

**I. Policy Statement**

The Board of Education recognizes the role of public education in preparing students for effective citizenship. Consequently, the instructional program developed to achieve this purpose must appropriately emphasize cultural heritage, and the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of citizenship. The Board also recognizes that as students prepare for effective citizenship, they often encounter issues that may be considered controversial. The Board of Education encourages the examination of controversial issues related to Board approved curriculum in an impartial and objective manner.

**II. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the teaching of controversial issues.

**III. Definitions**

- A. Controversial Issue – a point or matter about which there exist significant opposing viewpoints and/or multiple perspectives.
- B. Curriculum – the prescribed elements of programs and courses which state clearly and specifically what students are to know and be able to do, how well they will be able to do it, how they will meet the learning objectives and by what means they will be assessed.

**IV. Standards**

- A. A controversial issue may be considered when the following conditions are met:
  - 1. The issue has political, economic, or social significance and is presented within appropriate curricular guidelines.
  - 2. Students are provided access to relevant and credible information pertaining to the issue under study.
  - 3. The issue is presented in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
  - 4. Students are able to form and express their own opinions on the issue without jeopardizing their relationship with teachers or the school.
- B. Controversial issues must be presented in an impartial and objective manner.

- C. The use of resource speakers in teaching controversial issues is permitted in accordance with Policy 8060, Resource Speakers.

**V. Compliance**

- A. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that information from all views on a controversial issue is presented in an appropriate manner.
- B. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that their personal views, when appropriate, are presented as opinion rather than fact.
- C. Principals are responsible for developing and implementing school-based procedures for approving controversial issues to be considered in the classroom.
- D. Department of Education staff, particularly those with curricular responsibilities, are responsible for providing assistance and advice with regard to the teaching of controversial issues.

**VI. Delegation of Authority**

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures for the implementation of this policy.

**VII. References**

- A. Legal
  - Code of Maryland Regulations, 13A.04.04 Religious Education
  - Code of Maryland Regulations, 13A.04.0 Program in Social Studies
  - Code of Maryland Regulations, 13A.04.09 Program in Science
  - Code of Maryland Regulations, 13A.04.14 Program in English Language Arts
  - Code of Maryland Regulations, 13A.04.18 Program in Comprehensive Health Education
- B. Other Board Policies
  - Policy 8000 Curriculum
  - Policy 8040 Selection of Instructional Materials
  - Policy 8060 Resource Speakers
  - Policy 8070 Religion and Religious Materials

**VIII. History**

ADOPTED: February 1, 1972  
REVIEWED: July 1, 2011  
MODIFIED:  
REVISED: March 8, 1990  
April 28, 2005  
EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2005

**TEACHING OF CONTROVERSIAL**  
**ISSUES**

Effective: July 1, 2005

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- I. The principal, in conjunction with Department of Education staff and in accordance with curricular guidelines, bears the primary responsibility for the development of school procedures for the teaching of controversial issues.
- II. Teachers shall use the following Board of Education approved criteria for determining the appropriateness of issues for consideration as a part of the curriculum:
  - A. The treatment of the issue in question shall be within range, knowledge, maturity, and competence of the students.
  - B. There shall be materials available from which a reasonable amount of data pertaining to diverse aspects of the issue may be obtained.
  - C. The issue shall be significant and shall be curriculum related, but shall not utilize time disproportionate in relation to the regularly planned curriculum and should not adversely impact instruction.
  - D. A teacher who is in doubt concerning the advisability of discussing certain issues in the classroom should confer with his/her principal as to the appropriateness of doing so.
  - E. Assistance and guidance of Department of Education Staff shall be made available to principals and teachers concerning the teaching of controversial issues.

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