

POLICY 8050

TEACHING OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

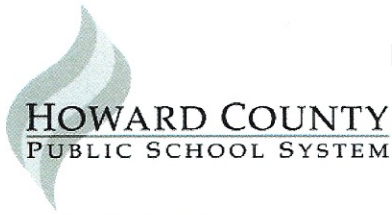
PUBLIC HEARING

7:00 BOE MEETING – DECEMBER 5, 2019

1. Public Hearing on this Policy will be held on Thursday, December 5th. All parents/interested parties may sign up to testify in advance or the night of the meeting.
2. The Policy has not been reviewed in 15 years, so this was a major re-write.
3. The BOE has been presented with the Policy and made their recommendations on November 7th. Please review that meeting on BoardDocs if you would like to know their thoughts.
4. The words with the line throughs ----- are the words that are being removed from the current policy.
5. The words that are underlined _____ are the words that are being added to the current policy.
6. Please review the Minority Opinions from the Assistant Principal that was on the Review Committee as well as the Minority Opinion from the PTACHC Representative.
7. Their concern seems to be regarding the Teacher's Opinion and the fact that each Principal may be the person in the building making the decision as to whether a topic is controversial.
8. Please reach out to your local PTA and ask their opinion regarding the Policy. You are also free to submit testimony online or testify yourself, as a parent/citizen.

Written Testimony: boe@hcpss.org

In-Person Testimony: hcpss.org – Board of Education – Participate in a Meeting
– Upcoming Hearings



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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, critical thinking, and the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of citizenship living in a pluralistic society. The Board also recognizes that as students prepare for ~~effective citizenship~~ active engagement in participatory democracy, 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~~ in an impartial and objective manner. The examination of controversial issues should occur in inclusive and supportive learning environments that encourage respect for multiple perspectives. The Board also encourages community stakeholders, students, school system employees, parents, service providers, and each member of the community to support the teaching of controversial issues in the classroom in order to promote the development of civic efficacy, student engagement, and critical thinking among our students.

II. Purpose

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

III. Definitions

Within the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. Citizenship – Having the right to participate in and to be represented in politics and for the purpose of this document refers to both global and national politics.
- AB. Controversial Issues – ~~a point or m~~Matters about which there exist significant opposing viewpoints and/or multiple perspectives based on reputable academic disagreements or political policy or ideological issues.
- BC. 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. Sensitive and controversial issue topics are components of the curriculum.
- D. Participatory Democracy – A system of government within which citizens either make decisions on policy and/or elect representatives in order to make laws and decisions on policy and implement those decisions.

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- E. Perspectives – A point of view; a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something.
- F. Sensitive Issues – Resolved historical fact that must be addressed in a manner that supports a safe learning environment for students.
- G. Third Party – Parents, mentors, volunteers, vendors, contractors, and others with whom students or employees interact during school or school-related activities.

IV. Standards

- A. A controversial issue may be ~~considered~~ addressed in the classroom when the following conditions are met:
 - 1. The issue has political, economic, cultural, or social significance and is presented within ~~appropriate~~ curricular guidelines.
 - 2. Teachers have communicated to students how to practice civil discourse.
 - 23. 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.~~
 - 34. Students are able to form and express their own opinions on the issue without jeopardizing their relationships with teachers or the school.
- B. Controversial issues must be presented as follows: ~~in an impartial and objective manner~~.
 - 1. In an age appropriate manner.
 - 2. With a goal of encouraging discussion and building mutual understanding of the topic.
 - 3. With access to and respect for multiple perspectives and sources that are founded in relevant and credible information.
 - 4. In a learning environment that is safe, supportive, inclusive, and focused on an academic examination of the issue.
 - 5. In alignment with the school system's curriculum, mission, and vision.
- C. A sensitive issue may be related to a controversial issue or may lead to a discussion about a controversial issue. Therefore, sensitive issues should be addressed in accordance with Section IV.B. of this policy.
- ~~C.D.~~ The use of resource speakers in teaching controversial issues is permitted in accordance with Policy 8060; Resource Speakers.
- E. Teachers who have concerns about presenting a controversial issue will seek assistance from a supervisor about methods for facilitating a discussion.

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- F. School-based procedures will be developed for approving controversial issues to be considered in the classroom.

V. Compliance Responsibilities

- A. The Superintendent/designee will ensure that students, parents, employees, and third parties are notified of the provisions of this policy annually.
- AB. Teachers are responsible for will ensure that information from all views multiple perspectives on a controversial issue is presented in an appropriate manner that models citizenship, supports student engagement in participatory democracy, and maintains adherence to related HCPSS policies as referenced in Section VII.B. of this policy.
- B. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that their personal views, when appropriate, are presented as opinion rather than fact.
- C. Principals School-based administrators are responsible for will developing and implementing school-based procedures for approving controversial issues to be considered in the classroom.
- D. Department of Education staff The Division of Academics, particularly those with curricular responsibilities, are responsible for will providing assistance, and advice, and training 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 1000 Civility
Policy 1010 Anti-Discrimination
Policy 1040 Safe and Supportive Schools
Policy 1060 Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, or Intimidation
 Policy 8000 Curriculum
 Policy 8040 Selection of Instructional Materials

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Policy 8060 Resource Speakers
Policy 8070 Religion and Religious Materials

C. Relevant Data Sources

D. Other

VIII. History

ADOPTED: February 1, 1972

REVIEWED: July 1, 2011

MODIFIED:

