



EDUCATOR PACKET

DO THE WRITE THING 2023-2024

A CAMPAIGN TO STOP VIOLENCE

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Do the Write Thing 2023-2024

DEAR PARTICIPATING MIDDLE SCHOOL EDUCATORS:

Thank you for taking the time to involve your students in the 2023-2024 Do the Write Thing (DtWT) program, the hallmark initiative of the National Campaign to Stop Violence (NCSV). You will be joined by hundreds of other classroom educators from across the United States in a coordinated, unique effort to give students the opportunity to communicate their experiences and insights on the impact of youth violence on their lives and to make personal commitments to reduce violence. This program can make a very positive difference in your relationship with your students and help reduce the level of violence in your school. An educator from Chicago shared, "The Do the Write Thing program is responsible for one of the most important things that happened in a classroom during all the years I have been a teacher. After the students had the opportunity to write on the issue of violence, discussion in the classroom became open and extraordinarily emotional. The ultimate result was positive beyond a teacher's wildest expectations."

In July of 2024, if your student is selected as a National Ambassador, you will be invited by the NCSV to attend DtWT's National Recognition Week in Washington, D.C. (travel and accommodations included).

During the National Recognition Week, DtWT Student National Ambassadors meet with Members of Congress and other prominent Americans to discuss the problem of youth violence. In addition, the students are honored at an embassy reception hosted by the Ambassador of Kuwait to the United States. A highlight of the week is a ceremony where their published writing is placed in the Library of Congress. For more information about the National Recognition Week please go to www.dtwt.org/recognition-week.

Enclosed is a packet titled Educator Handbook, which explains DtWT in more detail and includes further information on how to proceed. All of this information can also be downloaded from our website, www.dtwt.org/resources.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us by phone or by email. Thank you again for participating in this year's program. We wish your students success and hope to see you and one of your students in Washington, D.C. next July.

1-800-256-0235 info@DtWT.org www.DtWT.org 2021 Massachusetts Ave, NW Washington, DC 20036
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DO
THE
WRITE
THING



HELP STOP THE VIOLENCE

EDUCATOR HANDBOOK DO THE WRITE THING 2023-2024

A CAMPAIGN TO STOP VIOLENCE



Overview



At the beginning of an academic year, educators facilitate discussions in their classrooms with three impactful questions. Middle school students are encouraged to talk about the impact of violence in their lives by writing a song, poem or story while offering solutions to reduce violence. DtWT provides a better understanding for adults about youth violence and how it affects young people. The program amplifies student voices and decreases youth violence in areas where students take the pledge to Do the Write Thing.

Personal responsibility is emphasized. Through their writing and discussions, you will deepen your understanding of your students' lived realities, helping you to facilitate empathetic communication and foster a positive and impactful learning environment. Your involvement and support are crucial to the success of tWT in your school.

Please review the following materials concerning program rules, entry deadlines, selection criteria, classroom discussion, and student recognition before presenting the program to your students.

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Program Rules

Entry Format

- Written in English only
 - Approximately 500-1000 words
 - Poetry entries may be shorter
 - Typed (preferred) or hand-written in black ink
 - 8 1/2" x 11" paper
 - Single-sided pages
 - Numbered pages
-

Entry Content

- Any form of written expression (e.g. essays, poems, plays, songs)
- Must address the following questions:
 - **How has violence affected my life?**
 - **What are the causes of youth violence?**
 - **What can I do to reduce youth violence?**
- Positive and non-derogatory language
- Fictional writings must be identified as such
 - Strong preference will be given to non-fiction writings
- Credit must be given to outside sources
 - Writings based upon plagiarism will not be considered



Program Rules

Entry Submission

- Entries must be written by only one student
- "Cover Sheet" with signed consent statement (by student and a parent/guardian) must be included
 - See the attached Cover Sheet at the end of this packet
 - Entries without a signed Cover Sheet will not be considered
- No personal contact information should appear on the body of the written entry
- Entries must be submitted in the form they are received
 - Editing by someone other than the student is not permitted

Please send us the writings of ALL the students who submit an entry. In this program, everybody who makes a good-faith effort to participate deserves to be recognized and have their work considered in the selection process.



