

Austin/Travis County



Teacher Packet

2022-2023



Travis County
Do the Write Thing Challenge 2022-2023

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Thank you for involving your 7th and 8th grade students in the 2022-2023 Do the Write Thing Challenge.

WHY DO THE WRITE THING?

The Challenge satisfies a number of objectives from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills curriculum in English/Language Arts, Social Studies, and Health, and it complements character building and drug abuse prevention programs. Personal responsibility is emphasized.

Entries will be judged on the basis of content, originality, and the most thought provoking and responsiveness to these three questions:

- **How has violence affected my life?**
- **What are the causes of violence?**
- **What can I do about violence?**

Writings that do not address these questions will not be advanced in the selection process.

PROGRAM RULES

- Please submit **ALL** your 7th and 8th grade student writings so a certificate of recognition may be sent to the student to acknowledge their participation.
- Students may use any form of written expression (e.g. essays, poems, plays or songs) as long as the language is positive and not derogatory. Students may submit only one entry per year. All entries must be the work product of only one student.
- Entries should be approximately 500 to 1000 words in length. Written forms of expression such as poetry that by its nature may be shorter, may contain fewer than 500 words.
- Entries must be typed or written legibly in black ink on 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Only one side of the paper may be used and the pages should be numbered.
- Entries must be in English.
- **Your school must submit a minimum of 25 papers with parental consent forms** to qualify for having school finalists. **Entries that do not include a student or parental signature will still receive a certificate of recognition, however, they will not be advanced in the judging process.**

- Student name on essay is acceptable on all of the pages, but no school name please.
- Entries should be submitted in the form that they are received from the student writer. Editing for content, grammar, or spelling by someone other than the student is not permitted.
- **Essays are judged on content alone.**
- If a story is fictional, it must be identified as such to be advanced in the selection process, however, strong preference will be given to non-fiction in final selection process.

ESSAY SUBMISSION DATE

Please submit your writings to the DtWT Coordinator no later than Tuesday, December 13, 2022.

All forms, rules and additional discussion materials are also available on the TEXAS DTWT website @ www.dwtx.org

SELECTION CRITERIA

Entries will be reviewed by your jurisdiction's "Do the Write Thing" Committee, the coalition of business, community and governmental leaders that oversees and administers the "**Challenge**" 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 violence? What can I do about violence?*** Grammar and spelling will not be used as criteria for selection.

In their writings, students 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.



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CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Classroom discussion is not mandatory for participation in the “**Challenge**”. However, over the years we have found that students and their teachers gain much from the bonding that can result from the exchanges about the impact of youth violence that occur in prewriting classroom discussions. Teachers have indicated that they are amazed at the openness and honesty of these classroom discussions. They also indicate that these discussions present excellent opportunities to identify and prevent youth problems before they reach crisis proportions.

Many of the teachers whose classes have participated in the “**Challenge**” in the past have invited outside speakers knowledgeable about youth violence issues to lead pre-writing discussions. Other teachers have provided their students with selected readings or newspaper articles about violence in advance of the discussion to stimulate thought. Speakers or articles, which emphasize personal responsibility on the part of students for responding to the problem of violence, have proven to be particularly useful.

Below are some questions designed to generate discussion among your students before they prepare their entries for the “**Challenge**”. For other ideas, please visit www.dtw.org.

Questions to Consider:

- 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?

Common Core Standards

The “Do the Write Thing” Challenge has been reviewed by a panel of highly qualified public school teachers for compliance with Common Core standards. **The “Challenge” meets all of the English Language Arts Standards in Writing for Grades 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 the “Challenge” fulfilling Common Core Standards)**

Do the Write Thing and Common Core State Standards



Writing is the core component of the “Do the Write Thing” Challenge (DtWT). After classroom discussions about youth violence, participating middle school students are asked by their teachers to make a commitment not to be involved in violence and provide written answers to three questions:

1. How has violence affected my life?
2. What are the causes of youth violence?
3. What can I do to reduce youth violence?

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 include a narrative component, such as those that address the first question, can fulfill 3.A-E for grades 7 and 8.

