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December 18, 2015

Dear Members of the Exeter High School Community,

The recent decision to cancel all regular school dances for the foreseeable future has prompted a wide variety of responses that range from support and understanding to shock and disappointment.

For at least eight years, “inappropriate student behavior” at dances has been an issue. Various attempts by different school administrators, staff, parents, and students to address these reported behaviors have been tried. During those eight years, high schools both within the state and nationally have confronted the same problem and reached the same conclusion that led to the decision announced this week.

Accompanying this announcement was the statement that I made with regard to the personal “tipping point” of the October St. Paul’s School case. This connection clearly upset some people who believed that my comment was an affront to the vast majority of students, families, and staff of Exeter High School (EHS). For not fully clarifying my point, I apologize.

My statement was more directed at my role as a school administrator who is clearly responsible for what I “knew or should have known” (Marquay v. Eno, NH Supreme Court, 1995). Just as I believe that all school administrators have responsibility in this regard at their respective schools, I take this responsibility very seriously. Please note carefully that I was not making any references about “student rape” at EHS dances nor comparing our students with those individuals who were involved in that St. Paul’s School case. Rather, I was trying to stress that if any “reasonable and prudent person” knew what I know about student behavior at dances, then he or she would have reached the same decision at this time.

It is important that as a school community, we take this as an opportunity to promote our positive school values and continue to aspire to high standards in all that we do, individually and collectively.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Morgan  
Superintendent of Schools