



*Do the Write Thing*  
*Zanesville*



**2023**

**Zanesville City School District**  
middle-schoolers share how  
violence has touched their lives  
and how they choose peace



**DAVE YOST**  
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL



# FROM THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

As Ohio's Attorney General, I am so pleased to have partnered with the Zanesville City School District in the *Do the Write Thing* program for the second year in a row. A total of five Ohio school districts have now participated in the program, and it continues to grow across the state.

The students of Zanesville once again amazed me with their honesty, compassion and critical insight into the violence of their time. These essays most certainly were not easy to write, and often tough to read, but the impact of their words is invaluable to our search for understanding and a more peaceful society.

*Do the Write Thing* provides students the opportunity to speak their own minds and share their thoughts about how to address the violence they have experienced or witnessed. There is true treasure in these writings.

I commend these young people for the courage it took to share their thoughts and ideas, and I hope they continue to look for opportunities to improve their school and community.

I encourage everyone to take time to read the essays in this book. You may be surprised by what you learn, but I know it will leave you proud and optimistic about the generations to come.

Yours,



DAVE YOST  
Ohio Attorney General



# FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

It is both a pleasure and an opportunity for Zanesville City Schools and Zanesville Middle School to have been selected to partner with Mr. Dave Yost and the Ohio Attorney General's Office to provide our students a voice in the *Do the Write Thing* national writing program.

This program provides a platform for our students to express how they have been personally affected by difficult challenges, that are mostly outside of their control, as well as describe potential solutions to those challenges.

It is both heartbreaking and inspiring to read the stories written through the eyes of a 14-year old. And, for the adults in the community and beyond, who have the power to make positive and lasting changes, to once again view the community through the eyes of a child.

It is our hope that these insights will initiate the momentum that is needed to encourage us all to become a leader in creating the type of communities that we all desire to live in.



Sincerely,

**DOUG BAKER, Ed.D.**  
Superintendent  
Zanesville City School District

# ABOUT THE PROGRAM

This book contains a compilation of writings by middle-school students who were selected as the top 10 finalists of the 2023 *Do the Write Thing* program. This book will be shared across the community in recognition of all the students who accepted the challenge to share their voices and help create a safer, more peaceful society.

## Overview of Do the Write Thing

*Do the Write Thing* is a unique national program designed to give middle-school students an outlet to communicate in classroom discussions and then in writing how violence impacts their daily lives. In addition to exposing the causes and effects of violence, students are asked to share their ideas on reducing violence in their community.

The program asks students to express in stories, poems and songs, or in any other written forms, the violence they've faced, with an emphasis on exploring these key questions:

- How does violence affect your daily life?
- 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?

The benefits of the challenge are many. Students gain a greater empathy and understanding for victims of violence and realize that their positive actions can make a difference in their own home, schools and neighborhoods. Teachers gain a better awareness of what is happening in their students' lives and in the school culture. Community leaders benefit from greater understanding of the impact that violence has on youth and learn from the students' stories and ideas for reducing violence.

## Do the Write Thing in Zanesville

During the 2022-23 school year, Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost partnered with the Zanesville City School District for the *Do the Write Thing* program.

The program was well received, with nearly 450 seventh- and eighth-grade students submitting essays.

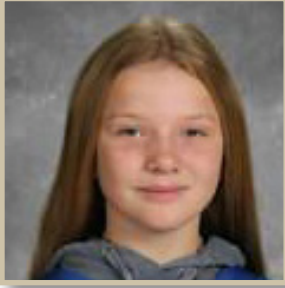
Zanesville community and business leaders volunteered their time to read each essay and choose the 10 submissions most responsive to the key questions. From the top 10, two students were selected to become Ohio ambassadors to the national *Do the Write Thing* conference in Washington, D.C.

A special thank you to all of the community volunteers, teachers, principals and school administrators who helped make *Do the Write Thing* such a great success in Zanesville.



*Do the Write Thing is the flagship program of the National Campaign to Stop Violence and has been in existence for 28 years. It operates programs in 28 cities in 14 states. Over the past 28 years, more than 1.5 million middle school students have participated in the program.*

*The national sponsor for the Do the Write Thing program is the Kuwait America Foundation.*



## ESSAY 1

# FAYTH BEAVER

Zanesville Middle School

### Domestic Violence in Women

Women have had enough with domestic violence and have worked so hard to change the rates. Ever since the Violence Against Women Act passage, domestic violence cases against women have dropped 63% since 1996. Even though there are still many cases, I have confidence that us women can end it together. Domestic violence has affected way too many women and needs to be stopped.

