

Pictured below: The 2025 Pittsburgh DtWT Dinner Celebration at Duquesne University's Union Ballroom, featuring the top student honorees from each participating middle school. Standing with students are DtWT Chairman Judge Dwayne D. Woodruff and Sr. Vice President at Duquesne University, William Generett, Jr., J.D.



EDUCATOR PACKET

PITTSBURGH "DO THE WRITE THING" 2025 - 2026

An initiative of the **National 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 an essay, song, or poem while offering solutions to reduce violence. **DtWT provides a better understanding for adults about youth violence and how it affects young people.** DtWT amplifies student voices and makes for safer communities.

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 DtWT in your school.

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DtWT Rules

Entry Format

- Written in English Only
- Approximately 500-1000 Words
- Poetry entries may be shorter.
- Typed (preferred) or handwritten in black ink
- 8 ½ 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 3 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 resources.
 - Writings based upon plagiarism will not be considered

Program Rules

Entry Submission

▪ Writings

- Educator will assign each student a number; begin with 1 and continue through last student
- Educator will send a “Student Number Key” (see pg. 9) listing the students’ names with their assigned number
- In upper left corner of students’ writings, place heading as follows:
 - Assigned Number
 - Educator Name
 - School
- No personal contact information should appear on the body of the written entry
- Entries must be written by only one student
- Entries must be submitted in the form they are received
- Editing by someone other than the student is not permitted

• Cover Sheets

- “Cover Sheet” (see pg. 8) with signed consent statement (by student and a parent/guardian) must be included
 - Consent statement includes pledge that student’s writing is their own words
 - Educator to send in Cover Sheets for all students via email
- Entries without a signed Cover Sheet will not be considered.

Submission & Deadline

Submission Directions

- Educators are responsible for sending in all submission documents
- Submissions will be accepted **via email** at: pitt.dtw@gmail.com
 - Scan the documents to send
 - Each email should contain **3 documents:**
 1. Writings
 2. Consent Forms
 3. Student Number Key
 - If needed, submission alternatives will be made on a case-by-case basis, please contact the DtWT Coordinator.
- Educator will send **1 email** with all required documents for all participating students

Submission Deadline

- Submissions are due by **January 12, 2026**

Pittsburgh DtWT Coordinator Carlena Jenkins

Judicial Personnel to
The Honorable Dwayne D. Woodruff
Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas
440 Ross St. Rm. 531
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Email: pitt.dtw@gmail.com | Office: 412 350-6263 | Cell: 412 983-9805

WRITING EXAMPLE

Page 1

(ASSIGNED NUMBER)

(EDUCATOR NAME)

(SCHOOL)

Title

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Rhoncus urna neque viverra justo. Integer malesuada nunc vel risus commodo viverra maecenas accumsan. Facilisis volutpat est velit egestas dui id. Id leo in vitae turpis. Tortor pretium viverra suspendisse potenti. Sagittis eu volutpat odio facilisis mauris sit. Quisque non tellus orci ac. Molestie at elementum eu facilisis sed odio morbi. Semper feugiat nibh sed pulvinar proin gravida. Aliquam ultrices sagittis orci a scelerisque purus. Tortor posuere ac ut consequat semper viverra nam libero justo. Ultricies integer quis auctor elit sed vulputate mi.

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Pittsburgh "Do the Write Thing" COVER SHEET

Student and Guardian Consent Form

INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you for participating in Do the Write Thing. To have your entry considered for selection as a National Student Ambassador, you and a guardian must complete this cover sheet and sign the Student and Guardian Consent Statement below.

Please print legibly in black or blue ink.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Student's First Name: _____ Student's Last Name: _____

Student's Grade: ☐ 6th ☐ 7th ☐ 8th Student's Gender: _____

Student's Address: _____
Street

City

State

Zip Code

Student's Assigned Number: _____

School Name: _____ School Phone: _____

Guardian's Name: _____

Guardian's Cell Number: _____

Guardian's Email Address: _____

Educator's Name: _____

Educator's Email Address: _____

STUDENT AND GUARDIAN CONSENT STATEMENT

The National Campaign to Stop Violence (NCSV), which sponsors Do the Write Thing, 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 guardian. If you and your guarding agree to permit the NCSV to publish your writing, please sign the following statement: **I (Student) pledge that my writing is my own words. We (Student and Guardian) agree to give ownership of the attached student writing to the NCSV so that it can be considered for recognition and published. The NCSV may further disclose the writing to the media and other parties as part of their national program.**

Student Signature

MM/DD/YY

Guardian Signature

MM/DD/YY



@DtWTOfficial



/DtWTOfficial



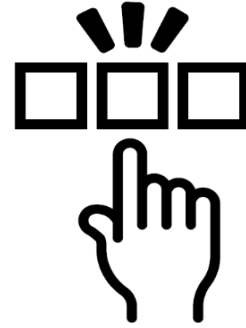
Do the Write Thing

STUDENT NUMBER KEY EXAMPLE

[EDUCATOR'S NAME & SCHOOL]

STUDENT NAME	ASSIGNED NUMBER
Student A	1
Student B	2
Student C	3
....	...
Student Z	26

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.dtwl.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 (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

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

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

Depending on the level of educator involvement in the student’s 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.

