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“Not a Question of If, But When”

During the past two weeks, there has been much discussion in the print and broadcast media about my decision to postpone second semester performance of a play being developed by Wilton High School’s Advanced Theater Arts class called “Voices in Conflict.” The play is a devised piece that uses the words of United States soldiers and Iraqi citizens to discuss the Iraq war. I approved the development of this class project prior to the start of the 2006-2007 second semester with the understanding that the play would honor those serving in our armed forces and would help Wilton High School students gain perspective about the complex issues associated with the war.

I miscalculated how ambitious the “Voices” project was in terms of time, effort and complexity. After much research and deliberation, on March 13, I decided to postpone second semester performance of the class project because it still required work. I was concerned about source use and attribution, placement of materials in appropriate dramatic context, balance and perspective about the issues related to the war, and proper introduction and follow-up support for a student audience.

At the end of the day, despite what you have read and heard in the media coverage, the question was not if but when we would perform the project. I decided the semester would not allow sufficient time to both complete a suitable script and adequately prepare for a performance, but I encouraged the teacher and students to continue

to work on the script with the hope that the seniors could leave it as their legacy for performance in the future.

Even though I remain convinced that my decision was in the best interest of our school and community, the students who were looking forward to performing were understandably frustrated and upset about my decision. For these talented actors and actresses, it was all about the performance.

I am proud of the students who have voiced their opposition to my decision. They have exercised their right to stand in dissent and they deserve our respect and admiration. At the same time, there are students who have expressed support for this decision. They also deserve our respect and admiration. -

I am working on plans with our faculty to resolve this situation in a way consistent with our educational goals. We are exploring a range of possibilities and I will let you know as plans develop. When the project meets our curriculum standards, it will be presented for students in a context that provides appropriate background and support. In addition to school possibilities, the Theater Arts teacher and students have the option, if they wish, to privately pursue more immediate performance opportunities outside of the school system.

As you know, there is much controversy about this decision and many in the media have taken an angry tone. I am working to ensure that those strident voices remain outside our school. Within Wilton High School, we will continue to promote an atmosphere of civility and respect, reminding all that we can disagree without being disagreeable. In the days to come, let us strive to work together to solve this problem with understanding and compassion for all.