

POLICY	BOARD OF EDUCATION OF FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND	
TEACHING OF POTENTIALLY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES/USE OF HISTORICAL ARTIFACTS	POLICY 516	

I. **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the teaching ¹ of controversial issues and providing context for use of historical artifacts in Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS).

II. **Policy Statement**

The Board of Education (Board) 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, and the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of citizenship. The Board also recognizes that as students prepare for effective citizenship, they often encounter issues that may be considered controversial, both past and present, where there exists significant opposing viewpoints and/or multiple perspectives. The Board encourages the examination of potentially controversial issues related to Board approved curriculum in an impartial, objective manner and recognizes the instructional value of historical artifacts and current events within the context of stated curricular objectives and the importance of teaching students to be critical thinkers.

III. **Definitions**

- A. Controversial Issue – a point or matter about which there exist significant opposing viewpoints and/or multiple perspectives.
- B. 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.

IV. **Standards**

- A. A controversial issue may be considered when the following conditions are met:
 - 1. The issue has political, economic, or social significance and is presented within appropriate curricular guidelines.
 - 2. 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.
 - 4. Students are able to form and express their own opinions on the issue without fear or retribution from school staff or peers.

¹ For the purposes of this policy, teaching is interpreted to mean teaching in either a virtual or in-person classroom.

- B. Controversial issues must be presented in an impartial and objective manner, and the use of historical artifacts or modern representations (symbols) will be within the context of a stated curricular objective.
- C. The use of resource speakers in teaching controversial issues is permitted in accordance with Board Policy 432 and FCPS Regulation 300-12 *Guest Speakers*.

V. **Compliance**

- A. Principals, in consultation with appropriate staff in the Curriculum, Instruction and Innovation Department, are responsible for developing and implementing school-based procedures for approving controversial issues to be considered in the classroom which are beyond the approved curriculum standards.
- B. Curriculum, Instruction and Innovation staff, particularly those with curricular responsibilities, are responsible for providing training and support to instructional staff with regard to the teaching of controversial issues and may consult with Accelerating Achievement and Equity staff as needed. This training will include an overview of Board Policy 516 and FCPS Regulation 500-40 and will equip instructional staff with the knowledge and competencies needed to prepare for and facilitate general and discipline specific conversations on controversial topics.
- C. Rather than sharing their own views or opinions, teachers are expected to present material, facilitate respectful conversation, and create a safe classroom space for student discourse.

VI. **Delegation of Authority**

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures for implementation of this policy.

Cross-reference:

FCPS Regulation 200-47 *Antique Weapons – Historical Demonstrations and Classroom Presentations*

Board Policy 308 *Personal and Academic Freedom*

Board Policy 314 *Political Activity*

Legal Reference	COMAR 13A.14.04 "Religious Education"		
	COMAR 13A.04.08 "Program in Social Studies"		
	COMAR 13A.04.09 "Program in Science"		
	COMAR 13A.04.14 "Program in English Language Arts/Literacy"		
	COMAR 13A.04.18 "Program in Comprehensive Health Education"		
Source Document	FCPS Regulation 500-40 <i>Teaching of Potentially Controversial Issues/Use of Historical Artifacts</i>		
Policy History	Reviewed	Adopted 5/12/2021	Revised