There are so many dreadful causes for domestic violence. My biological mother was a very dishonest and loyal partner when it came to an intimate relationship. That was just the start of the causes to come. The CDC claims the most likely cause for domestic violence between a relationship is differences in childhood. When a child grows up with toxic parenting or lack of love, affection, and attention they tend to give off toxicity due to them only experiencing that. Some other causes consist of drug abuse in childhood homes, delinquent behavior without punishment in childhood, isolation from society, lack of social-solving skills, insecurities, desire for power in relationships. I think aggression is a big cause of domestic violence given the fact most domestic violence cases (that have been reported) are mostly involved with physical abuse. The reason aggression and physical abuse match up is because one way for someone packed with lots of anger (to release it) is to make physical contact. Although, one that really stands out to me is young age. In today's society, young women and men are getting into relationships without fully understanding the concept of a relationship. These young adults (ages such as 8-14) brains haven't even fully developed, nor have they experienced a decent, healthy and long relationship between their parents. Miscommunication is one way to cause difficulty understanding your partner and once you grow distant from your partner, you can adopt many emotions such as anger, sadness, envy, depression, and loneliness. Not to mention drug abuse! Drug abuse is a big cause of domestic violence especially against women. Men seem to party and drink a lot once they get older in fact 58% over the age of 18 drink alcoholic beverages, way over the 49% of women who drink. Also 21 % of men binge drink alcoholic beverages whereas only 13% of women do.

Unfortunately, domestic violence has been one of the biggest effects on my life. Like I've said before, my biological mother was a very unloyal and dishonest partner. Every week was a new lie to a new guy about how she didn't mean to and how it was his fault. One of the best father figures I had she threw away for the pointless reason that he worked too much for our family and she could never have any alone time with him. From then on, it all went downhill. She would be with a different guy so often, which every single one of them was only there for one thing, sexual contact. She paid no attention to the men she was with because she was so desperate for other guys. Her playing all of these men never seemed to slow her down until she got with a man she very soon married. They got married in January 2016, which was a horrible decision. They were always so attached to each other and paid me little to no attention whatsoever. They seemed all nice and friendly in public but behind closed doors they were monsters. They cursed each others names, had major arguments over little things, took drugs such as cocaine, marijuana, and overdosed on sleep meds, abused alcohol privileges. They did all of this with me in the home! Not only were they terrible role models for me and the neighborhood children who came into our home, they forced me to keep all of it secret and to hide if police showed up at the house. After a while, the verbal arguments turned into physical arguments. One specifically turned into the separation of not just their marriage but me and my mothers relationship. My biological mother and her husband were fighting over a movie and were smoking tobacco cigarettes. After a while of arguing, her husband threw a cigarette at her, landing on the bed. As a natural reaction she immediately tried to put it out, resulting in her burning herself. Out of anger, she pushed her husband out of the room trying to protect not only her, but me, who was unfortunately also in the room. Her husband actually ended up falling down a flight of stairs, given that the stairs were right in front of the room. My biological mother immediately rushed downstairs to check on him. Right here is where I knew, from all of the past experiences, this would be one of the most terrific experiences I would come across in that home. Her husband felt attacked and swung



on my mom, causing her nose to break and shift sideways. Immediately my neighbors came over because of the scream and they took me into another room. I was severely affected by this because she was the dearest person in my life and she was hurt. I honestly thought she was going to die. My neighbor picked me up and closed my eyes so I couldn't see. First responders showed up very soon and my biological mother was rushed to the hospital bleeding everywhere. I had to stay at my neighbors house. Although, we lived in a duplex so it was not far. I did not sleep that night, or maybe I did. I don't quite think I slept that night or not. From this experience I have adopted PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder). This makes life very hard for me and certain words, actions, objects, ect., can trigger flashbacks from this event. I've even gone through severe depression because of guilt.

Although, there are many cases of domestic violence, reported or not, there are still many ways to reduce the amount of cases or domestic violence in general. On

the CDC's website, they suggest many hotlines such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline, Love Is Respect; National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, and RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline. Counseling may help separate a person and their intimate partner. It may also help connect the two and help them sort out their differences. There are many counseling centers in Zanesville, Ohio. The best recommended center is called Center for Personal Empowerment (740-450-1615). Some others may include The Counseling Center (740-450-7790) and New Source Counseling Center (800-323-7174).

The trauma that shivers down my spine to this day is one the many outcomes from these occurrences. All because of small disagreements. Small arguments and disagreements, turned into violence, that could have easily been avoided or solved in fact. I suffered abuse in almost all categories, and so many more trauma diagnosis. Us women are literally fighting for our lives, and we need help, you should fight too.



