

Fair vs. Equal

This lesson explores the difference between fair and equal. Students at this age really struggle with differentiating between these two concepts as they correlate fair as being the same as equal. This lesson will highlight what each concept means and how that manifests within a classroom setting.

Inclusiveness Sub-Concept(s)

Fairness, Kindness

Lesson Timeframe

45 minutes

Required Materials

- Fair is Fair* by Sonny Varela
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVqZzLN9eQU>
- Large piece of paper/poster board
- 30 Sticky Notes
- Fair vs. Equal hand out (see below)
- Black marker

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



**DESIGNATED BY CASEL
AS A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM
FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.**

See last page for details.

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Explore the concepts of fairness and equality through literature.
- Explain examples of fairness and equality within the classroom.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

How does fairness affect us as teachers? You are required to break up disagreements numerous times a day and teach others how to exercise fairness in a variety of settings, yet the concept seems elusive to even adults at times. Although fairness has two meanings, for this unit we are focusing on the ability to include others without showing favor. However, this skill is often overlooked in adulthood. Favoritism cannot be ignored as most people have experienced both sides of this double-edged sword. How can you consciously choose fairness in your day to day interactions with others? What subconscious tendencies do you have that may cloud your judgment? It might be a certain type of personality, a clique that has formed with close friends, or even getting stuck in the same routine every day during lunch. In order to practice fairness within your own world, you must first break out of your comfort zone and seek beyond the “usual”. Ask yourself this question each day this week: How can I treat people in a way that does not show favor for some and not others? Identify one action step you can take to move forward in your quest for fairness!

Tips for Diverse Learners

- Form groups with varying levels of English proficiency to aid in comprehension.
- Draw simple pictures on the side of each sticky note.
- Encourage students to act out any sticky notes that seem confusing to members of their group.



Share

5-7 minutes

Ask for 4 volunteers to come to the front of the classroom. Explain that each person is going to the doctor for something different.

- Student #1 has a cough
- Student #2 has a broken bone
- Student #3 scraped their knee
- Student #4 has a stomach ache

After explaining what each student has wrong, tell them you have the perfect solution: a band aid! (You will most likely hear comments like that's not fair, etc.)

- Did everyone receive the same treatment? Yes, it was equal.
- What would happen if everyone received the same treatment when they went to the doctor? Right! Only one child would get what they need, and that's not fair!

Today we will talk about the difference between fair and equal in our classroom and what that looks like for our special, unique third grade class.



Inspire

15 minutes

Fair vs. Equal

This unit has been focused on inclusiveness as we work towards including everyone, even when we don't know them very well. Today we are going to talk about fair versus equal because this topic comes up a lot when we are trying to include others! Explain that equal means that everyone gets exactly the same thing.

As a class, brainstorm some examples of this. (This may be difficult, and that's expected. Correct them gently as needed.) Explain that fair means that everyone gets exactly what they need.

As a class, brainstorm some examples of fairness. (This is often a struggle at this age. Guide the conversation back to your opening activity if students get stuck).

Fair and equal are not the same. As we include others in our day, we need to remember what they need to be included. We are all special and unique and every one of us has needs that are just a little different than the rest of the class. It is important that we value those differences.

Story: *Fair is Fair* by Sonny Varela

Read Aloud link- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVqZzLN9eQU>

This story illustrates the difference between fair and equal and how sometimes when we treat everyone equally, it can have serious consequences!

After reading the book (or watching the video), ask the following questions:

- *What did the hare and giraffe notice about the amount of food they received in comparison with the elephant?*
- *How did they feel when they realized they received less food?*
- *What was their solution?*
- *How did that affect each of them?*
- *What is one example in your own life when being equal might lead to an unsafe situation? (feeding yourself the same amount of food as your little baby sibling, wearing clothes the same size as dad, etc.)*



Empower

15 minutes

Explain that the class will now work to identify what fair and equal look like in our classroom. We will accomplish this by creating a T-chart that illustrates times when we need to be fair and other times when we are all equal. Each group will receive a stack of sticky notes. Each one has a scenario written on it. Your task is to sort all of your sticky notes into two categories: Fair or Equal. When we have finished our sorting, we will come together and add our sticky notes to the giant T-chart.

- Divide the class up into 6 groups of 5. Note: if you have less than 30 students, adjust your groups so they are fairly even.
- Pass out their sticky note stacks as they are ready.
- Allow 5-7 minutes for each group to sort their sticky notes based on fairness and equality.
- Reconvene the class and present the blank T-chart you have created. Highlight the headings of FAIR and EQUAL to help students understand where to place their sticky notes as they sort them.
- Invite each group to place their sticky notes under the corresponding heading. As the sorting occurs, highlight areas within your specific classroom that are more of struggle, making sure to reiterate HOW something is fair, even when it isn't equal. Example: Alec has an additional break time because he needs time to get refocused before our math lesson.

Hang your Fair vs Equal chart in a prominent location. Refer to it throughout the year any time you hear, "That's not fair!". You can even add items as they come up!



Reflect

2-3 minutes

Understanding the difference between fair and equal can be a struggle at times. Even adults struggle with this concept! Whenever you feel yourself getting frustrated that something isn't "fair", stop and ask yourself if that person needs exactly the same thing as me OR do they need something different so we can both have fun and learn? Once you answer that question, it's a lot easier to see why different people need different things.



Extension Ideas

- At Home Extension: Have students examine their home life. What are some areas that might be fair but not equal? Have them make a T-chart for home and share it with the class the following day.

RAK Notebook Prompt (See RAK Notebook Project in the Respect unit for more details):

- Pick a special friend in your life. Draw a picture of you on one side and them on the other.
- What is one thing that the two of you do differently that make things more fair? An example might be: When we play foursquare, I always let her go first because she is still learning how to play the game.
- Write this in between your two pictures. Below your explanation, write the word FAIR in big letters.



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PROGRAM FOR SOCIAL
AND EMOTIONAL
LEARNING.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>

Fair vs. Equal

Write (or cut out and glue) each statement onto a sticky note.
Use the blank one to create a personalized option for your class.

Has a desk	Has a backpack	Everyone walks in a line	Eats lunch in the cafeteria	Has recess after lunch
Exact same	Different	Learns math	Learning how to read	Needs extra breaks
Has a desk off to the side	Needs water at their desk	Needs extra snacks during our day	Has a helper in our class	Leaves to get extra help
Takes extra breaks during tests	Works out in the hallway	Sits closer to the board	Has a cushion on their chair	Has a fidget item to help them concentrate
Leaves early	Arrives later in the day	Has different work	Has a quiet area to work	Learns in another language
Wears glasses	Has homework	Is in 3rd grade	Tells their ideas out loud for the teacher to write	