LESSON 44 · UNIT 6 · THE DISCOVERY SERIES · ANY CYCLE · ~50 MINUTES

THE HEADLINE TEST

Same Data, Different Stories

PREPARATION

CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW	The Split Room taught the Team that a question can bend an answer. This lesson teaches the harder half: the reader can bend the data. Small groups each receive a one-page set of campus results and write the headline it supports, but each group's cover card secretly carries a different question from a different audience. The headlines come back contradicting each other, and the reveal lands: every group read the identical page. The data never changed; the question in the reader's head did. Then the Team learns to name the four ways readers bend data, and re-reads the same page together under discipline, producing the honest read that Week 3 of every cycle depends on.
OBJECTIVE	Students experience how a reader's framing changes what data appears to say, learn the four common reader bends, and practice the honest-read discipline: what the data supports, what it complicates, and where it runs out.
MATERIALS	The campus data packet and framing cards (included; one packet per group, one secret framing card per group) · whiteboard · Student Workbook capture page (included).
SET UP	Print one data packet per small group of three or four, and cut the four framing cards apart. Paperclip a different framing card to each group's packet, face down. Do not mention that the framings differ.
NOTES TO ADVISOR	Read the lesson through before teaching; adapt the timing to your class. The packet is fictional but engineered: it contains a genuinely mixed picture and three deliberate traps (a number with no baseline, a flat result, and a quote that cuts both ways). Groups will fall into them; that is the lesson working.

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Getting Started

4 MINUTES

+ Split into groups of three or four. Each group gets a data packet with its framing card clipped on top: “Read your card silently as a group, then read the data and do what the card asks. Ten minutes.”

Team Time — Write the Headline

10 MINUTES

+ Each group reads its (secretly different) assignment, reads the same one-page data set, and produces two lines for the board: a headline of eight words or fewer, and one recommendation.
+ Circulate but don't referee. If a group asks whether they can ignore some numbers, answer only: “Your call. You're the analysts.” Every shortcut they take now is teaching material in ten minutes.

The Board — and the Reveal

9 MINUTES

+ Groups post their headlines side by side and read them aloud. Let the room notice the contradiction on its own: the same school is apparently improving, in crisis, unsafe, and thriving, at the same time.

READ ALOUD

Before anyone argues about who's right, turn your framing cards over and read them to the room. Now you know: every group had the identical page. Not one number was different. What was different was the question you carried into the reading, and that question quietly picked which numbers mattered to you, which you skipped, and which story felt true when you finished. The data never changed. The reader did. Keep that feeling. Every month, this Team reads real campus data and writes the sentence this school gets treated by. The campus can't check our reading. We have to.

Direct Instruction — The Four Reader Bends

7 MINUTES

Name the four ways readers bend data, pulling examples from the boards just posted:

+ The cherry-pick. Leading with the number that fits the story you arrived with, and letting the rest fall away.
+ The missing baseline. “One in four eats lunch alone” sounds like a crisis, but it was asked for the first time this cycle. First measurements are starting lines, not verdicts. Nothing can be called rising or falling without a number behind it.
+ The headline leap. Turning one month's movement into a trend, or one result into a cause. Two points make a comparison; three make a trajectory: the Scoreboard rule.
+ Flat-line blindness. Skipping the result that didn't move. A number that held still while the campus worked on it is a finding, and sometimes the most important one on the page.

Team Time — The Honest Read

12 MINUTES

+ Now the whole Team re-reads the same page together, under discipline, and writes three sentences on the board:
+ Sentence one: what this data supports. (Claims that more than one stream backs: survey movement plus a matching Forum theme. This is the Three-Way Check instinct.)
+ Sentence two: what it complicates. (The numbers that pull against the easy story: safety up while adult connection slipped; the quote that says “better, but still rough if you're new.”)
+ Sentence three: where it runs out. (What this page cannot say yet, and the question next cycle's survey should add. The lunch-alone number needs a second measurement before anyone calls it anything.)
+ Compare the three sentences to the four headlines. Same page. The difference is the discipline.

Applying What We Learn

5 MINUTES

+ Name it forward: Week 3 of every cycle, themes, Three-Way Check, Priority Finding, is this exact skill under real conditions. The honest-read format (supports / complicates / runs out) is now the Team's Week 3 warm-up.
+ Name it outward: the next time a headline quotes a statistic about teens or about this school, the Team knows the questions: compared to what? who asked? what didn't move?
+ Name it toward spring: the YPAR Data Analysis Report is the honest read at full length: real numbers, a supporting quote, stated limitations. Today was the rehearsal.

