

Houston/Harris County

2008-2009



Teacher Packet



1001 Preston, Suite 410, Houston, Texas 77002
Phone: 713-755-4005 Fax: 713-755-4089
Website: <http://www.texasdtwt.com>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEACHERS</i>	1
▪ Program Rules	
▪ Entry Deadline	
▪ Judging Criteria	
▪ Classroom Discussion	
▪ Student/Teacher/School Recognition	
<i>SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS</i>	4
<i>TEACHER SURVEY</i>	5
<i>SAMPLE SCENARIOS</i>	6
▪ Scenarios for Discussion	
<i>STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS</i>	10
<i>STUDENT COVER SHEET/CONSENT FORM</i>	11



Houston/Harris County *Do the Write Thing* Challenge 2008/2009 Instructions for Teachers

Thank you for involving your seventh and eighth grade students in the 2008-2009 *Do the Write Thing* Challenge.

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.

Before presenting the program to your students, please review the following information covering program rules, entry deadlines, judging criteria, classroom discussion and student recognition.

Program Rules

The following guidelines for the preparation of student writings have been distributed to all participating superintendents, principals, and teachers:

1. 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. (**No fictional writings in essays**) Students may submit only one entry per year. All entries must be the work product of only one student.
2. Student entries at minimum, should address three questions:
 - How has violence affected my life?
 - What are the causes of violence?
 - What can I do about violence?
3. Entries should be approximately 500-1000 words. (with the exception of poetry which can be less)
4. Entries must be typed or written legibly in black on 8½" x 11" paper.
Do not use spiral notebook paper.
Use only one side of the paper.
The pages should be numbered.
5. Entries must be in English.
6. If the student participant uses a quotation or another person's material in his or her entry, the entry must identify whose work is being used by citing the original author's name, or citing the source of the material. **Writings based upon plagiarism will not be advanced in the judging process.**
7. Entries must have a Cover Sheet/Consent Form signed by the participating student and parent or guardian.
Entries without a signed Cover Sheet/Consent Form will not be advanced in the judging process.

(A blank Cover Sheet/Consent Form containing the Student and Parent/Guardian consent is attached.)

8. **Entries must be submitted with the original writing and one photocopy of the writing.**
9. Entries must 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. **Do not screen** student writings.
10. Your school must submit a **minimum of 50 papers** to be considered for the National Finalist competition.

Submission Deadlines

All entries, with Cover Sheet/Consent Form attached, must be **received in the office of County Judge Ed Emmett, 1001 Preston, Suite 410, Houston, TX 77002 no later than 5 p.m. Friday, Dec. 5, 2008.**

Judging Criteria

Entries will be judged by a panel of community leaders appointed by the *Do the Write Thing* Committee of Houston/Harris County, a coalition of business, community and government leaders. Entries will be judged 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?

In their writings, students should be encouraged to describe what they think are the causes of 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 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.

Classroom Discussion

Classroom discussion is not a requirement for participating in the Challenge. However, candid discussions have proved to be beneficial, sometimes in dramatic fashion. Teachers whose classes engaged in discussion have reported that students find they have an enhanced sense of connection to classmates. Some teachers have been amazed at the level of concern and honesty students express in prewriting discussions. A classroom discussion also provides an opportunity for educators to learn about problems simmering in school before the problems become crises.

Many teachers whose classes have participated in the Challenge have invited outside speakers knowledgeable about violence to lead prewriting discussions. Others have provided their students with selected readings or newspaper articles about violence in advance of the discussion to stimulate thought. Speakers or articles that emphasize personal responsibility on the part of students for responding to the problem of violence have proven to be particularly useful.

Please visit (www.dtw.org) the National Campaign to Stop Violence and (www.texasdtwt.com) the Texas Do the Write Thing challenge for more information.

Following are some questions to generate discussion among your students before they prepare their entries for the Challenge.

When you hear the word violence, what thoughts or memories do you have?

Where are you confronted by violence? Your home? Your school? Your neighborhood?

