

Descriptive or inferential statistics



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The Use of Statistics in a News Article The article “ Education—Answered Prayers” was published on the National Journal Magazine website d August 16, 1997. There is no specific author named, but the National Journal is a conservative news commentary publication which is also associated with The Atlantic and Washington Week. The article talks about why inner-city Catholic schools are so successful when inner-city public schools are struggling.

The author sprinkles statistics throughout the news piece. To set up the section on why Catholic schools are not the answer to struggling schools in general, the author cites the statistic that of 49 million school children in the U. S., only five percent of them attend Catholic schools. It is hard to find private school teachers and keep them, since twice as many change schools. Catholic school teachers are also paid 25 to 40 percent less than public school teachers (paras. 16 and 20). These statistics support the argument that Catholic schools are not the answer for every child.

Later on the author cites a series of statistics about how parents are applying for vouchers and scholarships. Scholarships support 14, 000 students nationwide and the waiting list is 40, 000 (para. 29). This is really amazing and supports the point that parents would choose private schools for their children if they could afford the tuition. The statistic only shows that 40, 000 parents would prefer that their kids attend private school, and the article does not say what percent that group is out of the 49 million total children. Overall, the statistics presented in this article are interesting but not really related to the main point. A reader would have to trust the source in order to be convinced by the argument, or would have to trust the interviewee’s

comments more than statistics. As far as statistics go, so few are in the article that they do not really help make the point.