Greetings,

Before we head into the weekend, I wanted to take a moment to share a budget update, since I know it's been on many people's minds. Earlier this week, the Board engaged a forensic auditing firm that will carefully review last year's spending. The process will begin following the submission of our external auditor's final written annual review, and while we can't say when it will wrap up, the aim is to give our community a clear picture of how and why the district's expenses went beyond the voter-approved budget.

We do expect the report from our external auditors to be finished in the next couple of weeks, and once it's finalized, it will be posted on our website and reviewed publicly with the Board. These steps are important not only for accountability, but also for giving all of us clarity as we move forward.

I can appreciate how news like this can feel unsettling. Any time there are questions about finances, it naturally creates worry. What I can say with confidence is that these reviews are the right steps, they are moving forward, and they will give us a clear picture of what happened and how we ensure it doesn't happen again. Transparency and accountability are not just words, they are promises we intend to keep.

That said, I've also been reminded this week of just how much good is happening in our schools every single day. I know I say it a lot, but it's so true. Even if I haven't been able to be in the buildings as much as I'd like, I've been keeping up with all the smiles, celebrations, and learning moments through our district Instagram accounts. Let's just say I've been doing a lot of "double-tapping" lately, and for all the right reasons. Seeing all those glimpses of joy, learning, and connection is what keeps me inspired and grounded.

Still, we can't deny that these are turbulent times. Whether in schools, in our community, or in the world around us, there's no shortage of challenges. One of the things I most value about South Country is the way we rally together. When we focus on community and unity, we find the steady ground we need to move forward with purpose and hope.

On a personal note, next week brings the celebration of Rosh Hashanah. This is meaningful to me not only because I really do love all cultural and religious celebrations that bring people joy, but because as you may know, my own children are Jewish, and though I'll miss celebrating with them as they continue to thrive at Virginia Tech, my heart is very much with them and with all in our community who will be observing. To those celebrating, I wish you and your families a sweet, healthy, and hopeful New Year. Shanah Tovah!

Take care of yourselves, enjoy the beautiful weekend ahead, and as always—Go Clippers!

It really is a privilege serving this community as your superintendent of schools!

Tony Santana
#clipperPRIDE