

# The Covid-19 Vaccination and Equity

*Compelling Question: How can the concept of equity be used to inform our approach to distributing vaccinations?*

Grade Level		Time	Standards/Competencies	
K-2	3-5	45–60 Minutes	<b>Common Core Anchor:</b> Reading: R1, R2 Speaking & Listening: SL1, SL2 Language: L3, L4, L6	<b>SEL:</b> Social Awareness Responsible Decision-Making
MS	HS			



## Web Related Connections

### Lessons

- [Coronavirus and Racial Disparities](#)
- [Coronavirus and Infectious Racism](#)
- [When Perception and Reality Collide: Implicit Bias and Race](#)

### Other Resources

- [Coronavirus Highlights and Perpetuates Inequities in Our Society](#)
- [Coronavirus Surfaces Fear, Stereotypes and Scapegoating](#)
- [How Systemic Racism Impacts Coronavirus Racial Disparities](#)
- [COVID-19 and Societal Inequities](#)

## Key Words

affluent  
 authorization  
 disparity  
 disproportionality  
 distrust  
 egregious  
 equality  
 equity  
 equity lens  
 health care desert  
 inoculated  
 leery  
 medical experimentation  
 multigenerational  
 overburdened

## LESSON OVERVIEW

Covid-19, an infectious disease that was first identified in Wuhan, China, quickly began spreading worldwide early in 2020. In March 2020, it was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). Across the globe, researchers worked tirelessly to develop vaccines that would provide immunity against the disease. In December 2020, several countries including the U.S. approved the Pfizer vaccine for emergency use. Manufacturing the vaccine takes time and the first shipments of the vaccine will be limited. States will have to prioritize who should receive the vaccine first and then in what order. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CSC) recommends that health care workers and residents of long-term care facilities should be the first to receive the vaccine.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn more about the Covid-19 vaccination rollout, understand the racial and other disparities in Covid-19 cases and outcomes, and explore the concepts of equity and equality as they relate to prioritizing vaccination.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn more about the Covid-19 vaccinations and plan for dissemination.
- Students will reflect on racial and other disparities for Covid-19 cases and outcomes and how that should impact the prioritization of vaccinations.
- Students will consider the difference between the concepts of equity and equality and apply that understanding to analyze how the vaccinations should be prioritized and disseminated.

## MATERIALS & PREPARATION

- [Background Information on Covid-19 and the Vaccine](#)
- Prepare the [Equality vs. Equity Illustration](#) to be projected for whole class viewing.
- “Racial disparities create obstacles for Covid-19 vaccine rollout” article (NBC News, December 3, 2020, [www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/racial-disparities-create-obstacles-covid-19-vaccine-rollout-n1249627](http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/racial-disparities-create-obstacles-covid-19-vaccine-rollout-n1249627), one copy for each student)

## PROCEDURES



### Information Sharing

1. Ask students: *Have you heard anything about the vaccine for Covid-19? What do you know?* Explain that a vaccine, usually in the form of a shot injected into the arm, produces immunity that protects the person from getting the disease.
2. Based on what your students already know, share some or all of the [background information on Covid-19 and the vaccine](#).
3. Engage students in a brief discussion about this information by asking the following questions:
  - What are your thoughts and feelings about this information?
  - What was new information for you?
  - How does this information impact what you think should happen next with vaccinations?

### Key Words (cont.)

prioritize  
rhetoric  
settlement  
systemic racism  
trauma  
vulnerability

### Understanding Terminology Activity: Equality vs. Equity

1. Ask students: *What is equity? What is equality? Do you know the difference between the two words?*
2. To illustrate the difference, show the [Equality vs. Equity Illustration](#). Ask students: *What do you see in the image?*

Elicit/explain that in the first image (“equality”), we see all three people are watching the game from behind the fence and each are using a stool of the same size. Because the people are different heights, the stool doesn’t help all of them be able to see the game.

Elicit/explain that in the second image (“equity”), we see that the same people have different sized stools depending on their height. As a result, they can all see the game.

Elicit that in the first image, equality means **same** (the same sized stool) and in the second image, equity **means get what they need** which takes into account that the people are different heights and need different-size stools (or no stool at all) to see the game.

Ask students: *Which works better so that everyone can see the game?*

3. Share the following definitions of equality and equity:
 

**Equality:** Everyone having the **same** rights, opportunities and resources. Equality stresses fairness and parity in having access to social goods and services.