Do you think you can tell when another person is on the brink of a violent act? Would you intervene? Under what circumstances would you intervene? What provokes people to be violent?

Student, Teacher, and School Recognition

All students submitting an essay or poem will receive a Certificate of Recognition.

Local Level

The Houston/Harris County *Do the Write Thing* Executive Committee coordinates the program locally. The Committee will organize a local recognition ceremony to honor the boy and girl from each participating school who submit the best entries. In addition to the School Finalists from each school, the students' parents, teachers, principal, and superintendent will be invited to the Recognition Ceremony. The 2008 Recognition Ceremony was held at Minute Maid Park. The committee will publish the writings of all School Finalists, and distribute the book to civic leaders.

State Level

The Executive Committee Readers Panel selects, from among the School Finalists, the top two girl and boy authors as National Finalists, and two runners-up as State Finalists. These students, their parents/guardians, and teachers are invited, as honored guests, to the leadership summit in Austin, which includes three days of recognition activities. Among these is the student congress, which drafts a platform stating the principles that constitute a decent society. The students present it in the Chamber of the Texas House of Representatives on *Do the Write Thing Day* in Texas. There are eleven Challenge programs in Texas: Austin, Beaumont, Brownsville, Corpus Christi, Dallas, El Paso, Houston, Lubbock, Odessa, San Antonio and Victoria.

National Level

The two National Finalists, along with each Finalist'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 2009.

During past National Recognition Weeks, National Finalists from jurisdictions around the U.S. have met with the Secretary of the Department of Education, the Attorney General of the United States, and members of Congress to discuss the problem of violence. In addition, students have been honored at embassy receptions hosted by the Ambassador to the United States from the State of Kuwait. A book containing their writings was placed in the Library of Congress.

Teacher Survey

Your input/feedback is vital to the future program development. Please complete and return the enclosed teacher survey with your student entries.

Special Instructions

- **Submit all papers**, as each student who writes will receive a certificate. The judging is blind; no school names listed.
- Please do **NOT** screen or grade the papers.
- **Emphasize to the students to focus on solutions – address the three questions**.
- Please return a completed **TEACHER SURVEY** as the information provided is a resource tool and represents the authentic voices of your students.
- Remember to:
 - Make copies of each entry.
 - Staple the cover sheet/consent form to the copy. Submit these along with the original entry.
 - Please submit to your District Coordinator by November 26, 2008.

DtWT Team contacts:

(713) 755-4005

Diane Jacobs – diane.jacobs@cjo.hctx.net

Debbi Braman – debbi.braman@cjo.hctx.net



Do the Write Thing Challenge: 2008-2009

TEACHER SURVEY

Name of teacher:

___Dr. ___Mr. ___Ms. ___Mrs. _____

***Teacher's home address**

City, Zip Code

*Note: This information is essential because much of the activity in the Challenge takes place during summer.

***Teacher's home phone:**

Name of school:

Address of school:

School phone number:

Questions 1 and 2 (required)

1. How many of your students submitted writings for the 2009 Challenge? _____
2. Did you have a classroom discussion about violence before your students prepared their writings for the 2009 Challenge? (YES) (NO)
If YES, how many of your students participated (were present) for the discussion? _____

Questions 3 and 4 (optional)

3. What (in your opinion) were the top three causes of violence identified by your students in their discussions and writings?
4. What (in your opinion) were the top three solutions for violence identified by your students in their discussions and writings?

Please submit this survey with your student entries.

Scenario 1

“He Loves Me, I Know He Does”

Jazmine is a popular student. She is dating John, a member of the football team. Jazmine starts noticing that John gets upset when she spends time with her girlfriends. At first, Jazmine thinks it’s cute and that John truly cares and loves her. Then, John starts demanding to know where she is and who she is with at all times. He calls her cell phone constantly. When a boy from school gives Jazmine a new CD to listen to, John is furious. When they are alone, he starts hitting her and calling her names. Then he starts setting down rules. Jazmine’s friends notice bruises and signs of cutting on her body. She makes excuses and begs them not to tell. Then they notice a change, she dresses and acts differently and she is spending all of her time with John. The isolation is unbearable and the beatings become more frequent.

