Greetings,

This was an amazing week. I don't necessarily mean that in the most positive manner, but in terms of the heaviness of some of the situations we deal with as a school district. Now I'm not saying this as a complaint, but rather a validation to the work we do as educators. I just feel that sometimes there is a lack of appreciation for what we face on a week-to-week basis, sometimes on a day-to-day basis. I just want to quickly acknowledge everyone involved and give them a much deserved shout. The details are inconsequential, the acknowledgement I'm hoping is not. You know who you are and I'm so appreciative of the professionalism and dedication that I've seen from our South Country family. Thank you.

But yes, TGIF!

What's also been true over the past two weeks are the fantastic times I've had at our various winter and holiday concerts. I've always been amazed at how music teachers can get massive amounts of kids to work in such beautiful synchrony, sometimes with their voices, and sometimes with an assortment of instruments that is simply mind boggling to me as someone with no musical skills; though I got pretty good at the human beatbox in the eighties. From our high school concerts that really are something to behold, not just in the quality of the music, but in the sheer number of students who participate; to our wacky middle schoolers who somehow come together to be equally impressive; to our third graders who are just too adorable and sing with such enthusiasm. (I've never heard *five golden rings* sung with such volume and excitement.) It's all fantastic. While I've yet to see a couple of our schools perform, I wanted to give a shout to our music teachers for doing such an amazing job with so many of our students. They not only provide instruction and the skills necessary to perform wonderful music, but in many respects they provide a safe haven for kids to feel that sense of belonging that we work so hard to achieve. You are a big source of Clipper PRIDE!

I'm not gonna front, I've been going to school concerts for 27 years now. Even in my first year teaching, I worked as a chaperone in the city and have not missed concerts since. To this day, they simply make me happy. Yesterday I invited Mr. Huntsman to stop by Critz to see the third graders sing and we both simply felt rejuvenated. Seeing all of the students sit and not only watch attentively, but really enjoy the concert along with teachers and staff was awesome and a reminder of why we do the work we do. It just *is* so rewarding.

Sure, we may have challenges and trying weeks, but we also have fantastic times and the ability to be impactful in terms of bringing joy to our learning community. I'm gonna choose to carry that joy into the weekend and be appreciative of the incredible opportunity I have been afforded. And appreciative of the wonderful people I get to work with.

Best wishes for a fantastic weekend! And as always, it really is a pleasure serving South Country as your superintendent of schools. Thank you all for doing your part! Your efforts are really appreciated.

Tony Santana
#clipperPRIDE