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

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

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

Speaking and Listening

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

	7 th Grade	8 th Grade
Writing		
	7.1.A-E	8.1.A-E
	7.2.A-F	8.2.A-F
	7.3.A-E	8.3.A-E
	7.4	8.4
	7.5	8.5
	7.6	8.6
	7.7	8.7
	7.8	8.8
	7.9	8.9
	7.10	8.10
Speaking & Listening		
	7.1.B-D	8.1.B-D




WHY SHOULD YOU HAVE *YOUR* STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN THE DO THE WRITE THING CHALLENGE?

The choices students make at the highly impressionable middle school age can impact not only the rest of their lives, but the lives of others.

The Do the Write Thing is an *academically designed and evidenced based* program that develops student problem solving, coping, social, leadership and academic skills and empathy. Students accept personal responsibility which nurtures a healthy learning environment.

Anti-social behavior, including violence, comes in many forms and is experienced on many levels: from bullying, disruptive conduct, domestic problems, illicit drug use and all the way to unruly neighborhoods and gangs. Research shows students are also adversely influenced by what they see and experience on social media, in the news and the various entertainment venues. They need an outlet to express their concerns and anxieties.

The *Do the Write Thing* Texas writing challenge is designed to be compatible with a teacher's curriculum requirements. Rather than it being something in addition to an already busy curriculum, Do the Write Thing satisfies a number of objectives from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum in English/Language Arts and Social Studies, and complements character building, anti-bullying/anti-domestic violence and drug abuse prevention programs. Many teachers have found *Do the Write Thing* useful as a stand-alone writing assignment in addition to being a learning tool.

	<p>Travis County Do the Write Thing Challenge 2022-2023</p> <hr/> <p><i>Local & National Recognition</i></p>
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Local Level:

Each jurisdiction participating in the “**Challenge**” has established a “Do the Write Thing” 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 Campaign to Stop Violence** website, www.dtwt.org. Most “Do the Write Thing” Committees will organize a recognition ceremony to honor the boy and girl from each participating middle school who are selected as School Ambassadors. ² 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 “Do the Write Thing” Committees will also publish the writings of all their "School Ambassadors" and distribute the publication to area community, business and governmental leaders.³

National Level:

Each “Do the Write Thing” Committee will designate two “National Ambassadors.” The two National Ambassadors along with each student’s teacher and one parent or guardian will be invited by the **National Campaign to Stop Violence** to attend the “**Do the Write Thing**” Challenge National Recognition Week activities in Washington, D.C. in **July of 2023**.

Sadly, we have learned during this pandemic that there are circumstances beyond our control which may cause NCSV to adjust National Recognition Weekend in accordance with health and safety regulations.

The majority of the costs for the National Recognition Week activities will be paid by our primary sponsors: the **Kuwait-America Foundation**. The people of Kuwait have donated money to the “**Do the Write Thing**” campaign for the past 28 years. This has been done to say thank you to 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 Judge, 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 Week is placing a book of the writings of the 2022 -2023 student national ambassadors in the Library of Congress, ensuring that the students’ words will be available to all and for future generations. In addition, students have been honored at embassy receptions hosted by the State of Kuwait.

While all “Do the Write Thing” Committees are encouraged to hold local recognition ceremonies and publish books of student writings, and while most local “Do the Write Thing” 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.

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



DO THE WRITE THING ...in brief

Youth violence and other anti-social behaviors are major public safety and public health problems in Texas and throughout our nation. The effects of exposure to violence or crime either as a victim, perpetrator or witness adversely impact education, family and the community. Negative consequences for individuals include depression, poor self-image, truancy, academic failure, alienation, substance abuse, violent acting out, delinquency and other self-destructive conduct, which forecast a dysfunctional adulthood.