- Do you know someone like John?
- Do you know someone like Jazmine?
- What if your friend was being abused by her boyfriend?
- What advice would you give Jazmine?
- What are some of the warning signs of relationship violence?

Scenario 2

“Daddy, No; Daddy, No; Please Stop”

My father has a very short fuse. He can snap at the drop of a hat when he drinks. My parents argue nonstop. Kids, jobs, money, spending so much and saving so little; it’s like a movie that plays over and over again except I can’t turn it off. I see the rage in my dad’s face as he hits my mom until he draws blood and tears. During her many beatings, I see him push her down, pull her hair, choke her and call her names. Too many times to count, I see her bruises, busted lips, black eyes and blood- stained torn clothes. This is not an unusual sight at my house. When my dad drinks, he is a different person. I hate to go home after school. I try to stay away as long as I can. The yelling and screaming are too much. Mom thought he was only hurting her....but daddy’s rage is also hurting me.

- Do you know someone who is need of help from domestic violence?
- Do you know someone who uses alcohol and violence to try to drown their problems?
- Do you think children who witness violent acts are more likely to become aggressive and consider violence an appropriate response when they are angry?
- Do you know of programs available to assist families dealing with domestic violence?

Scenario 3

“The Party”

Angel and Jacob’s parents are going out of town for a business trip. They will have the house to themselves for a few days. Jacob decides to throw a party. Word spreads quickly. The music is loud. Many young adults are seen taking drugs and drinking alcohol.

- If you were their friend what would you do knowing that most everyone at the party will be underage?
- Would you tell an adult if you knew some of the kids would be driving under the influence?
- What is the best way to handle this situation knowing that someone may get hurt in an accident?
- Do you think scenes from TV programs and movies influences teen drinking?

Scenario 4

“Mean Girls”

Amy just moved to town. She meets Julie who lives down the street and they become friends. It’s summer. School is out and they do everything together. They love to shop, swim and ride bikes. When school starts, Julie is back with her old clique from last year. Julie begins to ignore Amy and starts to spread rumors about her on My Space. Julies gives Amy’s *My Space* password to everyone. She has also given out her personal information making her a target for pedophiles. Now Amy’s best friend is her worst enemy. Amy is getting horrible messages from people she doesn’t even know.

- How many of you know someone else’s password?
- What do you think your **ex**-best friend is going to do with your password?
- Do you think pedophiles search the Internet for victims?
- Are you a cyber bully?
- Are you a victim of cyber bullying?
- Should laws be passed to protect you from cyber bullying or online assault?
- How much personal information do you share on the Internet?

Scenario 5

“This is the Day.....If Only”

Three students tease Jose because he is small for his age. During class, they laugh, shoot rubber bands at him, poke him in the neck with a pencil and call him names. After class, Jose accidentally steps on one of the bully’s shoes. The three punch Jose and push him to the ground. The physical and mental abuse has been going on for two years now. He is depressed and suicidal. The next day Jose brings a gun to school and writes a short message. “Blame the bully who made me do this, the cruel actions and words that drove me crazy. If only I had told someone, anyone.”

- Are you a bully?
- Are you the victim of a bully?
- Do you think fines and suspension from school have deterred bullies?
- Are there early warning signs of a victim who is ready to explode?
- Do schools and policy makers do enough to prevent bullying?
- When will you start standing up for the bully?

Scenario 6

“All in the Family....The Initiation”

Tony is the leader of a gang. They have just initiated his little brother Trey into the gang family. “We are your family now,” Tony tells Trey. The members are then told of a planned shootout with a rival gang who has been “disrespecting” them. The gangs meet at the designated time and place. Trey is given a gun. It happens in the blink of an eye. The rival gang is coming fast and furious. There is a lot of yelling, screaming and shooting. Then Trey gets hit and goes down. Tony sees what happens and freezes. He starts yelling “You shot my baby brother!” Tony runs after the rival gang member and shoots him. Then it’s all over. Trey is dead and so is the rival gang member. Tony now has to take his baby brother’s body home. He knocks on the door, his mother answers. She sees Trey lying bloody in Tony’s arms. She starts screaming and crying. Tony sits with tears streaming down his face, blood on his hands.

