

Fair But Equal

In this lesson, students discuss the difference among fairness, equality, and equity. They will use real-life situations to help them think about the concepts of fairness, equality, equity, and inclusiveness. The lesson also helps them flex their muscles in empathy, thinking about certain challenging situations from the perspective of others.

Inclusiveness Sub-Concept(s)

Equity, Fairness, Kindness

Lesson Timeframe

35-40 minutes

Required Materials

- Print out of the Equality/Equity image or smartboard on which to project the image
- Smartboard or other computer screen to project the “homework gap” video.

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:

- Define fairness and equality.
- Apply problem-solving strategies to help make different situations fair, equal, and/or equitable for everyone involved.

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

- Students can draw their responses to the situations instead of writing them down or students could role play.
- Read through each situation first and ensure each student/group understands the conflict.



Share

5-7 minutes

In our last lesson, we created our classroom mission statement regarding inclusion. Let's read it together.

Read the acrostic as a class.

Can anyone share how they have either fulfilled this mission or seen other 5th graders fulfill it this week?

Invite student response.



Inspire

12-15 minutes

Today we are going to talk about an important part of inclusiveness: fairness, equality, and equity. These can feel like big terms. Let's define them:

Can someone explain the idea of "fair" to the class?

Invite student response.

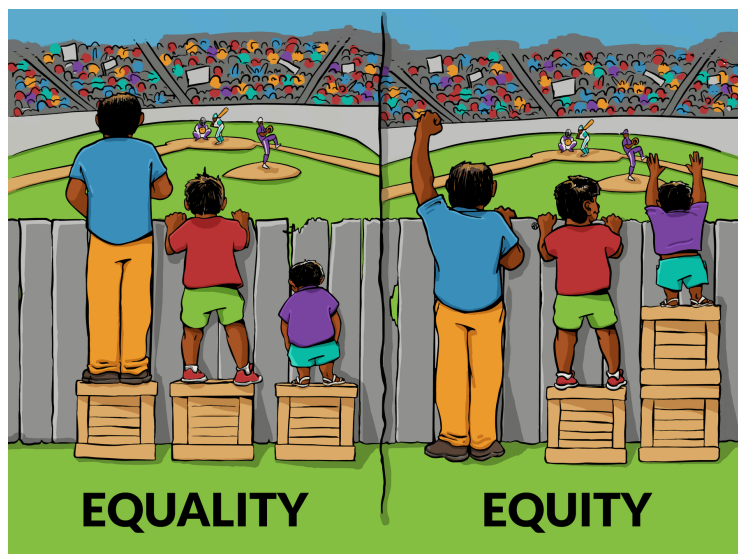
Ok, now what about equality. What does that mean?

Invite student response.

Now, what about equity. Does anyone know what equity means?

Invite student response; this will likely will be challenging. Offer up the following or a similar definition: Equity is when everyone has what they need to succeed.

Let's look at a good visual representation of these concepts.



(Image source: "[Interaction Institute for Social Change](#) | Artist: [Angus Maguire](#).")

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What is “equal” in the image on the left?

Answer: Each person has a box to stand on.

Why is this still not fair, though?

Answer: Even with a box, not everyone can see.

What makes the image on the right equitable?

Answer: Everyone has what they need to succeed and have an equal and fair opportunity.



Empower

25-30 minutes

Equity is tricky. We often think that if everyone simply has the same things - if things are equal - then things are fair. We know, though, that sometimes things are equal but they are still not fair or equitable, like we saw in the baseball image.

Part 1:

[The following activity requires video player capabilities (Smartboard would work well); if this is not an option, skip down to the second part of the Empower section.]

We are going to look at another example. This is a video of two high school academic teams that competed against each other in a knowledge challenge. Watch what happens:

Homework Gap (4:14)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqkAlwGsxwE>

Even though both teams got “additional resources,” why was this an unfair situation? Did they have the same types of resources?

No. One team got computers and other had books.

Why weren’t the book resources useful?

They weren’t able to look things up fast enough, compared to a computer.

Part 2:

Today, we are going to investigate some situations where things are equal but they are not equitable. Our job will be to figure out what we can do to give everyone the same opportunity to succeed. These are going to be situations that we might even see happen right in our classroom.

This will be most effective if you can use real-life examples. Here are some you can use if you can’t think of any applicable situations.

1. Lee moved to your town from South Korea. He speaks some English but he is still learning. During tests, Lee struggles to read all of the questions and answer them, and the teacher does not speak any Korean. Everyone is taking the same test so that is equal, but it is not

equitable for Lee. What could be done to make the test more fair for Lee?

2. Sam isn't able to walk. He is in a wheelchair. The computer lab is on the 2nd floor and your class has keyboarding once a week. Sam usually stays in the classroom and works on a laptop while the rest of the class goes upstairs. This works okay, but Sam misses out on the instruction from the keyboarding teacher. He has equal access to the computers but not to the instruction, so it's not equitable.
3. Lara is 11 and her younger sister, Ava, is 6. At home, the girls each have chores to do. Lara has to wash dishes, clean their bathroom, and sweep the porch when it gets dirty. Ava has to pick up her toys and put away her clothes after Lara does their laundry. Lara gets frustrated because Ava does so much less than she does. The situation isn't equal. Is it fair? Is it equitable?



Reflect

5 minutes

Have students relay their responses to the situations you provided. Conduct a group discussion around the responses.

Let's review the definitions of fair, equal, and equitable again, because they are all related but they are different.

Review definitions.

When you see a situation that isn't fair, isn't equal, or isn't equitable, think about ways you can help if it is reasonable to do so. Also, if you are in Lara's situation, and you feel you do more than your younger siblings, think about whether that inequality is actually fair. If it is, you will need to adjust how you think about that situation. If it is not, maybe you could talk to a parent or guardian about it. Remember, you can advocate for yourself just as easily as you can advocate for someone else. Remember our mission and if you see someone being excluded through inequality or an unfair situation, work to include them and give them the tools to succeed.



Extension Ideas

- You could write story problems for math that include concepts around fairness, equality, and inclusiveness (like the examples above).
- Students and parents can examine this issue at home, especially if there are siblings at home. In what ways are household rules fair but not equal or both fair and equal.



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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/>