

# PEACE POWER TOOLS

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## *Group Recognition and Incentives*

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### **Summary:**

Group recognition and incentives can be powerful. There is substantial evidence that group recognition, such as the earning of points for group or team cooperation or creative participation, encourages inclusion and thus reduces aggression. Group recognition helps groups learn lessons about shared power and interdependency. Research suggests that group recognition and incentives may be more effective than individual arrangements in the social arena.

### **Resources Needed:**

- Existing or newly created group
- Activity or task
- Tangible (in some cases) or activity incentives

### **Implementation Steps:**

- Identify an activity or task.
- Break the larger group (class, family or camp cabin) into two or more teams that can earn points for cooperative or creative participation in the activity or task.
- Establish a wide choice and variety of incentives or privileges ranging in novelty (i.e. a monthly pizza party), as well as the number of points needed to obtain each one. Participants can help design these arrangements.
- Teams that earn enough points become eligible for the incentive or privilege.
- As a general rule, *each* team that reaches an established score or one higher than their previous record should be able to earn privileges (making win-win possible).

### **Variations:**

- Group recognition can be used for increasing community contributions. Here, teams select team names, receive mention in a newsletter, or have their picture posted for participating in various community service projects.
- There is also considerable evidence that group recognition can be used for increasing sales, fund raising, and safety, as well as for reducing smoking in the workplace. Some incentives that have been used include use of video equipment, opportunities to work on junk cars, or visits by high status guests. The possibilities are limited only by one's creativity.
- For more ideas, ask the group members themselves! Youth, in particular, can be quite creative and are capable of identifying and developing group incentives.
- See also **Respect Game / Good Behavior Game**.

### **Rationale and Evidence Base:**

There is substantial evidence that group recognition and incentives can be more powerful than individual arrangements in social settings and they should be used frequently. This is especially true for young people who have been socialized to compete and produce scores. Individual rewards for children who are at risk may actually create social rejection by peers. Group recognition in team competition, for instance, has been found to promote positive collective action, inclusion and movement away from egotism. It is important to note that coercive exchanges within teams should be avoided because they tend to produce losers who feel embarrassed, humiliated or a sense of failure. For this reason, among others, it is important that the experiences of those who lose should be monitored closely. It is recommended that activities where all teams can win be used to help avoid this issue; in addition, inclusion can be incorporated as one dimension of successful performance.

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