

The logo for The Weiner Nusim Foundation, featuring the text "The Weiner Nusim Foundation" in white serif font on a black square background with a small white starburst in the top left corner.

The
Weiner
Nusim
Foundation

The Weiner Nusim Foundation
P.O. Box 295, Easton, CT 06612, (203) 459-0358

Violence in your school... What would you do?

Dear Principal:

The devastating consequences to families and communities that can occur when children have easy access to firearms has become all too clear in recent months.

The unfortunate statistics speak for themselves:

- On any given day 100,000 American children and teenagers will take a weapon to school.
- The rate of firearm injuries today—most of which are caused by handguns—is 10 times greater than the polio epidemic that occurred during the first half of this century.
- A study of eighth and ninth grade boys and girls found that 25 percent had been victims of nonsexual dating violence and 8 percent had been victims of sexual violence on a date.

As a former educator, I share with you a growing concern that increasing numbers of young people in this country are exposed to or involved in violence—at home, in the community and even at school.

That is why I urge you to use the appropriate

classroom Discussion and Activity Ideas in this guide. These age-specific Discussion and Activity Ideas were developed to help teachers at all levels stimulate discussion and learning in order to prevent violence before it happens. Classroom discussion will reinforce the critically important messages about the consequences of violence and the actions young people and their parents can take to help prevent it.

The Weiner Nusim Foundation, a non-profit organization that delivers free public-service educational programs to school and community groups, is happy to be able to send this vital material to you. Although the material is copyrighted, you may make as many photocopies as necessary to meet your needs. To further increase awareness of the program, please place the poster on the reverse side of this letter in a prominent location in your school.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Roberta Nusim".

Roberta Nusim

Roberta Nusim
The Weiner Nusim Foundation

The Weiner Nusim Foundation

The Weiner Nusim Foundation provides top-quality, imaginative, effective and educationally sound educational programs. These programs are designed to provide teachers and community groups with free public-service print and electronic educational resources that increase learning while requiring minimum preparation time, and to provide students of all ages with highly motivational interactive educational materials in formats that have unique appeal. The Foundation's policies are intended to foster an open exchange of ideas in an educational or community-based environment.

Elementary School Teachers

Teach Your Students About the Consequences of Violence

Discussion and Activity Ideas

1. Talk with students about actions they can take to help prevent violence from happening. Let them know they're not being tattletales if they tell a teacher or other responsible adult when they hear or see something they don't think is right. Ask students to name situations when it would be "okay to tell"—when they see a student with a gun, knife or other weapon (even if they think it might be a toy); when a student makes a threat to hurt someone; or when they find out that a friend is being abused. For younger children, you might present the "no" "go" "tell" approach. When students feel uncomfortable about a person's behavior, or an event, they should trust their feelings and say "no," "go" (leave the scene) and "tell" an adult.

2. Video games have many positive aspects: Playing the games helps introduce children to technology and gives them practice in following directions; some games provide practice in problem solving and logic; and games can help children improve their fine motor and spatial skills. But, many video games are based on plots of violence, aggression and gender bias. In many games the action involves killing, kicking or shooting—and some students may have difficulty separating violence in the game from inappropriate behavior in real life. Ask students to talk about the kinds of video games they prefer. Why do they like them? How would it feel to be actually kicked or conked on the head with a board? Are there other, less violent games they like to play? Students might work in groups to "invent" a new, nonviolent game that would be fun to play.

3. Like violent video games, violence on television may cause some children to think that such behavior is appropriate or even funny. Talk with your students about actions that take place in the shows they watch. Do students think that watching violence on television can encourage a person to be violent? How does cartoon violence differ from violence in real life? (A real person probably wouldn't be able to jump right back up after being hit on the head, for example.) Ask your students to count the number of violent acts that occur as they watch their favorite shows. As students report their findings, create a list that ranks the shows from least to most violent.

4. Plan a safety-first program. Have students brainstorm safety ideas—being safe at home (how to respond to phone calls when home alone, not opening the door to strangers, etc.) and avoiding unsafe places, for example. Students can work in groups to create presentations, posters, skits, etc., to explain their safety tips. They can share these materials with another class or in a school safety assembly.

5. Plan an "Officer of the Month" program. Once a month or grading period, invite a different safety officer—from local police, fire and rescue, sheriff, or fish and game departments—to have lunch with your class and talk about what they do to ensure people's safety. After the visit, have each student create a page about the visitor in an Officer of the Month notebook. Be sure to have students write thank-you notes, too.

6. Create a "Peaceable Classroom." Peaceable Classroom is an approach that integrates lessons about conflict resolution into daily classroom activities. To begin, talk with students about things they would like to see in their peaceable classroom: no fighting over supplies, no pushing or name calling, children working well together and sharing, etc. List ideas on the chalkboard or a poster and review them regularly with students. Teach students simple techniques they can use when they are getting angry: for example, walking away and counting to ten or talking about how they feel ("right now I feel angry because . . ."), rather than raising their voice, saying something unkind or acting out in a physical way. Give them ample opportunity to practice working together cooperatively and sharing. To extend the activity you might have students develop a slogan that describes their peaceable classroom, or write and illustrate stories about what they have learned about living peaceably.

