

# Teacher's Guide

Interesting, Fun, and Effective  
Classroom Activities  
To Influence Teen Dating Violence  
Awareness and Prevention

# Suggested Classroom Activities

## WEB PAGE DESIGN CLASS, COMPUTER APPLICATIONS CLASS, DESKTOP PUBLISHING CLASS, OR VIDEO PRODUCTIONS CLASS

- Depending on skill level and software availability, have students develop an interactive game, quiz, or automatic slide show/presentation dealing with teen dating violence awareness. (This can be done in anything from custom-animated PowerPoint to basic programming/authoring tools.) Consider setting the finished product up in the cafeteria as a kiosk and encourage students “test” themselves to see how much they know about the topic.
- Have your students incorporate their skills into producing something to raise awareness about teen dating violence. Depending on their skill level, students could create brochures to be placed in the school office, restrooms and locker rooms; an announcement could be aired in the school television broadcast system; or a web page could be featured on the school’s website.

## MATH CLASS

- Help students to develop an anonymous school survey that will measure their peers’ attitudes and behaviors concerning dating relationships. After administering the survey, compile the results and calculate the probability that a student in the school will be a victim (or perpetrator) of teen dating violence. Present your findings to your school administration, school board, or parent group.
- Work with your students to develop an anonymous school survey that will measure their peers’ attitudes and behaviors concerning dating relationships. Data from the survey can be used to practice additional skills such as:
  - measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode)
  - graphing data in a variety of forms
  - applying probability ratios to different populations (i.e. school, city, state, country) to determine the number of people affected; for example, if there is a probability that 1 in 5 teens will be a victim of dating violence, how many teens will be affected in your state? Population estimates for city, county, state, and country can be found at Census Quick Facts, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>



## GOVERNMENT/CITIZENSHIP CLASS

- Have the students role-play a debate between state legislators. They can pretend they are debating in one of the chambers of your Capitol Building, or on a television political news show. Applying their knowledge of state law and policy, the students should debate the following topic: “Teens should (or should not) have the ability to file their own protective orders in a violent teen dating relationship.”
- Applying your state statutes, conduct a “mock trial” of a teen dating violence case. Assign students to act in the roles of the judge, the prosecuting attorney, the victim’s attorney, the accused and the victim. The judge and attorneys must integrate the state statutes into their individual courtroom roles: during the attorney’s opening and closing arguments; as the judge presides over the courtroom scene; and during the questioning of the victim and accused. Let the remaining students act as the jury and deliberate innocence or guilt.
- Help your students make a formal request that local government leaders proclaim “Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week” in your area. Have a group of students be present during the official proclamation signing. Invite the news media to cover the event, or submit a news release.
- Discuss the role of citizens as activists and agents of change, particularly in the area of youth/teen advocacy and relationship violence prevention. As a class, identify an opportunity to influence change, such as:
  - Volunteer or participate in a local event to show support of teen dating violence prevention.
  - Hold a bake sale, car wash, etc. to raise money to donate to an organization that addresses teen dating violence prevention.
- Research relevant laws in your state and in other states. Write a letter to your senator expressing support for a specific issue related to the law and teen dating violence prevention.
- Have students review existing school policies concerning sexual harassment and dating and sexual violence. Discuss whether additional policies are needed to protect students who have been targets of these behaviors. They may wish to put their thoughts in writing in the form of a proposal to the school administrator or school board.

## DRAMA OR THEATER CLASS

- Assist students to enact a mock teen dating violence incident, demonstrating how violent behavior escalates. Include the roles that friends, family, teachers, bystanders and others may play in these situations. Include community groups in the enactment as appropriate. Follow-up with a discussion about what occurred. Discuss the obligation of all those involved, as well as school safety issues and strategies.
- Invite your students to create a dramatic scene in which they confront a friend who is in an abusive relationship or a friend who is treating a boyfriend or girlfriend in a hurtful or disrespectful manner. Bring in a local teen dating or domestic violence organization representative to discuss different approaches.
- Through discussion or debate, ask students to investigate whether “Romeo and Juliet” was a “great love story” or “a compelling story of love addiction.” Have students write a summary essay supporting their decision. Identify other plays, movies, or musicals that depict healthy or unhealthy relationships.
- Have your students use improvisational acting skills to interview a potential boyfriend or girlfriend before going out on a date with them. Discuss what kinds of questions they would ask to determine whether their potential date will be respectful?
- Have your students role play behaviors that are warning signs of an abusive relationship. Refer to the Toolkit’s “Warning Signs” for ideas. (“Warning Signs” can be found in the Toolkit’s Prevention Recommendations book.)