Submission Deadline

All entries must be submitted with a **Signed Cover Sheet/Consent Form** to your **local coordinator** of Do the Write Thing



Pittsburgh DtWT Coordinator
Carlena Jenkins

Judicial Personnel to
The Honorable Dwayne D. Woodruff
Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas
440 Ross St. Rm. 532
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
pitt.dtw@gmail.com | 412-350-6263



Pittsburgh “Do the Write Thing”
Court of Common Pleas
440 Ross St., Rm. 532
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

To: All Participating Pittsburgh Area Schools

Welcome to the **2024 Pittsburgh “Do the Write Thing” (DtWT)!**

We are very pleased to have you and your students involved in this unique program designed to give 6th, 7th & 8th grade students the opportunity to communicate their thoughts on the impact of violence on their lives and to make personal commitments to reduce violence.

The Pittsburgh DtWT is a program of the Allegheny County Family Courts under the direction of Judge Dwayne D. Woodruff and his co-chair and wife, Joy Maxberry Woodruff. More than 13,700 students have submitted writings since the program’s inception in 2007 and over 1,400 students have been honored at the annual DtWT Dinner Celebration, which brings together students from many school districts in and around Pittsburgh.

At the dinner, the boy and girl National Ambassador students are announced! The national ambassadors represent the Pittsburgh area and are honored in Washington, DC, along with their teacher and a parent during the DtWT National Recognition Week in July. They meet with national leaders/policymakers to discuss violence issues and a book of their writings is inducted into the United States Library of Congress.

Due to the generosity of our sponsors (listed below), we award Lap-top Computers, E-Tablets, Steelers tickets and monetary gifts to the 6 students judged to have the best overall writings, while their teachers receive monetary & other awards. We also award the top student writers from all the schools with a DtWT shirt, Pittsburgh Pirates tickets and other DtWT & educational award items.

Do the Write Thing entries will be accepted starting on Friday December 15, 2023, and the **final deadline** for submission of student writings to the Pittsburgh DtWT office is **5:00 pm on Friday, January 12, 2024**. The coordinators will make arrangements to collect the written submissions, or you can email submissions to pittdtwt.entries@gmail.com. You may print additional copies of the **Pittsburgh DtWT** documents by visiting the website at pittdtwt.org/school-districts.

Please be certain to print only Pittsburgh documents and not those of the national program. If you have any questions or concerns, please call 412 350-6263.

Sincerely,

Judge Dwayne D. Woodruff, Chair

Joy Maxberry Woodruff, Co-chair

Carlana Jenkins, Co-coordinator

Lou Ransom Jr., Co-coordinator

Pittsburgh DtWT Sponsors

HIGHMARK Blue Cross Blue Shield

DIEHL Automotive Group

UPMC

Alaska Center for Pain Relief

Pittsburgh Steelers

HIGHMARK Wholecare

Pittsburgh Pirates



PITTSBURGH "DO THE WRITE THING" COVER SHEET STUDENT AND PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Please Type or Print (Legibly) in Black or Blue Ink

Thank you for participating in the **Pittsburgh "Do the Write Thing."** To have your entry considered for selection as a Student National Ambassador, you and a parent or guardian must complete this Cover Sheet and sign the Student and Parent/Guardian Consent Statement below.

Student's First Name _____ Last Name _____

School _____ School's Phone # () _____ - _____

Grade _____ Parent's Full Name _____

Student's Home Address _____

City, State & Zip Code _____

Parent's Phone Number () _____ - _____ Student's Sex M _____ F _____

Student's T-shirt size (Circle One) Small Medium Large X-Large

Teacher's Full Name _____

Teacher's Email Address _____

STUDENT AND PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT STATEMENT

The National Campaign to Stop Violence (NCSV), which sponsors the Do the Write Thing (DtWT), will publish selected students' writings and quotations in a book and in a discussion paper on youth violence. Before publishing your writing, the NCSV requires your written consent and the written consent of a parent or guardian. If you and your parent or guardian agree to permit the NCSV to publish your writing, please sign the following statement: We agree to give ownership of the attached student writing to the NCSV so that it can be considered for recognition and published. The NCSV/DtWT may further disclose the writing to the media and other parties as part of their program.

Student's Signature

Date

Parent's Signature

Date

Student's Email Address

Parent's Email Address

FOLLOW US ONLINE:



/DtWTchallenge

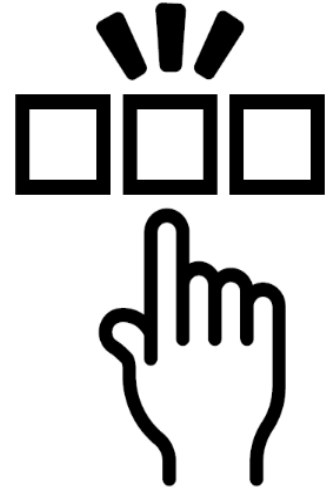


@DtWTChallenge



@DtWTChallenge

Selection Criteria



1 JUDGING:

Entries will be reviewed by your jurisdiction's DtWT Committee, the coalition of business, community and governmental leaders that oversees and administers DtWT in your area. Entries will be selected on the basis of content, originality and responsiveness to the three questions:

How has violence affected my life?