## ESSAY 2

# TRU CAMPBELL

Zanesville Middle School

Violence towards the youth comes in many forms. More than you may think. Youth violence caused by children and parents is what usually gets talked about the most but bullying by a teacher often goes unrecognized. This may sound trivial and something a student would try to say to get out of trouble, but this is something that does happen and is never talked about. Some teachers getting away with ignoring complaints from students and not willing to hear both sides of the story can ruin their willingness to try in class, enjoy school, and it creates missed opportunities to stop youth violence.

Bullying and rudeness by a teacher has happened to me on multiple occasions. One day, in kindergarten my teacher believed the worst kid in the class over me when he lied about something I did. I was in the classroom bathroom to fix my hair and wash my hands since the sink in the classroom was occupied. The kid then peeked into the bathroom without knocking and decided to lie to the teacher and tell her I was making a mess. The teacher believed him completely and I got yelled at for doing nothing. She didn't even question that he walked into the bathroom with me there. I cried to my mom that I didn't do anything and I was devastated. She was my favorite teacher and I was always a good student, so to not be believed like that made me terribly upset. You may think to yourself, "this was kindergarten, it's not that big of a deal," but for someone like me, it was a big deal. From that day forward I never liked her as much and I never trusted her as much and therefore, never fully liked her class as much as I did before. She was unwilling to hear both sides of the story and acknowledge the other student's wrong doings. The actions of a teacher towards a student can hinder their willingness to learn and behave in their class. I've seen students who act terrible for other teachers act amazing for ones who they really like and respect because they talk and socialize with students to make them feel welcome and comfortable in the classroom. This creates an engaging and safe environment for students to learn happily and willingly.

One cause of violence by teachers is another teacher or administrator's unwillingness to acknowledge if another

student or teacher does something mean or rude to a student. In second grade I was terribly bullied by two people who I thought were my friends. One was the son of a teacher. When I finally mustered up the courage to tell his mom, his mom told me he would never do that to someone and that it was terrible of me to lie about him. This was once again, a teacher I trusted and liked up until this point. She refused to acknowledge that her son wasn't a nice person at times and turned it back on me to make it look like I was the bad guy. From that day on I never really went to her for anything unless I had to and, and I could tell she didn't want me to come into her room in the mornings like I used to even though she never told me to my face. Her unwillingness to acknowledge the situation led to even more tormenting and bullying for me. It's situations like this one that can make cases of youth violence go unknown and undiscovered. To help combat this, other teachers and school administrators should pay more attention to complaints towards students and even teachers. If one of the best and well behaved students of their class has something to say about their teacher, then there must be something worth looking into.

I could help combat violence in my school by giving voices to those who's bullying is going unnoticed, and by helping create safe classroom environments where everyone feels welcome and ready to learn. Helping raise awareness to teachers and staff members that this type of violence does exist and it is going unreported, and encouraging classmates to speak up when they are seriously being mistreated by a teacher could help hold teachers accountable for disregarding the cries of students.

Violence towards youth by teachers can result in them not wanting to participate and act disrespectful in class and can put the number of reported cases at a standstill. If this keeps going on, students will not feel safe in school or welcomed by neither students nor staff. If cases aren't being reported, it doesn't necessarily mean that it isn't happening. There has to be a cause of all these students going unnoticed.



### ESSAY 3

# CYSILY DALRYMPLE

Zanesville Middle School

Everybody has some sort of trouble in life. It could be at home, school, or even in a public place. Even though I have few troubles with this subject, I still can get targeted for bullying or violence.

Anybody could also just be the cause. As we are young, past trauma can affect our future. Your brain doesn't finish developing until you are about 25 years old. Youth violence can also lead to them using drugs and could also cause depression.

Some causes of youth violence are neglect, abuse (physically or mentally), bullying or even racism. The list continues. These effects can really affect minors (ages 0-17). These things that cause it could have happened to the people who have done these things to others. For example, Emily (fictional character) is neglected at home, so she bullies others in school.

What can I do about youth violence? Well, depending on what is going on, there are different solutions. Bullying can be ignored or even reported to a trusted adult. You can also stand up for yourself against them. Don't allow them to see your fear. That's what they want. Neglect can be solved by talking to the people who are ignoring you. Or even therapy.

Mental abuse would need therapy as well. Most of the problems can also be solved by talking to somebody you trust. As they can help you throughout the way. Friends, neighbors you trust, and family members can all fit into that category. They can all help you on the way if needed. That's one of the best parts of having friends.

What is my opinion on youth violence? Well, it isn't the best thing to happen to a child. I don't have any experience with this subject, but I know that many people have had this same problem. One of the most used versions is bullying. Bullying can be caused by problems at home, past trauma, or even other bullying.

Home troubles are one of the main causes for bullying. Stuff happens behind closed doors, and most people don't know what it is. At home there may be child abuse, or neglect. These things cause the child to want somebody to feel the same pain as them. So they go bullying other children and or even bully people online. Just to make others feel the exact same way.