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Closing

3 MINUTES

READ ALOUD

Here's the discipline in one line: data doesn't come with a story; someone always adds one. On this campus, that someone is us. When this Team says a finding is real, it has to stay real when a skeptical adult pushes on it, because overstating a result once costs us the next audience. Let the data speak before you do, and when you finally write the headline, make it the honest one.

THE HONEST READ IS A REUSABLE TOOL

File the Team's three sentences with the Cycle Report, and open every Week 3 What We'll Do session by writing the same three, supports, complicates, runs out, before any Priority Finding is named. Findings that pass through this gate survive the Three-Way Check, and they survive adult scrutiny.

COMMON QUESTIONS

+ All four groups wrote similar headlines. Rare, but if it happens, ask each group which numbers they never mentioned, and the cherry-pick lesson runs anyway. Then reveal the framings and ask which one would have tempted them most.
+ Isn't all this skepticism a little cynical? The opposite: the discipline exists to protect the real findings. A Team known for honest reads gets believed, which is what gives student voice its power in the rooms where decisions get made.
+ Aren't we supposed to advocate for students? Yes, after the honest read, not instead of it. Advocacy built on a cherry-pick collapses the first time someone checks. Advocacy built on an honest read is very hard to dismiss.

MIDDLE SCHOOL ADAPTATION

Shrink the packet to five results and use two framings instead of four: “find the good news” and “find the problem.” Teach two bends (the cherry-pick and the missing baseline) and run the honest read as one guided conversation: what can we say for sure? what can't we say yet? Keep the reveal exactly as written; it lands at any age.

TAKE-HOMETHOUGHT

Data doesn't come with a story. Someone always adds one. Make yours the honest one.

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CAMPUS DATA PACKET · FRAMING CARDS · ADVISOR KEY

Print one packet per group. Cut the framing cards apart and clip a different one, face down, to each group's packet.

THIS CYCLE'S RESULTS — WESTFIELD (enr. 2,400)

DIRECTION SURVEY · 240 responses (10% of campus, 92% of those invited)

- “I feel safe at school.” 78% yes (last cycle: 71%)
- “There's an adult on campus I could go to with a real problem.” 61% yes (last cycle: 63%)
- “I ate lunch alone at least once this week.” 24% yes (asked for the first time this cycle)
- “Put-downs are common in my classes.” 41% yes (last cycle: 44%)
- “I feel like I belong here.” (1 to 5 scale) average 3.4 (last cycle: 3.4)

FORUM · 32 participants, cross-section of campus

- Top critical issue by tally: “friend groups don't mix” (19 tallies) · second: “stress about grades” (16)
- Quote: “It's better than last year, but if you're new here, it's still rough.”
- Quote: “The lunch thing isn't about the cafeteria. People just don't see you.”
- Facilitator observation: the room went quiet when the new-student experience came up (noted independently by 4 facilitators)

THE FOUR FRAMING CARDS — cut apart; one per group, face down

CARD A

Your group is answering the principal, who asked: “Is our school getting better?” Read the data, then write a headline (8 words or fewer) and one recommendation.

CARD B

Your group is answering a local reporter, who asked: “What's the biggest problem at this school?” Read the data, then write a headline (8 words or fewer) and one recommendation.

CARD C

Your group is answering a worried parent group, which asked: “Are students being left out at this school?” Read the data, then write a headline (8 words or fewer) and one recommendation.

CARD D

Your group is answering the district office, which asked: “Is the program at this school working?” Read the data, then write a headline (8 words or fewer) and one recommendation.

ADVISOR KEY — THE THREE TRAPS IN THE PACKET

1. The lunch-alone number has no baseline (first time asked): it is a starting line, and any group calling it a rising crisis has leapt. 2. Belonging is flat at 3.4: flat-line blindness if nobody mentions it; a genuine finding if someone does. 3. The “better than last year” quote supports Card A's story and Card B's story at once; a quote is context, not a verdict. Bonus: safety is up while adult connection slipped; an honest read holds both.

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LESSON

THE HEADLINE TEST

Four groups, one page of data, four contradicting stories. Capture what the experiment showed you while it's fresh.

My group's framing card, and the headline we wrote:

The number our framing made us skip, and the trap (if any) we fell into:
the cherry-pick · the missing baseline · the headline leap · flat-line blindness.

The four reader bends:

The Team's honest read: our three sentences (supports / complicates / runs out):

Reflection: A statistic I've repeated, about this school or about teens, that I never checked. What would the honest read have said?

TAKE-HOMETHOUGHT

Data doesn't come with a story. Someone always adds one. Make yours the honest one.

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