FOUNDATIONS AND BASIC COMMITMENTS

Teaching/Treatment of Controversial Issues

The purpose of this regulation is to provide criteria for determining the appropriateness of controversial issues and procedures for the treatment of controversial issues introduced spontaneously.

Prior to the teaching of a controversial issue, the principal and teacher shall review the following:

I. The topics selected for study must contribute to the achievement of the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) and the objectives of the Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) curriculum.

II. The topics shall be considered appropriate and acceptable areas of study by most students and citizens of the community.

III. No issue involving indoctrination of religious belief shall be included in class discussions or in the curriculum. This should not prevent or discourage the teaching of religions as an educational reality, the comparison or history of various religions, or the study of the influence of religions upon our society, our country's values, or those of other societies.

IV. Questions treated shall come within the range of the knowledge, maturity, and competence of the students involved.

V. Problems and issues selected for discussion and study shall be current, significant, and of interest to students.

VI. Materials should be available on all sides of the issues which will yield a reasonable amount of data to provide study of various perspectives on the issue.

VII. The issues studied shall be allotted only that amount of time required for a satisfactory study by the class.

VIII. Where differences of opinion may exist, appeals may be taken to the appropriate Associate Superintendent.
When an obvious controversial issue is spontaneously introduced by a student and/or a question is asked pertaining to an obvious controversial issue during the instructional process, the teacher shall:

I. Determine whether the topic will contribute to the achievement of the Virginia SOL objectives and PWCS curriculum for the course.

II. Determine whether the topic is appropriate to the course/program and relevant to the curriculum.

III. Follow steps I-VIII indicated above before proceeding with further treatment of the topic if the topic is determined to be appropriate and relevant.

IV. Reply to the questions in a manner representative of the course, student population, good judgment, and acceptable classroom management.

V. Explain to the student(s) why the topic is inappropriate, irrelevant, or will not be addressed further if the decision is made not to proceed with further discussion.

The Associate Superintendent for Student and Professional Learning (or designee) is responsible for implementing and monitoring this regulation.

This regulation and related policy shall be reviewed at least every five years and revised as needed.