**Equity:** Everyone getting **what they need** in order to have access, opportunities and a fair chance to succeed. It recognizes that the same for everyone (equality) doesn’t truly address needs and therefore, specific solutions and remedies, which may be different, are necessary.
4. Explain that certain institutions in our society such as schools, health care, government, and police, media, aim to ensure equity by recognizing that different people have different needs, opportunities and access (for a variety of reasons, including being a member of a historically marginalized group) and that the institution’s support and assistance should address those needs.
5. Ask students: *Can you think of any examples of how equity works in different institutions in society?* If students can’t come up with any examples, share the following:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that ensures services to children with disabilities and those services are tailored to children’s individual needs. The law requires that states provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. That means children with disabilities receive specific services and support because they have different needs.

### Turn and Talk Activity: How Should Vaccinations be Distributed Equitably?

1. Explain that now we are going to use what we learned about coronavirus outcomes and the difference between equality and equity to discuss how vaccinations should be distributed equitably.
2. Have students turn and talk with someone sitting next to them. Have them first come up with a plan to roll out the vaccine based on equality, reminding them that equality focuses on everyone getting the same. Because there are not enough vaccine doses to vaccinate everyone all at once, they will still have to decide on a process and order, but it should be based on equality where everyone is treated the same.

Before getting into pairs, provide an example based on equality, such as alphabetical order, for the order in which people receive vaccines.

3. Have students get into their pairs and provide 5–10 minutes to come up with a few ideas. Then have them share their ideas aloud. Ideas may include items such as: using alphabetical order, using age order, distributing the vaccination one state at a time, using a random order where people all get a number, etc.
4. Have students turn and talk with the same person and this time, have students come up with a plan to roll out the vaccine based on a system of equity. Remind them that equity doesn't focus on the same for all but stresses the need for everyone to get what they need, and it acknowledges that we have different needs, situations and access to resources.

Before getting into pairs, provide an example based on equity, such as residents of long-term care facilities (as CDC suggests), because those residents are typically elderly and reside in communal settings.

5. Have students get into their pairs and provide 5–10 minutes to come up with a few ideas. Then have them share their ideas aloud, providing a reason for each.
6. Engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
  - What do you notice about the difference between equality and equity-based solutions? Who is prioritized in each? Why?
  - What do you have to take into consideration so that everyone gets what they need to be healthy and cared for?
  - How would you address the distrust some people, especially in certain communities, have of the medical community?



### Reading Activity

1. Distribute the article "[Racial disparities create obstacles for Covid-19 vaccine rollout](#)" and provide students 15–20 minutes to read it silently.
2. After reading, engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
  - What is the overall message of the article?
  - What did you learn that you didn't know before? What was surprising? What information challenged your prior thinking?
  - In the article, a health advocate is quoted as saying: "Without considering racial equity, we deepen the cracks that systemic racism has already created in our health care system." What does that quote mean to you? How would you say that in your own words?
  - What is the author's point of view about who should be prioritized to receive the Covid-19 vaccination?
  - What evidence and background information does the writer provide to make her case?
  - What are some examples of systemic racism in our health care system that the author cites in the article?
  - What did you learn from the article? What more do you want to know?

## Closing

Have students go around one at a time and complete this sentence: "It is important to use an equity lens because \_\_\_\_\_."

## ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- ["Addressing Racial Equity in Vaccine Distribution"](#) (KFF, December 3, 2020)
- ["Coronavirus World Map: Tracking the Global Outbreak"](#) (*The New York Times*, updated daily)
- ["COVID-19 vaccine must be given with equity in mind"](#) (Cal Matters, December 13, 2020)
- ["Governor Cuomo Issues Letter to Secretary of Health and Human Services Urging Equity and Expedient Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccine Program"](#) (New York State, December 10, 2020)
- ["Healthcare Workers Became the First US Recipients Of The COVID-19 Vaccine"](#) (BuzzFeed, December 14, 2020)
- ["Here's what we know about Pfizer's vaccine -- including who could get it first"](#) (CNN, December 13, 2020)
- ["Intent to Get a COVID-19 Vaccine Rises to 60% as Confidence in Research and Development Process Increases"](#) (Pew Research Center, December 3, 2020)
- ["National Academies Release Framework for Equitable Allocation of a COVID-19 Vaccine for Adoption by HHS, State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Authorities"](#) (The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, October 2, 2020)
- [Podcast: Who Gets Coronavirus Vaccine First?](#) (JN Learning, October 7, 2020)
- [Tuskegee Study, 1932-1972](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- ["California May Consider 'Historical Injustice' When Allocating COVID-19 Vaccine"](#) (NPR, December 16, 2020)
- ["Will the Hardest-Hit Communities Get the Coronavirus Vaccine?"](#) (*The New York Times*, October 30, 2020)

## Common Core Standards

CONTENT AREA/STANDARD
Reading
R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
R2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
Speaking and Listening
SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
SL2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
Language
L3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
L6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

## CASEL's SEL Competencies

COMPETENCIES
Social Awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.
Responsible Decision-Making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.

