washington youth voice handbook
by ad am fletcher

the what, who, why, where, when and how youth voice happens

20+ workshop outlines
a youth voice directory
a resource guide

CommonAction
Let Me Support YOU!

Adam Fletcher is a writer, speaker, trainer and consultant working nationally and internationally to expand the roles of young people throughout society. For more information contact Adam at (360) 489-9680, email adam@bicyclingfish.com or visit www.bicyclingfish.com.

© 2007, © 2009 Adam Fletcher

All rights reserved. All worksheets and handouts may be duplicated, but must be duplicated exactly as is. Please obtain prior written consent from the author for any alternative usage.

Published by Adam Fletcher, PO Box 6185, Olympia, WA 98507-6185
Phone (360) 489-9680 or email adam@bicyclingfish.com

Author Adam Fletcher
Research Assistance Kari Kunst, Joseph Vavrus, Chelsea Nehler
Cover Design Doug Smith
Readers Jeff Conor, Jennifer Springsteen, Andrea Felix, Charlette Harris, Wendy Lesko (Youth Activism Project), Beth Kelly (Washington State OSPI), Jessica Paul (Seattle Metrocenter YMCA), Meghan Sullivan (Together, Inc.)

Printed in the United States of America.

All attempts have been made to ensure information in this publication is accurate; however, we cannot be responsible for the content of others’ websites. All listing current as of 11/06. Check sources by contacting us or referring to the Washington Youth Voice Directory for more information.

This publication was created with support from the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. This is not an official OSPI publication, nor does it reflect the official position of the Superintendent or the State of Washington.

This material is based upon work supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service under the 2003-2005 Learn and Serve America School-Based Grant to OSPI. Opinions or points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Corporation or the Learn and Serve America Program.

Let Me Support YOU!

Adam Fletcher is a writer, speaker, trainer and consultant working nationally and internationally to expand the roles of young people throughout society. For more information contact Adam at (360) 489-9680, email adam@bicyclingfish.com or visit www.bicyclingfish.com.
Washington Youth Voice Handbook
- abbreviated version -

the what, who, why, where, when, and how youth voice happens

By Adam Fletcher
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ................................................................. 5
How to Use this Handbook ....................................................... 7
An Introduction to Youth Voice ................................................. 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>What</em> is Youth Voice?</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Why</em> Youth Voice?</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Who</em> is Youth Voice for?</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>When</em> Does Youth Voice Happen?</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Where</em> Does Youth Voice Happen?</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>How</em> Does Youth Voice Happen?</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth Voice Planner</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth Voice Assessment</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Washington Youth Voice Directory</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth Voice Resource Guide</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Author’s Note

Thanks for picking up this manual. Before you read further, I want you to know that I am an adult. This manual was written from my perspective - with contributions, suggestions, and inspirations from thousands of children, youth, and adults - but it was written solely by an adult.

I have been involved in Washington’s statewide movement for Youth Voice, as well as on the national and international scenes, for more than 10 years. Through The Freechild Project and SoundOut, I have had the privilege of working with dozens of schools, community groups, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies across Washington to engage young people in meaningful ways. Along the way I learned that instead of just being a recruitment strategy, Youth Voice can be a catalyst, informer, agitator, and positive driver of action. I have seen that instead of simply being cheap labor for civic improvement, young people can be the designers, researchers, teachers, evaluators, decision-makers, and advocates of democracy. I have learned that Voice can be so much more than what I originally thought, and in this Handbook I want to share that with you.

I am not an expert; rather, I am someone who has deliberately and critically reflected about his own practice and the practices of others engaged in Youth Voice work. The publication you are reading was three years in the making, and features many of those reflections about this work. I want to personally thank everyone who supported and contributed to this manual and to my learning, and acknowledge them here, because this publication would not exist without their contributions.

My greatest thanks go to Jessica and Hannah - without your support I would not do this work. Thank you to my professional learning partners, especially Adrienne Wiley-Thomas, Greg Williamson, Andrea Felix, Mishaela Duran, and Heather Manchester. Thanks to Jennifer Springsteen for her suggestion that I do this book, and her subsequent contributions. Thanks to Henry Giroux of McMaster’s University in Ontario for his continued support of my work. Thanks to Wendy Lesko of the Youth Activism Project in Maryland, Jessica Paul of Metrocenter YMCA in Seattle, and to Meghan Sullivan of Together, Inc. in Olympia, for their thoughtful insights. I am also particularly grateful to the superb assistance of my staff readers, including Charlette Harris, Kari Kunst, Chelsea Nehler, Jessica Vavrus, and Joseph Vavrus.

The Youth Voice Movement in our state is more than 15 years old, and there have been many accomplishments. In Washington alone, there have been literally 100s of Youth Voice programs instituted and hundreds of thousands of young peoples’ lives have been touched. These accomplishments continue today in countless ways.
The Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction Terry Bergeson has supported Youth Voice for a long time. Her commitment made all of this possible. Other associates at OSPI include co-op students from 2001-2003, Gayle Pauley, Nasue Nishida, Beth Kelly, Barbara Quick, Brenda Merritt, Gary Gorland, and Lexie Domaradzki.