Other reasons for bullying are when the person who doesn't like you for being you. But you shouldn't let this harm your feelings. They just wanna see you in pain because they don't like you because you aren't the perfect version that they imagined. Don't change your personality just because people don't like the one you are comfortable with. They just wanna see you weak and powerless. Racism can also kinda fall in this category, but I won't talk about this topic much.

Depression is something that can be caused by these topics. Neglect can lead someone to believe that they are unloved. Abuse has the same causes. Bullying has the effect that they are imperfect and they feel judged, or even unloved. Looks is another big topic on bullying. As they may not look perfect to your standards, let them be, it's their body, not yours. Bullying is one of the largest reasons. We need to avoid it the best we can. Thank you for listening.





## ESSAY 4

# LILY DOLLINGS

Zanesville Middle School

16.6% of teens develop eating disorders before the age of 18. Eating disorders come out of nowhere like when you least expect it. It's never really about food, it's about dealing with personal things the wrong way. There are three types of eating disorders; anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating. I developed anorexia which is basically under eating or not eating at all. I was twelve years old and in sixth grade. It lasted a while through the winter of sixth grade into the end of the summer going into seventh grade.

To begin with, the causes of eating disorders; there have been many studies on (What is the cause of eating disorders) but there isn't one. There are a lot of factors that go into having or developing an eating disorder. Genes are one factor. Studies show that genes can increase one's likelihood of developing an eating disorder. This means teens are at an increased risk if they have a close relative who has suffered from an eating disorder. Having anxiety can also be one of the causes. A lot of studies have shown that most of the youth with an eating disorder show signs of anxiety. And one of the biggest factors that studies have come up with is trauma. Teens who have experienced abuse (emotional, physical, or sexual) are more likely to suffer from an eating disorder. People with trauma feel like they aren't in control of anything and an eating disorder is something they can control and that's why most people develop one because they want to be in control of something.

Following, how eating disorders have affected me; eating disorders have affected my life because I developed one last year. I lost the love for dance the only thing I knew I had I couldn't do anymore because it caused me to be so mentally and physically drained I just couldn't keep up

with it anymore. It affected my health in a lot of ways. At one point in time I was 88 pounds and 5'2 as a twelve year old. I play soccer so it was also very hard on me to keep going with that sport but I somehow managed to do it. I've almost passed out while playing and practicing. I have asthma now which is something that can happen if you don't eat enough. Both of my knees are messed up now because of the muscle I lost in my thighs that connect to the muscles in my knees. Also having an eating disorder helped me cover up my emotions and I thought I was okay but I really wasn't.

Then, what are ways I can reduce eating disorders in teens? Something that I can do is talk about it more because it's more common than you think. I think talking about it more will help other people talk about it. Maybe it'll stop other kids from developing them by knowing the warning signs. But something that Ohio can do is make more support groups because there are only a few. There are a lot in Columbus and Toledo but I don't know any in Zanesville. But there should be more support homes like the "Emily Program". It's a house you can stay in while you're going through an eating disorder. There are nurses there to supervise them all the time. They personalize treatments for their patients there.

95% of people with eating disorders are between the ages of 12 and 25. This topic is really important to me because it affected me for a very long time and eating disorders are very hard to get over and can leave long term damage on your body. I really hope that people can speak up about their eating disorders because I don't want anybody else to go through what I did.



## ESSAY 5

# GIANNA GRANDSTAFF

Zanesville Middle School

“You’re too fat.” “You’re too tall.” “You’re a disappointment.” People, mostly females, are told to look differently; act differently. They feel the need to change themselves to fit into the pretty girl standards. But why do they choose to hurt themselves?

### **What causes self harm?**

Boys tell girls to look different. They tell girls to be skinnier, be shorter, and be in shape. Girls take a lot of things into consideration and they keep it inside until they can’t even function. They feel they should listen to them and change how they look. To fit in. Then they feel worthless. They start to feel that they don’t even need to be here. They start to cut their wrists and bleed. Then it becomes a habit, and becomes a natural thing. She’s slowly killing herself but she doesn’t care anymore because no one thinks she’s even pretty. Everything around her is so stressful. She’s doing bad in school, no one talks to her, boys don’t look at her, her parents think she’s a failure. What’s the point of living if no one knows she even exists?

### **How has self harm affected your life?**

I know people who have felt sad all the time and hurt themselves and I know people who have thought about it. Self harm isn’t just cutting ur wrists until you bleed. It can be an eating disorder, punching yourself,

or anything that hurts your body mentally and/or physically. I developed an eating disorder at a very young age. I thought I needed to look skinnier to make myself look good. To make myself feel good, but all it did was leave me with always being hungry but making myself not eat, eating very little amounts of food, I always joke about it because I still can’t understand how or why I made myself that way. People hear about other people killing themselves. They see the scars on their body. The person with the scars say it’s just what they were born with but they created them.

