

PEACE POWER TOOLS

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The Respect Game / Good Behavior Game

Summary:

The Respect Game or “Good Behavior Game” is a classroom management strategy that rewards youth for not engaging in aggressive and disruptive behaviors. Students are broken into teams, which are proportionately mixed by gender and behavior (well-behaved and disruptive). Each team receives a check mark whenever a team member exhibits disruptive behavior, and a point for every period of time without (or with few) disruptive behaviors. Initially, the team with the most points at the end of each game period and week receives a tangible or activity incentive. Later, teams receive more abstract rewards.

Resources Needed:

- The Respect Game or Good Behavior Game (the Game) rules
- Blank space on a painted wall or bulletin board
- Hand-made (i.e. using easel paper) or pre-printed display chart for marking and tallying disruptive behaviors and points earned
- Kitchen timer or similar device
- Tangible (i.e. erasers), abstract (i.e. gold stars), or activity incentives (i.e. free time)

Implementation Steps:

- The Respect Game should be played at least 3-4 times per week, for at least 30 minutes; times should ordinarily be varied across the week.
- The teacher initially divides the students into two or three teams. Each team is proportionately mixed according to student gender and behavior.
- The teacher and students collaboratively identify what a peaceful and respectful classroom looks like (what people do). They then collaboratively prepare a list of “fouls” for the Respect Game—those behaviors that disrupt a peaceful classroom. Fouls are then listed on the wall.
- The teacher will then post a scoreboard chart for the teams.
- Teams will receive check marks whenever a fellow team member exhibits negative behavior during a short interval of time, say, five minutes. (Time is best kept with a kitchen timer or similar device.) The teacher DOES NOT COMMENT at this time on the foul, simply notes it on the scoreboard.
- At the end of the initial interval, each team with no fouls receives a point, and the timer is reset, and the game begins again.
- At the end of the period (often one subject period or 30 minutes) the team with the most points receives an incentive or reward. (If there is a tie, each team may be a winner). Initially, it is common that teams may need more tangible incentives, but as time progresses, teams can receive more abstract and social rewards.
- Over time, the intervals of time needed to gain a point are stretched, say from 5 to 10 to 15 to 20 to 30 over the course of several weeks. If students have trouble with a stretched interval at some point, a step back to a shorter interval can be made. Note that as the intervals are stretched, the time the teacher devotes to the Game becomes progressively less.
- Initially, the Game is to be repeated three times each week. Teams that consistently win daily games are again rewarded at the end of the week. As the year progresses, the Game can be incorporated into a whole day and throughout the week in various creative ways.
- Remember that this is a game; it should be handled in ways that are fun for the students.

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- NOTE THAT IT IS CRITICAL THAT PRIMARY ATTENTION BE PAID IN THE RESPECT GAME TO POINTS RECEIVED FOR POSITIVE INTERVALS, RATHER THAN TO FOULS. EXTENSIVE ATTENTION PAID TO NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR MAY INCREASE IT, AS ONE GETS MORE OF WHATEVER ONE PAYS ATTENTION TO.

Variations:

- Consistent nonemotional signals, such as red or green lights, can be used as cues about bad behavior.
- It may help to repeat the rules on a daily basis. There is evidence that youth will have greater "buy-in" when allowed to help set up and define the Game rules.
- Although evidence shows that systematic application of the Respect Game is more effective than less structured approaches, other ways of increasing adult attention for good behavior are also very useful.
- There is some evidence that younger children respond well when puppets are used as game teaching tools. Also, younger children (pre-school aged) may need to wear color badges to help track each child's behavior.

Rational and Evidence Base:

The Respect Game (the Good Behavior Game) is a promising and desirable universal strategy that meets scientific standards for violence prevention practice among youth. Substantial research shows that the Game is appropriate for culturally diverse groups of adolescents, pre-school and elementary age children to help reduce disruptive behaviors. The Game is a non-curriculum based strategy that is meaningful, yet simple, measurable, and flexible. Considerable research suggests that the Game "package" (including rules, nonemotional response cues, and group rewards) are more efficacious than individual game components. There is empirical evidence that each of the Game's "active ingredients" positively affects youth academic achievement. In addition, there is evidence that the Game is appropriate for non-classroom settings, such as physical education or outdoor play activities (i.e. recess or playground).

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