

INSTRUCTION: CURRICULUM

TEACHING OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES [Resource Personnel and Outside Speakers]

I. PURPOSE

TO ESTABLISH GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES AND CRITERIA FOR APPROVING RESOURCE SPEAKERS.

II. GUIDELINES

A. THE STUDY OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES SHALL BEGIN IN ELEMENTARY GRADES AND BE EMPHASIZED IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS WHEN STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE THE MATURITY TO FORMULATE AND EXPRESS OPINIONS ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANT ISSUES FACING CITIZENS, COMMUNITY, AND SOCIETY.

B. THE STUDY OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES SHALL BE PRESENTED IN AN OBJECTIVE AND SCHOLARLY FORMAT.

C. THE STUDENT SHALL HAVE THE FOLLOWING RIGHTS AND ASSOCIATED RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE STUDY OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES.

1. THE RIGHT TO STUDY ANY ISSUE, WHICH HAS POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, OR SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE.
2. THE RIGHT TO ACCESS ALL RELEVANT INFORMATION THAT IS APPROPRIATE TO THE MATURITY LEVEL OF THE STUDENT.
3. THE RIGHT TO STUDY IN AN ATMOSPHERE FREE FROM BIAS AND PREJUDICE.
4. THE RIGHT TO FORM AND RESPECTFULLY EXPRESS OPINIONS ON CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES.

III. RESOURCE SPEAKERS

A. RESOURCE SPEAKERS MAY BE INVITED TO SPEAK TO STUDENTS ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN CONJUNCTION

WITH THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND DURING SCHOOL-SPONSORED ACTIVITIES.

- B. SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR APPROVING STAFF REQUESTS TO INVITE RESOURCE SPEAKERS TO PARTICIPATE DURING CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION OR SCHOOL-SPONSORED ACTIVITIES OR EVENTS.
- C. THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA SHOULD BE APPLIED TO DETERMINE APPROVAL OF A RESOURCE SPEAKER:
  - 1. THE BACKGROUND OF THE INDIVIDUAL(S) TO APPEAR AT THE SCHOOL.
  - 2. SENSITIVITY TO THE RELEVANT NEEDS AND CLIMATE OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY.
  - 3. THE EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT AND IMPACT OF THE PRESENTATION.
  - 4. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PRESENTATION TO CULTURALLY SENSITIVE TOPICS.
  - 5. ALIGNMENT WITH THE INTELLECTUAL AND EMOTIONAL MATURITY OF THE STUDENTS.

#### IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

##### A. TEACHERS

- 1. TEACHERS SHALL UTILIZE BEST INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES WHEN PRESENTING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO:
  - a. ADDRESSING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE CONTENT OF THE COURSE AND APPROPRIATE TO THE MATURITY LEVEL OF THE STUDENTS.
  - b. GUIDING INSTRUCTION IN WAYS THAT PRESENT A BALANCE AMONG MANY POINTS OF VIEW TO ENSURE A WIDE RANGE OF INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION FOR THE STUDENTS' CONSIDERATION.
  - c. ADDRESSING CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS AS IMPARTIALLY AND OBJECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE, WITHOUT INTERJECTING PERSONAL BELIEFS INTO INSTRUCTION.

- d. ENCOURAGING CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH AN EMPHASIS ON EVIDENCE AND THE ABILITY TO ALTER OPINIONS WHEN WARRANTED BY NEW INFORMATION.

B. PRINCIPALS

PRINCIPALS, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DIVISION OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH CURRICULAR GUIDELINES, BEAR THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL PROCEDURES FOR THE TEACHING OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES.

C. DIVISION OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

THE DIVISION OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION SHALL PROVIDE ASSISTANCE AND GUIDANCE TO PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS CONCERNING THE TEACHING OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES.

[The principal shall approve outside speakers, resource personnel, and other persons prior to their appearance before student groups. This authority carries with it the responsibility of investigating the backgrounds of persons involved. In making this decision the following shall be considered:

1. Personal background of the individuals to appear at the school.
2. Organizations represented by the speaker or resource person.
3. Appropriateness of the subject to the maturity level of student.
4. Climate of student body and community.
5. Advisability of having a person not directly involved but knowledgeable about a given topic or organization, rather than a member of an organization or a proponent of an extreme point-of-view.
6. Advisability of placing restrictions on publicity, distribution of literature, and materials to be exhibited.

Each principal shall develop a procedure to be used in seeking approval for outside speakers and resource persons and shall maintain a file of these requests. Since an all-inclusive composite listing of approved speakers, resource persons, organizations, and issues of debate is not feasible, the principal shall exercise his authority and good judgment in handling all matters relative to the approval or disapproval of outside guests and the discussion of controversial issues.

Principals are not obligated to approve any speaker by virtue of the speaker's appearance at another school in Baltimore County. Principals should feel free to consult with the area directors and coordinators.

A suggested form which may be used in processing requests of this nature may be found on the following page.]

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*

RELATED POLICIES: BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY 3160, *SCHOOL SPONSORED RESPONSIBILITIES ACTIVITIES*  
BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY 5600, *STUDENT'S RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES*  
BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY 6000, *CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION*  
BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY 6002, *SELECTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS – PHILOSOPHY*  
BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY 6100, *CURRICULUM*

Rule  
Approved: 09/25/69  
REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

Superintendent of Schools