

POLICY TITLE: CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES		
ADOPTION/EFFECTIVE DATE:	MOST RECENTLY AMENDED:	MOST RECENTLY REAFFIRMED: 5/6/2002
POLICY/PROCEDURE MANUAL SUMMARY CATEGORY: INSTRUCTION		

~~As a public institution, the Harford County Public Schools has a responsibility to provide for the study of controversial issues. Many areas of study abound with vital issues which should be carefully studied and adequately discussed to develop student abilities in reflective and responsible thinking. Facing issues without prejudice and withholding judgments until facts have been gathered, considered, and conclusions drawn are valuable student outcomes of a free educational system. A free exchange of ideas is highly important in democratic living. Serious consideration of purposeful, carefully planned investigations of controversial issues relating to a course of study is important to the citizenship education of students.~~

~~In providing for the study and discussion of such issues, the school system must maintain a non-partisan, neutral position. Controversial issues shall be presented and discussed in secondary school classrooms. Such study shall be objective and scholarly, and teachers shall guard against giving their personal opinions until after students have had the opportunity to collect and assemble factual information on the subject, to interpret the data without prejudice, to reconsider assumptions and claims, and to reach personal conclusions. Students must be encouraged to search after truth as well as to form, express, and justify personal views in controversial issues.~~

~~The teacher has the right to express personal views regarding controversial issues which have been previously presented and discussed in class. Such points of view should be clearly identified as opinions. The teacher may also express his/her views to generate additional thought and discussion but should identify these opinions and their purposes.~~

~~Further, the teacher has the obligation to assist students in achieving a scholarly competence, to teach factual information and concepts upon which truth is based, to help students develop a respect for factual knowledge as the basis for critical thought, to avoid discussion of issues beyond the comprehension and maturity of students, to lead students to recognize that some problems and issues escape solution, and to demonstrate a deep respect for the dignity of each student and his/her right to express opinions without jeopardizing relationships with the teachers of the school.~~

Board Approval Acknowledged By:
Patricia L. Skebeck, Secretary and Treasurer

I. Purpose

To establish criteria related to the teaching of controversial issues in the schools.

II. Definitions

Controversial issue means a subject or matter about which there are significant differences of opinion, and about which related discussion may create strong feelings among students and/or members of the community.

III. Statement of Policy

A controversial issue may be considered for secondary classroom instruction or discussion when the following criteria are met:

- A. The issue is related to the instructional goals of the course of study and commensurate with the level of maturity of the students.
- B. The controversial issue is presented in an impartial and objective manner and in an atmosphere that is free from bias and prejudice.
- C. The controversial issue, as presented, encourages open discussion and a respect for conflicting beliefs and opinions.
- D. Teachers may express their personal views regarding controversial issues, provided the teacher presents such views in accordance with the above criteria, and provided the teacher makes clear that the teacher's statement represents his/her personal opinion only.

Board Approval Acknowledged By:

Barbara P. Canavan, Superintendent
Board of Education of Harford County

Policy Action Dates					
ACTION	DATE	ACTION	DATE	ACTION	DATE
Reaffirmed	5/12/1980				
Reaffirmed	10/26/1998				
Reaffirmed	5/6/2002				

Responsibility for Policy Maintenance & References		
LAST EDITOR/DRAFTER NAME: Patrick P. Spicer, Esquire	JOB POSITION OF LAST EDITOR/DRAFTER: General Counsel	
PERSON RESPONSIBLE: Dr. Susan Brown	JOB POSITION OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE: Executive Director of Curriculum and Assessment	
DESIGNEE NAME: N/A	JOB POSITION OF DESIGNEE: N/A	
REFERENCE 1 TYPE:	REFERENCE 1 NO.	REFERENCE 1 DESCRIPTION:
POLICY NUMBER PRIOR TO NOVEMBER 1, 2005: Instructional Program .03.05.090		

REFERENCES¹

References are set forth in the Policy.

¹ All references are to specific federal or Maryland statutes or regulations. References are provided for convenience and informational purposes only and are not to be considered as exhaustive or as precluding Harford County Public Schools from relying upon any other statutes, regulations, or legal authority in support of a policy.