



Chapter 11:

In Moments of Uncertainty, Our Leadership is Called Upon More Than Ever

As we move swiftly into February, and dedicate special time to honor countless African American trailblazers throughout Black History Month, the wise words of my dear colleague and friend Dr. Michelle King resonate profoundly in my ear:

“Maintaining the safety of every student, parent, and employee remains the District’s top priority.” These words guided and strengthened our resolve to support our school communities during yesterday’s challenges.

The disturbing incident that happened at Sal Castro Middle School continues to echo throughout the district.

In every school and district office, our hearts collectively swell for those who were injured, and our thoughts remain focused on their speedy recovery. Meanwhile, the schools that were directly impacted continue the work of restoring calm and normalcy on campus and attending to the emotional needs of their community.

Feelings of gratitude continue to be felt everywhere for the first responders, employees, and community members who handled this situation so professionally, as we know they will be there for us if we ever need them.

And, students and parents who were distressed by yesterday’s news returned to school today with a heightened need for assurance that school campuses are still safe.

Let me be extremely clear: our school campuses continue to be one of the safest places where our young people can possibly be—and *you* are the reason why.

Through countless daily acts, you all play an indispensable role in ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of our youth. You *all* contribute to the cultivation of learning environments that are responsive to students’ social-emotional needs. In

short, because of your tireless efforts, our schools are places where young people are protected, cared for, embraced, accepted, nurtured, uplifted, and empowered. Few places in our region can make such a claim. Our schools are, and always will be, safe havens in the community.

In moments of uncertainty, our leadership is called upon more than ever. You are all invaluable leaders, and I call upon you now to be a voice of reassurance that lets students and parents know their safety continues to be our top priority. And, if there is ever a situation where you feel unsafe or perceive a potential danger, remember—**if you see something, say something.**

Together, we will be the steady hand that keeps our schools safe and our District moving unwaveringly toward 100 percent graduation.

Have a great weekend.

Vivian Ekchian
Interim Superintendent

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