

Growing Anti-racist UU's: A Curriculum for Children

www.uucharlottesville.org/anti-racist-curriculum/

Equality vs Equity - Lesson 9 for Grades 3-5+

by Dinny Jensen and Linda Dukes

LESSON OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

What is the difference between equality and equity?

There is a common misconception that *equity* and *equality* mean the same thing and that they can be used interchangeably, but the truth is they do not — and cannot. Yes, the two words are similar, but the *difference between* them is crucial.

Equity and **equality** are two strategies we can use in an effort to produce fairness.

Equity is giving everyone what they need to be successful. **Equality** is treating everyone the same. **Equality** aims to promote fairness, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same resources.

GOAL

To understand the difference between equality and equity and that fairness does not mean that everyone has to get the same thing.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

To understand equality and equity and how the community may need to make some adjustments based on the **needs** of its people.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Band-aid activity was found at

<http://jewishspecialneeds.blogspot.com/search?q=bandaid>,

“New” equity/equality/justice pictures and discussion were found at

<http://culturalorganizing.org/the-problem-with-that-equity-vs-equality-graphic/>

LESSON-AT-A-GLANCE

Opening	10 minutes
Activity 1: Band-aid activity	25 minutes
Activity 2: Discuss the equality vs equity graphic	15 minutes
Closing	5 minutes

LEADER PREPARATION

Read Leader Resource (at end of this lesson) before class.

“Equality of opportunity is not enough. Unless we create an environment where everyone is guaranteed some minimum capabilities through some guarantee of minimum income, education, and healthcare, we cannot say that we have fair competition. When some people have to run a 100 metre race with sandbags on their legs, the fact that no one is allowed to have a head start does not make the race fair. Equality of opportunity is absolutely necessary but not sufficient in building a genuinely fair and efficient society.”

— Ha-Joon Chang, 23 Things They Don't Tell You about Capitalism

MATERIALS FOR LESSON

- Band aids (one per student, all the same)
- Handout 1 with various injuries (printed and cut in advance, so each child has 1 injury)
- Handout 2, Equality/Equity pictures, for each student. Children will be able to talk more easily with their parents about today's lesson if they are able to take a copy of the picture home.
- Flip chart paper or board and markers

LESSON PLAN

OPENING (follow usual routine) (10 minutes)

- Light Chalice
- Question to think about as we go along: Is it really fair to give everyone the same thing?
- Joys and Sorrows
- Discuss how we may feel bad about our history – many of us feel this way. If we stay in feeling bad, though, it's hard to act for change. We can make a difference if we work together for change.

Activity 1: Band-aid activity (25 minutes)

Acknowledgment: Band-aid activity was found at <http://jewishspecialneeds.blogspot.com/search?q=bandaid>,

Goal: everyone getting the same thing isn't actually “fair”
Lesson 9, Grades 3-5

Distribute “injury cards” to students (see Handout 1). Ask students, one at a time, to share their injury (drawing from a stack of cards, starting with the person with a cut on hand), giving each student a band-aid (regardless of the injury). If anyone complains or questions the band-aid, simply say that it would not be fair if everyone did not get the same thing.

Variation: Give all but the last student a band-aid. Add in a discussion of how it felt to be the only one without a band-aid.

(This may go faster if your assistant opens the band aids and hands them to you or if you open them in advance, since cleanliness isn’t an issue.)

Questions for discussion:

- Was it equal that everyone got a Band-Aid?
- Was it fair that everyone got a Band-Aid? Why or why not? (Everyone getting the same thing wasn’t fair because it didn’t help most of the students.)
- What would have made this activity more fair for everyone with an injury?
- How does this activity apply to racial justice? After the children give their ideas say:

Let’s go a little deeper. We know from earlier racial justice lessons here that people of color have been treated unfairly in our country – what were some of the ways this was true?(slavery, segregation, redlining)

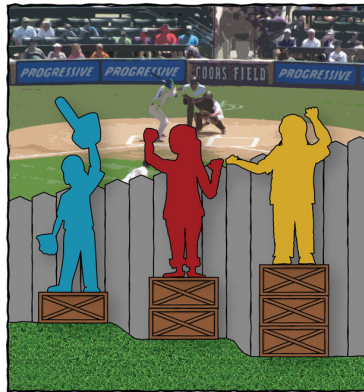
Remember that these things created a big Wealth Gap between White families and families of color (African American, Latinx, and Native American families). Many people of color have not had the opportunities for education, jobs, and housing that most White people have had. If we think about all these things and also think about the band-aid activity that we just did, do you think it’s fair to treat everyone exactly the same? [no – be sure they understand this point]

- If we know that not everyone has the same needs, how can we bring about equity within our community?