What are the causes of youth violence?

What can I do to reduce youth violence?

Grammar and spelling will not be used as criteria for selection.

2 WRITING EMPHASIS:

In student writings, they should be encouraged to describe what they feel are the causes of youth violence and to offer specific suggestions about what they as individuals can do to reduce violence in their homes, schools and neighborhoods. Personal responsibility for responding to the problem of youth violence should be emphasized. Students should be encouraged to share personal experiences about the impact of violence on their lives and the lives of their peers. The panel of judges in your area will be looking at how well your students present their views on these matters.

Classroom Discussion

QUESTIONS DESIGNED TO GENERATE DISCUSSION

- How does violence affect your daily lives?
- Where are you confronted by violence? Your home? Your school? Your neighborhood?
- What are some of the causes of youth violence in your community?
- What can you as an individual do to reduce youth violence in your community?



For lesson plans or other teaching ideas,
visit: www.dtw.org/resources

Common Core Standards

DtWT has been reviewed by a panel of highly qualified public-school educators for compliance with Common Core standards. DtWT meets all of the English Language Arts Standards in Writing for Grades 6, 7 and 8. (Standards W.7.1 through W.7.10 and W.8.1 through W.8.10) Please note that we have determined Standards W.7.2 and W.8.2 to only be applicable to nonfiction submissions. (Please see attached schedule for more details on DtWT fulfilling Common Core Standards).

Writing is the core component of DtWT. After classroom discussions about youth violence, participating middle school students are asked by their educators to make a commitment not to be involved in violence and provide written answers to the three question prompts listed under Program Rules.

The DtWT experience is flexible, allowing for adaptation as needed by school districts and individual classrooms. Thus, the writing component of DtWT can cover significant portions of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts.

WRITING

Essays that address the first question, can fulfill 3.A-E for grades 6, 7, and 8.

Essays that address the second two questions can fulfill 1.A-E, 2.A-F, 7, 8, and 9 for grades 6, 7, and 8.

All essays can be used to fulfill 4 for grades 6, 7, and 8.

Depending on the level of educator involvement in students' writing for DtWT, the program can be used to fulfill 5 (peer review), 6 (technology), and 10 (writing over a range of time and revision) for grades 6, 7, and 8.

SPEAKING & LISTENING

Classroom discussions, before and after presenting DtWT can be used to fulfill 1.B-D for grades 6, 7, and 8.

6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
Writing		
6.1.A-E	7.1.A-E	7.1.A-E
6.2.A-F	6.2.A-F	6.2.A-F
6.3.A-E	7.3.A-E	8.3.A-E
6.4	7.4	8.4
6.5	7.5	8.5
6.6	7.6	8.6
6.7	7.7	8.7
6.8	7.8	8.8
6.9	7.9	8.9
6.10	7.10	8.10
Speaking & Listening		
6.1.B-D	7.1.B-D	8.1.B-D

Student Recognition

LOCAL LEVEL



Each jurisdiction participating in DtWT has established a DtWT Committee to coordinate the program. A jurisdiction may be a city, a county, a city-county combination or even an entire state. A complete listing of participating localities can be found on our website, www.dtwt.org/resources.



Most DtWT Committees will organize a recognition ceremony to honor a male and a female student from each participating middle school who are selected as School Ambassadors.

In addition to the School Ambassadors from each school, you, along with the students' parents and your principal, will be invited to attend the recognition ceremony. Most DtWT Committees will also publish the writings of all their School Ambassadors and distribute the publication to area community, business and governmental leaders.



Schools with fewer than twenty-five entries will be grouped together for review and School Ambassador selection purposes.

While all DtWT Committees are encouraged to hold local recognition ceremonies and publish books of student writings, and while most local DtWT Committees do undertake these activities, the responsibility for organizing and funding these functions rests with each local Committee. Some start-up Committees do not initiate these functions during the early years of operation.