### **What can you do to reduce self harm?**

The first thing that needs to be done is people need to be nice to other people. Whether or no you don’t like them, you still don’t know what is going on at home. Some people come to school happy as can be, but at home they stay in their home thinking about how worthless they are. There should be programs with people going through the exact same thing. They can help each other become better, and benefit themselves from each other. Help people to help you.

Hurting yourself is not worth the pain that it causes. You’re perfect and beautiful how you are. Help yourself be better, stronger, and healthier. Go to groups; help the people around you become better. Be happier. Be better.



## ESSAY 6

# VIOLET HILL

Zanesville Middle School

### Body Image

Have you ever felt like you weren't perfect enough? Or wish that you looked like someone else because you thought they were what society calls "beautiful"? Well statistics show that at the age of 13 around 53% of American girls are unhappy with their bodies. And unfortunately this expands to nearly 78% by the time girls reach 17. This is why we as people should be more accepting of all people and not feel pressured to look like what society calls being "perfect" or "beautiful", because that can cause a lot of damage to ourselves and our mental health.

To begin, there's many causes for people feeling insecure in their own bodies. For example, bullying and body shaming from others. I've seen many people in my own school be bullied and hated on just for the way they look. And people don't realize how that damages people's physical and mental health. For instance, according to [www.mentalhealth.org.uk/](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/), it says "Having body image concerns is a relatively common experience and is not a mental health problem in and of itself; however, it can be a risk factor for mental health problems. Research has found that higher body dissatisfaction is associated with a poorer quality of life, psychological distress and the risk of unhealthy eating behaviors and eating disorders." Body shaming can lead to unhealthy eating habits such as anorexia, orthorexia, and others.

Furthermore, another cause for insecurity is social media. For instance, according to [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org) it says, "Surveys show that ninety percent of teens ages 13-17 have used social media." This means that a lot of teen girls are being exposed to "idealized" body types along with body negativity. Such as telling young girls they should diet and eat less and try these easy weight loss workouts. Telling them this makes young girls feel like they aren't good enough and causes many issues to their mental and physical health.

In addition, body image has tremendously affected my life. For instance, last year was the most I've struggled with body image. I hated the way my body looked. I felt like I had to be skinnier, prettier, and I was insecure about so many things. This was due to seeing people online who looked perfect and I put myself down just because I didn't look like them. Then, I decided I wanted to make a change to my body, so I started working out and ate less and less. This is probably one of the unhealthiest things I've could've done to my body. I was becoming so weak

and I was scared to eat too much and nobody noticed. I was scared to tell people about it because I didn't want them to worry about me. I didn't realize that I was slowly starving and killing myself and for what reason just to have a 24 inch waist? To have the "ideal" stomach and waist? Furthermore, school didn't make anything better for me. Seeing so many pretty and "perfect" girls. And getting shamed for what I wear. If I dress down I don't try and I'm lazy, but if I dress up I try too hard and I'm showing too much skin. If i don't wear makeup they say i look tired and I should wear more makeup, but if I do wear it they say I wear too much and to wipe my face, and that I'm fake. I feel like no matter what I do people will judge me. As a result of this I've come to the realization that no matter what I wear or what I do somebody is going to judge me for something. So now I feel that I can just do what makes me happy and not worry about others opinions because they are probably insecure as well, and that's why they feel the need to judge others to make themselves feel better.

As a result, we as people need to stop judging others and make a change in society. To begin, we could make a change to help people feel less insecure by normalizing normal things about the human body that society thinks are imperfections. For example we could help by showing these features are normal and beautiful. Such as stretch marks, belly fat, acne, noses, skin color, hair, and many more. We need to normalize these things because there is nothing wrong with you being you because you are an amazing unique individual. In addition, people could also appreciate their body for what it can do, and focus on the positive things you love about yourself. According to <https://seedsofhope.pyramidhealthcarepa.com/> says, "One of the best tips for how to improve body image is to start seeing your body in a positive light, instead of a negative or neutral one. Every persons body has incredible capabilities, even if you feel limited by it at times. Its important to focus on what your body can do. Cultivate gratitude for your body's abilities." This shows that no matter what you look like on the outside you are capable of anything you put your mind to, and you are perfect the way you are.

In conclusion, in the past years I've learned that nobody is perfect, even if they appear perfect and fine on the outside they could be hurting on the inside. This is why we should all be more kind to each other, and not feel like we have to be perfect because there is no such thing. We should show more positivity to our own and others bodies, and realize our "imperfections" are really perfect.



