

Standing for the trees

Annotation

Liliele questions some aspects of the process that led to a newspaper headline, the appropriateness of the methods used and the conclusions drawn. She queries the sample size and the nature of the sample. She judges that more information is needed to validate the conclusion.

Problem: Standing for the trees

A stand of native trees on the school grounds shades nearby houses. A local councillor wants the trees removed because he lives in a house that is affected by the shade. He has started a campaign to get the trees cut down.

The teacher shares the following local newspaper headline with the students:

80 percent of residents want trees removed, councillor says

The teacher and the students discuss that if 80 percent of the residents want the trees to be removed, then maybe the trees should be cut down. However, several students live in the affected houses, and they know that their families don't want the trees removed.

The teacher poses the following problem for the students:

Seems like we need more information about this. What questions would you want to ask the councillor about this statement? Make a list for me.

Student Response

Liliele's work sample is as follows:

Who did you ask?

How many people did you ask?

Teacher: Tell me some more about your thinking.

Liliele: I think maybe he asked not many people.

Teacher: Can you tell me more?

Liliele: Well we don't know how many people and who they are. They might be just his friends and one other person who said no or just five people, or they might be people who don't even live in that street but are his friends. I don't think he can say it's 80 percent without telling us more.