



How We Think about Fairness

- In California school districts where at least 81 percent of students receive free or reduced-price lunches, there is one computer for every 10 students. In districts where 20 percent or fewer receive such lunches, there is one computer for every seven students. (Congressman Chaka Fattah [D-PA], 2002)
- Although the average US ratio of guidance counselors to high school students is one to 490, at some affluent high schools in the Northeast, there is one counselor for every five students. (Boston Magazine, 2002)
- Twenty-nine percent of African Americans and 28 percent of Latinos report that stereotyping is a "serious problem" in their workplaces. (HOW FAIR, 2003)

Data such as these remind us that widespread fairness has not been achieved.

At the very core of the Level Playing Field Institute's work is our commitment to long-term fairness in the American workplace and higher education system. While there are different definitions of fairness, there are traits that are common to many of them, such as:

- Ethical integrity
- Impartiality
- Acting without prejudice or favoritism

When thinking about fairness, we recognize the interdependence of individuals, organizations, and society; and know that everyone benefits when opportunities for success are readily available to all.

We acknowledge that people have different competencies, abilities, and personal backgrounds. Historical and ongoing injustices have permitted some to benefit through easier and more plentiful access to opportunities, while causing others to bear the burden of discrimination. This discrimination is manifested in unjust hurdles and lowered expectations, both of which unfairly limit full potential.

Some address these inequities by promoting an approach to fairness which requires only that everyone be treated "exactly the same." The Level Playing Field Institute, however, stresses the importance of moving beyond a "sameness in treatment equals fairness for all" solution, because it fails to take two major factors into consideration: 1) The multitude of different strengths and talents in the population, and 2) The magnitude of the systemic imbalances affecting millions in the US.

In order to create sustainable fairness, individuals and organizations must share the responsibility to change the current climate and culture of inequity. We strive to embody this approach to fairness and incorporate it into all of our work.