



NORTHWEST YESHIVA HIGH SCHOOL

February 26, 2010
12 Adar 5770

Dear Friends:

You may be aware that NYHS's women's basketball team – the 613s – this week participated in the Washington State Division Tournament in Yakima. The tournament began on Wednesday and continues through Saturday night. We realized before entering the tournament that our Thursday game was likely to be scheduled for the day time – during the Fast of Esther. This would prevent our team from participating in the game and eliminate the team from the tournament. We appealed to the WIAA for a scheduling accommodation that would allow our students to compete on Thursday night. We suggested a number of options that would minimize the inconvenience to other teams. The WIAA carefully considered our request and suggestions but ultimately decided to not grant the accommodation. I am sending you this note in order to add a few observations to the accounts that you may have seen or heard in the media.

First, we acknowledge that the WIAA is committed to working with schools that observe the Sabbath on Saturday towards inclusion in the state basketball tournament. In fact, if our team had advanced in the tournament and been scheduled for competition on Friday and Saturday, the WIAA would have made the necessary accommodations required by Shabbat observance.

Second, we are pleased to have participated in the tournament on Wednesday. We wish that we had been able to compete further but we choose to focus on the positive. We are also grateful to our scheduled opponents for Thursday – St. John-Endicott – for meeting our team on the court and providing us the opportunity to congratulate them on advancing, and wishing them success.

Since this story first appeared in the media on Tuesday, we have received widespread support from people throughout Washington State and beyond. Blogs on news stories, calls and e-mails to the school have been overwhelmingly supportive. Most of these comments came from individuals who do not share our religious beliefs or practices. The comments express support for and admiration of our girls for their commitment to their values.

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As an educator, it is my responsibility to inspire my students. However, often my students inspire me. The group of students who comprises the NYHS 613s has worked hard since before the season began to achieve a state tournament berth. They are the first NYHS team to compete in a state tournament in any sport. They secured an invitation through winning two very difficult games at the district tournament. They left for Yakima on Tuesday fully aware of the uncertainty facing them regarding their Thursday game. Throughout the experience, they were committed to being faithful to their values. They have also demonstrated a consistently positive attitude, shown respect for all those involved in this controversy, and expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to compete. Throughout they have been supported and encouraged by all of their peers at NYHS and our alumni. NYHS students and alumni have expressed their support directly to the players and have called-in to radio shows and posted their comments on-line on various blogs.

In our roles as parents and educators, we strive to instill in others moral and spiritual values. These values only become meaningful when they are embodied by our children and students, beyond the boundaries of the home and school. NYHS's students come from diverse backgrounds. One of the ways their diversity is expressed is in the manner in which the *mitzvot* are observed in their homes. But these students have demonstrated that although they come from backgrounds with diverse standards and modes of observance, they share a common respect for, commitment to, and pride in our traditions and values. Their respect, commitment, and pride, express a core value that they take with them beyond the walls of the classroom.

I am sharing this with you in the hope that these wonderful young women will inspire others as they have inspired me.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Bernie Fox
Head of School