



# BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Board of Education

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## NEWS RELEASE

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## Bonita Unified Honors Students' Resilience, Achievements During Class of 2026 Commencement Ceremonies

**SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE** – Nearly 800 graduates from Chaparral-Vista, San Dimas, and Bonita high schools crossed the commencement stage on June 2 and 4, turning their tassels and tossing their caps as family, friends, and educators honored the Class of 2026 for its achievements during ceremonies that celebrated the character and traditions of each school community.

Each high school recognized students' achievements in academics, arts, and athletics, in addition to celebrating graduates who overcame personal challenges in their pursuit of a diploma. Among the graduates' many accomplishments, all of Bonita Unified's valedictorians and salutatorians will continue their academic journeys at UCLA.

Class of 2026 graduates have also enrolled at institutions that include UC Berkeley, Duke University, California Institute of the Arts, Fordham University, and USC; others will enlist in the armed forces or enter the workforce, building on skills developed in the District's career technical education pathways.

Commencement festivities began with Chaparral-Vista High School's ceremony on June 2 at the Bonita Center for the Arts, where 34 graduates were cheered on by an emotional crowd as they crossed the stage to accept their diplomas. The continuation high school's ceremony featured speeches from four graduates: Rachelle Armenta Torres, Caleb Alvarez, Dominic La Scala, and Natalie Gonzalez, each of whom reflected on their personal journeys at Chaparral-Vista and offered words of wisdom to their fellow graduates.

"Chap taught me something important: there is no 'right' speed for success," said Caleb Alvarez, who plans to enlist in the Marine Corps and become a firefighter. "Some people sprint to the finish line, some crawl, and some trip halfway there and have to restart. But what matters is that you keep going...and to anyone here who struggled quietly, the students who thought they weren't good enough, smart enough, or capable enough, this moment belongs to you, too. To the teachers, counselors, friends, and family who didn't give up on us even when we gave up on ourselves, thank you. Sometimes people loan you belief until you learn how to believe in yourself again."

San Dimas High School recognized 305 graduates on June 2 at Saints Stadium during a heartfelt ceremony that began with staff sharing hugs, high-fives, and fist bumps with graduates as they walked on the field. Messages of love and encouragement were expressed throughout the ceremony, as valedictorian Adrian Nazeck and salutatorian Keren Situ reflected on their past and provided words of inspiration to their peers.

**MORE**



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"In this world that can seem so full of uncertainties and fill you with doubt, I don't want any of you to ever doubt yourselves or your abilities," Nazeck said in his speech. "I know each of you possess the skills to succeed at whatever you want to pursue in life. This is why I implore each and every one of you to live life to the fullest, because you never truly know what life has in store for you."

Nazeck will major in mechanical engineering at UCLA, joined by Situ, who plans to major in history and pursue a career in corporate law.

Bonita Unified's commencement activities concluded with Bonita High School's graduation on June 4, in which 453 students turned their tassels following a ceremony filled with pop culture references, powerful performances from choral students, and a fireworks display. Class of 2026 graduate Om Shanbhag marked a milestone-filled day, celebrating his 18th birthday while also taking the stage as valedictorian to deliver an address reflecting on the friendships, experiences, and support that shaped his high school journey.

Shanbhag plans to study business and economics with aspirations of attending law school and working in public policy; he will be joined at UCLA by co-salutatorians Megan Leung, majoring in biology in the pre-med track with the ultimate goal of being a neurosurgeon, and Anna Li, majoring in statistics and data sciences with the goal of working with brain computer interfaces to help patients with neurological disorders.

"Although Bonita taught us how to solve equations and memorize facts, the people within it taught us what no textbook could: how to fail, recover, and care for others beyond ourselves," Li said in her co-salutatorian address. "As we step off the fields of Bonita High School one last time, I hope we remember that although the grades got us here, the people shaped us into who we are and made these years worth remembering."

### PHOTO CAPTIONS

**BUSD\_GRADUATION2026\_SDHS:** A San Dimas High School graduate high-fives a teacher during the processional of the school's commencement ceremony on June 2.

**BUSD\_GRADUATION2026\_BHS:** Bonita High School graduates shake hands as fireworks light up the sky following the school's commencement ceremony on June 4.

**BUSD\_GRADUATION2026\_CHS:** A Chaparral-Vista High School graduate shakes hands with Board of Education members during the school's June 2 commencement ceremony.

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