

## OPEN INQUIRY

### Gun Control

—Julia O’Connell

Julia O’Connell’s third graders in Baltimore, Maryland, engaged in an inquiry into gun laws after one of her students read a newspaper article about a first grader who had tragically been shot and killed at school by a classmate. Saddened and outraged, the kids wanted to do something. Julia discovered that legislators in Maryland were about to debate a new gun-lock law. So the class began an inquiry into Maryland’s gun laws. They made a list of questions and researched gun incidents, gun locks, gun control, and gun advocacy—all big ideas that emerged from their questions. Their findings led them to help pass gun-lock legislation. After they wrote letters of concern to Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, she invited them to the State House on the day the legislation was to be debated. They arrived at the front steps of the capitol carrying handmade signs and chanting, “Locks on guns. Locks on guns!” When legislators stopped to ask them questions, the kids answered with extensive knowledge gained from studying the issue so thoroughly.

Several weeks later, when the Responsible Gun Safety Act was passed, the class was invited back to attend the formal signing of the new law. These kids learned that when you think about an issue, explore many sides of it, acquire knowledge through research, and make a plan of action, you can truly make a difference. What a great lesson for these thoughtful, committed third graders!

March 15  
Dear Lt. Gov Townsend,  
Thank you for letting us come. You told us that not only grown ups can make a difference, but children can make a difference too. Thank you very, very much for trying to help put locks on guns. Also, thank you for trying to keep us safe. I also learned about the law makers. I learned laws are made and I learned a lot of other things I know you will try to vote for locks.

Your friend,  
Derrick