



TO: All Participating Middle School Principals
FROM: The Honorable Lori A. Dumas, Chair, Do the Write Thing Philadelphia
DATE: September 2019
SUBJECT: 2020 “Do the Write Thing” Challenge

This year we have witnessed students from across the country demand that we, as a nation, ensure their safety and that of their friends, families, schools and communities. They are speaking up, calling on us to listen and to take action to end the violence they face. At the National Campaign to Stop Violence, we are heeding those calls and have been for the past 24 years. Through our hallmark program, the **“Do the Write Thing” (DtWT) Challenge** Program, we seek to empower youth, through their writings, with the ability to reduce youth violence.

By agreeing to include your **6th, 7th and 8th** grade students in the **2020 “Do the Write Thing” Challenge** you will be giving them a voice. Starting this fall, you will be joined by hundreds of other school principals from across the United States in a coordinated, unique effort to give students the opportunity to communicate their thoughts on the impact of youth violence on their lives and to make personal commitments to reduce violence. All costs for this program are generously paid for by our sponsors.

Over the past twenty-four years, the **“Do the Write Thing” Challenge** has proven to be effective in reducing youth violence in schools and communities across the United States. In that time over one million students have accepted the “Challenge” to do something to reduce youth violence. Hundreds of books have been published and circulated containing the words of these students, both locally and nationally. Recent research conducted by the University of Texas at El Paso on the **“Do the Write Thing” Challenge** found the program had a positive impact on the relationship between students, parents and teachers. Participating students exhibited a “greater empathy and understanding for the victims of violence.” Additionally the research showed that participating students show **“more positive behaviors and attitudes towards peers and teachers.”** The program has helped motivate widespread community

involvement aimed at making schools and neighborhoods safer for young people. As a result the “Challenge” is especially proud of the support of thousands of adult volunteers across the country.

The packet enclosed, entitled Instructions for Classroom Teachers explains this year’s “**Do the Write Thing**” Challenge in more detail. This packet includes a letter to participating classroom teachers and information about program rules, entry deadlines, selection criteria, classroom discussions, common core application and student recognition. In addition you will find a brief summary of UTEP’s research outlining the benefits of using the **DtWT Challenge** and information on how OJJDP’s campaign on “Changing Minds” dovetails with the **DtWT Challenge**. Feel free to visit the national Do the Write Thing website, www.dtw.org, to view more information about the Challenge, as well as a video highlighting National Recognition Week.

Please designate one person to be the contact person for your school. This individual will need to collect the completed student writings from your teachers and deliver them to the local coordinator for the National Campaign to Stop Violence. **The deadline for the submission of student writings is 5:00 PM on Friday, March 13, 2020.**

If you have any questions, please contact Brooke Hutchins, Esquire at brooke.hutchins@courts.phila.gov or email dtwtphilly@gmail.com. We wish your students success and hope to see one of your teachers and one of your students in Washington, D.C. next July.