

Fair vs. Equal

In this lesson, students discuss the difference between fair and equal. They will use real-life situations to help them think about the concepts of fairness, equality, 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)

Fairness, Kindness

Lesson Timeframe

45 minutes

Required Materials

- ☐ It might be useful to read about growth mindset before this lesson in case the wrap up sparks conversation about mindset; it would be a good opportunity to talk about growth vs. fixed mindset. Here are some resources that might help:

[10 Ways to Teach Kids About Growth Mindset](#)

[8 Ways to Encourage a Growth Mindset in Kids](#)

[How Praise Became a](#)

[Consolation Prize](#) (an important reminder about what a growth mindset is and what it is not, from researcher and growth mindset developer Carol Dweck)

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 and/or equal 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? Perhaps it is 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 they could role play.
- Read through each situation first and ensure each student/group understands the conflict.



Share

3-5 minutes

In this unit we are talking about inclusiveness. In our last lesson, we talked about a part of inclusion that sometimes we forget about: ourselves! We usually focus on including others, but don't also realize that sometimes we need to advocate for ourselves to be included or to participate in something. This can be hard to do, though. Why is that? Why is including ourselves in things sometimes difficult?

Invite student response.



Inspire

7-10 minutes

Today we are going to talk about an important part of inclusiveness and even teamwork: fairness and equality.

Let's chat a bit about what fair means. Can someone explain the idea of "fair" to the class?

Invite student response.

Ok, now what about equality or having things be equal for everyone. What does that mean?

Invite student response.

Is it possible for something to be fair but not equal? How?

Invite student responses. If no one responds, you could offer the following example:

We are all on the same baseball team and at practice, usually everyone gets 15 minutes in the batting cage to practice hitting. Half of the team has played since Kindergarten and are quite good at hitting. For the other half, this is their first year and they have never played a baseball game in their life. They have very little practice with hitting a baseball. The coach decides that all of the players who have not played before get twice as much time in the batting area (so, 30 minutes) as the kids who have been playing for the last four years (who will only get 15 minutes). Does everyone get equal time in the batting cage? No. But, is it fair that they don't get equal time? Yes, because there are some kids who need a lot more practice. The whole team will be better if everyone is a strong hitter and not just some of the players.

Sometimes when things are unequal, even if they are fair, does it feel fair? Why or why not?

Invite student responses.



Empower

15-20 minutes

Working in small groups, you are going to look at three situations that could happen in a school and discuss what you can do to make the situation more fair or equal, and, most importantly, inclusive! Be sure to answer the questions associated with each situation.

Break students into small groups and give them approximately 10 minutes to work. When the groups are done, have them return to discuss as a large group.

Situations:

Mario is a new student who joins your class, and he is in a wheelchair. To get into the library, you have to go up three stairs and there is no ramp. As a result, Mario cannot get into the library.

- How would you feel if you were Mario?
- What is the challenge that Mario faces if he cannot use the school library?
- What could you do to make Mario feel included when the class has to do library activities?
- How can you help make this more fair and equal for Mario?

It is your birthday, and your teacher has said that you can bring in birthday treats to share with the class. Your favorite sweet treat is the yummy peanut butter cupcakes your mom makes and you had planned on bringing those. But, Sasha, a student in your class, has a severe peanut allergy, and Antonio, another classmate, has to be on a gluten-free and dairy-free diet.

- What challenges do you face when bringing treats to class?
- What could you do to help your celebration be fair and/or equal for everyone? Label your ideas as fair, equal, or both fair and equal.
- Do you have allergies that make it harder to feel included in certain activities? What do you do?

Your teacher has assigned a research project that you can do on the computer. You will get some time in class to work, but you must also work on this project outside of class time. You don't have a computer or the Internet at home, though.

- Is it fair that you have to do your work on the computer?
- What could you propose to your teacher that would help you do your best work on this project?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you had to complete a task but didn't have all the tools you needed? What did you do?



Reflect

5 minutes

Have a student representative from each group share some of their ideas; use the ideas to springboard additional discussions about fairness and equity in your school or classroom. How do we all work better when everyone has a fair opportunity to succeed? How is our class team stronger?

This could be a good opportunity to also reinforce the idea that students should not compare themselves to each other, especially as grades and state testing become more important. Instead, they should work hard to the best of their own abilities and seek to grow where they are at. This may mean advocating for themselves if they don't have access to certain resources; how can they make their situation better rather than simply give up?



Extension Ideas

- You could write story problems for math that include concepts around fairness, equality, and inclusiveness (like the baseball example 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/>