Student Recognition



NATIONAL LEVEL

Each DtWT Committee will designate two student National Ambassadors. The two National Ambassadors along with each student's educator and one parent/guardian will be invited by the National Campaign to Stop Violence to attend the Do the Write Thing National Recognition Week activities in ³ Washington, D.C. in July of 2024.

The majority of the costs for the National Recognition Week activities will be paid for by our primary sponsor: the Kuwait-America Foundation. The people of Kuwait have donated money to the DtWT program for the past 30 years. This has been done to thank the American people for the liberation of Kuwait in 1991.

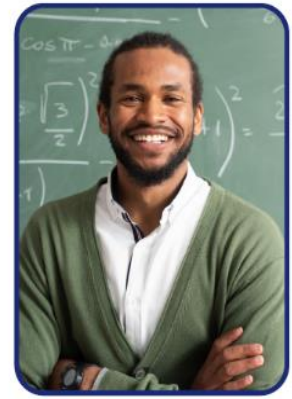
During past National Recognition Weeks, National Ambassadors have met with a United States Supreme Court Justice, the United States Secretary of Education, the Attorney General of the United States, the United States Secretary of Interior, Members of Congress and many notable celebrities to discuss the problem of youth violence. A highlight of National Recognition Week is placing a book of writings of the 2023-2024 Student National Ambassadors in the Library of Congress. This ensures that the students' words are preserved for future generations. In addition, students have been honored at embassy receptions hosted by the State of Kuwait.

³

Jurisdictions must have at least 500 student writings to qualify for participation in the National Recognition Week activities in Washington, D.C.

Benefits

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EDUCATORS

- Facilitates discussions that result in greater tolerance and compassion
- Establishes mutually trusted relationships with students
- Heightens awareness of healing and bonding between students and their families
- Increases knowledge about students leading to 1) attitudinal changes and 2) adapting their instruction

STUDENTS

- Creates greater empathy and understanding for victims of violence
- Encourages more positive behaviors and attitudes toward peers and educators
- Creates a belief that their positive actions can make a difference
- Increases tolerance and reduces judgment regarding differences among peers
- Increases communication with peers and family members, rather than resorting to violence

PARENTS/GUARDIANS

- Initiates a better understanding of the impact of violence on their children
- Fosters an understanding of their child's concerns
- Improves communication at home with children and spouse
- Creates a greater awareness of violence in the school and community

DtWT Changes Minds

The Changing Minds campaign is sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Based on scientific research from Harvard, the research reveals that a child's positive and negative experiences shape and reshape the brain. The more a child witnesses violence, the more neural connections are created in the regions of the brain that involve fear, anxiety and impulsiveness...while fewer are created in regions that involve reasoning, planning and behavior control. This increased stress can lead to "long-term behavioral and physiological disorders" including depression, drug abuse, diabetes, stroke and inflammation patterns.

However, the young brain is malleable. Fostering stable, supportive relationships can prevent or help reverse this damage, resulting in lifelong benefits for the child's learning, behavior and overall health.

DtWT is a proven program that can mitigate the negative impact of violence on children when educators and volunteers open pathways using the "Five Gestures" suggested by OJJDP to help heal a child.

5 GESTURES TO HEAL A CHILD:



CELEBRATE

- Publicly recognize and praise children
- Encourage children to try new things and teach them about being kind and helpful to others
- Engage children in open ended thinking
- Encourage positive interactions between children and their peers and educators

COMFORT

- Offer children safe ways to express their feelings and ideas
- Help children empathize and take others' perspectives
- Expand children's network of consistently caring adults

2



LISTEN

- Publicly recognize and praise children
- Encourage children to try new things and teach them about being kind and helpful to others
- Engage children in open ended thinking
- Encourage positive interactions between children and their peers and educators

COLLABORATE

- Encourage children to think ahead by discussing challenges they would face in carrying out their plans and help them consider how they can prevent or solve them
- Guide students to first identify and understand their obstacles, communicate how they are feeling and describe the problems in their own words
- Acknowledge children's problem solving attempts whether or not the attempts are successful

4



INSPIRE

- Encourage children to spend time with other caring adults who can act as role models
- Help children develop strategies to bring them closer to short and long term goal success
- Support children's abilities to speak up when things go wrong or when they are victimized
- Help them become advocates for change

CONTACT US



Pittsburgh “Do the Write Thing”

Court of Common Pleas
440 Ross St., Rm. 532
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412 350-6281
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DtWT, an educational initiative of the National Campaign to Stop Violence

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