

A Bit More on Equity and Equality

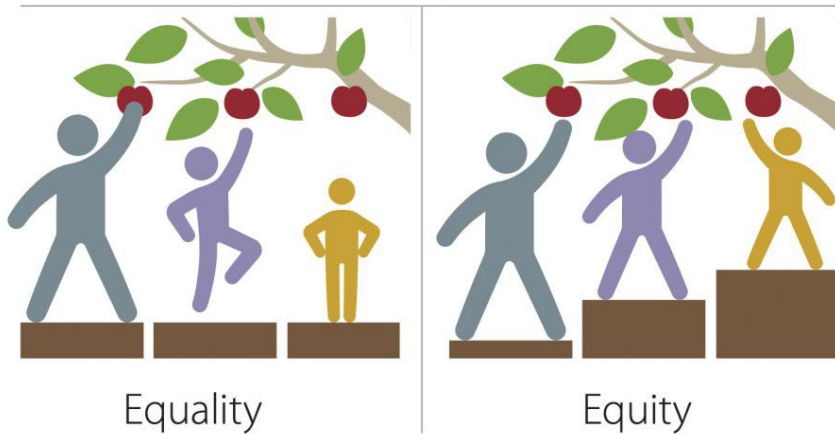
School Funding Interim Commission
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September 15, 2025

Section 1. Educational goals and duties.

(1) It is the goal of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full educational potential of each person. **Equality** of educational opportunity is guaranteed to each person of the state.

(2) The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity.

(3) The legislature shall provide a basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools. The legislature may provide such other educational institutions, public libraries, and educational programs as it deems desirable. It **[the legislature]** shall fund and distribute in an **equitable** manner to the school districts the state's share of the cost of the basic elementary and secondary school system.



Equality – (as in equivalence) the state or fact of being exactly the same in number, amount, status, or quality

Equity – a fairness or justice in the way people are treated

Equitable – having or exhibiting equity: dealing fairly with all concerned; *often, specifically*: fair in a way that **accounts for and attempts to offset disparities**

Thank you <https://www.merriam-webster.com/> for these definitions.

What makes these terms challenging:

Sometimes...

...Equal treatment is unfair and therefore inequitable. For example, if Montana's funding formula distributed \$1 B of the state's share *equally* to our 400 school districts (\$2.5 M to each) that would be *inequitable* (and silly and wasteful).

...Equal treatment is fair and equitable. Montana's constitutional guarantee of equality of educational opportunity is an example of providing the same benefit to all people being fair. In fact, not doing so would be unfair and inequitable. The 14th Amendment's equal protection clause is another powerful example.

What might help:

For the School Funding Interim Commission...

Consider using “equity” and “equitable” only in reference to the gathering and distribution of resources, as the Montana Constitution does: “fund and distribute in an equitable manner”.

And remember that doing so in a fair and **equitable** manner is one way the state ensures that every school district can fulfill the constitutional guarantee of **equality** of educational opportunity.

