**Analyzing Anecdotal and Statistical Information in the News**

**Age:** 9th – 12th

**Duration:** 90 minutes

**Standards:**

CC.8.5.6-8.H. Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

CC.8.6.6-8.H. Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis reflection, and research.

CC.8.5.9-10.F. Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

CC.8.5.9-10.G. Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text

CC.8.5.9-10.H. Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author’s claims.

CC.8.6.9-10.H. Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CC.8.5.11-12.F. Evaluate authors’ differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors’ claims, reasoning, and evidence.

CC.8.5.11-12.G. Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CC.8.5.11-12.H. Evaluate an author’s premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

CC.8.6.11-12.H. Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

* Define anecdotal, statistical, and expert information
* Identify examples of anecdotal, statistical, and expert information in news stories
* Analyze key features of anecdotal, statistical, and expert information and compare and contrast these
* Explain why reporters may elect to include different types of information in news stories

**Lesson Overview:**

In this lesson, students will:

1. Brainstorm initial understandings of homelessness *(Opening)* **<10 min**

2. Identify examples of anecdotal and statistical information in news stories about college students’ homelessness **(20 min)**

3. Learn definitions of anecdotal and statistical information **(10 min)**

4. Analyze characteristics of anecdotal and statistical information; compare and contrast these **(20 min)**

5. (*Extension):* Learn about expert information; identify examples of expert information in news stories; analyze characteristics of expert information relative to anecdotal and statistical information **(20 min)**

4. Label examples of each information type in news stories *(Exit Ticket)* **(<10 min)**

**Student Handouts:**

1. Learning from Anecdotal and Statistical Information in the News *(excerpts from newspaper stories)*
2. Analyzing Anecdotal and Statistical Information in Newspaper Articles
3. Defining and Comparing Anecdotal, Statistical, and Expert Information
4. Identifying and Analyzing Expert Information
5. Match Each Example to the Type of Information it Represents *(Exit Ticket)*

**Opening Brainstorm**

1. Ask students: “How many of you have heard of the stereotype of a ‘broke college student’? Where does that stereotype come from? What factors contribute to college students being ‘broke’?”

*Facilitator Information:* Write students’ responses on the board (e.g., as a concept web).

*Facilitator Information:* Introduce the concept of homelessness and explain that that is a difficult topic that students will be reading about.

Homeless can be defined as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence” (https://nche.ed.gov/mckinney-vento-definition/)

Housing instability can be defined as an umbrella term capturing a variety of housing-related issues including (a) high housing costs, (b) poor quality housing, (c) unstable neighborhoods, (d) overcrowding, (e) homelessness (https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/ancillary-services-support-welfare-work)

1. Ask students what questions they want to know about college students’ experiences with homelessness.

Record students’ responses on the board.

*Facilitator Information:* It may be helpful to complete this as a KWL chart – or *What I know? What I want to know? What I learned?* Return to the KWL chart to answer the last question, at the end of the lesson.

**Analyze News Stories Including Anecdotal and Statistical Information in News Stories**

1. Ask students to read and analyze two newspaper stories including anecdotal and statistical information.

*Facilitator Information:* This lesson is based on two newspaper stories about college students’ homelessness. Newspaper stories were published in the New York Times and the Washington Post. These stories can be printed in their entirety; however excerpts from these newspaper stories are included on the *Learning from Anecdotal and Statistical Information in the News Handout.*

* <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/20/education/learning/college-homeless-students.html>
* <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2017/03/15/the-disturbing-trend-of-homeless-community-college-students/>

*Facilitator Information:* Reading and newspaper article analysis can be completed by students individually, in partners or small groups, or as a whole class. If students complete the analysis individually or in small groups, then share responses to the *Analyzing Anecdotal and Statistical Information in Newspaper Articles Handout* as a class.

*Facilitator Information:* Anecdotal and statistical information within each news story is highlighted. Highlighting may not show up when Handouts are printed; therefore it may help to also project each Handout and have students complete their own highlighting using two different colors.

**Introduce Definitions of Anecdotal and Statistical Information**

1. Introduce definitions of anecdotal and statistical information.

*Facilitator Information:*

* **Anecdotal:** (a) describes one specific example or one individual’s story; (b) typically, presents information in narrative form or verbally.

*Prompt:* What does the word **narrative** make you think of?

*Explain:* Narrative has to do with a story, so it’s one individual’s story.

*Prompt*: What makes for a good story?

*Explain:* Persuasive anecdotal information tells a rich story, so a story that includes details or specifics about a situation. Sometimes narratives or effective anecdotal information also describe stories that are emotional. This is why anecdotal information is sometimes very persuasive to us as readers, it makes us feel emotional.

*Prompt:* If I hear an anecdotal story about your experience in school, can I make conclusions about other people?

