



# 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 May, your student may be among the 100 invited to join us for a local Chicago recognition dinner.

**Then, 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](http://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.

As Chairs of the Chicago Do the Write Thing Challenge, it is our continued privilege to be working with you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us directly. Thank you for participating in this year's program.

Thank you,



Robin M. Hulshizer, Co-Chair



Dr. Judith Allen, Co-Chair

Chicago 2023-2024 Do the Write Thing Challenge



DO  
THE  
WRITE  
THING



HELP STOP THE VIOLENCE

312-829-2475  
[DTWTCH@lw.com](mailto:DTWTCH@lw.com)  
[www.DtWT.org](http://www.DtWT.org)



LATHAM & WATKINS LLP

# 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 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

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## 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.

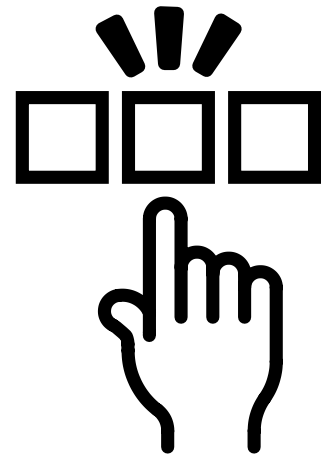
Scan ALL submissions into one PDF and send to local Chicago Coordinators and Co-Chair for DtWT, Latham & Watkins, by **February 16, 2024: [DTWTCH@LW.COM](mailto:DTWTCH@LW.COM)**.

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.

# 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](http://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
<b>Writing</b>		
6.1.A-E	7.1.A-E	8.1.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
<b>Speaking &amp; Listening</b>		
6.1.B-D 7.1.B-D 8.1.B-D		

# Social-Emotional Learning Standards (ISBE)

**Goal 1:** Develop self-awareness and self management skills to achieve school and life success

- **Learning Standard B:** Recognize personal qualities and external supports
  - 1B.3a: Analyze how personal qualities influence choices and success
  - 1B.3b: Analyze how making use of school and community supports and opportunities can contribute to school and life success
- **Learning Standard C:** Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals
  - 1C.3a: Set a short-term goal and make a plan for achieving it

**Goal 2:** Use social awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships

- **Learning Standard A:** Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others
  - 2A.3b: Analyze how one's behavior may affect others
- **Learning Standard B:** Recognize individual and group similarities and differences
  - 2B.3a: Explain how individual, social, and cultural differences may increase vulnerability to bullying and identify ways to address it.
  - 2B.3b: Analyze the effects of taking action to oppose bullying based on individual and group differences
- **Learning Standard D:** Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways
  - 2D.3a: Evaluate strategies for preventing and resolving interpersonal problems

**Goal 3:** Demonstrate decision making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts

- **Learning Standard A:** Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions
  - 3A.3b: Analyze the reason for school and societal rules
- **Learning Standard B:** Apply decision making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations
  - 3B.3b: Evaluate strategies for resisting pressures to engage in unsafe or unethical activities
- **Learning Standard C:** Contribute to the well being of one's school and community
  - 3C.3b: Evaluate one's participation in efforts to address an identified need in one's local community

# Social Justice (Learning for Justice)

**Anchor Standard: Justice 12:** Students will recognize unfairness on the individual level (e.g., biased speech) and injustice at the institutional or systemic level (e.g., discrimination).

- **JU.6-8.12:** I can recognize and describe unfairness and injustice in many forms including attitudes, speech, behaviors, practices and laws

**Anchor Standard: Action 19:** Students will make principled decisions about when and how to take a stand against bias and injustice in their everyday lives and will do so despite negative peer or group pressure.

- **AC.6-8.19:** I will speak up or take action when I see unfairness, even if those around me do not, and I will not let others convince me to go along with injustice.

**Anchor Standard: Action 20:** Students will plan and carry out collective action against bias and injustice in the world and will evaluate what strategies are most effective.

- **AC.6-8.20:** I will work with friends, family and community members to make our world fairer for everyone, and we will plan and coordinate our actions in order to achieve our goals



# Student Recognition

## LOCAL LEVEL

The local Chicago jurisdiction of DtWT has an established committee that coordinates this program. This committee in Chicago is co-chaired by Latham & Watkins and Communities In Schools of Chicago.

Annually, the co-chairs work with local volunteers and DtWT supporters to organize a recognition dinner for the top 100 authors. Here, along with the authors' parents and teachers, we celebrate the work of the 100 authors and announce the two National Ambassadors from Chicago that will head to Washington, D.C., in July.

The Chicago DtWT committee also annually publishes a book of Chicago writings. This book is then shared with business, community, and governmental leaders.



# Student Recognition



## NATIONAL LEVEL

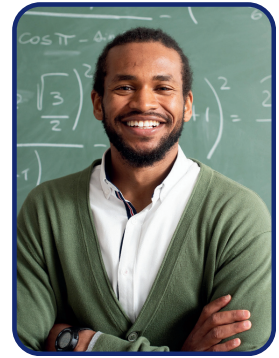
Each DtWT Committee will designate two student National Ambassadors. The two National Ambassadors along with each student's educator and one parent/guardian will be invited by the National Campaign to Stop Violence to attend the Do the Write Thing National Recognition Week activities in Washington, D.C.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

# 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 a child when educators and volunteers open pathways using the "Five Gestures" suggested by OJJDP to help heal a child.

DO  
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HELP STOP THE VIOLENCE

# 5 GESTURES TO HEAL A CHILD:



1

## 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



3

## 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



5

## 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

# DO THE WRITE THING



HELP STOP THE VIOLENCE



**LATHAM & WATKINS** LLP

## CONTACT US

330 N Wabash Ave., Suite 2800  
Chicago, IL 60611  
312-829-2475  
[DTWTCH@lw.com](mailto:DTWTCH@lw.com)  
[@DtWTofficial](#)

[www.DtWT.org](http://www.DtWT.org)