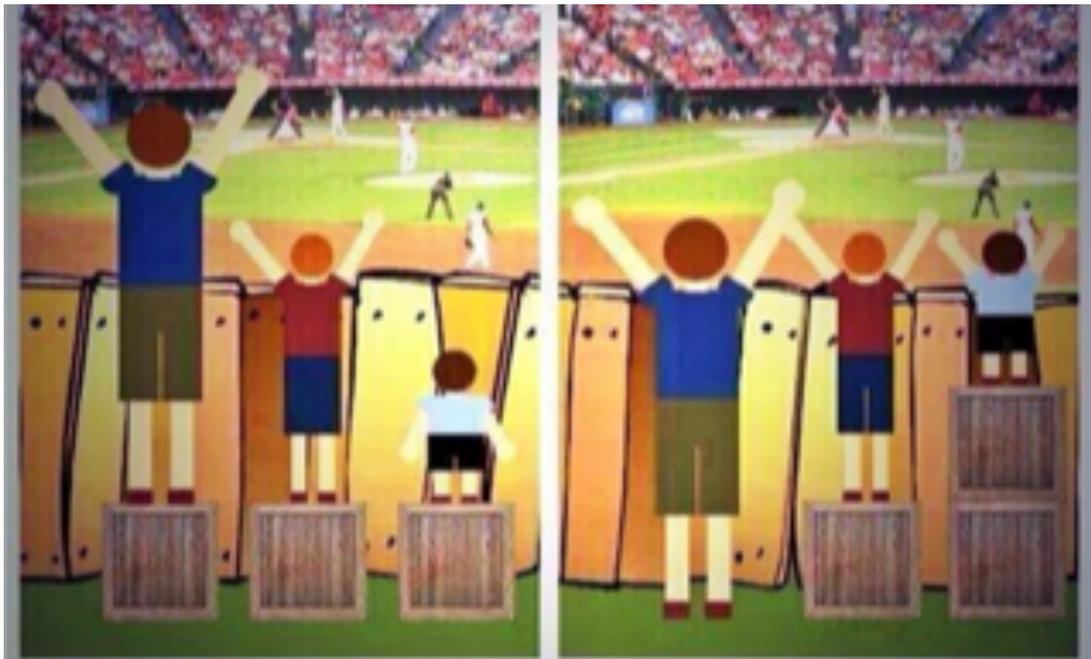


## Fair Isn't Always Equal By Tamara Mount

One piece of our anti-bias work comes up regularly and has been a focus in some programs at the start of school: we all have differences, and we work to own, acknowledge, and embrace those differences. At each stage of development, students become aware of a new layer, whether it be: speaking ability, skin color, energy level, athletic ability, reading speed, artistic tendencies, etc. Some differences are obvious to others, some are ones students may bring up on their own; one child might not be able to eat certain foods, another might celebrate a holiday less common in the community, have a varied family configuration, or have fewer "toys" than friends, and another might dress differently from their peers. We talk about differences as something natural and common to us all, just as we have things in common, such as the "fundamental needs" discussed in the Lower Elementary curriculum.

In our multi-age classrooms, we have the opportunity to acknowledge many levels of growth and development. And we support/scaffold/help each other in many areas. A graphic from this website [Lead, Teach, Grow](#) helps to make this point in a visual way and the Upper Elementary used this as a springboard to a class discussion last week.



The conversation among students that followed included, "For what things do you feel 'tall'?" and "For what activities do you need a 'boost' to help you out?"

**Fair isn't always equal** - Some differences lead us to needing different scaffolding to be successful. That might look different at each plane of development:

- holding a teacher's hand to walk in from recess successfully
- needing to use a "fidget" or a special chair to be able to pay attention in a lesson
- using an audiobook for seminar
- having an adult sit next to you
- needing to drink more water to not be ill, or needing to drink less water to not have 'accidents'
- needing more time to complete math problems
- ensuring that the books in the classroom reflect the diverse population of the students

We intentionally talk about these differences being natural and appropriate. We never force a child to discuss something about themselves, yet we do encourage them to feel comfortable owning who they are, and feeling comfortable advocating for what they need. If you'd be interested in talking further about this topic, please [email](#) me or stop by my office.