*Explain*: One thing to think about or be careful about with anecdotal information is that it only describes one person’s experience. So while it can help us more richly understand one particular situation or one individual’s experience, it is hard to draw conclusions about many people based on only anecdotal information.

* **Statistical:** (a) describes information about many cases or many people; (b) typically presented in quantitative or numerical form.

*Prompt:* Why is statistical information typically presented as a number?

*Explain:* Because it is used to summarize information about multiple cases or multiple people.

*Prompt:* If I said, 30% of students in this class dislike homework. What does the 30% mean? Why would I want to give you a percentage in this case?

*Explain:* Because statistical information summarizes information about multiple cases. We have to do this carefully, but when we have information about many people, instead of one, we can form generalizations or draw conclusions based on this information. So, if I asked many classes whether or not they liked homework, and I consistently found that 30% of students disliked homework, I could maybe predict that in most classes about 30% of students dislike homework.

*Prompt:* As compared to anecdotal information, what is statistical information missing?

*Explain:* A story, or rich narrative description. But is it providing us with information about multiple cases or multiple people.

*Prompt:* Let’s take that example. If I generally wanted to find out what percentage of students disliked homework, as a piece of statistical information, what would I need to do or think about to ensure that I was really confident in that 30%

*Explain:* Introduce ideas of **sample size** (i.e., how many classes I actually surveyed/students I talked to, to determine the 30% number) and **representativeness** (i.e., who did I want to draw conclusions about and how similar were they to who I collected data from)? Connect this to news stories about homelessness.

*Prompt:* Would we expect college students at different kinds of college and in different locations to experience homelessness at the same rate?

1. Ask students to complete the *Defining and Comparing Anecdotal, Statistical, and Expert Information Handout.*

*Facilitator Information:* Students can complete the *Defining and Comparing Anecdotal, Statistical, and Expert Information Handout* individually, in partners or small groups, or this can be completed as a whole class. If students are first completing the Handout individually or with a partner, after, review this Handout as a whole class.

*Facilitator Information:* Ask students to only complete the first two columns, addressing anecdotal and statistical information, before expert information is introduced.

*Prompt:* Explicitly direct students to compare anecdotal and statistical information.

*Extension:* If students need additional practice identifying anecdotal and statistical information, they can be asked to highlight this information in an additional news story for the Boston Globe.

https://www.bostonglobe.com/2022/12/25/metro/dinner-or-tuition-food-insecurity-deepens-college-campuses/

**Extension: Expert Information**

*Variation:* Depending on students’ grade level and timing, this lesson can just be focused on anecdotal and statistical information only. If so, delete the expert information column from the *Defining and Comparing Anecdotal, Statistical, and Expert Information Handout*.

1. Ask students to read a third story on college students’ homelessness and complete the *Identifying and Analyzing Expert Information Handout*.

*Facilitator Information:* The newspaper story with expert information is drawn from CNN. Depending on reading level, please print the newspaper story in its entirety or ask students to read excerpts on the *Identifying and Analyzing Expert Information Handout*.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/12/08/us/cuny-ncs-scholars-program/index.html>

*Facilitator Information:* Students can complete the reading and Handout individually, with a partner or in small groups, or as a whole class. If the Handout is completed individually or in small groups, then share responses as a class.

1. Introduce the definition of expert information.

*Explain:* Expert information comes from a more knowledgeable other.

*Prompt:* What makes someone an expert?

*Explain:* They are **knowledgeable** about a particular area, for example, they have achieved a certain level of education or have a particular job. And they are **experienced** in a particular area, so they have done the job for a long time and they know what to do, they know the processes involved.

*Prompt:* What is an example of an expert? What makes a scientist or researcher an expert? Think about the individuals quoted in the article, what makes them expert?

*Explain:* Researching the topic of homelessness means that you know a lot about it. So you’ve taken classes on homelessness, and you’ve also, yourself, talked to a lot of people who are homeless and collected and analyzed a lot of information about them. And so an expert is going to probably know more than you or me about homelessness.

*Prompt:* Expert information is sometimes called expert **opinion**. Are experts’ opinions like my opinion or your opinion?

*Explain:* Experts have informed opinions that are based on research, based on the classes that they have taken, and based on their work over many years. So, if I were deciding who to listen to or trust, I would trust an expert’s opinion more than just someone random on the street.

1. Students complete the last column in the *Defining and Comparing Anecdotal, Statistical, and Expert Information Handout* for expert information.

*Facilitator Information:* This last column can be completed by students individually, in partners or in small groups, or as a whole class. If completed individually or with partners/in small groups, review as a whole class. Be sure to ask students to compare expert information to anecdotal and statistical information.

**Exit Ticket**

1. Ask students to complete an Exit Ticket (Match Each Example to the Type of Information It Represents).