## FAMILY/CONSUMER SCIENCE CLASS

- Have your students perform research to find local professionals and organizations that can provide intervention services for a teenager who believes they are in a violent or potentially violent relationship. Have them report the results back to the entire class and submit a summary to the campus newspaper.
- Bring a representative from an appropriate community organization into the classroom to talk about teen dating violence and discuss services specific to teen dating violence. Your students could submit a short story and a list of services to the high school campus newspaper.
- Study the relationship between spousal abuse and child abuse. What are the effects of domestic violence on children? What similar factors are associated with dating violence perpetration?

## ART CLASS

- Using a life-size human shape, along with cut-outs from butcher paper and a variety or specific selection of materials (e.g. fabrics, yarns, papers, markers, clay, chalk, etc.), have students creatively and artistically create a visual representation of a person involved in a violent relationship (vs. a person involved in a healthy relationship.) Place them in a school location where they can be seen by other students and school personnel. Have the artists write a description to display with their artwork.
- Divide the class into pairs or groups and assign each pair/group a door in the school. Conduct a “Healthy Relationships” door decorating contest! To encourage student body awareness/participation, the student body can vote on their favorite door.
- Make a collage with pictures and words to illustrate the messages teens hear and see about intimate relationships in the media, music, from parents, and peers, to illustrate healthy vs. abusive relationships, or to illustrate what they want from a partner in a healthy relationship.

## HEALTH SCIENCE CLASS

- Discuss relationship violence, the spectrum of violence (physical, social, emotional, psychological, verbal) and the continuum of violence. Have the students research the associated health problems beforehand. Conduct a class discussion about the adverse health effects of a violent teenage dating relationship, such as eating disorders, depression, suicide, unwanted sex, sexually transmitted disease, pregnancy, etc.
- Create a survey to anonymously and randomly survey the student body regarding their experience or awareness of the problem of relationship violence on the campus. Ask health-related questions in your anonymous survey. For example, one question might be, “Have you been in a violent or controlling dating relationship?” and a follow-up question might be, “If you answered ‘yes’ to the previous question, did your experience cause real or potential health problems, such as feelings of depression, thoughts of suicide, disordered eating behaviors, drug or alcohol use? Please explain.” Report the results back to the class and submit an article to the campus newspaper.
- Research and discuss why domestic violence is considered a major public health problem. Ask your students if any of the health concerns are also associated with teen dating violence. Talk about which strategies are considered most effective in preventing domestic violence from a public health perspective, and if any might also apply to teen dating violence prevention?

## ENGLISH CLASS

- Hold a class discussion or debate addressing whether "Romeo and Juliet" is a 'great love story' or 'a compelling story of love addiction.' Have your students write a summary essay supporting their position.
- Have your students write a comparative paper discussing, 'how it feels to be loved,' versus 'how it feels to be controlled.' Have the class discuss their views.
- Using the Toolkit's Facts and Warning Signs, ask your students to define "teen dating violence."
- Challenge your students to write an article for the school or community newspaper on the issue of teen dating violence and prevention. Have the work judged by a panel of local journalists. Ask that the winning article be highlighted during the National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week or immediately afterward.
- Ask your students to read and analyze reports from newspapers and websites about dating violence and discuss how these stories are told. What words are used to describe acts of dating violence?
- Have the students read an article on teen dating violence or relationship violence and complete the following assignment:

### *Sample Assignment Sheet*

- State the topic.
- Write a citation for your article.
- Write a short article summarization.
- State the article's main facts and opinions.
  - Paraphrase one example of each.
  - Draw an inference from the facts.  
*(Be careful that you are not just paraphrasing the facts.)*
- Write 2-4 sentences about the article's 'tone.' *(the author's attitude toward his subject).*
  - Quote words or phrases from the article which set the tone.
- Develop your vocabulary
  - Choose two words from the article that you did not know previously.
  - For each of the words, quote a sentence from the article that uses them.
  - Write what you think each word's definition is, based on context.  
*(Use your knowledge of roots and prefixes to help you determine the 'best guess' definition.)*
  - Write the dictionary definition of each word.
  - Write your own sentence(s) using the words.