6 th Grade	7 th Grade	8 th 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

Pittsburgh DtWT Dinner Celebration



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 the national website at **www.dtw.org/resources**.

Most DtWT Committees will organize a recognition ceremony to honor the top student/s from each participating middle school.



Aleena Halaszynski has the Judges' full attention as she reads her 1st Place Essay



Ambassador Aleena Halszynski, her parents & teacher, Mrs. Crossen; Judges Watson, Cowan, Bridges, Cozza, Woodruff, Hens-Greco, Henry-Taylor; Chief PO Russ Carlino



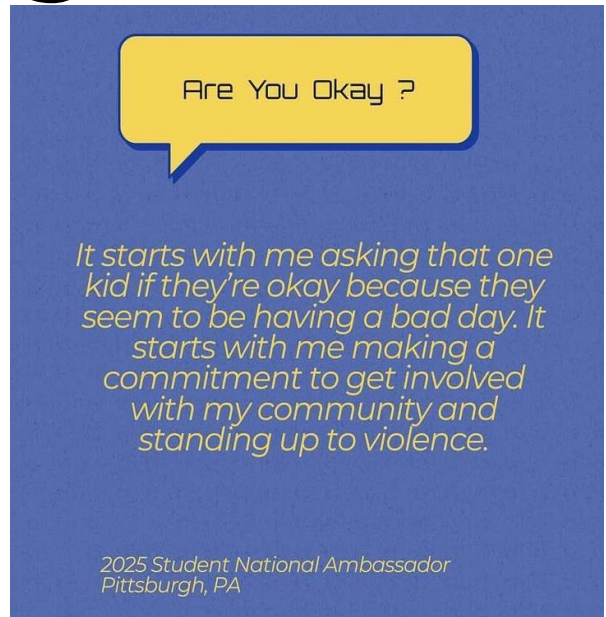
(center) Teacher, Ms. Hallie Leach & 1st Place Boy, **Nolan Pastor** w/awards.
Judge Nicola Henry Taylor (left) and Judge Dwayne D. Woodruff (right).

In addition to the top student writers from each school, the student's educator and the parent/guardian will be invited to attend the local recognition dinner or ceremony. Some DtWT Committees will also publish the writings of all their student honorees and distribute the publication to community, business and governmental leaders.

Student Recognition



NATIONAL LEVEL



Each DtWT Committee will designate one student National Ambassador. The National Ambassador along with their educator and one guardian will be invited to attend the Do the Write Thing National Recognition Summit in Washington, D.C. in July of 2026.

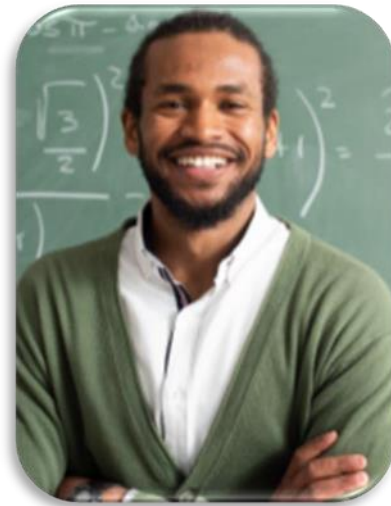
The majority of the costs for the National Recognition Summit will be paid for by our primary sponsor: the Kuwait-America Foundation. The people of Kuwait have donated money to the DtWT program for the past 34 years. This has been done to thank the American people for the liberation of Kuwait in 1991.

During past National Recognition Summits, National Student 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 the National Recognition Summit is placing a book of writings of the 2025-2026 National Student Ambassadors' writings in the Library of Congress. This ensures that Student Ambassadors' words are preserved for future generations.** In addition, the National Student Ambassadors have been honored at embassy receptions hosted by the Ambassador of Kuwait.

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

Benefits

Documented by the
University of Texas at El Paso



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 attitudinal changes and adaptation of 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 judgement regarding differences among peers
- Increases communication with peers and family members, rather than resorting to violence

Parents/Guardians

- Initiates a better understanding of the 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.



CONTACT US

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