

February 2022

Editorial Introduction to the Special Issue: Math Circles in Times of Physical Distancing

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Recommended Citation

Hancock, Emilie and Zaharopol, Daniel (2022) "Editorial Introduction to the Special Issue: Math Circles in Times of Physical Distancing," *Journal of Math Circles: Vol. 2 : Iss. 2 , Article 1.*
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/mathcirclesjournal/vol2/iss2/1>

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Editorial Introduction to the Special Issue: Math Circles in Times of Physical Distancing

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The simultaneous global COVID pandemic and Black Lives Matter movements shined a light on existing social justice issues and catalyzed Math Circle programs across the United States to adapt their programs and better address systemic inequalities. In this special issue, *Math Circles in Times of Physical Distancing*, we share a collection of articles documenting Math Circle lessons and programs that are making Math Circles more inclusive, diverse, and equitable in an online environment.

The first three articles explicitly address social justice issues and students from marginalized backgrounds in online Math Circle Settings. Matthew Jones, Sharon Lanaghan, and Carolyn Yarnall first share their work at the CSUDH Math Teachers' Circle in their article, "Incorporating Social Justice and Equity as Themes in Math Circles Online." Their manuscript presents strategies to combine worthwhile mathematical tasks while engaging with social justice. The authors share suggestions for implementing either a semester around this theme, or one-shot sessions within other Math Circle contexts. Additionally, in "Revisiting Prejudiced Polygons: Adapting a Familiar Activity During a Time of Unknowns," Anne M. Ho, Jaime J. McCauley, and Tara T. Craig provide a thorough description of a Math Circle activity geared towards teaching social justice that can be run online or in-person. Readers are offered an important call to action to integrate the work of Math Circles with social justice education. The next article, "A Summer Program Goes Online: How BEAM Served Students from Marginalized Backgrounds During COVID" written by Ramya Ramaswamy and Javier Ronquillo Rivera, describes a more intensive and longitudinal outreach program. The authors share program-

level considerations that have helped them successfully build a community of high-need students engaging in rigorous and challenging mathematics online.

The last two articles in this special issue provide detailed accounts of strategies to create more inclusive Math Circles, again within the context of a virtual community. In “The UCI Math Circle: Building an Online Community of Young Math Researchers,” Alessandra Pantano, John N. Treuer, and Yasmeen Baki describe an undergraduate mentoring structure that has helped increase attendance, as well as the retention of female students. The final article, “MAGPIES: Math & Girls + Inspiration = Success: Creating and Implementing a Virtual Math Circle for Girls” written by Lauren L. Rose, Amanda Landi, Jazmin Zamora Flores, Cathy Zhang, Shea Roccaforte, and Julia Crager, offers a description of the intentional, research-based choices made to create a supportive environment for girls and the broader societal factors they are trying to address.

By highlighting the lesson plans and programs shared in these articles, this special issue seeks to promote the deliberate planning and implementation of Math Circles that can better address social justice issues and systemic inequalities.