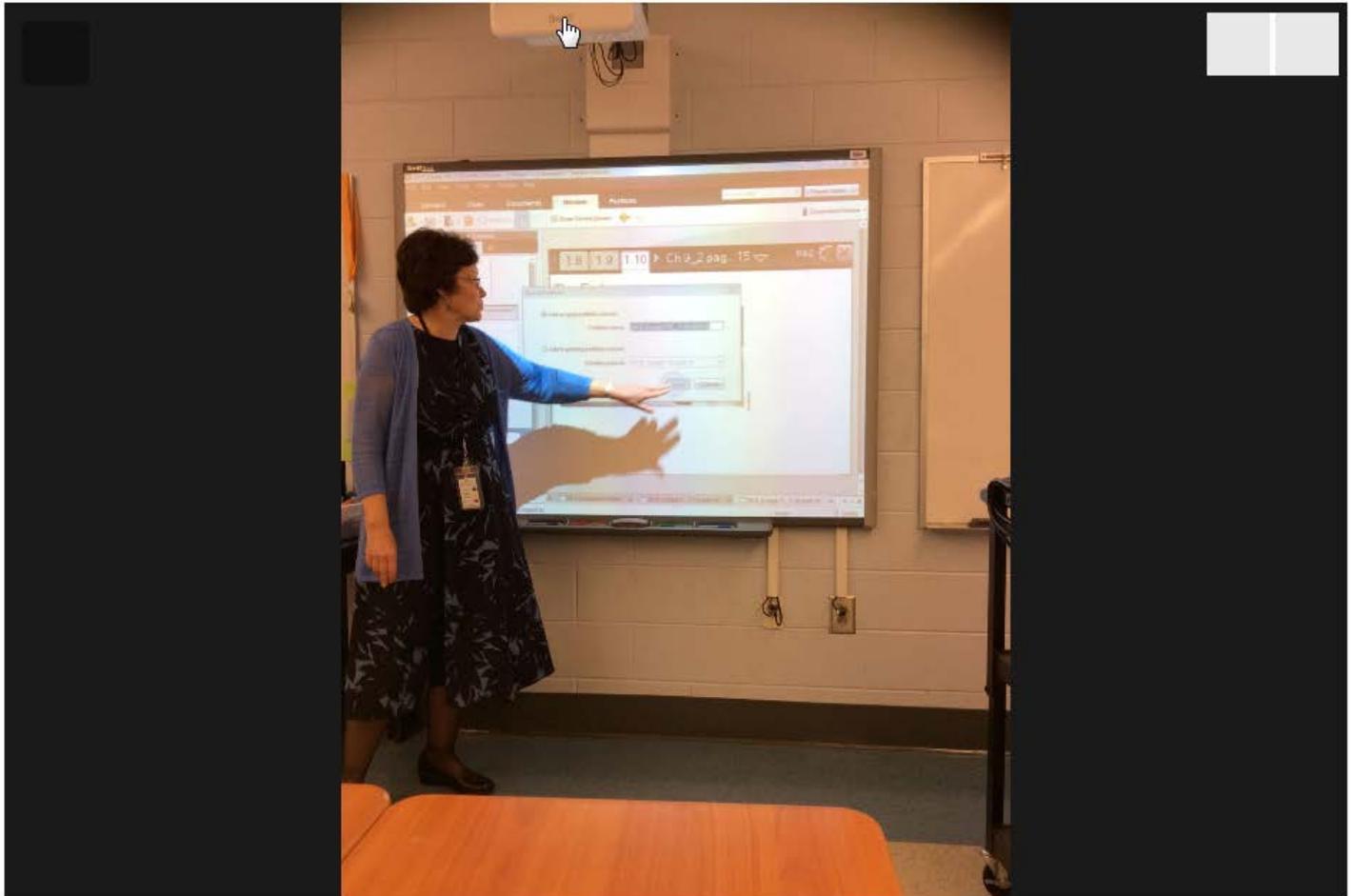


## Statistics teacher mines U.S. Census data for lesson plans

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Charleston County School of the Arts seventh-grade math teacher Kathleen Traylor helped write new lesson plans using a trove of U.S. Census Bureau data for the newly revamped Statistics in Schools program, which provides free interactive teaching ideas to teachers nationwide. Kathleen Traylor/provided

Kathleen Traylor/Provided

The news is awash in statistics. They are trotted out, analyzed, visualized, massaged, fudged and used (sometimes unsuccessfully) to predict electoral outcomes.

For teachers, a daunting task presents itself: How to prepare students for the onslaught of statistics they're about to face?

This fall, the U.S. Census Bureau debuted some fresh ideas for K through 12 teachers via Statistics in Schools, a revamped version of the Census in Schools program it launched in 2000. Top teachers across the country mined

the Census Bureau's trove of population data to create new lesson plans, now available for free download at [census.gov/schools](https://www.census.gov/schools).

Kathleen Traylor, a seventh-grade math teacher at Charleston County School of the Arts, jumped at the opportunity to write a few lesson plans for the website. With more than 20 years' teaching experience under her belt, Traylor knew that some educators struggled to bring statistical concepts to life.

"So many jobs need it," Traylor said. "It's in the standards, but it's just that sometimes it's the end of the year and the teacher doesn't necessarily get to it or the teacher doesn't have the depth of understanding to teach it beyond mean, median and mode."

In [one lesson plan](#) designed for eighth-graders and meant to demonstrate the use of two-way tables, Traylor pulled out city-level data on commuters who walk or bike to work. She discovered, to her surprise, that Columbia ranked among the top cities in the country for use of non-motorized transportation. She culled some figures, put them in tables and let the students draw their own conclusions.

In a [lesson plan for high-schoolers](#), Traylor used 2010 Census data to show how congressional seats are apportioned based on state population.

"We had a hard time digging out the data. People at the Census Bureau dig the data out for us, and we package it nice and pretty for the teachers to use," Traylor said.

The Statistics in Schools website offers lesson plans for geography, history, math and sociology classrooms. In a press release announcing the program in September, Census Bureau Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer Nancy Potok said the goal is increased statistical literacy.

"Understanding the value behind the numbers that measure our changing society will help the future leaders of tomorrow learn how to make data-driven decisions that shape communities for generations to come," Potok said.