Greetings,

As we close the books on another school year, I want to take a moment to reflect on just how extraordinary the past few weeks have been. From our moving up ceremonies to school dances and, of course, the senior prom - there's been so much joy in seeing our students celebrate the culmination of their hard work and growth. Our seniors looked fantastic and carried themselves with pride, love, and unity. These moments, so full of light, remind us why we do what we do and it's awesome.

But it would be dishonest to say that this year was all celebration. In truth, it was one of the most difficult years of my career. No, it was the most difficult year. So many of us faced real challenges, both personally and professionally, as individuals and as a district. And yet, we persisted. We supported one another. And in doing so, we grew stronger. I always think back to a quote I heard, not sure from who, but it says *the road to purpose is not paved in comfort.* This year surely was a bumpy one.

What we learn, time and again, is that we grow through the struggle. We don't get to skip over the hard parts, but we do get to walk through them together. Every challenge is an opportunity to reflect, to adapt, and to rise. And that's exactly what I saw across South Country this year - in our staff, our students, and our families.

More than our experiences here, in many ways, the world outside our schools feels like it's spinning faster and wobbling more than ever. The news cycle never stops. Division and distrust seem to grow louder. And too often, we're pushed into corners, more inclined to react than to understand. Now more than ever, we must model something better. We must listen to opposing viewpoints with curiosity, not judgment. We must show our students that disagreement doesn't mean disrespect. And we must believe, and I mean truly believe, that in our collective strength, we can move mountains.

That belief is what inspires me as we look to the year ahead. Thanks to the tireless work of so many across our district, we are set to begin implementation of our community-driven Strategic Plan - a roadmap grounded in the very values our community has said matter most: honesty and integrity, respect, valuing every student, giving and doing our very best, being solution-oriented, student-centered, equitable, community-engaged, and of course, rooted in our Clipper P.R.I.D.E.—Prepared, Respectful, Involved, Diligent, and Ethical. These values will help guide our pursuit of three major goals: embracing academic excellence, enhancing the student experience, and ensuring our operations provide a supportive learning environment.

Yes, there will be challenges ahead. There always are. But there is also incredible promise.

One of the greatest privileges of working in education is that every year, we get to begin again, with renewed energy, bold ambition, and a shared expectation that we will not only endure, but evolve. That's what I see for South Country.

Thank you all for your commitment, your heart, and your belief in what's possible.

Summer is finally here!

This will be my final message for the school year. Thank you for all you do for our South Country family. Despite it all, it's been a great year! I feel fortunate and lucky to serve such a great community of people.

Wishing you a summer of rest, joy, and well-deserved renewal.

Congratulations again to the Class of 2025!

Tony Santana
#clipperPRIDE