

Equity in Education

Facilitation Guide



Tool for

Intellectual Character



20 minutes



**Educator-prep
Leader-prep**

Materials

- Watch:
[EQUITY IN EDUCATION:
Defined](#)

Making Connections

Principled Innovation asks us to work with others and recognize the limits of our own knowledge so that we can better understand and tackle the complex issues our communities face.

Connecting Character Assets:

[Inclusivity](#)
[Fairness](#)

About this Guide

The fair and just learning environments envisioned by Principled Innovation are those in which all students have equal opportunities to succeed. However, students – and communities – have different ideas of what “success” looks like. What is the role of the teacher when success means different things to different learners? Use this video by a Maryland teacher-of-the-year to spark a conversation about how fairness can shape the way teachers consider their role in the classroom.

In Principled Innovation, solutions are designed to address the needs of communities in a fair – equitable – manner. However, since not all members of a community have the same values, those same people will have diverse understandings of what their needs might be. In order to meet community members’ needs in an equitable manner, principled innovators need to understand what those individual values are. It is for this reason that the first Moral practice is “[Identify and acknowledge fundamental values](#)”:

Distinguish the values that are important to the individuals, team, community and learning environment and ensure that the process, structures, and solutions honor, appreciate, and reflect the identified values.

Thus, [designing solutions](#) begins with understanding the values of both the individuals and the community and then seeks to design solutions that serve those values as equitably as possible. In the context of an individual classroom or school, equity requires understanding the values of students and their families and seeking to find solutions to help them meet their goals.

Yet, creating a fit between curricula and the learning community can be exceptionally challenging. For instance, a school that crafts all of its curriculum around the needs of students who are aiming for careers in computer programming would likely under-serve those students seeking to build careers in the arts. When these misalignments between student values and curricular decisions occur, the individual classroom serves a crucial role in equity by bridging the curriculum to support all students’ goals.

Use this video to spark a conversation about the role of the teacher – or the role of schools or of entire educational systems – in creating an equitable “fit” between curriculum and the members of the learning community’s educational values.

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Instructions

1 Situate

Prepare participants for the video by providing the following definition of “fairness,” drawn from the Principled Innovation framework, and explaining that the speaker in the video will be sharing his understanding of what it means to provide equitable learning opportunities for students:

“Fairness is the equitable, just and reasonable treatment of others according to their needs.”

2 Discuss

Here are some questions to consider in leading a conversation on this video:

1. Parker talks about equity as creating a learning environment to “fit” the needs of the students to become autonomous in meeting their goals. What are some ways to identify the goals that students have?
2. Parker says that he had previously thought of his role as a teacher as that of being a “dispenser of knowledge” and “superstar.” What does he mean by that, and how does this approach to teaching affect equity in a teacher’s pedagogy?
3. The teacher in this video – Parker – teaches at the secondary level. Yet secondary teachers and specialists often work with well over 100 different students on any given day.
 - a. If equity involves creating a learning environment that “fits” the goals of students, is it realistic to expect equity when a teacher is serving so many different learners?
 - b. What are some practical ways that teachers can address the “fit” of the learning environment for so many different students?
4. Local communities often differ in what they value in an education. How can a school system provide equity for communities that differ in their goals for education?
5. If equity in education involves creating learning environments which serve the values of local communities, what can a school do to identify those values and provide greater equity for that community’s learners?
6. If students and their communities differ in what they consider to be the desired outcomes of education...
 - a. Are learning standards opposed to equity?
 - b. Do statewide learning standards still have a place?
 - c. If learning standards do have a place, how might they function to help support the individual needs of students and their communities?