

Reflection/Discussion Questions

LeKesha Parkman's story



[Link to video](#)

Note: We encourage you to use these questions in whatever ways feel appropriate for your circumstances. They do not need to be discussed in order. Some questions may be more useful for a particular group of people than others. In any case, we hope you will use this guide as a tool for thinking about what “mathematics” is and about the experiences that young people have in school.

General questions

- 1) What parts of LeKesha's story stand out for you? Why do you think these experiences resonate with you?
- 2) Are there parts of the story to which you are not really able to relate? If so, why do you think this is the case?
- 3) What do you think LeKesha's story says about how we might define “mathematics”? What do you hear that causes you to think that?
- 4) Given what LeKesha shares, what do you think educators and others who make decisions for schools should be considering related to young people's experiences in school mathematics?
- 5) What aspects of LeKesha's story do you believe are similar to many other people's experiences? What causes you to think that?
- 6) What aspects of this story are very unique to LeKesha? What causes you to think that?
- 7) What other questions would you like to ask LeKesha?

Questions specific to LeKesha's story

- 1) [time stamp 5:28] LeKesha talks about two different types of teaching that she experienced (“answer this, do it this way” versus “story form” and “relative to real life”). Which way (if one of these) did you experience more in school? What other thoughts do you have about this?
- 2) [time stamp 7:30] What do you notice about how LeKesha's view of herself as a mathematician changed when she was in her college statistics class? Based on her story, to what could you attribute that change? How did her teacher's view of her impact how she saw herself?

- 3) [time stamp 11:30] What forms of mathematics does LeKesha discuss in this section of the video, as related to the [Standards for Mathematical Practice](#)? How do these relate to what we typically experience in school?
- 4) [time stamp 15:38] In what ways are mathematics and creativity intertwined? Do you think that if we highlighted the creative aspects of mathematics in and out of school, more people would consider themselves mathematicians?
- 5) [time stamp 22:25] Do you relate at all to LeKesha's reflections on "mathematics" at the end of the video? If so, how?

Questions for educators (and anyone who wishes to consider these ideas)

- 1) [time stamp 4:57] Is it "wrong" if young people don't show their work formally in writing? Are there other strategies teachers can use to allow all young people entry into reasoning and communicating about mathematics?
- 2) [time stamp 6:31] LeKesha talks about being required (in one class) to do the mathematics in the teacher's way or it was not considered correct, even though her strategy made sense to her and resulted in correct solutions.
- What does this say about "mathematics", and how did it impact LeKesha?
 - Whose mathematics is it if we try to impose our ways of thinking and reasoning on young people?
 - Did you feel you had voice and choice in mathematics classes? How did this impact you?
- 3) [time stamp 19:30] LeKesha discusses ideas for bringing educators, young people, and families together around mathematics.
- Have you had experience with working toward this goal?
 - What has been effective, in your experience, in partnering meaningfully with families?
 - What strategies for partnering with families have not been as successful, in your experience? Why do you think that may be the case?
- 4) [time stamp 20:50] What is your reaction to LeKesha's comment that teachers often share their perceptions of young people from one grade to another? How might this impact young people?