduating class and recognize the journey that brought each student to this milestone.

The ceremony featured student speakers, District leadership, and school officials who reflected on the challenges, growth, and achievements that defined the Class of 2026. The evening was filled with excitement, pride, and anticipation as graduates prepared to begin the next chapter of their lives.

The ceremony began with a Land Acknowledgement delivered by Banning High School student Khloe Tafolla, recognizing the Indigenous peoples who have called the region home for generations. Throughout the evening, students, staff, families, and community members joined together to celebrate the accomplishments of the graduating class and the traditions that make commencement one of the District's most anticipated annual events.

Banning Unified School District Superintendent Terrence Davis delivered a powerful message centered on the value of a one-hundred-dollar bill. Holding up the bill, he explained that whether it is wrinkled, crumpled, torn, or dirty, its value remains unchanged. He encouraged graduates to remember that life's challenges, setbacks, and hardships do not diminish their worth.

"Your value does not change because of the obstacles you face," Superintendent Davis told graduates. "No matter what life brings, never forget who you are and the value you possess."

Banning High School Principal Art Paz commended the graduating class for their resilience, perseverance, and dedication throughout their educational journey. He acknowledged the

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challenges students overcame and celebrated the determination that brought them to graduation day.

"The Class of 2026 has demonstrated what it means to work hard, remain focused, and continue moving forward," said Principal Paz. "Today, we celebrate your accomplishments and officially welcome you into the proud tradition of Banning High School alumni."

Senior Class President Lillian Anderez addressed her classmates, reflecting on the memories, friendships, and experiences that shaped their high school years. Her remarks encouraged graduates to embrace the future while remaining connected to the relationships and experiences that helped define their time at Banning High School.

Valedictorian Mary Adeife Britto shared her personal story of immigrating from Nigeria at a young age and overcoming barriers along the way. She reflected on being told that adapting to the American education system would be difficult, yet through determination and support, she achieved academic success and earned the distinction of valedictorian.

Britto encouraged her classmates to continue breaking barriers and pursuing their goals regardless of the challenges they may encounter. This fall, she will attend Princeton University on a full-ride scholarship.

Salutatorian Luke Yang spoke about the power of change and the importance of embracing growth. He challenged graduates to continue working hard, remain adaptable, and seize opportunities that come their way. His remarks highlighted how perseverance and commitment can transform aspirations into achievements.

Yang will continue his educational journey this fall at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

As graduates crossed the stage, the diversity of student experiences at Banning High School was on full display. Students wore cords, stoles, medals, and regalia representing academic achievement, athletics, student leadership, Career Technical Education pathways, clubs, performing arts programs, and numerous extracurricular activities. The colorful display reflected the countless opportunities available to students and highlighted the strong culture of participation and engagement that exists throughout the Bronco community.

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Throughout the evening, the stadium reflected the deep pride that exists within the Banning community. Families filled the stands while teachers, staff members, Board of Trustees members, and District leaders gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of the graduating class. For many in attendance, the ceremony represented more than a graduation—it was a continuation of a longstanding tradition.

Among those seated in the audience and serving as faculty members were numerous Banning High School alumni who once walked the same stage and now give back to the community that helped shape them. Their presence served as a reminder of the lasting connections and traditions that define Bronco pride.

The ceremony also highlighted the dedication of those who support students throughout their educational journeys. Senior Class Counselor Joanna Soto was recognized for her work guiding students through the graduation process and helping members of the Class of 2026 prepare for life after high school.

The ceremony concluded with the presentation of diplomas, the acceptance of the Class of 2026 by Superintendent Davis, the turning of the tassels, and the singing of the Banning High School Alma Mater. As graduates officially became alumni, cheers echoed throughout the stadium, marking the culmination of years of hard work and the beginning of new opportunities.

The Banning High School Class of 2026 now joins generations of Bronco graduates who have gone on to make meaningful contributions in their communities, careers, and beyond.

Banning Unified School District extends its appreciation to the many individuals and departments whose efforts helped make the commencement ceremony possible. From Safety and Security personnel, Communications & Community Engagement, Innovation Technology Services, Maintenance and Operations, Transportation Services, Child Nutrition Services, school site staff, counselors, teachers, classified employees, and administrators, commencement represents a true Districtwide effort. Their dedication helped ensure graduates and families experienced a memorable celebration worthy of the accomplishments of the Class of 2026.

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Additional Resources

View Ceremony Photos:
https://banning-usd.smugmug.com/2025-2026/June-2026/BHS-Commencement-Ceremony

Watch the Ceremony:
https://youtube.com/live/9Mcg4nyu9FM?feature=share

View the Commencement Program:
https://canva.link/9xd6y8uv632oqcq

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About Banning Unified School District:
Banning Unified School District serves nearly 4,300 students across its schools and is one of the largest employers in the city of Banning, with over 600 dedicated staff members. The District's mission is to collaborate as a diverse community to develop responsible, respectful, and prepared students who achieve their full potential. Guided by its vision to prepare, inspire, and educate, Banning USD is committed to fostering a supportive environment where students can thrive academically and personally.

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Mr. Art Paz, Principal at Banning High School & Superintendent Terrence Davis welcomes students, families and staff to the 2026 Commencement Ceremony.

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Valedictorian Mary Britto of Banning High School delivers her speech to the Class of 2026, congratulating them on this great achievement.

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Salutatorian Luke Yang of Banning High School spoke about the power of change and the importance of embracing growth.

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