## ESSAY 7 | AMBASSADOR

# AYLAH KING

Zanesville Middle School

### Youth Self-Harm

According to planetofsucces.com, “Self-harm is a coping mechanism to deal with problems and emotional issues.” Self-harm comes in many different forms. Such as, cutting, burning, hitting, and swallowing illegal/toxic substances. I, myself, am a person who self-harms. Today, self-harm is becoming more and more common as the years roll by. Having to live as a person who harms themselves is extremely difficult. Always worrying about if someone is going to catch you doing it, if someone will judge you, make fun of you, if your parents will send you to a ward, or tell somebody. But remembering that you’re not alone, always helps fight the battle.

People self-harm for various reasons. Many feel like they deserve it, they feel alone, they use it as a “punishment”, their emotions become out of control, bullying, abuse, trauma, etc. For example, if they are going through things at home, they could possibly grow up hurting themselves because of the trauma that they have faced as a child. Millions of people around the world have scars, but these are different. These scars leave physical and emotional damage on a person for many years on end. In the article by www.planetofsucces.com, it states, “If you’re confronted with feelings that seem to be unbearable, self-harm may appear to be the only solution to release the pain.” Most people are terrified to ask for help. From time to time, kids/teens are not being believed that they need help. This is a major issue for kids/teens nowadays. If kids are not being believed, then God only knows what will happen to them next.

Self-harm has affected my life tremendously. When I started self-harming, I always felt like a freak. I was in a constant state of worry and fear. When people would look at me, I would overthink everything. Questioning if they saw my scars and/or wounds or not. Day after day, I would cut and cut until I was lying in a pool of my own, delicate blood. Crying, and sobbing for help. But no one heard my screams. I went through all of this alone, and was afraid of what I was going to do next. I was terrified of myself. I felt like a freak.

Self-harm is like an addiction in a way. Once you start, you can’t stop. While self-harm might bring a temporary sense of calmness and allow physical and emotional tension to release, generally right after, it is trailed by a wave of shame and guilt. Then, all of your agonizing feelings come right back.

Self-harm is also a coping mechanism for many. According to www.mind.org.uk, “Self-harm is when you hurt yourself as a way of dealing with very difficult feelings, painful memories or overwhelming situations and experiences.” Self-harm is an extremely dangerous way of coping with emotions and other traumatic events/things. Most people self-harm because of their past and/or the present.

There are many, many reasons how we can help prevent self-harm. One way I know for sure how you and I can help is by checking up on others. According to www.healthnavigator.org.nz, “When someone experiences anxiety or depression, it can be scary, lonely and distressing for them. Showing you care through compassion and kindness can help create a safe space for them to share their feelings.” Showing that you cared for them really makes a difference. Knowing that, someone cares for you is all anyone ever wants. Also, “checking in to see if they are okay or need support can make a world of difference to them,” says www.healthnavigator.org.nz.

Asking for help is an extremely difficult thing to do. Recently, I reached out to our guidance counselor after suffering for 2 years. It was the most difficult thing I have ever done in my life; but knowing that I have people who care and support me, it feels like pounds have been lifted off my shoulders. Millions of people around the world never ask for help for various reasons. For example, they’re scared, they don’t think they need it, etc. But asking for help is one of the most beneficial things to do in a situation like this because once you start, you can’t stop.

Have you ever thought about the mental effects of self-harm? Well, I can tell you. When you go everyday harming yourself, you realize you can’t stop. It makes you go crazy when you don’t harm yourself, like something is off. It also makes you feel worthless, alone, and afraid. Today, self-harm is one of the most common things in teenagers. If you’re struggling with your mental health, suicidal thoughts, self-harm, or anything that can harm you in the long run, don’t be afraid to ask for help. You can always talk to someone, even if it’s your best friend, guidance counselor, therapist, parent/legal guardian, or someone you trust. In the wise words of Leila Sales,

“Throughout it all, you are still, always, you: beautiful and bruised, known and unknowable.”



## ESSAY 8

# TRIO LADD

Zanesville Middle School

A child, treated like an object, a mind, ruled by nothing but sadness and anger, an ocean of tears, cried every single day, eyes, beat red from no sleep, trying to avoid the inevitable ... school. It was here I experienced this everyday. A person craving the gift of knowledge, cursed with the punishment of abuse. I was irrelevant to everyone else. My only use was to get picked on for their own sick amusement. It was like I wasn't even there, an outsider in a world full of people who fit in so well. I wanted to be like them, I wanted to fit in. But when I tried, they made fun of me. Over, and over again.