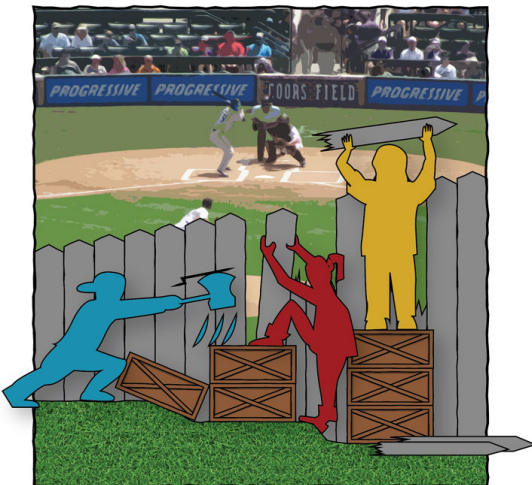
Activity 2: Discuss the equality vs equity graphic (15 minutes)



EQUALITY



EQUITY



JUSTICE

<http://culturalorganizing.org/the-problem-with-that-equity-vs-equality-graphic/>

In small groups discuss what the images are telling us about equity and equality (Handout 2). (Teacher: having read the Leader Resource will help you here!)

As a group create a definition for the word **equity** and write it on a piece of chart paper. Do the same for the word **equality**. Keep these definitions for reflection and review at the beginning of the next lesson.



Equity is giving everyone what they need to be successful. **Equality** is treating everyone the same. **Equality** aims to promote fairness, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same help.

Ask: When it comes to racial groups in our country, are all groups starting from the same place? [no] So should we think about equity instead of just equality? [yes]

CLOSING (follow your usual closing routine)

- How do you feel after this class?
- What can you do this week to work towards building equity in our community?
- Reading: “Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are.”
— Benjamin Franklin
- Extinguish Chalice

LEADER REFLECTION AND PLANNING

When class ends, please stop for a minute with your co-teacher to...

- Take a deep breath together and acknowledge that you have done one thing today for racial justice. Sometimes the problems seem so huge that we need to find specific actions we can take, and this is one of them.
- Discuss if any children weren't fully included in the lesson and how they might be in the future.
- Note any issues that you want to follow up on in the next class.
- Note any issues that you want to mention to your congregation's racial justice curriculum planners or your religious educator.

TAKING IT HOME (for families)

Ask parents/caregivers to look at their child's Handout 2 and discuss it at home.

HANDOUTS 1 AND 2

HANDOUT 1 (Print one and cut up)

I cut my hand.

I sprained my ankle.

I broke my leg.

I burned my finger.

I have a stomachache.

I have a fever.

I keep coughing.

I scraped my knee.

I have the flu.

I'm having an asthma
attack.

I have poison ivy.

I feel depressed.

I pinched my finger in the drawer.

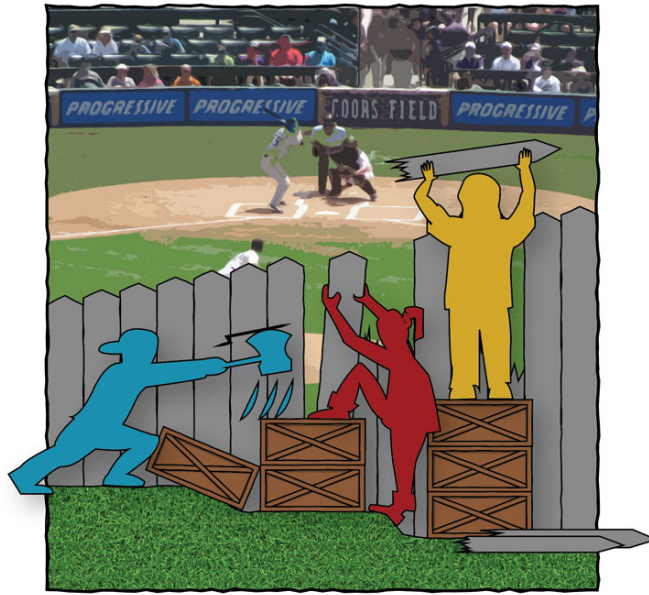
My tooth hurts.



EQUALITY



EQUITY



JUSTICE

<http://culturalorganizing.org/the-problem-with-that-equity-vs-equality-graphic/>

Leader resources

<http://culturalorganizing.org/the-problem-with-that-equity-vs-equality-graphic/>

The problem with that equity vs. equality graphic you're using

October 29, 2016 Paul Kuttner Post Equality, Equity, Infographics, Justice, Metaphors, Symbols

[NOTE: November 1, 2016. This post has been updated based on the new things I've learned about these images since posting the original article.]

I was doing some work for a colleague at the Family Leadership Design Collaborative, and she gave me a challenge: redesign the “equity vs. equality” graphic that’s been circulating on the web. You’ve probably come across a version of this graphic yourself. There are a bunch of iterations, but basically it shows three people trying to watch a baseball game over the top of a fence. The people are different heights, so the shorter ones have a harder time seeing. I’ve included the original image above, by Craig Froehle.

