

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN EXAMINING AN ARTICLE

1. What information do you get from the title? What attracted you to reading it?
2. Who is the author? What is their background? What group do they represent? Can you infer what their opinion might be?

WORDS:

1. What “trigger” words do you find? Trigger words are those that cause an emotional response?
2. What words are used as supposedly-understood jargon? Some words become part of the common vernacular thinking that everyone has the same understanding. This is almost never true. Each person stamps their own interpretation on issues.
3. What sources does the author cite? What is their background? Bias?
4. Is there a diversity of opinion offered?
5. Is there more than one “expert” cited?

SO-CALLED FACTS AND DATA

1. Be wary of items stated as fact. What is a fact to one person, is a personal bias to another.
2. How are numbers used? Be wary of data that are presented as givens. For example, in Kersten’s article she says the committee is “stacked” because 20% of the committee is Native American. There were 38 members of the committee. Were there 7 Native Americans on the committee? Twenty percent of 38 sounds like a lot but it really isn’t. Using percentages particularly of relatively small numbers, may give a slanted view of the importance of a certain idea.

STRATEGIES:

1. Listen
2. Reframe the discussion to YOUR knowledge of purpose of public education
3. Repeat key phrases (like George Floyd trial—What would a responsible educator do??? What is the purpose of public education?_
4. Ask questions? “What about the other students? What do you think our purpose is in public education?”
5. Avoid using their “trigger” words.
6. Take the opportunity to educate
7. Give examples/stories if possible
8. Avoid jargon and trite expressions, e.g. “I hear what you are saying?” They are overworked and may sound condescending.
9. To be true to our goals of public education, we cannot always do what each specific parent/community member/teacher wants. We do have to maintain our role of educating all kids.
10. Other suggestions.

CAVEAT: It is difficult to change someone’s values, even by presenting facts. Facts can be researched and resourced. Values are emotional and often based on belief systems which are very difficult to change