They pushed me to the edge, they never let up, they never stopped. But in the end it was always the same result. Someone was crying in pain, and it wasn't me. I hurt someone, I let my rage control me. But the teachers didn't see everything, they never really cared. They were too busy with their own lives to focus on the lives of the children under THEIR care. They never asked if I was ok, they didn't ask for MY side of the story, they didn't feel the pain I had experienced, think the thoughts I thought, do the things I did. So in the end, I was never the victim in their eyes. It was always my fault.

This was my life, and I know this is the life of many others. Some go through bullying. Going to school everyday just to get hurt, treated like the dirt on someone's shoes, thrown away like useless scraps no one wants. Some go through abuse. Their parents treating them like property, not like a child. Beating them, abusing them, breaking them physically, and mentally. Some go through gun violence. Walking home and hearing shots in the distance, worrying that your own home isn't safe, never knowing if you will be next.

Children everywhere experience this, from kids looking at colleges, to kids still learning simple multiplication. They are treated like this. They are bullied to the brink of suicide, they are abused until they run away and live on the streets, they are exposed to gun violence until they become a victim, or a suspect. Children are our future. We are what our childhood makes us, we don't want to be raised like

this. We may be small, but there is strength in numbers, and there are billions of us willing to stand up and say, no more. We need to stand up and stop this. If we see someone getting bullied, we must act. We cannot let it go unchecked any longer. And if you are a bully, stop and use your brain. Think about what you are doing, consider the consequences, think of what you might be doing to that child's life. Because before you know it, that child will be no longer with us. If you are getting abused, call the cops. There is a difference between discipline, and harassment. You are a human being, you do deserve to be treated as such. If you experience gun violence, then please, stay safe. This world is a dangerous place, full of merciless people. Do not get involved in it, at any cost.

But at the end of the day, we are just kids. We don't have the power to make big changes. Our voices are not loud enough to be heard worldwide, but your voices are. Adults have the power to make these changes, if you're a teacher and you see bullying, do something about it. It isn't teasing, it's abuse. Act like it before the blood of an innocent child is on your hands. If you know a child is getting abused, call the cops. You are an adult, if anyone has the power to do that, it's you. And if you're a parent, and you hit your child, don't do it out of anger, do it out of discipline. It is NEVER acceptable to punch your kid. And if you're an adult who experiences gun violence in your area, you must do everything possible to protect your child. Anything can happen, the mind of the insane is unpredictable.

We go through things, things you might not, and may never understand. But we bleed the same color. We are humans just like you. And we need your help. We want the freedom and peace so we can go to school without worry. We want the feeling of entering our homes to a caring, and loving family everyday. We want our homes to be a welcoming haven. Our schools to be a place of friends and knowledge. We no longer want to live in fear. We must work together. We must treat each other with love. We must do the right thing.



## ESSAY 9

# CYAIRA WALLACE

Zanesville Middle School

### Gun Violence Towards Schools

Did you know the United States has had 139 school shootings since the year of 2018? The amount of school shootings that happen each year is crazy and very sorrowful. As the generations go on, we need to protect our children from gun violence toward schools. After being educated on this subject, I feel gun violence towards schools should be put to rest.

There are many causes of gun violence towards schools; one of these is bullying. According to Alfred University's 'Why do Shootings Occur?', more than 86% of a group of students agree that school shootings can be caused by other kids picking on them, making fun of them, or bullying them. Another cause is childhood trauma in one's lifetime. Michigan ACE Initiative 'Experts note connection between adverse childhood experiences, mass shooters' article states "The vast majority of shooters experienced early childhood trauma and exposure to violence at a young age. The nature of their experience included parental suicide, physical or sexual abuse, neglect, domestic violence and/or severe bullying." Lastly, bad mental health can cause gun violence towards schools. Examples of bad mental health can consist of: depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders, and/or addictive behaviors. Bad mental health can come from lots of things including childhood trauma, bullying, traumatic experiences, grief, etc.

Has gun violence towards schools affected my life?

Unfortunately, gun violence towards schools has affected my life in multiple ways. One of those ways is being scared to go to school. After hearing about all the shootings that have happened on the news or even going into soft lockdowns have scared me to go to school because you never know what can happen. Sometimes when my anxiety gets the best of me, I get so worried and scared about what will happen at school. Adding on, school shootings have also affected my life by not feeling safe at school. As I stated previously, hearing what is able to happen to my school or any schools for that matter doesn't make me feel safe. Additionally, it's sad that students feel this way about school. No one should feel unsafe in an environment that you are at for about eight hours a day for five days a week. Finally, gun violence towards schools has affected my life by not knowing if I will

make it home or not from school. This also ties into being scared to go to school and not feeling safe as well. As stated previously, no student should feel this way about school and it's very downhearting that I'm not the only student, let alone person that feels this way.