- Invite students to interview one or more older relatives or neighbors about dating customs and beliefs in the past. They might tape-record the interview, with permission, and write a report about what they learned.
- Ask your class to write poetry about the meaning of love, respect, friendship or other related topics.

## SCIENCE CLASS

- Around the topic of “teen dating violence,” Have your students practice using their research skills, including:
  - Collecting background research (5 sources).
  - Applying experimental design skills, use a survey to conduct an experiment.  
For example, ask questions like the following:
    - Does the gender of the interviewer and interviewee affect survey results?
    - Do responses vary based on whether the survey is conducted one-on-one or in a group setting?
    - Does the social context setting affect survey responses (e.g. if the survey is conducted in the boys locker room after PE vs. in science or math class)?
      - Develop a hypothesis.
      - Identify dependent and independent variables.
      - Conduct research.
      - Analyze the data.
      - Develop a conclusion and a discussion.

## HISTORY CLASS

- Assign students to research the historical timeline and social views of domestic violence, from when it was a “private family matter” to when it became a crime. Direct them to look at what occurred during those transitions, and to discuss in their paper any similarities to the current issue of teen dating violence. They should include information on legal statutes, and close with their summary of the findings, including their own opinion. Have students present their papers and discuss their findings and opinions.
- Ask the class to analyze the history of the Constitution in terms of power structures and equal rights (e.g. from land-owning, white men to women, minorities, etc.) and the role of the legal system in influencing change. Discuss some of the ‘teen rights’ your students think are important in today’s society. Students should consider how history might or might not determine opportunities to exercise those rights.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASS

- Invite presenters to the class to discuss personal safety issues, including how to respond to direct physical violence in a personal relationship. Include self-protection strategies, as appropriate.
- Assist your students to plan a dance to celebrate healthy relationships. Select music that promotes equality, respect, and other aspects of healthy relationships. Decorate with positive images of relationships. Give a prize to an individual or couple who demonstrates respect for others and each other.
- Plan a school-wide or community ‘walk’ with your students to honor those who have suffered or lost their lives or loved ones to teen dating violence. Students can use the walk to raise awareness and raise money to support a local service provider or to support prevention projects, resources and events on campus.

## GENERAL

- Assign teams of students to research local, state and/or national facts and statistics about teen dating violence. They should also research and provide information on preventive or intervention services. Applying their findings, allow them to develop brochures, informational flyers, web pages, newsletters, posters, public service announcements and/or commercials to promote awareness and prevention. Make sure the students’ work is posted or distributed within the school and/or community.
- Have your students create posters on teen dating violence facts and prevention. Hang the posters in a visible area of the school, such as the student commons area or the hallway near the main entrance.
- Help the students prepare an informational community presentation, on teen dating violence. Assist them to deliver it to other high schools, parent groups, teacher organizations, and community forums. Encourage them to define and describe “dating,” “violence” and “dating violence.” They can also address what the difference is between “acceptable” and “unacceptable” dating behavior. Assist them to look for other opportunities to present this information to the public.
- Encourage students to use teen dating violence as a topic for local, state and national speech, drama, or essay competitions.
- Ask your class to watch a TV program or movie about a couple’s relationship. During the next class, have the students give a short description of the relationship and how the people treated each other, particularly if there was violent, aggressive, or controlling behavior. Then have the class discuss the influence TV and movies might have on their own ideas about relationships. Did the TV program or movie depict how they see themselves in a relationship or not? Give them the opportunity to discuss what is acceptable behavior and what is not.

