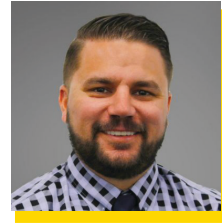


# Conversations about COVID-19

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There is no doubt that at least one conversation in the last few months has been centered around COVID-19. Even if your family has not been affected, or your town has not recorded any cases, how our lives have changed due to the Coronavirus has been a topic of conversation in nearly every home. In our home, with a registered school nurse and a teacher at the helm, the children have transitioned from joking about it, to being scared about it, to asking some interesting questions about it.

Thanks to the CDC, there are some outstanding graphics we can use to encourage more mathematics-based conversations at home. For updated graphs, go to [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html) Two of the graphs have sparked good conversations for my household.

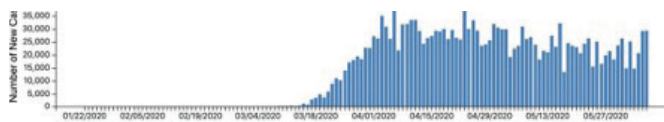


Figure 1: CDC June 7, 2020.

In *Figure 1*, I asked my children, “What are some things that you notice happening?” and, “What questions do you have about the graph?” For my children, it was about the first part of the chart. Why were there no Coronavirus cases in February? This data led to a good conversation about awareness and more people testing for the virus. This information helped explain what happened from March 16th to mid-April.

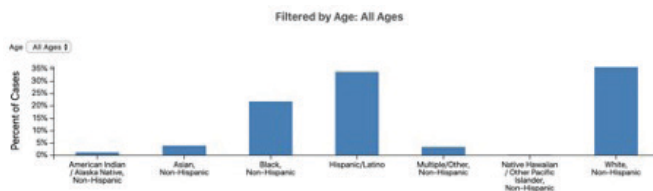


Figure 2: CDC June 7, 2020.

The graph in *Figure 2* was very confusing for my children, especially when we discussed it in more detail. When I asked them what they saw and noticed, they said that White

and Hispanic/Latino people were getting sick about the same amount, and higher than any other race. Then, we talked about what percent of the population within the United States is White, Hispanic/Latino, Black, and other races. According to Akilah Johnson, Black people are being infected and dying at higher rates from the Coronavirus (Johnson 2020). Why is the percent of COVID-19 cases among Blacks and Hispanic/Latinos much higher than that of other races when we compare this percent with their percentages of the United States population? Mathematics provides raw data that we can use to encourage discussions with our children to help them understand the implications of that data.

Regardless of where you stand on the significance of COVID-19 and its effects on our world, there is solid data that we can use to encourage much thoughtful discussion. At the onset of the pandemic, I did not know how to talk about the Coronavirus with my children. Should I not talk about it so they would not worry about it? No, because they might hear their friends talking about it, hear it on the news, or hear my spouse and I discussing it. Should I tell them all the daily counts and how the curve is moving? No, because that might cause them undue panic over something that is out of their control.

Instead our household has used this time to talk about data in a visual manner. This California Mathematics Standard is a skill children will need from elementary school through high school and beyond. Even as adults, interpreting visual representations of data is an essential tool, and we need to practice this skill with our children.

Until next time, thank you for bringing “Math in the Home.”

## References

Johnson, A., and T. Buford, 2020. *ProRepublica*, “Coronavirus.” <https://bit.ly/MathInTheHome> COVID.

