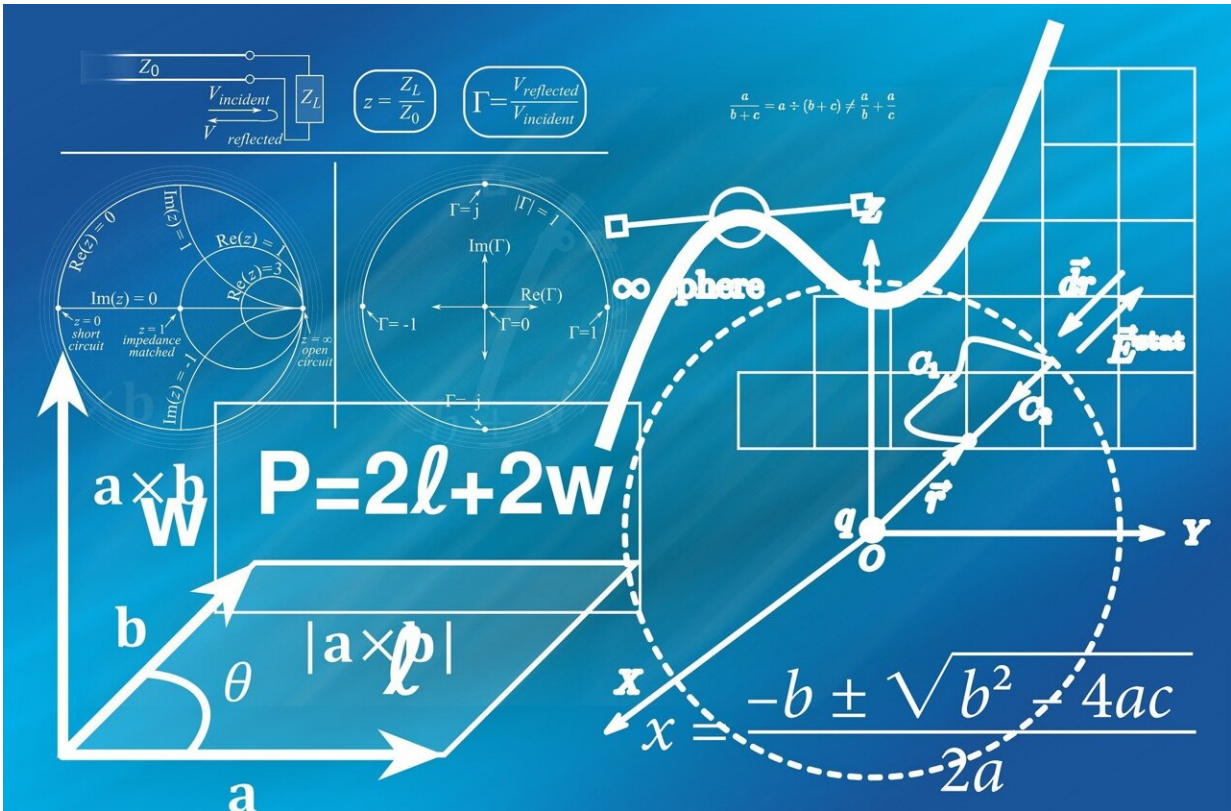


Mathematics learning for Black communities

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Communities of color in the United States have been disproportionately hit by the COVID-19 pandemic over the last few years, experiencing higher numbers of infections and death than predominantly white communities.

Seventy-four percent of [children](#) and teens in the U.S. who died from COVID-19 in 2020 were Black or Latinx, even though they only make up 40 percent of the country's total population, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In the midst of this public health crisis—coupled with the increase in race-based violence in the U.S.—Assistant Professor Naomi Jessup co-authored an article with other scholars of color on the difficulties Black Americans face in society today, and how educators and families can help Black communities flourish through equitable, culturally appropriate mathematics education.

Their article, published in *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, explores how schools began relying heavily on Black parents to be responsible for their [children's learning](#), and how math curriculum designed to be one-size-fits all doesn't allow students across all backgrounds to be successful.

The pandemic also brought to light the inequities in access to digital equipment and resources, and a lack of Black representation in digital mathematics materials. These issues presented additional roadblocks to Black students' academic achievement during the pandemic.

"In conversations with Black families in our networks, frustrations arose regarding the poor quality of materials given to families for instruction. These frustrations echo sentiments that scholars have reported before the COVID-19 [pandemic](#)," Jessup and her co-authors wrote. "Teachers of Black children devoted less time and emphasis on developing critical thinking skills, engaged in less challenging curriculum, resulting in a continuous cycle of curricular violence that furthers their opportunity gaps."

To begin addressing these issues, the authors cited examples of online

communities where Black educators and families could discuss the educational challenges they faced, and the ways parents supplemented their children's assignments with their own cultural knowledge and understanding of the curriculum.

Jessup and her co-authors also outlined the Hope Wheel, a lesson planning tool that teachers can use to ensure their curriculum is more inclusive.

"The Hope Wheel is not a panacea for Black communities, but represents expanding and urgent opportunities to rise to the challenge of repurposing mathematics content for healing, inspirational experiences and addressing ongoing traumas," they wrote.

More information: Lou E. Matthews et al, Looking for "us": power reimagined in mathematics learning for Black communities in the pandemic, *Educational Studies in Mathematics* (2021). [DOI: 10.1007/s10649-021-10106-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10649-021-10106-4)

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