

Greetings,

The last couple of messages were somewhat somber and I'm relieved that we got through a week with no threats, real or not. I do want to again emphasize the impact that these events have on our students and staff. It's something I don't take lightly.

Yesterday I had the great fortune of stopping by the Equity Committee meeting and sat in for a community circle facilitated by Ms. Escobar. There was an eclectic group of staff members and the parent representative who participated. Holding true to the golden rule, what happens in the circle, stays in the circle, but the lessons are passed on. To say the experience was cathartic is an understatement and what I can say with certainty is that no one participating was cognizant of titles or even our cell phones. It was engaging and even emotional. While I have always understood the impact a well orchestrated circle can have, I never truly appreciated it until I participated in good faith. I was happy to be a passenger in the experience and walked away with not only an appreciation for the process, but for the amazing individuals who shared in the experience. It was a moment of Clipper Compassion and PRIDE as we all allowed ourselves to be vulnerable because there was inherent trust.

I also came away with a feeling like there is simply an energy out there, a pervasive sense of negativity that I can't seem to pinpoint. Sure, we can all point to many factors; the upcoming election, the anniversary of October 7th, the unrest in the middle east, school threats, more elected officials getting indicted, and everything else like climate change and all of the social pressures that come with technology. I think we're all feeling it one way or another. So what do we do about it? That is a question I don't purport to have the answer to, except of course to be kind, not to be judgemental, allow and respect different points of view, and simply be a good and empathetic person. As different as we may have been in our circle, we all had shared human experiences and a lot more commonality than we first thought. I know I've said this before, but I just think it's so true.

We're also adults with experience and coping mechanisms. I wonder what our learners must be feeling and thinking. As much as I can try to appreciate it, I didn't grow up in this world. My world was vastly different. In an effort to try to better understand this, I've been reading *The Anxious Generation - How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, by Jonathan Haidt. While all books are open to criticism and I'm not endorsing its content or theories, I do think it makes fantastic points and really has me reflecting on the last couple of

decades with a new perspective, capturing just how different the world has really become for our children. I think it's worth a read.

On Superintendent's Day, November 5th, I'll be hosting two book studies focused on *The Anxious Generation* with the hopes of facilitating a great discussion on how best we can support our children in this new world. I believe the book will be provocative for folks who are teachers and parents and am confident that at the very least, it will prompt a lot of critical thinking. If you are interested, please look for it on *My Learning Plan* and sign up! The book study is open to the first 50 staff members who register and books will be provided! So sign up as as soon as possible, giving you ample time to read the book. Registrants will be contacted via email to secure their copy which are already available at the district office. My goal is to engage in discussion, learn a bit, and perhaps share our learning with our peers.

So this has been another heavy message and I'd like to end on a brighter note. Today I spent the morning at the Middle School and about four periods at the high school and it was exactly what I needed. Despite all of the aforementioned, there were lots of happy kids, young adults, and staff who really brightened up my day. It really was all good and the students were gracious and welcoming. Tonight I'll be stopping by the sixth grade dance and checking out some of the moves the sixth graders learned in PE Class which hosted Dancing Classrooms for Hispanic Heritage month. The kids did some salsa and merengue this week and I'm looking forward to seeing them in action. And while I've been to a couple of sporting events, I'm looking forward to our football home opener tomorrow at noon. Ultimately and underneath it all, there are so many great and positive things happening in our buildings and that is a credit to our incredible staff and supportive community.

Let's continue pushing through. Let's try to really focus on the positive and the many blessings we have. And for those of us who are struggling, let's be there to be that light during dark times. As with any storm, it will all pass. Let's hold on to our faith and belief in a great tomorrow, again not losing sight of the things we are fortunate for today. Like each other.

Best wishes for a great weekend and go Clippers!

Tony Santana

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