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MathSoc Cartoons and Edu-Action!: Engaging Math Education with Artistic Resources

Math is notorious for being a problem concept in school because many students see it as confusing, highly abstract, and boring. Some causes of this are the highly technical nature of the subject and, with pure mathematics, the lack of immediate real-world connections. As a consequence of this perception of the subject, students often develop a debilitating emotional reaction to math called math anxiety and achieve lower academic performance in math.

To try to combat this perception of the subject, I experimented with two artistic projects during my undergraduate degree: MathSoc Cartoons and Edu-Action!. In these projects, students produce artistic educational resources for their peers that give high-level overviews of complex math topics as supplements to traditional course materials. These resources include cartoons, posters and videos that explain ideas simply, demystify the theory with relevant applications and analogies, and incorporate colourful artwork and fun characters to make the material engaging.

In this poster we will explain design techniques in these resources that attempt to make the material fun and easy to understand, the merits of different styles of resources, student feedback on our work, and challenges we encountered along the way. In addition, we will offer suggestions for how instructors can implement similar resources into their classes and possible uses for these types of resources outside of math.