




STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



**TO:** Superintendents of Schools

**FROM:** Stefan Pryor, Commissioner of Education 

**DATE:** January 29, 2013

**SUBJECT:** Students' Tribute to Newtown

Students throughout the state wish to offer their support and comments on the Newtown crisis. To provide an opportunity for them to share their views and questions to the public and policy makers, a respectful and age-appropriate civic platform has been created. Their reactions will also be chronicled to create a record of the ever-important student response to the Newtown tragedy.

Through the civic platform, students in elementary, middle, and high school will have the opportunity to express their thoughts and concerns regarding the Newtown tragedy through various creative forms, including art and writing. Their responses will be a tribute to Newtown's experience and the impact of the tragedy on the students of our state.

The Commission on Children, in partnership with the State Department of Education, the Department of Economic and Community Development, the State Library, the Public Safety Committee of the Legislature, The Connecticut Forum, and a few youth advisories, has designed a structure and format for the students to present their responses to the state.

Enclosed, please find the submission opportunity for consideration in your schools. Included in this packet is a list of questions for distribution to classroom teachers for students to consider and respond to, if they choose to do so. Also included is a cover sheet that district personnel should use to collect and coordinate the various student responses to the enclosed questions. Each question delineates which grades are eligible to respond and individual and group submissions are allowed. This is strictly a voluntary exercise. Should a school wish to proceed, it is also voluntary for each teacher and the student. The submission deadline is February 28, 2013.

The questions provide the opportunity for open-ended responses to create a thoughtful and authentic civic platform for students. Mental health professionals and experts in school crisis and disaster have reviewed the questions and process to ensure each are sensitive and appropriate to the weighty subject.

Students need not answer all, or any, of the questions. Teachers choose not to participate, or may select an appropriate range of questions for their individual classrooms and allow the students to select from within.

Should a student wish to have his or her work be private, it does not need to be submitted to the state or to the class teacher. Teachers may offer the option of reflection, without exposure, to honor different student needs.

Students' Tribute to Newtown

January 29, 2013

Page 2

A selection committee composed of a poet, painter, singer, dancer, non-fiction writer, videographer, child development specialist, teachers with expertise in the art forms, youth representatives, a firstresponder, a Newtown resident, and civic and state leaders will choose forty of the submissions to be presented at the State Capitol. Selection will represent a range in age, geography, and art form. Following presentation at the Capitol, twenty submissions will be given to Newtown and twenty will be displayed in the Connecticut Legislative Office Building and in other locations. These displays may include poems, songs, videos, dance, paintings or drawings, and essays.

The committee will also select a composite group of responses for presentation. All submissions will be reviewed and compiled, with the assistance of the State Library, so the state has a historical record of the civic response from students regarding Newtown. Selected tributes and responses to questions will be presented in March or April of 2013. Representatives from Newtown, the State Department of Education, the Governor's Office, school districts throughout the state, and from the United States Department of Education are anticipated to attend the presentation. I hope you will review the enclosed material and encourage participation.

Thank you.

## STUDENTS' TRIBUTE TO NEWTOWN

### Tribute and Additional Questions

1. **Tribute on Newtown.** Write a poem, offer a painting or drawing, song, dance, essay or create a video, on your response to the Newtown occurrences. This tribute is an opportunity to acknowledge the town's experiences and what it means for the state and the nation. (20 of these tributes will be given to Newtown. 20 may be displayed in the state LOB corridor or elsewhere. All will be archived to honor every submission and viewpoint). For poems and essays, a two page limit. For video, a five minute limit. Grades 5-12
2. **School safety.** How would you like safety to improve in your school or community? Do you feel safe in your school? Tell us why or why not. Up to one page response. May include art and/or poetry. Grades 5-12
3. **Programs and policies re school safety.** What program or policy solutions do you suggest to assure that children are safe from violence in our state and in our country? Up to one page response. May include art and/or poetry. Grades 6 -12
4. **Strong community.** What helps you and your community adjust to a disaster? How might a community heal from tragedy such as was experienced in Newtown? Does family play a role in a community being strong? Up to one page response. May include art and/or poetry. Grades 5-12
5. **A school teacher or leader.** Tell us a story of a teacher or principal who helped you or your community in a hard or difficult time. Up to one page response. May include art and/or poetry. Grades 3-12
6. **A hero.** Who is your hero in school, at home, or in the community? May include art and/or poetry. Grades K-6

*If you have questions about Newtown or any personal concerns, your teacher will guide you to the right person for discussion.*

## Submission on Newtown

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Town or City \_\_\_\_\_

Please check which items you have submitted. You may submit as many as you wish.

# 1. Submission for Tribute.

Poetry \_\_\_ Drawing/Painting \_\_\_ Mixed Media \_\_\_ Essay \_\_\_ Dance \_\_\_ Song \_\_\_ Video \_\_\_

# 2. School Safety \_\_\_\_\_

# 3. Suggestions to Reduce Violence \_\_\_\_\_

# 4. A Strong Community \_\_\_\_\_

#5. A Special Teacher or School Leader \_\_\_\_\_

#6. My Hero \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I do want this to be considered for the pieces to be displayed or read publicly.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want this to be considered for the pieces to be displayed or read publicly.

Submit to: Commission on Children, 18-20 Trinity Street, Hartford, CT 06106

Deadline: February 28, 2013