

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
Board of Education of Harford County

Policy Action Dates					
ACTION	DATE	ACTION	DATE	ACTION	DATE
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Reaffirmed	10/26/1998				
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