

Greetings,

This week has been a study in contrasts and a reminder of the complexities and emotions that shape our lives and the lives of our students.

On Thursday, I had the tremendous honor of attending the Moving-Up Ceremony at Brookhaven Elementary School. As you can imagine, it was joyful and inspiring to see our dual-language students, confident, proud, and expressive in both English and Spanish in front of their families, teachers, and peers to mark a milestone in their academic journey. More than being adorable and impressive, I think their bilingualism is not only a strength, but a bridge that connects cultures and communities. It really was wonderful to see.

“Hablamos dos idiomas, pero compartimos un solo corazón.” (“We speak two languages, but we share one heart.”) That was certainly the vibe at Brookhaven and it was awesome.

While all this was happening, I was also aware of the fear and uncertainty many in our community have been feeling in light of reported ICE activity in the area. I want to acknowledge those concerns and appreciate the impact they may have on not only affected students and families, but their friends, classmates, and our staff. It’s also important to emphasize that much of the information that was circulating appeared to be inconsistent or unverified. Ultimately it’s imperative that we avoid spreading misinformation or reacting to speculation. In times like these, we must respond with calm, compassion, and facts, not fear. I trust that we will continue supporting ALL students, our families, and each other as we’ve always done. This is what defines us as a learning community.

I also want to emphasize that public schools are not political spaces. They’re places of learning, trust, and safety for every child who walks through our doors. Regardless of where any of us fall on the political spectrum or how we feel about immigration policy, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to serving all students and maintaining a welcoming environment. While staff and educators may hold personal beliefs, it’s essential that we not impose them in our classrooms or conversations with students. I can appreciate how sometimes that might be difficult to do, especially during tough times, but it’s again important to keep that in mind.

We should remind ourselves that our strength as a district comes from our diversity - diversity of culture, of thought, of experience and from our shared belief in the power of education to transform lives. This is what makes South Country so special.

As we approach Father’s Day, I want to close on a more personal note. This holiday has always been a bit complicated for me. I was raised by my mother and only met my father a handful of times before he passed away when I was twelve. Because of that, I’ve always viewed Father’s Day not just as a time to honor dads, but to recognize all those who show up with love, wisdom, and care - whether they’re fathers, mothers, grandparents, guardians, teachers, or friends. Anyone who nurtures and believes in a child’s potential deserves recognition. So happy Father’s

Day to all of the dads in the community and to those we have lost, let's cherish their memories and continue to proceed with love as our north star.

Thank you for all you do to lift up the children of South Country. Let's continue to lead with empathy, stay informed, and support one another as we move through these final days of the school year.

As always, it's a real pleasure to serve you as your superintendent of schools.

Con orgullo Clipper,

Tony Santana

#clipperPRIDE