

Greetings,

As we wrap up this week, I want to take a moment to say something that should be said more often - thank you, teachers. Your unwavering dedication, even in the most uncertain times, has not gone unnoticed. I feel fortunate to have spent numerous years in the classroom and can appreciate the impact teachers make on a daily basis. Your commitment to our students, and let's be honest, your impressive ability to stand together in solidarity, even when the road gets bumpy does not go unnoticed. (and let's face it, it's been more like potholes and detours lately). You continue to show up, give it your all, and do it with heart. That matters.

This has not been an easy stretch, and yet you've remained focused on what matters most. Whether you're comforting a worried child, leading a lesson with energy despite a million other things on your mind, or finding new ways to reach a reluctant learner—you're doing the work that changes lives. And I see you. While *Teacher Appreciation Week* may be behind us, my appreciation for the work you do is ongoing. You are very much a source of Clipper PRIDE!

This week, I had the pleasure (and freezing-cold experience) of participating in the Ice Bucket Challenge for Mental Health Awareness Week at Critz Elementary. It was an incredibly rewarding moment, standing in front of the entire school community to help spotlight the importance of mental wellness. And yes, in true superintendent fashion, I had not one, but two buckets of ice water dumped on me. In a suit. Just to one-up Mr. Clark, of course. Totally worth it! Now the challenge goes to Martino Sottile and let's see if he's up for it!

Finally, as we head into Mother's Day weekend, I also want to take a moment to recognize all the amazing women in our schools who play the role of mom, not just at home, but in our classrooms and hallways. Whether you're handing out snacks, advice, or just some much-needed encouragement, you are the steady force that holds so much together. To the moms, the grandmas, the aunties, the big sisters, the "school moms," and everyone who steps into that caregiver role, you matter. And you make a difference every single day.

So here's to you. I hope someone brings you flowers this weekend, breakfast in bed, an invite to a wonderful brunch, or at the very least, the ability to take an uninterrupted nap.

I'm lucky to still have my mom and as feisty as she is, always giving me a hard time for the first 20 minutes of my visit, *are you eating? You look stressed. You don't look well. You had such beautiful hair. I don't like those jeans on you* - I still feel blessed to have her in my life. My mother has been my ultimate teacher. For all the moms who are no longer with us, let's also cherish their memories and continue to love in their name.

As always, it's a privilege serving you as your superintendent of schools!

Tony Santana
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