



Investigating Substance Use

Data-driven Decisions

GRADES 11–12

65–75 MINUTES

Lesson Overview

This lesson engages students in analyzing real-world data to explore substance use trends within their community. Through interactive activities, students compare their assumptions to actual data from the Oregon Health Authority Overdose Prevention Dashboard and the Oregon Student Health Survey. Students use guiding questions to identify key findings and reflect on how these insights influence personal and community decision-making. The lesson emphasizes applying harm-reduction principles and collective care strategies to brainstorm actionable solutions for promoting well-being. Students connect data analysis to informed choices, fostering critical thinking and responsible decision-making for personal and social impact through class discussions and individual reflections.

Essential Questions

- How do statistics and facts about substance use and misuse inform my choices and actions in my community?
- How do I make informed choices and work to address social injustices after analyzing information?

Student Learning Goals

- I can analyze local data on substance use and misuse using a data dashboard or data tables.
- I can identify data trends within my community.
- I can reflect on how evidence-based information can guide personal choices and community action.

Related Standards

Health Standards

HS.SUB.5. Analyze the data on overdose and fentanyl laced over-the-counter and prescription medication.

HS.SUB.8. Identify potential barriers to making healthy decisions regarding substance use and identify personal strategies and community support to overcome those barriers.

HS.SUB.12. Access and analyze the validity of information related to alcohol, marijuana/cannabis, tobacco, and other drug use, misuse and abuse prevention.

Transformative SEL Standards

Standard 5. Responsible Decision-making and Curiosity. Demonstrate curiosity and analysis of oneself and society in order to make caring choices that impact personal, social, and collective well-being across situations and environments.

Standard 4. Relationship Skills and Collaborative Problem-solving. Establish and maintain healthy, supportive relationships and effectively navigate diverse settings in order to collaboratively solve problems.

Lesson Materials

- Slide deck
- Data tables from the Oregon Student Health Survey (included in slides)
- Student sheet (printed or for digital use)
- [Oregon Overdose Dashboard](#)
- Journal prompts (included in slides)

Supplemental Materials

- [Oregon Student Health Survey Full Report](#)
- [Oregon Student Health Survey Dashboard](#)

Lesson Plan

Preparation

Practice using the data dashboard to familiarize yourself with your county's information. Remind students that this lesson looks at numbers that represent people. They may be students' friends, family or community members. It is important to help students take care of themselves during this lesson.

This lesson allows students to collaborate with their peers on important issues that may bring up feelings. Before the lesson, revisit community agreements and expectations to ground the conversation and ensure a safe space for all students, including a reminder about confidentiality. You may also want to remind students that they are not required to share anything if they do not want to.

This lesson may take 60–75 minutes and can be broken up into multiple lessons depending on your context.

Learning Sequence

Share the essential questions and learning goals with students. Remind students there is no singular correct answer.

Activity 1. Activating Schema: Impressions and Evidence | 20 Minutes

This lesson begins by connecting to students' prior knowledge. In this warmup, students will offer their current thoughts (before examining data) and then look at data from the Oregon Student Health Survey to compare their initial thoughts with what the data shows.

1. Ask students to respond to the questions about their perceptions of substance use (alcohol and marijuana) trends in their community. These are questions adapted from the Oregon Student Health Survey. Let students know that they are not answering for themselves. They are predicting how their peers would answer. Questions are displayed on Slides 4–6 and in the student handout.
 - Select all of the tobacco products they used in the last month.
 - How old were they when they had their first drink?
 - During the past 30 days, did they use prescription opioid drugs such as Oxycontin, Percocet, Vicodin, or Codeine without a doctor’s orders or differently than how a doctor told you to use it?
2. Capture students’ responses by charting or adding to the slides and ask them what evidence they used to come to their answers. Invite students to share with the class.
3. Introduce the Oregon Student Health Survey as a way the state collects information about students. Explain that it is anonymous. The data is collected in three different grades.
4. Project the data table on Slide 7. Ask students if the data confirms or conflicts with their initial perceptions. Repeat with the remaining two data tables (Slides 8 and 9).
5. Explain that the class will use data from the Oregon Overdose Dashboard to explore trends and answer these essential questions (Slide 10):
 - How do statistics and facts about substance use and misuse inform my choices and actions in my community?
 - How do I make informed choices and work to address social injustices after analyzing information?
6. Remind students that these numbers represent real people (Slide 11). They may include family, friends or community members. As a community, we need to take care of each other and practice self-care. Optional: Invite students to share how they might care for each other and themselves through this process.

Activity 2. Data Exploration: Dashboard Data Dive | 25 Minutes

The Oregon Overdose Dashboard is a resource published by the Oregon Health Authority. Students can use the live website, or you can download specific data tables and print them before the lesson. In this activity, students explore the dashboard to look at trends (Slide 12).

1. Explain to students that a data dashboard is an interactive tool that provides comprehensive, real-time or aggregated information about opioid-related incidents within a specific area. It uses charts, graphs and maps to help users quickly identify trends, patterns and areas of concern.
2. Guide students to explore the dashboard. Before students start to make sense of the data, it is important to orient themselves with the dashboard. Before digging into the data, students will work through a short scavenger hunt. Ensure each student has a digital or printed

version of the scavenger hunt. You may want to model the first question and think aloud about your process for navigating the site (Slide 13).

3. Give students time to complete the scavenger hunt individually or in pairs.
4. Once students understand the dashboard's organization, explain that they will examine the data more closely. Ask the class to generate exploration questions or offer the following questions to guide students in the data dive.
 - What substances have the highest rate of misuse among teens?
 - How have overdose rates changed over the last five years?
 - What do you notice about your county?
5. Encourage students to capture their questions as they emerge. They can add these to their handout. On the handout, students will record questions, surprising findings and trends.
6. For the whole class discussion, invite students to share a question or a finding with the class. Ask students where they found the information on the dashboard, what stood out and how the data aligns or conflicts with their assumptions.

Activity 3. Connecting Data to Actions | 15 Minutes

This activity connects the data to individual and community action. It is a time for curiosity and movement toward responsible decision-making.

1. Ask students to think about the data and get curious about what we, as a community, can do with this information. Pose the question: What can we do to promote personal, family and community well-being (Slide 14)?
2. In small groups, ask students to brainstorm actions and responses. Encourage them to think about themselves, their peers, family and community members. Remind students that this is a systemic issue. Offer the following questions to push ideas beyond individual actions (Slide 14).
 - What role might education play?
 - What role might policy play?
 - What role might resources and access play?
 - How might you consider prevention, harm reduction or other ideas to address the trends you are seeing?
3. Invite students to share their ideas with the whole group. Listen for ideas that go beyond individual actions. Use the prompts above to move students to think about collective care and actions.
4. Reiterate that understanding data, current and past years, and societal influences can help individuals make informed decisions and contribute to community health and well-being.

Activity 4. Intentional Close | 5 Minutes

Allow students time for personal reflection and thinking to bring this lesson to a close.

1. Ask students to respond to at least one of the following prompts (Slide 15).
 - What data trend surprised you most?
 - How does this data connect to your personal choices?
 - What micro-step could you take to help your community address substance use and misuse?

Formative Assessment Opportunities

Listen For

Listen for how students interpret the dashboard data. Where do they need more support to understand graphs and visual data representations?

Exit Ticket

Use the discussion prompts in the closing as an exit ticket.

- What data trend surprised you most?
- How does this data connect to your personal choices?
- What micro-step could you take to help your community address substance use and misuse?