

Do Something about... School Violence Unit

Day 8: Zero Tolerance

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Title – Do Something about... School Violence Unit

Day 8: Zero Tolerance

By – Do Something, Inc. / www.dosomething.org

Primary Subject – Social Studies

Secondary Subjects –

Grade Level – 9-12

Do Something about...
School Violence
10-Day Unit

The following lesson is the eighth lesson of a 10-day School Violence Unit from Do Something, Inc. Other lessons in this unit are as follows:

Day 1: Bullying

Students will be introduced to the unit and learn the definition of bullying

Day 2: What's life like in my shoes?

Students will learn about bullying in the news and take on the perspective of someone being bullied.

Day 3: Mean Girls

Students will explore the differences and similarities of female and male violence.

Day 4: School Zones

Students will talk about safety in their own school.

Day 5: Groupthink

Students will learn about gangs and the theory of groupthink.

Day 6: Stand Up!

Students will learn about diffusion of responsibility and discuss how they should play a role in protecting others.

Day 7: Responsibility

Students will learn about the principal of diffusion of responsibility and techniques that can help them if they are ever a victim of violence.

Day 8: Zero Tolerance (See the lesson below)

Students will investigate zero tolerance laws and learn about the difficulties schools face when deciding how to handle school violence.

Day 9: Still I Rise

Students will learn about how to find inner strength and cope with bullying.

Day 10: Bully Pulpit

Students will launch an anti-bullying campaign in their school.

More student resources for this cause are at:
www.dosomething.org/causes/school_violence

For more Service-Learning Curricula check out:
www.dosomething.org/oldpeople

Day 8: Zero Tolerance

Goal:

Students will investigate zero tolerance laws and learn about the difficulties schools face when deciding how to handle school violence.

Vocabulary:

- Zero Tolerance

Process:

1. Ask students if they know what kind of policy their school has for students that are violent. Have they ever seen this policy in action? How is this policy communicated to students?
2. Have students find out their states policy on school violence:
3. Introduce students to the concept of zero tolerance. “**Zero Tolerance** is a term used to describe a non-discretionary rules enforcement policy. Under a system of zero tolerance, persons in positions of authority – who might otherwise exercise their discretion in making subjective judgments regarding the severity of a given offense – are instead compelled to impose a pre-determined punishment” (wikipedia.com)
4. Read about zero tolerance cases in any of the following articles:
 - (<http://www.thisistrue.com/zt.html>): “Losing my tolerance for zero tolerance”
 - <http://hepg.org/main/hel/Index.html>: Pros and cons of the law
 - <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSDFS/gfsaguidance.html>: Description of laws

5. Tell students that today they will taking on the perspective of a school board council reviewing different cases related to bullying and school violence. Each group should review the cases and rate them in order of severity of crime committed.
 - **Case 1:** Susan creates an “I hate Myra” blog which invites people to list reasons why they dislike Myra. She writes in this blog after school everyday. Other students are also starting to write about Myra. Myra’s parents report this to the school board. What should be done?
 - **Case 2:** Tyler and a group of three friends have been seen by students and teachers to be picking on a boy in a wheelchair. They insult him and threaten to steal his chair. The boys’ parents come to the school board for help. What should be done?
 - **Case 3:** Raymond was beaten up after school by a group of kids in a gang. He shows up to school with black and blue marks. Other students have also witnessed this group physically picking on Raymond. His parents want the gang expelled.
 - **Case 4:** Justin brings a knife into school. Another student reports it. He says he was bringing it in to show another student. He has no history of violence.
 - **Case 5:** Louis curses out his teacher and threatens to beat her up. The teacher brings the case to the school board. Louis has had many reports of being disruptive in class, but never to this extent.
6. Students should discuss each of the cases and what kinds of action they think should be taken with each of the students involved. Each group should contain school board members and a parent representative of the “bully” and the “victim” of the bullying.
7. They should investigate the following questions:
 - Are all of the acts violent?
 - What makes one act more violent than another?
 - Is an incremental punishment strategy or “maximum” punishment strategy more effective for these cases?
8. Afterwards, the groups should share their decisions with the class. What made these decisions difficult? Are you surprised by how other groups handled these cases?

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