Media Literacy: Credibility and Bias

Is it biased?

Objectives (Students will learn how to):

- Identify different types of bias that may appear in a story

Read the scenario below, then decide if it is biased. If you think it's biased, identify which type of bias (list on slides 9 and 10) is present.

1- An unmotivated reporter submits a simple recap of the swimming team's season instead of following up on the coach telling him that the swimming program is being merged with the other school's in the district and writing that story.

Is it biased?

2- The editors decide not to publish a story about the Gay Straight Alliance posters being vandalized, because they don't want to further offend anyone.

Is it biased?

3- One particular student is frustrated with the lack of mental health resources at the school and writes an editorial about that without noting the resources the counseling department says are available.

Is it biased?

4- The web editor wants to get more people visiting the website, so they suggest writing a web-only story for the main homepage area focusing on the three times students were mugged going home during the past three years.

Is it biased?

5- The investigative reporting team hears student rumors on social media that the principal is going to be fired at the end of the year. They conduct interviews with the principal, superintendent, school board, and read through the school board meeting minutes before confirming the rumor and publishing a story that it is true.

Is it biased?

6- A reader suggests that the paper do a story about them finding a maggot in their burger from a fast food restaurant last week. The editors choose not to pursue the story because the restaurant is a major advertiser with the paper.

Is it biased?

7- All of the editors are also members of the Young Republicans. They choose not to cover the Young Democrats get out the vote event, but they do cover the Young Republicans canned food drive.

Is it biased?

8- All of the editors are also members of the Young Democrats. They interview state level representatives from both parties about the upcoming election, but only use flattering direct quotes from the Democrat and unflattering information from the Republican.

Is it biased?

9- The same reporter has covered the homecoming dance for the last three years. This year they copy and paste their previous story, just swapping out the details and quotes. This results in the story not mentioning anything about the major fight that occurred outside of the school at the end of the dance.

Is it biased?

10- The editors choose to publish a story that the district cannot hire enough teachers to staff the math department, but do not publish a story about the district earning a blue ribbon award from the U.S. Department of Education.

Is it biased?

11- In writing a story about climate change the reporter gives equal coverage and weight to scientists and a conspiracy theorist, whose theories have been discredited.

Is it biased?

12- In the breaking news section a news reporter covers the school switching to a new learning management system at the beginning of the next school year, but they write a story that the school will also be switching grading software at the same time at the bottom of the news briefs section.

Is it biased?

13- The news editor writes about the upcoming student council elections and makes educated guesses about what each candidate will do if they are elected.

Is it biased?

14- The features editor wants to do a feature package with multiple stories highlighting a local daycare's open house, but the month before they chose not to provide any coverage to the Senior Center's collaboration with the choir, claiming it was not interesting to readers.

Is it biased?
