

BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DATE: July 9, 2013

TO: **BOARD OF EDUCATION**

FROM: S. Dallas Dance, Superintendent

SUBJECT: **CONSIDERATION OF THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY 6102, TEACHING OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

ORIGINATOR: S. Dallas Dance, Superintendent

RESOURCE PERSON(S): Patricia Lawton, Chief Academic Officer
Elizabeth Aitken, Senior Executive Director

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Education approves the proposed changes to Policy 6102. This is the third reading.

Attachment I – Policy Analysis
Attachment II – Policy 6102

**POLICY ANALYSIS FOR
BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY 6102
TEACHING OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

Statement of Issues or Questions Addressed

In accordance with Board of Education Policy and Superintendent’s Rule 8130, Policy 6102 is scheduled for review in school year 2012–2013. Policy 6102 supports teaching of controversial issues as an integral part of the curriculum when enhanced to support the instructional program. Staff is recommending that Policy 6102 be revised and written to: (1) Include a policy statement that authorizes teaching controversial issues that directly relate to the curriculum and are aligned with school system goals; (2) Revise the policy by removing dated references and clearly communicating the intent of the policy; (3) Include an implementation section; (4) Confirm with the Policy Review Committee’s editing conventions.

Cost Analysis and Fiscal Impact on School System

No fiscal impact is anticipated by the revision of this policy.

Relationship to Other Board of Education Policies

1. Board of Education Policy 5600, *Students’ Rights and Responsibilities*
2. Board of Education Policy 6000, *Curriculum and Instruction*
3. Board of Education Policy 6002, *Selection of Instructional Materials-Philosophy*
4. Board of Education Policy 6100, *Curriculum*

Legal Requirements

1. COMAR 13A.04.04, *Religious Education*
2. COMAR 13A.04.05, *Education That is Multicultural*
3. COMAR 13A.04.08, *Program in Social Studies*
4. COMAR 13A.04.09, *Program in Science*
5. COMAR 13A.04.14, *Program in English Language Arts*
6. COMAR 13A.04.18, *Program in Comprehensive Health Education*

Similar Policies Adopted by Other Local School Systems

1. Harford County Board of Education, Policy 03.05.090, *Controversial Issues*
2. Howard County Board of Education, Policy 8050, *Teaching of Controversial Issues*

Draft of Proposed Policy

Attached

Other Alternatives Considered by Staff

No other options were considered.

Timeline

First reading – May 21, 2013

Public comment – June 11, 2013

Third reading/vote – July 9, 2013

INSTRUCTION: CURRICULUM

Teaching OF Controversial Issues

I. PHILOSOPHY

- A. THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF BALTIMORE COUNTY (BOARD) RECOGNIZES THAT THE TEACHING OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES REPRESENTS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE CURRICULUM WHEN USED TO ENHANCE AND SUPPORT THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM.
- B. THE BOARD BELIEVES THAT THE STUDY AND DISCUSSION OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE FOR EDUCATION IN A FREE SOCIETY. STUDENTS' LEARNING IS ENHANCED BY EXAMINING EVIDENCE, FACTS, AND DIFFERING VIEWPOINTS THROUGH THE EXERCISE OF FREEDOM OF THOUGHT. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' ABILITIES TO THINK REFLECTIVELY AND RESPONSIBLY BASED UPON OPPOSING POINTS OF VIEW AND MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES.

II. DEFINITION

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE - A PROBLEM, SUBJECT, OR QUESTION ABOUT WHICH THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES OF OPINION, NO SIMPLE RESOLUTIONS, AND FOR WHICH RELATED DISCUSSION MAY CREATE STRONG FEELINGS AMONG PEOPLE.

III. STANDARDS

A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE MAY BE CONSIDERED FOR 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 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 PRESENTED ENCOURAGES OPEN DISCUSSION AND A RESPECT FOR CONFLICTING BELIEFS AND OPINIONS.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

THE BOARD DIRECTS THE SUPERINTENDENT TO IMPLEMENT THIS POLICY.

[Training in reflective and responsible thinking is the responsibility of all teachers. This training is impossible, or at least severely hampered, if the entire community does not respect the principles of freedom and recognize that dissent does not necessarily mean disloyalty. However, one form of dissent which is absolutely incompatible with freedom is that which attempts to end freedom. Irrational fears do just this, and thereby may block such a community institution as the school in its effort to handle controversial issues.

Many areas of study are alive with controversial issues that demand the teacher-pupil freedom to deliberate, decide, and accept the ultimate responsibility of their decision. Indeed, a sustained study of the political, social, and economic record of man inevitably leads to different value judgments. To learn how to make value judgments is the right of all pupils.

- I. It is the responsibility of the schools to make provision for the study of controversial issues.
 - A. The study shall be emphasized in the senior high school when most pupils are mature enough to study the significant controversial issues facing our citizens.
 - B. The study shall be objective and scholarly with a minimum emphasis on opinion.
- II. The pupil has four rights to be recognized in the study of controversial issues.

- A. The right to study any controversial issue which has political, economic, or social significance and concerning which he should begin to have an opinion.
- B. The right to have free access to all relevant information, including the materials that circulate freely in the community.
- C. The right to study under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
- D. The right to form and express his own opinions on controversial issues without thereby jeopardizing his relations with his teacher or the school.

III. The teacher employs the same methods in handling area of controversy as characterize his best teaching at any time.

- A. The teacher, in selecting both the content and the method of instruction shall be mindful of the maturity level of his students. The teacher has become acquainted with the thought patterns of his community and his decisions shall be made with these in mind.
- B. The teacher shall assure himself that the controversial subject to be discussed belongs within the framework of the curriculum to be covered, that the subject is significant as well as meaningful for the pupils, and that through the discussion pupils will have some opportunity to grow.
- C. The teacher shall handle the classroom presentation in ways which will insure a wide range of information and interpretation for the pupils' consideration. He shall strive to present a balance among many points of view.
- D. The teacher shall not use the classroom as a personal forum. He shall not employ the techniques of the demagogue or the propagandist for attention, for control, or simply for color.
- E. The teacher shall emphasize keeping an open mind, basing one's judgment on known facts, looking closely at facts to evaluate them in terms of the subject under discussion, and being ready to change one's opinion should new facts come to light.
- F. The emphasis always shall be on the method of forming an opinion as much as on the opinion formed.]

LEGAL REFERENCES: COMAR 13A.04.04, *RELIGIOUS EDUCATION*
COMAR 13A.04.05, *EDUCATION THAT IS
MULTICULTURAL*
COMAR 13A.04.08, *PROGRAM IN SOCIAL STUDIES*
COMAR 13A.04.09, *PROGRAM IN SCIENCE*
COMAR 13A.04.14, *PROGRAM IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARTS*
COMAR 13A.04.18, *PROGRAM IN COMPREHENSIVE
HEALTH EDUCATION*

RELATED POLICIES: BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY 5600, *STUDENTS'
RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES*
BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY 6000, *CURRICULUM
AND INSTRUCTION*
BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY 6002, *SELECTION OF
INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS*
BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY 6100, *CURRICULUM*

POLICY
Adopted: 09/25/69
REVISED: _____

Board of Education of Baltimore County