Greetings,

I don’t know, but it felt like we were in September for two months! Despite this, October is here and we're quickly approaching the halfway point of the first quarter of the school year. Always amazed at how a month can feel so long and yet time seems to flash by in an instant.

As we move forward together, I want to take a moment to talk about the steps we’ve been taking to meet our financial challenges head-on. Over the past several weeks, we’ve been developing a corrective action plan, and while much of this work involves audits, reviews, and long-term planning, there are also immediate steps that can be taken right now.

One of the most important things we can do in this moment is to be thoughtful with our discretionary spending. That’s why we are enacting a temporary moratorium on conferences, even those funded through grants, so that we can determine if those dollars could be applied elsewhere to help offset expenses. We are also scaling back on field trips. To be very clear, this does not mean eliminating them altogether. Field trips are valuable learning experiences, but for now, we are asking staff to be more selective and bring forward only those trips they believe are truly worthwhile. Those requests will come directly through my office so we can make the most responsible choices.

These may sound like “little things,” but the truth is that little things add up. And when we are careful and deliberate in these areas, it means we can better safeguard the big things - the classrooms, programs, and services that touch our students every day.

I also know how easy it is for rumors to spread when words like “freeze” or “moratorium” are used. So let me assure you: our focus is on scaling back, not cutting away the heart of what makes this district special. This is about tightening our belt together in smart, manageable ways. We also have to start looking at long term solutions and really reflect on what’s truly important to us as a learning community.

And while these conversations are important, they don’t define who we are. This week, I had the chance to visit a classroom where a group of students interviewed me with thoughtful, and sometimes pretty tough, questions. Their curiosity and confidence were inspiring and a reminder that even in challenging times, our students are thriving, learning, and leading.

I’m still loving the fact that cell phones in our classrooms, in large part, seem to be behind us. I really think this is a change for the better. While it may have seemed obvious to us, the accessibility of the phones really was disrupting our school’s culture.

This is a general statement as much as it is a universal sentiment. I can only imagine the same can be said for society in general. There is simply so much happening and the means by which it's shared, skewed, and delivered is simply alarming. That's why it continues to be more important than ever that we model kindness, open mindedness, and the ability to appreciate different perspectives.

The days ahead will require patience, teamwork, and trust. All around. But I know we can do this together. And if this week is any indication, our Clipper Pride remains unshakable.

Wishing you a restful weekend and moments of joy with family and friends. And as always, unlike my Jets, it feels good to root for a team that knows how to win.

For the record, I'm not going to make any more references to my sports teams. It just hasn't worked out for me.

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

Tony Santana
#clipperPRIDE