

APPENDIX 1B

Process for Becoming Informed About Policy

We propose a multistep process for becoming informed about education policy:

1. Find *original* policy documents (often linked on state Department of Education or district websites). Hint: use the bill name/number (e.g., HB270) as a search term.
 - a. Use, but do not rely on, summaries of legislation provided by state or third-party sources—these are often summarized in ways that promote an agenda and limit your view of the full policy (see Garan 2002, 2004 for examples of this).
 - b. Full policy documents may seem intimidating because they are long, formal, and often include multiple items of legislation in one package. The formal language becomes predictable/repetitive (and therefore skimmable!). Try searching a keyword you care about to see where it's mentioned, or using the table of contents to isolate the sections you are most interested in.
2. Read, listen, watch media coverage on education policy.
 - a. Sign up for automatic updates (ASCD SmartBrief, EdWeek Update, Marshall Memo, National Education Policy Center updates, and others).
 - b. Subscribe to alerts from blogs that focus on issues in your state/grade/content area.
3. Cut through the rhetorical fireworks so that you can access the arguments without being attacked by the writer's emotions.
 - a. Skim adjectives and question inflammatory word choices so that you can see the storyline behind all the political spectacle.
 - b. Ask yourself: Why was this writer motivated to write about this topic in this way? What does he have to gain/lose?
 - c. What about this information and argument have I heard before? What is new to me?
4. Reflect on the overlap and divergence of policy documents with media representations.
 - a. Who is on what side?
 - b. What other issues or debates does this remind you of?
 - c. How does a new policy connect to existing policies and programs?

5. Connect what you know about your setting, your leaders, and your practice with the policy documents and media coverage.
 - a. What resonates? What doesn't?
 - b. Why might the media representation and your experience differ?
6. Talk with your colleagues.
 - a. Ask questions to see what colleagues have heard and read within their own personal and professional networks.
 - b. Respond to rumors using what you've learned by comparing sources with those who have heard something else.
7. Share what you find.
 - a. Consider emailing, listing, or posting the information you found most relevant so that others can start there with their own research.
 - b. Pinterest boards and Thinglink.com boards are easy ways to compile and share online resources.