



2026 MICHIGAN SCHOOLS PARTICIPATION PACKET

www.dtwtdetroit.com



Dear Michigan Middle School Teachers,

Across America, students like yours are rising to the challenge of doing something to end youth violence. The Do the Write Thing (DTWT) essay **“Challenge”** gives middle school students an 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 cycle 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 attached material concerning program rules, entry deadline, selection criteria, classroom discussion, and student recognition before presenting the program to your students. In this packet, you will find a variety of helpful information to administer the essay challenge at your school. Additional information is provided on our website at www.dtwtdetroit.com. Schools that chose to participate need to submit the following items by **Friday, November 21, 2025**, via email to info@dtwtDetroit.com.

- ✓ DTWT Michigan School Application
- ✓ School Female Finalist’s Essay
- ✓ School Female Finalist’s Parent Consent Form signed by parent/legal guardian
- ✓ School Male Finalist’s Essay
- ✓ School Male Finalist’s Parent Consent Form signed by parent/legal guardian
- ✓ School Student Writers Roster
- ✓ Essay count confirmation letter from School Principal

School entries must submit all documents through the [2026 DtWT Google Entry Form](#).

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and limited access to paper copies via remote learning, schools are requested to electronically submit their two finalists’ essays via email. Finalists’ papers are due by **Friday, November 21, 2025**. School must submit 2 essay finalists (1 male and 1 female finalists) by **Friday, November 21, 2025**. Schools will submit a letter from the school principal, verifying the count of essays count completed by the students at their school. A sample letter is available on our website.

Please contact me at (586) 350-6336 or at info@dtwtDetroit.com if you have any questions about the Do the Write Thing essay challenge. Thank you for being a strong advocate in our program.

Regards,

Zemen Marrugi, M.Ed.
Michigan DTWT Chair



Essay Challenge Guidelines

Classroom discussion is not mandatory for participation in the DTWT writing “Challenge”. However, over the years we have found that students and their teachers gain much from the bonding that can result from the exchanges on the impact of youth violence that occur in pre-writing 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.

Common Core Standards

The Do the Write Thing essay challenge has been reviewed by a panel of highly qualified public school teachers for compliance with Common Core standards. The “Challenge” meets 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.

Essay Criteria

- Student entries, at minimum, should address the follow three questions: **How has violence affected my life? What are the causes of youth violence? What can I do about youth violence?**
- All Michigan middle schools in 6th, 7th and 8th grades are eligible to participate.
- Students may use any form of written expression (e.g. essays, poems, plays or songs) if 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.
- All entries must be non-fiction.
- Entries should be written in English and 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.
- 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 person's name or citing the source of the material. Writings based upon plagiarism will not advance in the selection process.
- Entries must have a consent statement signed by the participating student and a parent or guardian. Entries without a signed consent statement will not advance in the selection process.
- No personal information should appear on the written entry such as student or school name.
- 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.¹

¹ Teachers, please submit names of all students that submit an essay. 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.



Selecting School Finalists

- Each school selects two finalists (one male and one female) from their essays. The two school finalists' essays must be typed: black ink, 12 size font on 8 ½ x 12 paper. No handwritten submissions. Only one side of the paper may be used and the pages should be numbered.
- The names of each school's male and female finalists will be published in this year's local Do the Write Thing Book of Writings. The names of the school finalists will also be recognized on the Michigan Do the Write Thing website.
- One National Ambassador will be selected to represent Michigan and recognized in the national Do the Write Thing Book of Writings.
- Schools need to provide a minimum of 100 student names of students that participated in this year's essay challenge to be considered for the National Ambassador Award. Schools cannot combine their essays with another school's essay numbers.
- All student essays must be received by **Friday, November 21, 2025**.

Selection Criteria for National Ambassador

Entries will be reviewed by the “Do the Write Thing” Committee, a coalition of business, community and governmental leaders that oversees and administers the “**Challenge**” in Detroit. 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.

The one National Ambassadors from Michigan along with one 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 2026.

During past National Recognition Weeks, National Ambassadors have met with United States Supreme Court Judges and clerks, 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 this year's Book of the Writings in the Library of Congress, ensuring that the students' words will be available to for future generations. In addition, students have been honored at embassy receptions hosted by the State of Kuwait.

Additional Resources: Videos

Bullying video to use as an anticipatory set: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rGtYs8cRhs>

Do the Write Thing 20th Anniversary: <http://www.dtwtdetroit.com/>



Do the Write Thing (DTWT) Michigan School Application (Submit School Application via [2026 DtWT Google Entry Form](#))

School Information:

School Name: _____

School Address: _____

School's Main Phone No: _____

Principal's Name: _____

Principal's Email: _____

DTWT Teacher Representative Information:

Teacher's Full Name: _____ T-shirt Size: _____

Teacher's School Phone No: _____ Personal Mobile No: _____

Teacher Mailing Address: _____

School Email: _____

Personal Email: _____

Student Essay Information:

Grades of Students that Participated in the DTWT Essay Challenge: _____

(Only students in 6th, 7th and 8th Grade will qualify for the National Ambassador Award.)

Number of Students that participated in the class discussion about ending youth violence: _____

Number of Student writings submitted from your school: _____

(Only schools with a minimum of 100 student writing submitted will qualify for the National Ambassador Award.)

School's DTWT Student Finalists (The school finalists' essays must be typed):

Female Student Finalist: _____ T-shirt Size: _____

Home Address: _____

Student Email: _____ Parent Phone Number: _____

Parent Name: _____ T-shirt Size: _____

Male Student Finalist: _____ T-shirt Size: _____

Home Address: _____

Student Email: _____ Parent Phone Number: _____

Parent Name: _____ T-shirt Size: _____



Student Writers Roster

To ensure each student receives a certificate with the correct spelling of their name, schools need to submit a roster of all the students that participate in this year's essay challenge. Multiple copies of this document may be made if more than fifty students participate in the essay challenge. Attach this list to the school's DTWT application. Submit school application via [2026 DrWT Google Entry Form](#).

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STUDENT AND PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT STATEMENT

Please Type (Preferred) or Print Legibly in Black/Blue Ink

Thank you for participating in the “Do the Write Thing Challenge.” To have your entry considered for selection as a Student National Ambassador, you and a parent/guardian must complete this student and parent/legal guardian consent form.

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

School: _____ **Student's Phone Number:** _____

Grade: _____ **Parent's Full Name:** _____ **Parent's Phone Number:** _____

Student's Home Address: _____

School's Phone Number: _____ **Student's Gender:** _____

Teacher's Full Name: _____ **Teacher's Phone Number:** _____

Teacher's Email Address: _____

STUDENT AND PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT STATEMENT

The National Campaign to Stop Violence (NCSV), which sponsors the “Do the Write Thing Challenge,” will publish selected students writings and quotations in a book and in a discussion paper on youth violence. Before publishing your writing, the NCSV requires your written consent and the written consent of a parent/legal guardian. If you and your parent/legal guardian agree to permit the NCSV to publish your writing, please sign the statement following: We agree to give ownership of the attached student writing to the National Campaign to Stop Violence so that it can be considered for recognition and published. The NCSV may further disclose the writing to the media and other parties as part of their national program. As writings including factual life experiences may receive favorable response from the judges, we ask that the parent/legal guardian attest that the writing is either true to the best of their knowledge or has been labeled as fictional.

Student's Signature

Date

Parent's Signature

Date

Student's Email Address

Parent's Email Address

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