- If you knew of the initiation, would you try to talk Trey out of it?
- How do you think Tony feels now?
- Why do you think gangs are so popular with young adults?
- Do gangs really protect their “gang families”?
- Have you lost someone you love to gang violence?
- Does TV glorify violence? (wrestling, violent video games and movies, TV shows such as *South Park* and *Family Guy*, music videos, etc.)
- Do violent video games teach children how to kill and also desensitize them to violent images?

Scenario 7

“My Mama’s Prescriptions”

Susie’s mother has recently had back surgery. Her doctor has prescribed a powerful narcotic to help relieve the pain. Susie decides she can make some fast money at school by selling some of her mom’s pain pills. She goes into the girl’s restroom and starts asking other students if they want to “get high”. Kaitlyn buys a couple pills from her. Later that evening she takes two of the strong narcotics, not knowing exactly what they are. Kaitlyn is alone in her room. She takes the pills and starts shaking and hallucinating. She then passes out. Hours later her mother calls her for dinner. She doesn’t respond. Her mother goes to her room and finds Kaitlyn unconscious on the floor. She screams and calls 911 for an ambulance. Kaitlyn is taken to the hospital where she is listed in critical condition. Doctors frantically order a battery of tests to try and find out what is wrong so they can begin treatment. News of the overdose quickly spreads to Susie.

Are you asked to buy prescription drugs to get “high”?

Would you take a chance taking an unknown drug just to get “high”?

Should Susie tell someone what drug Kaitlyn took? It could save her life.

Should Kaitlyn’s friends tell her parents about Susie?

What can parents and policy makers do to avoid situations such as this with prescription drugs?

Scenario 8

“Go, Fight, Win”

Tyler and Jake are playing basketball for their high school teams. The game is quickly becoming competitive. They push and shove to get the ball and score. Under the rim, Tyler shoves Jake and he tumbles to the floor. Jake gets up. He is mad. He shoves Tyler. Tyler shoves back and punches him in the stomach. Some words are exchanged. Then the crowd starts yelling, “fight, fight, fight!” They begin egging them on. Their blood starts pumping and the fists start flying. The crowd is getting into it. A referee is punched in the face. Coaches from both teams quickly run to the court to help defuse the situation.

Is there too much pressure on players to win games?

Are players encouraged to be violent to win?

Do coaches choose combative players to help them win?

Are some sports more violent than others?

Is there too much violence in high contact sports?

Did the crowd help instigate the fight?

Does the crowd have any responsibility for the fight?

Have you seen unsportsmanlike like conduct from adults at your games?

Do high contact sports lead to violence off of the court?



Houston/Harris County *Do the Write Thing Challenge, 2008-2009*

Instructions for Students

Thank you for accepting the *Do the Write Thing* Challenge (DtWT).

Please review the following program rules before you write.

Student Program Rules

1. 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. (**No fictional writings in essays.**) Students may submit only one entry per year. All entries must be the work product of only one student. Each student participating will receive a certificate.
2. Students should address the following three questions:
 - How has violence affected my life?
 - What are the causes of violence?
 - What can I do about violence?
3. Entries will be 500-1000 words. (with the exception of poetry which can be less)
4. Entries must be typed or written legibly in black on 8½" x 11" paper.
Do not use spiral notebook paper.
Use only one side of the paper.
The pages should be numbered.
5. Entries must be in English.
6. If the student participant uses a quotation or another person's material in his or her entry, the entry must identify whose work is being used by citing the original author's name, or citing the source of the material.

Writings based upon plagiarism will not be advanced in the judging process.
7. Entries must have a **Cover Sheet/Consent Form** signed by the participating student and a parent or guardian. Entries without a signed Cover Sheet/Consent Form will not be advanced in the judging process.
8. Entries must be submitted with the **original writing and one photocopy** of the writing.

