

Greetings,

This week's message will be on the lighter side. I think we could all use a moment to breathe, take stock of the good around us, and simply appreciate the people and experiences that make our days meaningful.

I met with a student advisory group from the middle school this past week, and it was spirited to say the least. Middle school students are wonderfully wacky and deeply honest, and there is a sincerity and clarity in their thinking that reminds me how hopeful and imaginative that age can be. They look at the world with fresh eyes, unfiltered and full of possibility. Talking with them brought me right back to my own middle school days. I'm not gonna front, I did some reminiscing. And yes, I was a nerd. Yes, there were mean kids. But the world felt okay. Maybe that was because we didn't have 24 hour news, the internet, social media, or deep fakes. All I had was an imitation Walkman, way too much Drakkar cologne, too much hair gel, and the hope that maybe, just maybe, Tatiana liked me back. (*Spoiler: she did not.*) Still, I was so optimistic at what the future had in store. Ah, the 80s.

And just as I'm inspired by our students, I am also inspired by our staff. The relationships they build, the patience and care they show, and the way they bring learning to life, it's awesome. There are so many moments happening in classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, and fields that reflect the very best of who we are. I also really appreciate the warmth that's demonstrated when I arrive at a building. It's simply reassuring. Even when things feel heavy, the work happening with our kids and staff is meaningful, joyful, and deeply human. That's what keeps me grounded.

Next week, we'll join the nation in observing Veterans Day. This is a moment to honor the men and women who have served in our armed forces, including many within our own community and our own families. Their courage, sacrifice, and willingness to serve others reflect the very best of what we aim to teach and live. To our veterans and the families who support them, we thank you. We see you. We appreciate you.

On a personal note, my 85 year old mother will be undergoing cataract surgery next week. While the procedure is routine, she is understandably anxious. And as her only caretaker, I feel that right along with her. But I will meet it with optimism, patience, humor, and love, even though I already know she is going to be extra grumpy about it. I'm sure she'll be fine, I'm just hoping I get through it!

Finally, I want to wish our Bellport Clippers football team the very best as they take on Northport tomorrow in the first round of the playoffs. Let's show up loud, proud, and with full Clipper PRIDE. I will most definitely be there!

And as always, it really is a privilege serving this community as your superintendent of schools!

Wishing you all a restorative weekend.

With appreciation,

Tony Santana

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