The Points of Light Foundation YES Ambassador program was vital to developing my understanding of Youth Voice, thanks to Cyndi Sherer, Jim and Pam Toole, Patrick Doyle, and the 2000-2001 YES Ambassadors. Thanks to Norma Straw, Lai Lani Ovailles, Sasha Rabkin, and Ilana Mullen, all former YES Ambassadors at OSPI. I am grateful to have walked in your shoes, if just for a moment and only in your memory. Sasha, I particularly thank you: following are the ways I internalized our conversations.

Thanks also to the youth and adult allies I have worked with in community-based organizations here in Washington, including PeaceJam, Olympia Chapter of the National Youth Rights Association, Get It Right!, Olympia Free School, Service Learning Northwest and ESD 112, Institute for Community Leadership, Gateways for Youth at The Evergreen State College, and Community Youth Services. Also, thanks to all the schools, students, and adults across Washington who I have worked with closely, including Langley Middle School, Spanaway Elementary School, Friday Harbor High School, Secondary Academy for Success in Bothell, StudentLink on Vashon Island, Lewis and Clark High School in Spokane, Dayton High School, Wishkah Valley High School, Colfax High School, and Secondary Education for Migrant Youth in Yakima. Special thanks also go to Service Learning Washington.

This publication stands on the shoulders of those who worked for so long to accomplish so much. In turn, we all stand on the shoulders of those many people that we draw inspiration from, including those in the movements for women’s rights, civil rights, migrant farm workers rights, and other struggles for justice. That’s where Youth Voice is today: at the heart of a massive, collective struggle for a more just, sustainable, and democratic world where we all belong, learning, teaching, leading and working together.

I hope that the Washington Youth Voice Handbook is useful for you.

This publication is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Linda Vavrus, a lifelong educator who would not, did not, and has not stopped teaching.

Thanks, Granny Linda.
How to Use this Handbook

The *Washington Youth Voice Handbook* is designed to make your job easier, whether you are a young person or an adult ally. Youth Voice is not a new concept - the phrase “Youth Voice” can be found in literature from the mid-1940s. The *Washington Youth Voice Handbook* summarizes what young people and adults in Washington have learned about Youth Voice since it became popular in the early 1990s. This publication can help those who are new to Youth Voice learn about it, and encourage those who are more experienced to learn more.

There is so much jargon out there that meaning of words is often lost, and terms like “Gen X” or “tweens” become meaningless and out-of-date almost as soon as they are printed. In an effort to avoid that trap, this publication sticks to simple terms. Here is how age-related words are defined from here out:

- **Child** refers to ages birth to 11;
- **Youth** is ages 12 to 20;
- **Young people** are everyone between birth and 25.

In the *Washington Youth Voice Handbook* the phrase “Youth Voice” is meant to address people in between 12 and 20; however, many lessons are appropriate for younger people, and older ones, too. The following section begins those lessons with an introduction to Youth Voice. From there the *Handbook* carefully details different aspects of Youth Voice.

**Chapter One: What is Youth Voice?** explores the definition of Youth Voice, common misconceptions about Youth Voice, Principles of Youth Voice, Cycle of Youth Engagement, and barriers to Youth Voice.

**Chapter Two: Why Does Youth Voice Matter?** details reasons why Youth Voice matters, issues addressed by Youth Voice, and myths about Youth Voice.

**Chapter Three: Who is Youth Voice For?** identifies people affected by Youth Voice, populations Youth Voice works for, and ways to honor diverse Youth Voice.

**Chapter Four: When Should Youth Voice Happen?** explores times of life, times in the year, and calendar days for Youth Voice activities.

**Chapter Five: Where Does Youth Voice Happen?** shows locations where Youth Voice is engaged and provides rubrics exploring the process of engaging Youth Voice.
Chapter Six: How Does Youth Voice Happen identifies types of Youth Voice activities and popular approaches to engaging young people throughout communities.

After the Youth Voice Planner will you find a Youth Voice Workshop Guide that includes 23 complete workshop outlines. There is also a Youth Voice Assessment and an introductory Youth Voice Resource Guide that features publications, websites, and organizations, as well as the Washington Youth Voice Directory, with examples from across the state.

Somewhere within the movements for women’s rights, civil rights, migrant farm workers rights, and other struggles for justice, young people must be heard. Somehow between neighborhood councils, city halls, county board, state agencies, and public offices, young people must be engaged. Sometime throughout childhood, teenage years, and adulthood, young people must be entwined. Someone from every home, school, community organization, and government office must seek nothing less than to infuse young people throughout our communities. Today Youth Voice is at the heart of a struggle for a more democratic world where we all belong.

The Washington Youth Voice Handbook was written for you. However, our communities need more than these words - they need your action. You are invited to use this publication as a tool with which to grow democracy throughout our state. Washington needs Youth Voice, and Washington needs you. Now, let’s get to work.

A Word to Youth

Schools want you to learn. Youth programs want you to grow. Libraries want you to read, churches want you to pray, governments want you to pay taxes, and everybody seems to want you to vote... the list goes on and on. But when was the last time someone asked you what YOU want to do?