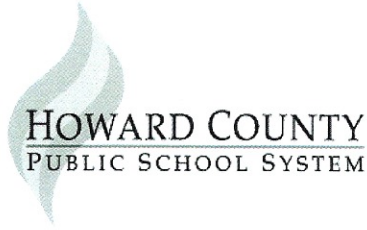
REVISED: March 8, 1990

April 28, 2005

February 13, 2020

EFFECTIVE: ~~July 1, 2005~~

July 1, 2020



**POLICY 8050-IP
IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES**

TEACHING OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Effective: ~~July 1, 2005~~
July 1, 2020

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- I. ~~The principal, in conjunction with Department of Education staff~~ The Division of Academics, working with school-based administrators and in accordance with curricular guidelines, bears the primary responsibility for the development of ~~school procedures and training~~ for the teaching of controversial issues.
- A. Assistance and guidance from the Division of Academics will be available to school-based administrators and teachers concerning topics related to the teaching of controversial issues such as, mitigating biases and facilitating discussions that include a variety of perspectives.
- B. Teachers will ensure that their instruction is in accordance with the procedures and training referenced in Section I. above and maintains adherence to related Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) policies as referenced in Section VII.B. of this policy.
- II. Teachers ~~shall~~ will 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~~ will 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.~~
Credible and relevant information that represents multiple and diverse perspectives which address the complex aspects of an issue will be provided to students.
- C. The issue ~~shall~~ should be significant and ~~shall be related to written curriculum related, but shall not utilize time disproportionate in relation to the regularly planned curriculum~~ and should not adversely impact instruction or pacing.
- D. A teacher who is in doubt ~~concerning the advisability of~~ about discussing ~~certain a controversial issues in the classroom with students~~ should confer with his/her principal administration as to the appropriateness of doing so.

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- E. ~~Assistance and guidance of Department of Education Staff shall be made available to principals and teachers concerning the teaching of controversial issues.~~

III. In order to support the development of civic efficacy, student engagement, and the critical thinking among HCPSS students, community stakeholders are encouraged to:

- A. Support the goal of the HCPSS to create engaged participants in democracy by teaching students to address controversial issues with inquiry and civility.
- B. Work in partnership with HCPSS educators in the appropriate discussion of controversial issues.
- C. Participate in students' education experiences by continuing to have civil and thoughtful conversations that reflect multiple perspectives.

III. History

ADOPTED: February 1, 1972
REVIEWED: July 1, 2011
MODIFIED:
REVISED: March 8, 1990
 April 28, 2005
 February 13, 2020
EFFECTIVE: ~~July 1, 2005~~
 July 1, 2020

HCPSS Policy 8050 Teaching of Controversial Issues

Minority Opinion by Sandra A. McGraw

The work of the committee was exemplary. However, I would like to go on record with my minority opinion in reference to Section V: Responsibilities.

- A. "Teachers will ensure that their personal views, when appropriate, are presented as opinion rather than fact."

It is my opinion, that the teacher is in a position of authority, and the classroom should not be used as a platform to express their personal opinion. The teacher's job is to equip students to be able to express their opinions and to provide students with the skillset, resources and confidence needed to actively bring positive change. The teacher is a hired representative of the school system, and the teacher's voice in the classroom is representative of HCPSS. This should be clearly stated. (The teacher is a representative of the school system and should refrain from giving their personal viewpoints).

It is also my opinion that a student may not feel safe or comfortable expressing his or her opinion if it differs from the teacher's viewpoint. The purpose of the teaching of controversial topics needs to be student centered at all times, and the objectives and outcomes should be centered around standards in researching, speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Minority Opinion by Towanda Brown

To summarize my opinion, I do not understand the role of the curriculum office in this policy. It seems each Administrator can define what they want to do in their school. There will be different characteristics/belief systems/values of Administrators, which will naturally play a role in what they approve/permit and what they restrict. I think this is definitely an issue. My minority opinion is as follows:

Policy Statement

Section V Responsibilities

- B. "~~Teachers are responsible for~~will ensure that their personal views, when appropriate, are presented as opinion rather than fact."

My minority opinion: teachers should not provide their personal views period. It will difficult to define "when appropriate" and there will be teachers, especially in elementary school and other grades, where the students are still impressionable by teachers and will be strongly influenced by their teachers opinion/perspective. In the discussions of this policy, it was stated that the position would be all or nothing; however, I think there is definitely additional restrictions needed if teachers are allowed to present their personal views.

- C. "~~Administrators are responsible for~~will develop and implementing school-based procedures for approving controversial issues to be considered in the classroom."

BOE Meeting of November 7, 2019

My minority opinion: why is each Administrator given the ability to approve what is a controversial issue to be considered? The definition should be consistent across schools.

Implementation Procedure

I "The principal, in conjunction with Department of Education ~~staff~~employees and in accordance with curricular guidelines, bears the primary responsibility for the development of school procedures for the teaching of controversial issues."

Why is the principal able to develop school procedures for the teaching of controversial issues? I do not understand why this is not a standard procedure across all schools instead of the principal developing the school procedures? We have seen where the schools' administration has not done a good job of managing staff regarding the discussion of controversial issues and the students are the ones who pay the price. You cannot undo or erase when something is done by a teacher/staff members -- our students mental and emotional health should be #1 priority.

IIA "The treatment of the issue in question shallwill be within range, knowledge, maturity, and competence of the students."

What does "competence of the students" mean? We know we have teachers/staff members that have different beliefs regarding what students are capable of doing and they will be given the opportunity to decide what classes/students are given the opportunity for discussion of a topic.

III "In order to support the development of civic efficacy, student engagement, and the critical thinking among our students, community stakeholders including the BOE, students, school system employees, parents, service providers and each member of the community is encouraged to support the teaching of controversial issues in the classroom"

How are the members of the community supposed to support the teaching of controversial issues when we do not know what the controversial issues are to be discussed? This is the equivalent of asking the community to sign a blank check for the HCPSS and their individual school administrators to fill out as they deem fit.