



2015-2016 DO THE *WRITE* THING CHALLENGE

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Thank you for involving your 7th and 8th grade students in the 2015-2016 Do the *Write* Thing Challenge, a violence prevention program that allows middle school students an opportunity to examine the impact of youth violence and emphasizes personal responsibility for finding a solution. Do the *Write* Thing¹ is an initiative of the National Campaign to Stop Violence. All across America, students like yours are rising to the challenge of doing something to end youth violence. The Challenge gives middle school students the opportunity to examine the impact of violence on their lives and to communicate in written form what they think should be done to reduce youth violence. Personal responsibility is emphasized. By encouraging students to make personal commitments to do something about the problem, the program ultimately seeks to give them the opportunity to break the cycles of violence in their homes, schools, and neighborhoods. Your involvement and support are crucial to the success of the Challenge 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

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

- 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.
- Student entries, at a minimum, should address the following three questions:
 - How has violence affected my life?
 - What are the causes of youth violence?
 - What can I do about youth violence?
- Student writings that do not address these questions will not be advanced in the selection process.
- Entries should be approximately 500 to 1,000 words in length. Written forms of expression such as poetry that, by their nature may be shorter, and may contain fewer than 500 words.

¹The Do the Write Thing website is found at the following address: <http://www.dtw.org/>.

- 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; the pages should be numbered.
- Entries must be in English.
- If a story is fictional, it must be identified as such to be advanced in the selection process.
- If the student participant uses a quotation or another person's material in his/her entry, the entry must cite the person's name or the source of the material. Writings based on plagiarism will not be advanced in the selection process.
- Entries must have a legible cover sheet that includes the names and contact information of the student, his/her parent or guardian, and his/her teacher. The consent statement must be signed by the participating student and a parent or guardian. No personal information should appear on the body of the written entry. Entries without a signed cover sheet will not be advanced in the selection process.
- Submit the original writing and one photocopy with the cover sheet. Do not staple or fold the corners; use a paper clip, please.
- 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.²

²Teachers, please send us the writings and the cover sheets 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 his or her work considered in the selection process.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

All entries must be collected by participating teachers or principals and submitted to the Montana Board of Crime Control no later than **Friday, February 19, 2016**. Send the writings to the following address:

Montana Board of Crime Control
Do the Write Thing
5 South Last Chance Gulch
Helena, MT 59620-1408
Attn: Julie Fischer, DtWT Chair

Please go through the following checklist and make sure each of your entries include the following:

- A completed and legible cover sheet that includes student and parent/guardian signatures and contact information;
- The original student writing and a photocopy;
- Length of writing is 500 – 1,000 words (unless it is poetry);
- Entries are typed or written on one side only of 8-1/2” x 11” paper in black ink, and multiple pages are numbered;
- Entries are written in English; and
- References to others’ works are cited as such.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS³

The Common Core State standards Initiative is a collaborative effort between the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Writing standards were developed by teachers, school administrators, and education experts and provide a framework for developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the work place and higher education. Montana adopted these Core Standards November 4, 2011.

As of August 2011, the Do the *Write* Thing Challenge has been reviewed by a panel of highly qualified public school teachers. The Challenge has been aligned to meet 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). Standards W.7.2 and W.8.2 are applicable only to nonfiction submissions.

³The Common Core State Standards Initiative may be found at the following website: <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards/writing-6-12/introduction/> and on the website of the Office of Public Instruction: <http://opi.mt.gov/Curriculum/MontCAS/GetReady.php>.

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 are often amazed at the openness and honesty of these classroom discussions. They have also indicated that these discussions present excellent opportunities to identify and prevent youth problems before they reach crisis proportions.

Here are some questions designed to generate discussion among your students before they prepare their entries for the Challenge:

1. What is violence? What is youth violence?
2. Does violence affect your daily lives? If so, in what ways?
3. Where are you confronted by violence? Your home? Your school? Your neighborhood?
4. What kind of violence have you experienced, either first- or second-hand? How have the experiences impacted you?
5. What are some of the causes of youth violence in your school or community?
6. What can you do as an individual to reduce youth violence in your school or community?
7. Have you observed other youth who work to end violence in your school or community?
8. What would you like your school or community do to prevent youth violence?

SELECTION CRITERIA

Student writings are graded on the basis of content, originality, and responsiveness in answering the following questions:

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

Top student writings should not only answer the three questions posed about youth violence and drug abuse but also recount personal experiences and suggest solutions that can be initiated by the student and other individuals. Top student writings should be moving pieces of written expression.

STUDENT RECOGNITION

Montana will recognize the top Do the *Write Thing* finalists from each participating school in a recognition ceremony at ExplorationWorks in Helena April 30, 2015. One boy and one girl will be selected to represent Montana as Student Ambassadors at the National Do the *Write Thing* Recognition Ceremony in July of 2016 in Washington, D.C. The Student Ambassadors are announced at the Montana Celebration in Helena.

During past National Recognition Weeks, National Ambassadors have met with the United States Secretary of Education, the Attorney General of the United States, the United States Secretary of the Interior, members of Congress, and many notable celebrities to discuss the

problem of youth violence. In addition, students have been honored at embassy receptions hosted by the State of Kuwait.

The majority of the costs for the National Recognition Week activities will be paid for by our primary sponsors: the Kuwait – America Foundation and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science. The people of Kuwait have donated money to the Do the *Write* Thing campaign for nearly 20 years in order to say thank you to the American people for the role they played in liberating Kuwait from Iraq in 1991.⁴ Other sponsors include, but are not limited to, Marriott, Southwest Airlines, the National Guard, and the Harlem Globetrotters.

2016 DO THE *WRITE* THING TIMELINE

February 19, 2016: Student writings are due at the Montana Board of Crime Control
April 30, 2016: Montana’s Do the *Write* Thing Celebration in Helena
July 2016: National Do the *Write* Thing Celebration in Washington, D.C.

THANK YOU

Thank you for participating in Montana’s Do the *Write* Thing Challenge. If you have any questions about the Challenge, please contact State of Montana Do the *Write* Thing Chair Julie Fischer at 406-444-2056 or jfischer2@mt.gov at the Montana Board of Crime Control. We look forward to reading your students’ writings and helping them find their voice as they take a stand against youth violence.

⁴The Kuwait-America Foundation website is <http://www.kuwaitamerica.org/>; the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences is <http://www.kfas.org/>.