



Barrington 220 students from all eight elementary schools participate in the district's annual Math, Logic and Problem Solving Tournament held recently at Barbara B. Rose Elementary School in South Barrington.

## Call Me *Maybe*

*Asking hard questions and being skeptical of easy answers can be productive.*

THOSE OF US WITH A FEW YEARS UNDER OUR BELTS probably recall being sure of one thing or another, only to be surprised by life. Few of us married the first person we dated or entered the profession we originally thought was ideal for us. When I was a kid and adults asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, it was never “a school superintendent.” I always wanted to be a cowboy, although I’m sure there are many horses (and cows) out there much better off thanks to the unexpected trajectory of my career path.

The uncertainty of life reminds me of two short stories I shared with the Barrington High School Class of 2012 at its commencement ceremony last spring. The first comes from a long time ago in a land far, far away, where there lived a teenage king who did not like to study or read.

He obviously graduated from somewhere other than Barrington High School.

This inexperienced young ruler assembled his kingdom’s wisest men and women and asked them to condense all human knowledge into one book he could easily read. The sages worked 10 long years on the project, only to have the king reply, “I’ll never be able to read such a big book.” The king – who was quite adept at using Twitter, as were most of his friends – said, “Go back to work and summarize all human knowledge into a single Tweet of 140 characters or less.”

So back to work they went, this time for another decade. When they reappeared, their spokesperson proposed the Tweet, “Things change; this too shall pass.” A clever message, but not the end of the story. Now an adult, the king recognized that sometimes when things go badly, one needs

to be resilient and persevere. When things go well, one needs to cherish those times, for likely they will not last.

Due to the frantic pace and short attention span of his generation, the king feared even a short Tweet might not make the point. He next told them to abbreviate all knowledge into a single word. The wise men and women worked another 10 years. When they returned, the now middle-aged king asked for one word to embody all wisdom. By this time, his elderly adviser simply smiled and said, “Maybe.” It was a brilliant one-word summary of life’s ever-changing nature. In this day and age, “maybe” is still a smart word.

Writer H. L. Mencken once said, “For every complex problem, there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong.” His observation describes much of what is misguided about our political, cultural, and even educational experiences. We accept clear, simple, yet often wrong answers to the very complex problems facing our society.

How do we avoid this quandary? We should become healthy skeptics, digging deep into the issues and questioning both assumptions and easy explanations. Many people believe education is about memorizing answers only for tests. Instead, I hope Barrington 220 students learn how to ask probing, insightful questions that foster critical thinking and delve further into the issues. When confronted with a complex situation that requires a response, ponder and counter with “maybe.”

Our school board president, Brian Battle, once shared a story about an auto defect at General Motors. Supposedly, the president of GM received a letter from a customer, which read:

“We have a tradition in our family of eating ice cream for dessert after dinner each night. But the kind of ice cream varies; so, after we’ve eaten, the whole family votes on which kind of ice cream I should drive to the store to purchase. I recently bought a new Pontiac and since then my trips to the store have created a problem. Every time I buy vanilla ice cream, when I leave the store my car won’t start. If I get any other kind of ice cream, the car starts just fine. I know it sounds silly, but what is there about a Pontiac that makes it not start when I get vanilla ice cream, and easy to start whenever I get another kind?”

*(Story continued next page)*



# Coming Soon!



## Peter Yarrow

*Of Peter, Paul and Mary*

April 20 @ 8:00pm  
Tickets start at \$32

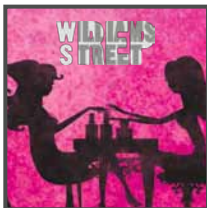
*A special Spring concert!*

As part of the legendary folk group, Peter, Paul and Mary, Peter Yarrow's music has spanned the generations and touched the lives of so many. Peter's talents as a creative artist — both with Peter, Paul & Mary and as a solo performer — are frequently directed at using music to convey a message of humanity and caring. His gift for songwriting has produced some of the most moving songs Peter, Paul & Mary have recorded, including "Puff, the Magic Dragon", "Day is Done", "Light One Candle" and "The Great Mandala". Don't miss this show!

### More Events Coming Soon...



Under the Covers with The Gees  
March 23 @ 3p



Steel Magnolias Opens  
April 26 @ 8p



Delfeayo Marsalis does Duke Ellington  
May 18 @ 8p

**Tickets on Sale NOW!**  
rauecenter.org or 815.356.9212



The president of GM could have easily disregarded the letter. Instead, he sent an engineer to analyze the man's dilemma. After following him to the store several times, he learned the man was right. Every time he purchased vanilla ice cream, the car would not start; but with any other flavor, the car started normally.

The engineer took notes on the time of day, weather conditions, type of gas, etc. He researched the issue and then discovered the problem. Since vanilla ice cream was the store's most popular flavor, it was kept in a freezer near the checkout lanes for customers' convenience. All other varieties were available near the back of the store. If the man bought vanilla ice cream, he returned to his car more quickly before it had time to cool down. This was the discovery of "vapor lock," which has since been addressed by all auto companies.

So when faced with a perplexing problem, take time to say, "maybe." Ask questions and suspend judgment on matters that are generally accepted. We need more of that in our world, whether talking about car repair, educating children, solving complex issues related to stem cell research, or determining how to protect personal privacy in an era of rapidly growing technology. Asking hard questions – being skeptical and saying "maybe" to easy answers – can be a productive exercise.

At its best, a Barrington 220 education provides a foundation for active adult learning and good citizenship. Students are encouraged to flex their knowledge and skills by asking tough questions about life's puzzles. Out of the discussion and the debate will come important understandings.

And that's no "maybe." U



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

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