

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 DtWT 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.

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.
- All entries must be submitted electronically (see below). No paper submissions will be accepted.
- Entries must have the appropriate header on the written submission. Headers are removed prior to judging. The header must include:
 - Student Name
 - Grade
 - School Name
 - Teacher Name

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 by writing the word "fiction" at the top of the writing
 - 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
- Entries must have a completed Consent Form via Google Forms inclusive of both student and parent or guardian sign off
 - Entries without a completed Google Form will not be advanced in the selection process
 - [See the linked Google Form here](#)
- 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 received by Friday, February 16, 2024.

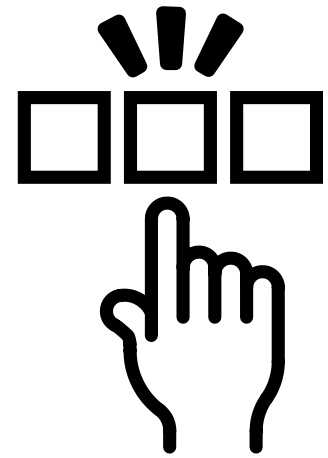
Each entry must have a completed [Google Form](#) and the appropriate header.

Scan ALL submissions into one PDF and send to local Chicago Coordinators and Co-Chair for DtWT, Latham & Watkins, by **February 16, 2024: DTWTCH@LW.COM**.

Please include the teacher's name, school name, and the number of essays you are sending in the body of your email.



Selection Criteria



1

JUDGING:

Entries will be reviewed by local volunteers, a coalition of business, community, and governmental leaders that oversees and administers DtWT. In Chicago, the co-chairs for DtWT are Latham & Watkins, and Communities In Schools of Chicago. Entries will be selected on the basis of content, originality, and responsiveness to 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

WRITINGS 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.