How can we prevent gun violence towards schools? We can reduce easy access to dangerous weapons, especially to children. This also includes people that have been abusive or violent towards family members, and people with any violent convictions. The government can supply background checks for people that want to buy a lethal weapon. Furthermore, we can insist on mandatory training and licensing for owners. According to the Prevention Institute's 'Gun violence must be stopped. Here's what we can do to prevent more deaths.' "This training should include recurring education to renew permits, with a graduated licensing process at least as stringent as for driver's licenses." Additionally, this license should be mandatory for anyone that is wanting to buy a gun, and all gun owners. When registering this license, background checks, drivers license, or any identification should be checked before being able to have the license. Lastly, we can prevent gun violence from schools by raising the legal age to buy a gun to 21. According to Everytown Research & Policy's 'How Can We Prevent Gun Violence in American Schools?', "This policy can help block gun sales to teenagers. Data shows that 18-to 20- year olds commit gun homicides at a triple the rate of adults to 21 and older. The shooter at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida was 19 years old. Under federal law, he could not have bought a handgun at a store. Yet he was legally allowed to buy the AR-15 assault-style rifle he used in the shooting because Florida law did not prohibit residents between 18 and 21 years old from buying long guns. Florida has since changed its law to prohibit the sale of firearms to people under 21 years old."

From all the data gathered above, it is clear to say gun violence towards schools should be put to rest. Gun violence towards schools is a big problem in the United States of America; and this sick virus needs to be stopped immediately. No child should ever feel scared to enter a school let alone a classroom. So what will you do to help children stay safe and comfortable at school?



## ESSAY 10 | AMBASSADOR

# EVAN WOERNER

Zanesville Middle School

Peer Pressure is defined as “A feeling that one must do the same things as other people of one’s age and social group in order to be liked or respected by them.” My number one fear is being pressured into doing something that I don’t want to do, that might affect me for the rest of my life. Diana Grant explains this idea by saying, “It is better to walk alone than with a crowd going the wrong direction.” This is how I choose to live my life in order to overcome peer pressure.

Young people can feel pressure from their peers to solve problems through violence. Television, movies, and social media glamorize using your fists as a way to solve problems. These visual outlets often show individuals using violence as the alpha, the strongest, or the hero. This is a false portrayal because a hero should be able to use their words and be the bigger person by solving their problems in a civilized manner. For example, if there is a scuffle among students in the hallways at school, the first thing that many young people would do is to reach for their phone to record the fight for views and likes on social media. They think that by doing this they will gain popularity and notoriety online, but in the end they are hurting themselves in the long run by ruining their reputation. These videos give the perception that the person posting is immature and disrespectful. When I see people laughing, recording and sharing footage of altercations, I feel disappointed and worried because one day my peers and I will be leaders in our community and this isn’t how leaders should behave.

Another wrong turn for a young person might be to vandalize property to appear fearless in front of their friends. Teens might decide to spray paint words or artwork on a building for others to see and know that they left their mark. Kids in my community have laughed about throwing rocks at people’s homes and cars. They think it is funny if they break a window. I choose to not laugh at or participate in these activities because they could lead to having

problems with the police. Even more so, the people who’s possessions are getting damaged have worked countless hours to earn the money to buy and fix up their homes. They don’t deserve to have their property destroyed. In addition, a person sitting in their living room when a rock flies through the window, could feel unsafe in their own home. A person’s home is their safe place.

Many young people also get lost by taking drugs or vaping. Many kids associate drugs and vaping with a party atmosphere. They think these substances can enhance their experience and their popularity with their friends. The widespread use of vaping devices is evident in school policy and security. Many schools like mine, have installed detectors in restrooms that alert administration when vapor is in the air. I think it is sad that so many of my peers have decided to ruin their health and reputation for something as insignificant as a vape. The chemicals in a vape can contain metals that you are inhaling into your body, and this can cause hardening in your lungs and possibly death. Adults that see you using a vape can not only get you into trouble, but they may see you as immature as well.

A roadmap that I could offer to other youths, would be to keep your circle of friends limited to a small group of people that have the same values that you do. I would rather have a group of 10 real friends that care about me and my future than have 100 fake relationships that wouldn’t stand beside me when I have to make a difficult choice to not follow the crowd into a bad situation.

In conclusion, despite the fact that many of my peers may choose to walk a path that leads to violence, vandalism or drugs, that path does not lead to where I want to go. These choices, that may seem small now, could lead to large consequences in the future, like jail or physical harm. Instead, my small group of friends and I choose to take a different path even if no one else follows. I think taking this route may be more difficult, but it is worth the trouble.









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# Do the Write Thing 2023

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