Resources

Handgun Control, Inc. & The Center to Prevent Handgun Violence: cphv.org
National Crime Prevention Council: ncpc.org
National School Safety Center: nssc1.org
National Youth Gang Information Center: iir.com/nygc
Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program: ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS
Street Law, Inc.: streetlaw.org

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If you suspect a student in your class needs help, talk with your principal and school health professionals to determine what action should be taken.

Middle School Teachers

Teach Your Students About the Consequences of Violence

Discussion and Activity Ideas

1. Ask students to talk about times when they became so upset that they lost control. What happened? How did they respond—by hitting or shoving, or with angry words? How did they feel after the incident was over and they had calmed down? Students might brainstorm ways to avoid being drawn into situations when they could lose control: taking a deep breath and counting silently to ten and then talking the problem out, changing the subject or simply walking away, for example. Challenge students to use the techniques they listed, and, on a regular basis, ask students to share their “success stories.”
2. Talk with students about the importance of telling a teacher, parent or other responsible adult when they suspect another student is considering a violent act; when they see a student with a gun, knife or other weapon (even if they think it might be a toy); when they are threatened; or when they hear another student being threatened or suspect a friend is being abused. Ask students to share experiences when they have encountered a potentially violent situation. What did they do? What happened? Would they do the same thing now?
3. Ask students to make a list of their favorite television shows. Next to each name, have them write “yes” or “no,” to indicate whether or not they think each show is violent. Then, tell them to keep a television violence log for a week. As they watch their favorite shows, they are to count the

incidences of violence in each one. At the end of the week, ask students to report on their findings. Were the shows more violent than they thought? Which shows were most violent? Do they think all the violence is necessary? To complete the exercise, ask each student to choose one program and create a storyline for it that does not involve any violence.

4. Graffiti is often gang—and violence—related. Have students plan and implement an anti-graffiti campaign for the school or community. Students can develop slogans, create posters, and write public-service announcements for the school public address system and even the local radio station. They also might plan and coordinate a work day to remove graffiti from the school grounds or from a location in the community.

5. Gun-control issues have been hotly debated for years. Challenge students to hold their own debate. Divide the class into two teams—for and against gun control. Each team will do research and develop arguments to support its position. Present the debate in front of another class. At the conclusion of the debate, ask the listeners to react to the arguments they heard. Did they change their minds about gun control?

6. Students might develop a school-wide “Peace Pledge” campaign to encourage others to settle disagreements without violence and to work for a safe school for all. Students can create a slogan for their campaign or challenge other classes in a slogan contest, design posters and write

announcements for the public address system. They might work with the student council to plan a Peace Pledge assembly with skits that illustrate ways to avoid violence and a talk by a local law enforcement officer or juvenile court judge. Finally, they should write a brief Peace Pledge and determine how and when they will get students to sign it. They might design a giant Peace Pledge banner for display in the cafeteria and give each student who signs it a piece of candy and a ribbon to wear, for example. To extend the activity, students can work to make sure Peace Pledge Day becomes an annual event at your school.

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High School Teachers

Teach Your Students About the Consequences of Violence

Discussion and Activity Ideas

1. If your students are like most teenagers, they are quick to announce, "I can handle it." They may be reluctant to share information about troubled friends because they don't want to betray a confidence or because they don't believe a situation is that serious. Talk with students about news reports they've seen about teen violence. How many times have they heard someone tell a reporter, "I didn't think he (or she) was serious.?" What were the consequences? How would students handle a situation when a friend threatened violence toward him- or herself or someone else? Talk with students about safe, positive ways they can ensure a violence-prone friend gets help.

2. Graffiti is often gang—and violence—related. Have students plan and execute a graffiti assessment to determine where the problem areas in your community are. Ask them to identify reasons why certain areas might be more attractive to "graffiti artists" than others (lack of lighting, isolation, general unattractiveness of the site, presence of other graffiti, etc.), and to consider possible remedies. Then, have them develop presentations, make the appropriate contacts, present their ideas to government and community leaders and launch a campaign to create a more graffiti-proof community.

3. Gun-control issues have been hotly debated for years. Ask each of your students to develop his or her case for or against gun control, and to prepare a five-minute statement to support that case. Invite another class to hear the presentations and determine which arguments were most compelling. (You will need to poll your students to ensure that both sides of the issue are adequately represented before proceeding with this activity. If necessary, ask for volunteers to "switch sides.") Conclude the activity by asking students to work in small groups to develop what they think would be the best possible gun laws.

4. Ask your students what they think constitutes date violence. Does it have to result in serious injury, or can it be more subtle—like grabbing an arm and holding it too tight? What strategies can they suggest for avoiding date violence, or for dealing with a violent or potentially violent situation they encounter? Should they always report date violence, or is it sometimes so minor that there's no need to make a big deal out of it?

5. Talk with students about what violence means to them, and about the kinds of violence they see on television. Then, ask students to keep a log of all the violence they see on television for one week and to record the incidents by category (deadly violence, violence in sports, etc.) and by type of program (news, sports, cartoons, comedy, drama, news magazine, etc.). Have students present their findings to the class and then work together to chart the data they have collected to create a class report. Ask students to research the effects of exposure to violence on young people. Do they agree with the researchers? Why, or why not? What do they think the findings say about the future of our society?

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