Greetings,

During the past week I finally had the chance to get out to a couple of our fall athletic events. I always enjoy watching not just the athletes competing and working with their coaches, but also their classmates and community members showing up to cheer them on. As someone who went to public school in the city, we didn't really have access to a wide range of sports, so I never take for granted the scope of our athletic programs here. It really is something special and I'm looking forward to catching even more games in the weeks ahead. Go Clippers!

At this week's Board of Education meeting, we heard a terrific presentation on literacy at the elementary level. Our teachers and administrators highlighted the research-based strategies they're putting into practice—from phonics to morphology—and how these approaches are helping our youngest learners build the strong foundation they need for future success. Even after years of working with curriculum, I was struck by the level of intentional planning and how much research is driving what we do every day. With state assessments continuing to move toward deeper levels of comprehension and critical thinking, the work happening in our elementary classrooms could not be more important. The energy, expertise, and commitment of our teachers came through loud and clear, and it was inspiring to see. So a big Clipper PRIDE shout goes out to the team! Amazing work!

We also took an important step forward on the financial side of things. The Board unanimously approved an agreement with Investigative Management Group (IMG) to conduct a forensic audit of our finances. Again, they're here to help us understand how and why last year's expenses went over budget and more importantly, how we can strengthen our systems going forward. To support this work, we welcomed Mr. John Belmonte as our acting assistant superintendent for finance. With his decades of school business experience, we're looking forward to his input and to working together as this process moves ahead.

I know folks are eager for answers, and while we're still waiting on the final audited report, our focus is on being open, honest, and proactive. We'll keep sharing updates as we get them.

And now, a three-day weekend is upon us. With a nor'easter rolling in Sunday into Monday, it might be the perfect excuse to stay inside and enjoy some pumpkin coffee, pumpkin bread, or pumpkin muffins. Personally, I'm gonna have me some pumpkin pie and lots of comfort food. It'll be that type of weekend!

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

Tony Santana
#clipperPRIDE