

## Do Something

“After four student suicides, two murders on school grounds, six bombing threats, and racial problems at my previous school, Do Something made me happy to be a principal,” says Dr. Harvey Chiles.

Do Something has national offices in New York City and programs in cities and towns ranging from Newark, NJ, to Los Angeles, CA, to McAllen, TX, to Beaver Dam, WI. Do Something hopes to become a nationwide league of young people, in grades K-12, who believe that they can plan community change and take action to make it happen. In each Do Something program, the young people are asked what they think should be done to help their community, and they are then given the resources, through their schools and their adult advisers, to bring their plans to life. Each school year includes a Town Meeting which brings together the kids and their supporting adults, as well as local business people and politicians. At the meeting, the students outline the goals from which they draw their projects.

When Dr. Harvey Chiles became a principal, he also became a Do Something “Community Coach” at his new high school in Illinois. Says Chiles: “Do Something shows that if you bring a diverse group of kids together with the right adults and with good processes, they will make good decisions. It’s electrifying to watch. What I remember most at our Town Hall meeting was the intentional action of adults stepping back and not inserting themselves into the kids’ process of priority making. When there was lag time in the meeting, when nothing seemed to be moving forward, the trained Community Coaches waited, and let the kids make things happen. There was a movement of the spirit in that room; it was, I think, a spiritual experience. It took my breath away.”

Teri Dary is a teacher and Community Coach for third- and fourth-graders at Jefferson Elementary School in Beaver Dam, WI. She says her job as a community coach is similar to her role as a soccer coach: “You play off the strengths and build up the weaknesses of the kids on your team. The kids do the work, you guide them in the ways to do it. You start with simple tasks and work to get the kids to take the leadership themselves. My third- and fourth-graders now do all the outreach work and make all the media contacts. Kids will really seize the initiative: one fourth -grade girl had organized a neighborhood litter pick-up, set the date and locations, secured the equipment, and hand-written dozens and dozens of parental permission slips before I even found about it. A fifth-grader organized a statewide penny drive to support the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association. He and his team sent out more than four hundred letters to elementary schools around the state asking for a penny from each student. They collected over \$1,700.”

**Contact:** [www.dosomething.org](http://www.dosomething.org)

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