

# Activity: Perceptions of Power

## Objectives:

1. Identify different types of power.
2. Reflect on one's personal influence within a team.
3. Explore how power can be used for positive change.

**Duration: 30 minutes**

## Materials:

- Paper and pens for taking notes

## Instructions:

The following exercise is an adaptation of an activity from [The Innovation Center Collective Leadership Works](#).

This module explores power – a dirty word in some circles. However, power used for good is how the world changes. At a basic level, power simply equals influence. Each of us has different types of power in different situations. We are also part of power structures whether consciously or unconsciously. To examine how to use our own forms of power for social progress, we must identify the different forms of power and learn how to judge the appropriate use of it.

Below are various types of power defined in "Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice Education," edited by Adams, M, Bell, L and Griffin, P.

- **Power over** – the use of domination to act or produce an effect.
- **Power with** – the use of connection and cooperation to act or produce effect.
- **Power within** – the use of inner wisdom to act or produce effect.
- **Personal Power** – the use of individually unique characteristics and resources to act or produce an effect.
- **Social power** – the use of social identity to access resources and produce an effect
- **Empowerment** – increasing individual or collective power by exposing the fallacies of "power over" and increasing our abilities to use "power with" and "power within."

### **Prior to facilitating the activity, ensure there is enough room for participants to form a single file line.**

1. Begin by instructing the participants to organize themselves into a single file line that starts with the person who feels he or she has the most influence in the group to the person who expresses having the least influence.
2. Participants aren't allowed to talk or communicate through written form. They should line up based on their own perception. This may not be their influence/power in someone else's opinion.
3. Before concluding the activity, wait for everyone to place themselves in the line.
4. Then facilitate a discussion using the following questions as a guide:

**"Having power is not nearly as important as what you choose to do with it."**

**– Roald Dahl**

## Discussion Questions:

1. How did you feel during this activity?
2. How did it feel to be at the highest influence end of the line? What about the least influence?
3. What did you notice during the exercise?
4. What types of power did you think about in this game? Use this as an opportunity to bring awareness to the types of power defined in Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice Education.
  - **Power over** – the use of domination to act or produce an effect.
  - **Power with** – the use of connection and cooperation to act or produce effect.
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5. Are you part of any groups or structures that either consciously or unconsciously exercise power over others?
6. How can you use your personal power in that group or structure to change the dynamic to "power with" or growing someone's "power within"?
7. What do you think gives people power? For example, you can have individual influence based on your personality or perhaps you have positional influence as a coach, upperclassmen or team captain.
8. If we lined up all of today's participants (athletes, coaches, sports administrators) with the overall school or organization, where do you think you would fall?
9. What kind of power do you have in your school, organization or community within your current role? How can you use that power to improve your school, organization, community and the broader society?
10. How much power do the following groups hold: student-athletes, coaches and administrators? Discuss each independently.
11. How does the power or influence we hold affect our ability to impact change in society?
12. What are ways we can gain more power?

## Key Takeaways:

1. There are multiple types of power.
2. We all have power in different forms and contexts.
3. Deciding how, when and why to use our power is important to reflect on.

**Next Steps:** Take the following actions after completing the activity with your team.

1. Share photos on social media and tag/mention RISE.
  - **Facebook:** @RISEtoWINorg
  - **Instagram:** @RISEtoWIN
  - **Twitter:** @RISEtoWIN
  - **Snapchat:** @RISEtoWIN
2. Discuss your experience with students, athletes, coaches, athletic department staff and other organization members. Identify ways you and your school/organization can help lead the way in improving race relations and driving social progress.

## **Feedback:**

RISE welcomes feedback as we seek to continually improve our tools and resources. We encourage all participants to share their feedback by completing an online survey at [bit.ly/risetools](https://bit.ly/risetools). Our Leadership & Education Programs team can be reached at [education@RISEtoWIN.org](mailto:education@RISEtoWIN.org).