Greetings,

This week was full of moments that showed just how many different ways our students and staff shine. I was finally able to get out to a couple of games this week, which I always love. There were some great victories and yes, some tough losses too. Still, our student athletes always shine when it comes to sportsmanship—a true example of Clipper Pride—and that is a credit to both our staff and our wonderful community. Go Clippers!

At the middle school, we celebrated our Students of the Month. It's always great to see how proud our kids are when their hard work and character are recognized and even better, the smiles on their families' faces. The support and love demonstrated by their teachers and staff was also uplifting and a reminder of why we are all here.

At the high school, I had the chance to take part in their Hispanic Heritage Month observance. It meant a lot to me to share the pride I feel in my own heritage and to talk a little about my mother, who came here as an immigrant and has always cherished the opportunities this country provides. Her example has been a lasting influence in my life. But my message to students went beyond my own story. I reminded them that we should all feel pride in who we are, whatever our backgrounds, and that the real strength of our community comes when we share and celebrate that pride with one another. It was wonderful to see students connect that message to their own experiences.

Over at Frank P. Long, I walked through their living wax museum, where students became prominent Hispanic figures for the day. The effort and creativity were outstanding, though I'll have to admit, Shakira nearly stole the show.

The high school also hosted its fall college fair, giving our students the chance to explore what's next after graduation. I held the first meeting of my Superintendent's Student Council this week as well. Elevating student voice is a big part of our Strategic Action Plan, and I'm excited about what we'll build together through those conversations. (I'm really looking forward to doing the same at the middle school in a few weeks!) I even rolled up my sleeve and donated blood at the high school student council's drive, a small but meaningful way to support the leadership and service our students demonstrate every day.

This was also Board Appreciation Week, and I want to take a moment to recognize our Board of Education. Serving on a school board is truly a labor of love—it's volunteer work that requires countless hours, late nights, and sometimes difficult decisions. Our board members balance their service with jobs, families, and personal lives, yet they

show up, again and again, because they care deeply about our students and this community. Their guidance helps set the direction for our schools, their advocacy ensures we have the resources we need, and their commitment keeps student achievement at the center of every conversation. I'm grateful for their leadership, and I know South Country is stronger because of their service.

As we head into the weekend, a reminder that schools are closed Monday in observance of Diwali. To everyone celebrating, I wish you joy, light, and time with loved ones.

Weeks like this remind me of the pride we can all share in being part of South Country. It really is a privilege serving this community as your superintendent of schools!

Tony Santana
#clipperPRIDE