

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

30-40 minutes

Required Materials

☐ N/A

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

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

Review the definition of inclusiveness: *Including others, inviting them in, and welcoming them with open arms.*

When we include others, we might be creating a fair and equal opportunity for them to participate and be part of a group. Review the definitions of “fair” and “equal” with students. Here are some definitions you could use:

Fair: Everyone gets what they need and that we are not favoring some people over others.

Equal: Everyone gets exactly the same thing.



Inspire

7-10 minutes

Fair vs. Equal

Ask:

- Is it possible for something to be fair, but not equal? How?
- What about equal, but not fair?

Invite student responses.

Then, read the following scenario and ask the questions that follow:

We are all on the same baseball team and at practice, everyone gets 15 minutes in the batting cage to practice hitting. Half of the team has played baseball 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. Going to the batting cage is everyone's favorite part of practice. The coach decides that all of the players who have not played before get twice as much time in the batting cage (30 minutes) as the kids who have been playing for the last four years (who will only get 15 minutes). This makes the more experienced players upset. They would like 30 minutes in the batting cage as well.

Ask:

- Does everyone get **equal** time in the batting cage? *No. This is not equal for everyone.*
- 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.*
- When things are not equal, even if they are fair, does it feel fair? Why or why not?

Invite student responses.



Empower

15-20 minutes

Instructions:

Break students into small groups and give each group the following three situations. The groups need to discuss what they could do to make the situation more fair or equal, and, most importantly, inclusive! If time is tight, you could give each group just one situation.

Give groups approximately 10 minutes to work. When they are done, have them return to discuss as a large group and read out their ideas.

Situations:

1. 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?
2. 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 do you need to think about when bringing treats to class?
 - What could you do to help your celebration be fair and/or equal for everyone?
 - Do you have allergies that make it harder to feel included in certain activities? What do you do?
3. 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 equality in your school or classroom. How do we all work better when everyone has a fair opportunity to succeed?

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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AS A RECOMMENDED
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/>