

# PEACE POWER TOOLS

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## *Recognition Notes & Boards*

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### **Summary:**

A recognition note is a signed or anonymous written praise statement about a person who is identified and recognized for exhibiting pro-social or achievement-related behaviors. The recognition note specifies the person, as well as the behavior displayed. Once prepared, recognition notes are usually placed on a recognition board, which is either a mounted surface or existing bulletin board for public display and recognition. Recognition boards are appropriate for classrooms, halls, lunchrooms and staff lounges, among other locations.

### **Resources Needed:**

- Pad of paper or pre-printed recognition notes ([click here for sample notes that may be freely copied or adapted](#))
- Blank space on a painted wall or bulletin board

### **Implementation Steps:**

- Staff and/or peers can complete recognition notes when a young person performs well socially or academically.
- Once a recognition note is completed, the note is then publicly posted.
- Recognition notes should be completed regularly (at least several times a day within a classroom), with an effort to ensure that all are recognized often. (The most frequent implementation error with recognition notes is the failure to complete adequate numbers consistently over time.)
- Teachers and/ or staff may find it useful to read some of the posted notes on a daily basis.
- Depending on the number of notes, teachers or other staff person are encouraged to count the notes on a weekly basis as a simple measure of program implementation.

### **Variations:**

- There is considerable evidence that many variations can be effective forms of positive reinforcement. Recognition notes have also been referred to as "praise notes", "Tootle" Notes, and compliment books.
- Instead of posting the recognition note on a painted wall or bulletin board, the note can be affixed to student papers, placed in a photo album or read aloud.
- In some cultures, public recognition can be embarrassing. In an effort to protect privacy, teachers may choose to place recognition notes inside student folders.
- Recognition notes and boards are for everyone! There is considerable evidence that this tool serves as a form of positive reinforcement among administrators, teachers, security, and other staff, as well as peer to peer. Some projects actually start with the adult staff and then expand to include youth.

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

There is substantial evidence that recognition notes and boards, including the variations listed here, can be used to increase social competence, academic achievement, work performance, and physical health while reducing violence, aggression, and vandalism in the school setting. Many of the most powerful prevention programs have included recognition notes as a key component. For example, a peer-to-peer note can transform a child's tendency to tattle into that child's reporting of good behaviors. Research suggests that frequent or daily written praise can have powerful effects with children who are most at risk for anti-social behaviors, especially helping such a child develop control over his or her emotional impulses. Here, daily rewards and recognition actually increase stimulation of

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dopamine circuits and reduce threats by individuals at higher risk toward individuals at lower risk for negative behaviors. When rewards are given monthly or infrequently, problem behaviors have been shown to increase, especially among students who are at a higher risk for these behaviors. This may be due to resentment, sabotage or resignation among students who are unlikely to have ever experienced rewards for positive behavior.

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