In the first of two images, all three people have one crate to stand on. In other words, there is “equality,” because everyone has the same number of crates. While this is helpful for the middle-height person, it is not enough for the shortest and superfluous for the tallest. In contrast, in the second image there is “equity” — each person has *the number of crates they need* to fully enjoy the game.

The distinction between equity and equality is an important one. For example, if we’re talking about school funding, advocating for equality would mean ensuring that all schools had the same amount of resources per pupil (an improvement in most cases, to be sure). On the other hand, advocating for equity would mean recognizing that some schools — like those serving students in low-income Communities of Color — will actually need more resources (funding, experienced teachers, relevant curriculum, etc.) if we are going to make a dent in the educational disparities that have come to be known as the “achievement gap.”

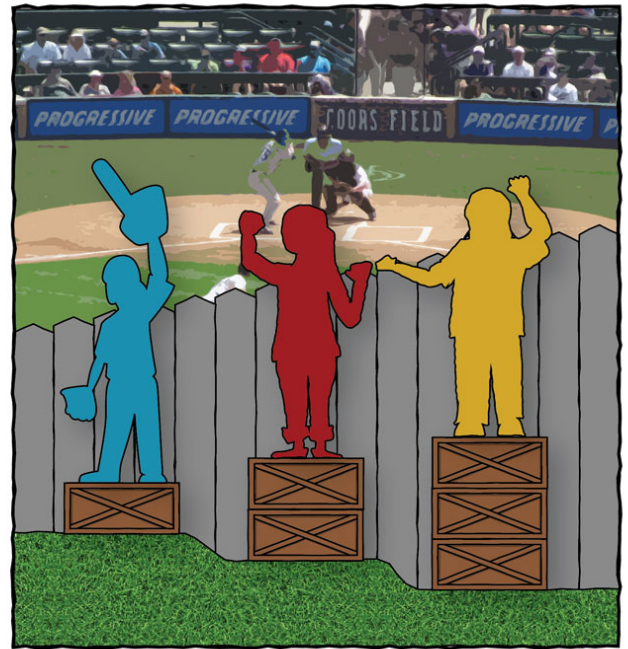
The problem with the graphic has to do with where the initial inequity is located. In the graphic, some people need more support to see over the fence because they are shorter, an issue *inherent to the people themselves*. That’s fine if we’re talking about height, but if this is supposed to be a metaphor for other inequities, it becomes problematic. For instance, if we return to the school funding example, this image implies that students in low-income Communities of Color and other marginalized communities need more resources in their schools because they are *inherently less academically capable*. They (or their families, or their communities) are metaphorically “shorter” and need more support. But that is not why the so-called “achievement gap” exists. As many have argued, it should actually be termed the “opportunity gap” because the problem is not in the abilities of students, but in the disparate opportunities they are afforded. It is rooted in a history of oppression, from colonization and slavery to “separate but equal” and redlining. It is sustained by systemic racism and the country’s ever-growing economic inequality.

This metaphor is actually a great example of deficit thinking — an ideology that blames victims of oppression for their own situation. As with this image, deficit thinking makes systemic forms of racism and oppression invisible. Other images, like the one of different animals having to climb a tree, or of people picking fruit, suffer from the same problem. How would we make these root causes more visible in our “equity vs. equality” image?

Well, if we began with the metaphor of the fence, this would require making clear that the reason some people have more difficulty seeing than others is not because of their height, but because of the context around them. Below is a sketch of this idea. In this image, some people are standing on lower ground (a metaphor for historical oppression) and are trying to see over a higher fence, a metaphor for present-day systems of oppression. (I also put a hole in the fence, made by the person on the right, to symbolize the creative and often subversive ways that people find to work around systems and get some of what they need.)

