**Being and appearing fair in your decisions**

I'm a father of three young children, and not a day goes by that one of them doesn't say to me, "That's not fair!" Maybe it's because I let the eldest stay up an extra 15 minutes. Maybe it's because I made the middle one take out the trash. Maybe it's because the youngest got a cubic millimeter more yogurt. Like all kids, my kids are busy shaping their moral compasses, and - apparently - fairness is a big core value to them.

As adults, we want to be treated fairly too. If we're forced to chaperone football games but the teacher down the hall doesn't have to, we cry foul. If the math teachers get new textbooks but us in the history department are still using maps that contain the Soviet Union, we rightfully feel upset. And we're all aware of school leaders who put all the difficult students together in the new teacher's classroom.

When decisions are made, fairness is affected.

I hope I don't need to tell you that when you make decisions as an educator, you should be fair. But as it turns out, fairness is super complicated.

Here are some tips you can use related to fair decision-making:

First, consider fairness in *outcomes* and fairness in *process*.

What makes something fair in its outcome is its end result. If you have 30 kids in your class and you're able to take 20 on a field trip, it's likely that the ten students who can't go will feel like the outcome is unfair.

Process refers to *how the decision was made.* For example, did you consider the opposing sides? Better yet: Did you *consult* with opposing sides? Gathering input and working directly with stakeholders goes a long way to ensuring *process* fairness.

Second, consider how we communicate our decision-making.

Research proves that people are more likely to feel a decision was fair, even if the outcome is not good for them, if you explain the process *first*.

Here's a quick example: "As you know, our field trip is coming up. I tried to secure spots for all of you, but that wasn't possible. So, I've been meeting with a select group of students after school, and we decided to randomly pick students out of a hat. That means 10 of you won't be able to go, unfortunately. The 20 students we randomly selected are..."

Students will undoubtedly feel bummed, but if you explain the process transparency, you're far more likely for them to perceive your decisions as fair, even if they don't like your choices.

Make good choices, -Kevin

**Bad decision of the week:** A teacher fought a child on a school bus

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