

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

- A. Freedom provides for controversy; therefore, controversial issues are the heart of our every changing democratic process. This does not imply that the Board will sanction controversial issues which create conflicts within cherished interests, beliefs or affiliations of a group of citizens. However, some issues involve important proposals or policies concerning citizens' points of view, a well established American tradition and not just controversy.
- B. Without minimizing the importance of any established truth or value, it shall be the policy of the Braxton County Board of Education to foster dispassionate, unprejudiced, scientific studies of controversial issues in an atmosphere free of bias and prejudice. Only through the intelligent study of such issues (political, economical, administrative or social), can learning experiences within schools be of maximum relevance, thus, furthering student social and academic development to the optimal degree.
- C. Teachers shall service as impartial moderators during discussions concerning controversial issues and shall not attempt directly or indirectly to limit or control the judgment of their pupils. It is the intent of this policy that the teacher shall foster the scientific method and thinking process of the issue rather than teach or instill his or her views in regard to them. Academic freedom and its exercise shall always recognize maturity related limitations.

The pupil shall be granted the right:

1. To study any issue in accordance with his chronological age, emotional and biological maturity and academic achievement;
2. To have free access to all relevant resource materials, including those which circulate freely in the communities;
3. To study under competent teacher and receive instructions free from partisanship; and
4. To express his or her opinion on controversial issues without jeopardizing his standing or relationship with his classmates, teachers or school. This does not imply that a student has a right to say what he thinks at any time and place. Disruptive exercise of the freedom of expression shall not be permitted.

Ref: Blackwell v. Issaquena County Board of Education, 363 F. 2d 649 (th Cir., 1966); Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District, 393 U.S. 503, 89 St.Ct. 733, 21 L.Ed. 2d 731 (1969); Wood v. Strickland, 95 S.Ct. 992, 1000-1001 (1975); Pickering v. board of Education of Township High School District, 205, 88 S.Ct. 1731, 391 U.S. 563, 20 L.Ed. 2d 811 (1968); Watts v. Seward School Board, 454 P. 2d 732 (Alaska, 1969), affirmed en banc, (5th Cir. 1970). (1/6/03 changed file to Policy #)