## Background Information on Covid-19 and the Vaccine

### A Vaccine for Covid-19

- COVID-19 was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. It quickly began spreading worldwide early in 2020 and was declared a global pandemic in March 2020 by the World Health Organization. As of December 2020, there have been more than 71.4 million cases of coronavirus and 1.6 million deaths from the disease.
- Researchers around the world have been tirelessly working on a vaccine to provide immunity (protection) against the disease by pharmaceutical companies including Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, and others. In December 2020, several countries including the U.S. approved the Pfizer vaccine for emergency use. After the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) approved the vaccine, the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) Community on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended the vaccine for those ages 16 and older. Vaccinations began the second week in December 2020.
- It will likely take several months for the vaccine to be widely available to the rest of the population. Making the vaccine takes time and the first shipments of the vaccine will be limited. Therefore, states have to prioritize who should receive the vaccine first and then in what order. The CDC recommends that health care workers and residents of long-term care facilities should be the first to receive a vaccine.
- Due to high demand and preorders from wealthy countries, people in low-income developing countries may not receive vaccinations for several years.

### The Disproportionate Impact of Covid-19 and “Vaccine Hesitation”

- It has been well documented that Covid-19 disproportionately impacts communities of color, specifically Black, Latinx and Native American people. These communities of color are at increased risk of serious illness and death related to coronavirus due to systemic inequities and structural racism in housing, employment, education and health care systems. According to CDC's "[COVID-19 Hospitalization and Death by Race/Ethnicity](#)," the rates of infection, hospitalization and death in the U.S. are as follows:
  - Compared to white people, Black people have 1.4x the cases, 3.7x the hospitalizations and 2.8x the deaths.
  - Compared to white people, Native American/Indigenous people have 1.8x the cases, 4x the hospitalizations and 2.6x the deaths.
  - Compared to white people, Latinx people have 1.7x the cases, 4.1x the hospitalizations and 2.8x the deaths.
- People over 65 years old are 18% of population but account for 80% (8 out of 10) Covid-19 deaths. (*Source: CDC, “Older Adults,” December 13, 2020*)
- Compared to white people, during the Covid-19 pandemic, Black people in the U.S. were more likely to work in jobs considered “essential,” which meant that during the pandemic, they have been working, and interacting with a high volume of people. The five occupations with the highest disparities (between white and Black workers) were transportation and material moving, health-care support, food preparation and serving, building and grounds cleaning and maintenance, and personal care and service. Specifically, 10.58% of Black people worked in transportation and material moving, compared with 5.33% of white people; 5.46% of Black people worked in health-care support, compared with 1.76% of white people. (*Source: Tiana Rogers et al., “Racial Disparities in COVID-19 Mortality Among Essential Workers in the United States,” World Medical & Health Policy (2020)*)
- People who live in dense areas of the country (i.e., large cities) and those in communal settings (e.g., homeless shelters, ICE facilities, prisons) are more likely to get and spread Covid-19.
- There are a variety of reasons that people are reluctant or hesitant to take the vaccine. For example, there is a history of distrust among Black people in the U.S. because of several unethical studies and vaccination

experiences. This includes the Tuskegee Study of syphilis from 1932-1972. During that time, the U.S. Public Health Service, in trying to learn more about syphilis and treatment programs for Black people, withheld adequate treatment from a group of Black men who had the disease, causing needless pain and suffering for the men and their loved ones. In the 1940s, penicillin became the recommended drug for treatment of syphilis, but researchers did not offer it to the subjects of the study.

- As a result of this history, there is “vaccine hesitance” especially in the Black community and strong efforts will be made to address this reluctance. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the country’s leading infectious disease specialist, urged confidence in the vaccine in a conversation with leaders of a coalition of Black doctors, faith leaders and academics.



## Equality vs. Equity Illustration