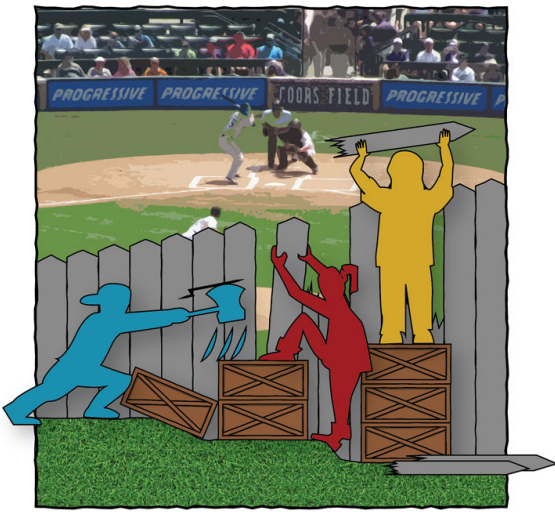


EQUALITY

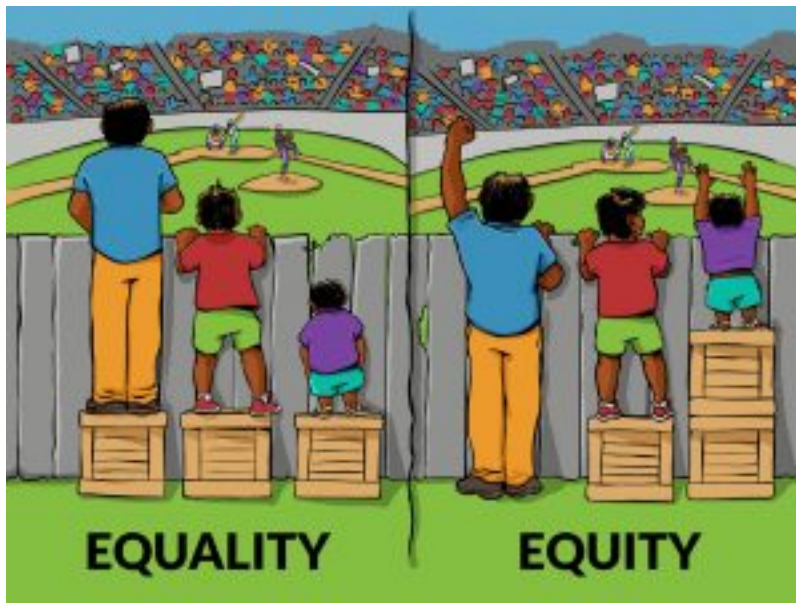


EQUITY

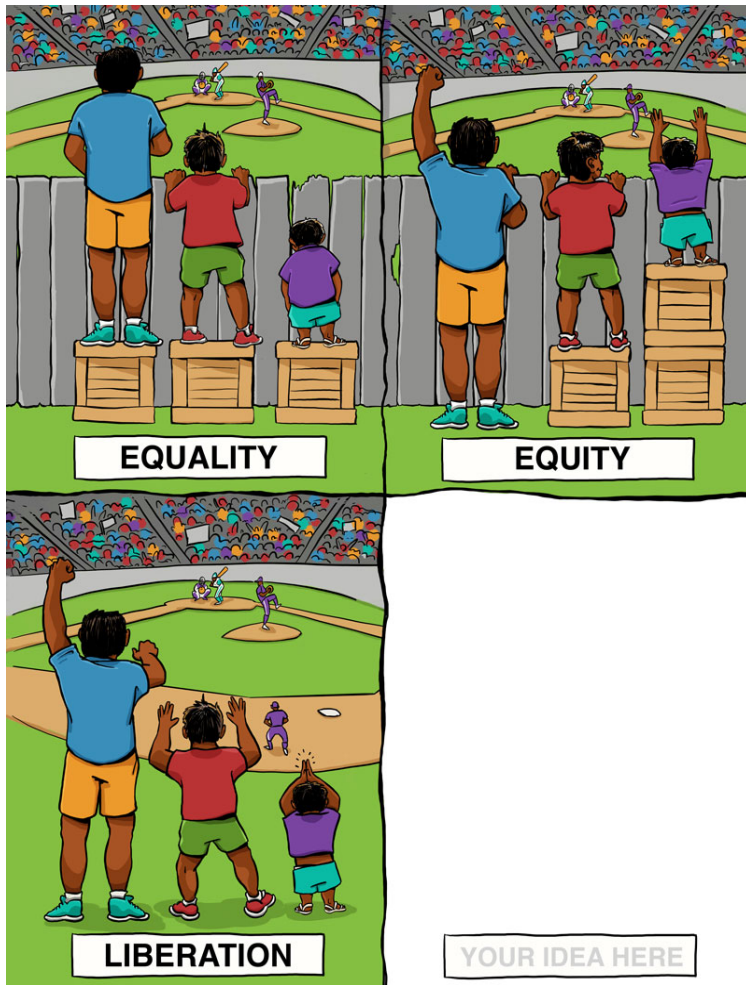
However, I still don't love this new version, because nothing is being done here to address the real problem: the fence. So I drew this third image for fun. Though by this point it's losing a lot of the original image's nice simplicity.



JUSTICE



If you want to play around with this metaphor yourself, check out the 4th Box toolkit. Recently, the people at the Center for Story-Based Strategy and the Interaction Institute for Social Change worked with artist Angus Maguire to recreate the fence image, producing the beautiful version to the right. It went viral, and they noticed a lot of people remixing the image to expand on the concepts. So they collaborated with Maguire again to create an adaptable visual toolbox, which makes it easy to create your own image in the “4th box” as shown below. They’ve been using it to inspire both in-person and online dialogues.



I still see a lot of drawbacks to the core metaphor, however, so I've been on the lookout for others.