

PEACE POWER TOOLS

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Home Recognition Notes

Summary:

Home recognition notes (also "home notes") are detailed descriptions of positive youth achievement and contributions. The home recognition note is completed by a staff person working with youth in any setting (i.e. school or youth-serving organization) and is then sent home to parents or guardians. There is growing evidence that home recognition notes strengthen school-home relationships, help parents and guardians participate in recognizing positive behaviors, and can lead to positive changes in youth behavior when done often.

Resources Needed:

- Pad of paper or pre-printed home recognition notes
- Incentives or tangible prizes (at parent or guardian's discretion)

Implementation Steps:

- Home recognition notes are completed by staff when a child or youth exhibits a targeted positive behavior (social or academic).
- Once a home recognition note is completed, the note is then sent home to a parent or guardian (via youth, by mail, or by email).
- Home recognition notes should be completed and sent to a child or youth's home often, with an effort to ensure that all are recognized regularly (once a month for every youth is a good guideline).
- Staff often need to plan for mutual recognition, or home note programs tend to fade over time despite their power. Such plans may involve multiple staff meeting regularly (e.g., every Wednesday afternoon) to prepare notes together, a buddy system, or other creative alternative.

Variations:

- System-wide home recognition programs are particularly powerful; in some cases they have been managed by teams of staff and students who ensure that blank notes are available, and may arrange to have them sent to parents.
- Preprinted postcards have been used in some schools.
- One variation of the home recognition note is the positive note home for inhibition, where adults send positive notes home when youths refrain from negative behaviors, resulting in home rewards.
- Considerable evidence also shows that home recognition notes can be in the form of certificates in exchange for tangible incentives from parents or guardians. For instance, one school issued recognition certificates to students who then presented them to parents or guardians in exchange for compact discs.
- Recognition to families can be provided by telephone in situations where reaching people by phone is easy; in many cases in contemporary society, however, this can be difficult.

Rationale and Evidence Base:

There is growing evidence that home recognition notes help to increase youth engagement in school, as well as reduce disruptive and aggressive behaviors at home and at school. There is also evidence that home recognition notes help build bridges and provide parents and guardians with the opportunity to participate in the recognition of a young person's positive behavior. The home recognition note is a variant of the "home note", which has become a useful component of structured behavior programs in schools where consequences for behaviors at school are administered at home. It is expected that the home-school relationship is strengthened and youth behaviors in school noticeably changes.

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For many, however, when home notes detailing problematic behaviors are frequent, aversive relationships between home and school often result. By emphasizing positive behaviors and positive consequences, home recognition notes help counter those aversive relationships and negative outcomes.

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Julia Wesley & Mark Mattaini