

Day
19**Focus On Fair**

In a UDL classroom, some learners may get materials or experiences that others do not. Some students will point out these perceived inequities and declare them unfair. For this reason, it is important to start the year by emphasizing that equal does not mean fair and that no learner in the classroom will get the same things as his or her classmates. Some students, for instance, will get preferred seating; some will take tests in other environments, some will use talking calculators; some will work with partners more often than others; some will use headphones to block out background noises during certain lessons, and some will need support from an ELL teacher. Point out that everyone in the classroom has different needs and will, therefore, get something “special” at some point during the year whether it’s a phone call home to share good news, a make-up test because of an illness, or extra help preparing for an upcoming math competition. Use these examples as a starting point for communicating that you will always try to give students what they need, but that you will never treat them the same because they are not the same. Each student is unique and should be treated as such. To teach “fair vs. equal” in the classroom, try the following ideas:

- ★ *Create a Venn diagram or anchor chart comparing fair and equal.*
- ★ *Have a class discussion about what a fair classroom looks and feels like.*
- ★ *Illustrate the concept—especially if you teach young children. One way to illustrate is the “bandage game” where a student is asked to role-play having a small injury. That student comes to the front of the room and gets a bandage on the arm. Then, every other student in the classroom also gets a bandage on the arm because “it isn’t fair for only one student to get a bandage.” Students typically understand immediately that everyone doesn’t need a bandage. The group can then discuss how different students have different needs and will, therefore, require different supports.*