DATE: September 8, 2009

TO: BOARD OF EDUCATION

FROM: Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO EDUCATION POLICY 6306 – INSTRUCTION: PRAYER AND RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

ORIGINATOR: Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent

RESOURCE PERSON(S): Sonja Karwacki, Executive Director, Special Programs PreK-12

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board of Education approves the proposed changes to Policy 6306. This is the third reading.

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Attachment I – Policy Analysis
Attachment II – Policy 6306
Policy Analysis for  
Board of Education Policy 6306  
Prayer and Religious Literature

Statement of Issues Addressed
Board of Education Policy 6306 was last adopted in 1969. The policy is recommended for revision to ensure compliance with the most current language in the Annotated Code of Maryland and COMAR.

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

Relationship to Other Board of Education Policies
Board of Education Policy 5600, Students’ Rights and Responsibilities.
Board of Education Policy 6703, Patriotic Exercises.

Legal Requirement
Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article §7-104 and §7-105; COMAR 13A.04.04.01

Similar Policies Adopted by Other School Systems
1. Anne Arundel County, Policy 610.01, Patriotic Exercises
2. Carroll County, Policy IMDD, Moment of Silence
3. Howard County, Policy 3000, Religious Observances
4. Montgomery County, Regulation JFA-RA, Student Rights and Responsibilities

Draft of Proposed Policy
Attached

Other Alternatives Considered by Staff
None

Timeline:
  First reading – July 14, 2009
  Public comment – August 11, 2009
  Third reading – September 8, 2009
INSTRUCTION: Prayer and [Bible Reading] RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

I. COMPLIANCE

A. No [principal, teacher, or other agent] EMPLOYEE of the Board of Education OF BALTIMORE COUNTY (BOARD) may authorize, [direct,] or require the reading of [the Bible] RELIGIOUS LITERATURE or the saying of prayer as a devotional exercise in a public school of Baltimore County.

B. DAILY SCHOOL OPENING EXERCISES may include UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT APPROVED PATRIOTIC EXERCISES AND/OR a moment of silent meditation.

C. ANY STUDENT OR TEACHER WISHING TO BE EXCUSED FROM PARTICIPATION IN ANY OPENING EXERCISES SHALL BE EXCUSED.

D. NO ATTEMPT SHALL BE MADE TO PREVENT A STUDENT FROM ENGAGING IN VOLUNTARY PRAYER OR READING RELIGIOUS LITERATURE PROVIDED IT DOES NOT INTERFERE WITH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES REQUIRED OF THE STUDENT.

LEGAL REFERENCES: ANNOTATED CODE OF MARYLAND, EDUCATION ARTICLE §7-104, §7-105
COMAR 13A.04.04.01

RELATED POLICIES: BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY 5600, STUDENTS’ RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY 6703, PATRIOTIC EXERCISES

Policy Board of Education of Baltimore County
Adopted: 10/31/69
REVISED: _______