The Texas Do the Write Thing Challenge is a multi-faceted program, focusing on middle school children, which science says is the age group most vulnerable to anti-social influences. It is an academic program that meets several state educational mandates and is implemented in public, (including alternative schools) and private schools. Our educator developed lesson plan is administered which involves classroom discussions, research and composition. The student writers respond to three questions: How violence has affected them; what in their opinion are the causes; and what are their solutions. Every student who submits a writing, receives a certificate of recognition presented by the teachers. All papers are read by volunteer readers, who select a boy and girl as School Finalists. There are nine programs in Texas and each publishes, with written parental consent, a book of the Finalist writings and holds a ceremony for these Finalists.

The goal of Texas Do the Write Thing Challenge is to prevent bullying, violence and juvenile delinquency. The program develops student empathy and problem solving, coping, social, leadership and academic skills; which are imperatives for a productive adulthood and maintaining a robust civil society. The students feel valued because their thoughts, analysis and solutions are solicited...they are given a voice. They shoulder personal responsibility which creates a healthy learning environment. Family involvement evolves from student participation.

A Lamar University study of over 1,000 *Do the Write Thing* Challenge papers found the program to be one of the few in the nation to elicit youngsters' cognitive processes and emotional responses in dealing with violence. Understanding their perspective on the violence they experience in their lives is vital; in other words gathering information and data from the source. This provides the basis for designing prevention and intervention initiatives. The study further found, "Research examining the children's writing on the topic of violence is particularly needed". The Challenge has been the genesis of projects and initiatives; it has identified specific problems in specific locations, (please see website for more information), and makes a positive difference in the lives of Texas young people and their families.



2022 TEACHER SURVEY

PLEASE ATTACH COMPLETED SURVEY WITH YOUR ESSAY SUBMISSIONS

Teacher's First Name and Last Name (please print) _____

Teacher's email: _____ Teacher's phone #: (____) _____

School Name: _____ District: _____

School's email address: _____

School address: _____ City: _____ Zip Code: _____

School Phone #: (____) _____

Questions 1 and 2 (required)*

1. Approximate number of your students submitting writings for the Challenge? _____

2. Did you have a classroom discussion about violence before your students prepared their writings for the Challenge? (yes) (no)

Number of your students who participated (were present) for the discussion.

1-50 51-100 101-150 151-200 201-250 251-300 301-350 over 351

3. Did you use any of the TEKS correlated scenarios provided with the teacher packet?

(yes) (no)

4. Comments: _____

Optional Questions:

5. What (in your opinion) were the **top three causes of violence** identified by your students?

6. What (in your opinion) were the **top three solutions for violence** identified by your students?

2022-2023 CONSENT STATEMENT

Thank you for participating in the 2022-2023 “Do the Write Thing Challenge.”

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 INFORMATION - Please PRINT Legibly in Black/Blue Ink**

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

School Name: _____ Student's Grade: _____ Gender: _____

District: _____ School's Phone Number: (_____) _____

Teacher's Full Name: _____ Teacher's #: (_____) _____

Teacher's email address: _____

Parent's Full Name: _____ Parent's Cell Phone #: (_____) _____

Student's Home Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

STUDENT AND PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT STATEMENT

“Do the Write Thing Challenge – Austin/Travis County” will publish selected students writings and quotations in a book and in a discussion paper on youth violence. Before publishing your writing, DtWTX requires your written consent and the written consent of a parent or guardian. If you and your parent or guardian agree to permit the DtWTX to publish your writing, please sign the following statement: We agree to give ownership of the attached student writing to Do the Write Thing Texas so that it can be considered for recognition and published. Do the Write Thing Texas may further disclose the writing to the media and other parties as part of their national program.

Student's Signature _____ Student's Email _____

Parent's Signature _____ Parent's Email _____

IT'S TIME TO TAKE *THE CHALLENGE!*



IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER FOR THE DO THE WRITE THING CHALLENGE

Please contact your school's "Do the Write Thing Coordinator" to pick up essays from your school starting **NOVEMBER 2022 through DECEMBER 13, 2022.**

April, 2023 - School Finalists Announced

May, 2023 - National Finalists Announced

July, 2023 - National Recognition Ceremony, Washington D.C.

All forms and rules are also available on the TEXAS website: www.dtwtx.org

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL BULLYING/VIOLENCE PREVENTION