Youth Voice is about you. That is, you and your family - and your school, and your programs, and your community, and our state. That’s right - Youth Voice is important to Washington. Luckily, Washington is all about Youth Voice, too. Across the entire state, in small towns, downtowns, suburbs, and the countryside more adults are checking in, checking it out, looking up, listening to, and engaging Youth Voice throughout our communities.

If you have never been in a Youth Voice program before, this publication should challenge you. Get your friends, pull something together, and get to work! Take action! Our communities can’t wait any longer! You must do something! This book shows the basics of Youth Voice, including who, what, when, where, why, and how Youth Voice happens. It also tackle tough issues; notice that there are no “youth-only” or “adult-only” sections. This entire publication is for you, and the adults you work with.

If you have been in a program where Youth Voice happens, that’s cool, too. The Washington Youth Voice Handbook can give you a common language to use with friends, teachers, youth workers, and parents. It may help you find a deeper purpose and have higher expectations for the places and people that you are involved with everyday. It can also help meet those purposes and
expectations with useful guidelines, real-world examples, and hands-on learning opportunities.

Oh, and just in case you’ve never heard it before, I have a secret to tell you: you are an expert. Think about it: after more than 12, 15, or 18 years of life as a young person, you know a lot about children and youth. Adults know a lot, too - but you are living it right now, and that matters! So while you read this, spend some time dreaming, thinking, doing, and seeing through a young person’s eyes and with a young person’s hands - with your own hands, that is. Democracy insists that your hands become involved throughout your community. All young people should be engaged throughout their communities in all kinds of ways. That is democracy, and that is what Youth Voice is for.

That’s where the Washington Youth Voice Handbook comes in. It’s all about how to turn up the volume, deepen the impact, and feel the power of Youth Voice across the state of Washington. It’s all about you.

A Word to Adults

You do hard work. Everyday you are faced with a ton of challenges from the young people around you: LaTisha wants to go to college, but her family doesn’t have the resources; Mike wants to dropout of high school and “unschool” himself; Ernesto ran out of a meeting last week, and you haven’t heard from him since, and; your department has announced cutbacks in budget and staff. The reality is that there is no “silver bullet” for the hardest parts of your work. But even the most difficult days working with young people - either in classrooms, at community centers, or in neighborhood programs - can be more rewarding than some people imagine.

Washington prides itself on a long and strong history of democracy and civic engagement. From the early history of the Oregon Territory through the 1900s and into modern times, our communities, our schools, and our government have always strived to listen to everyday people, and to meaningfully involve them in creating and sustaining the common good. However, a challenge has arisen to that history: with more than 1,000,000 people in our state ages 5 to 18, we have consistently failed to listen to a large portion of the population. The outcomes of that negligence are glaring: low voter turnout, lack of voter support for child- or youth-friendly legislation, and an ongoing stream of young people flooding out of small towns and inner-city areas across the state.

As the Washington Youth Voice Handbook will illustrate, a lot of people, programs, and organizations across the state have engaged young people. I hear a new example almost every week of young people and their adult allies from every corner of the state who are working to challenge the negligence mentioned above. There is a lot of talk these days about Youth Voice, and that’s where this publication comes in. It is time to move from rhetoric to reality. This publication explores how we can do that with clear tips, examples, and resources that will move our state closer to being a democracy for all people.

The ultimate responsibility of adults throughout Washington today is to challenge, support, and sustain children and youth as active, engaged, and meaningful partners at home, at school, and throughout our communities. Just
like the work you do everyday for young people, this publication is meant to encourage, support, and sustain you. Thank you for reading it and taking action. Together we can do it!
WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

The following questions are designed to encourage you to consider your own knowledge before you read this Handbook. Take a moment and thoughtfully explore your own thinking about each question, either by writing on this page or in your mind. If you can, discuss your answers with someone else.

1. Who are youth?

2. How do you define “Youth Voice”?

3. What does Youth Voice do for you?

4. How interested are you in Youth Voice?

5. How can you see Youth Voice being engaged?

6. How important do you believe Youth Voice is?

7. Can you explain why you believe Youth Voice is important?

8. Are there limitations to Youth Voice?
YOUTH, VOICE AND BEYOND
Defining a Movement

There are a number of important words and terms that help young people and adults effectively communicate about Youth Voice. Following are definitions of some of the important terms used throughout this Handbook.

**Adult ally** A proactive non-youth who works with or for young people through a non-threatening, anti-discriminatory relationship with them.

**Adultism** Bias towards adults, adult perspectives and adult ability; leads to discrimination against young people.

**Adultcentrism** Perspectives equating age to authority, such as, adults are older, therefore have more knowledge and ability than children and youth.

**Civic Engagement** Connection one feels towards the public good fostered through general involvement, i.e. volunteering or campaigning, or specific activities, i.e. voting, activism and service learning.

**Empowerment** A person with power actively granting, giving, or otherwise acknowledging another person’s power.

**Engagement** Sense of connection a person feels to another person, place, thing, or activity.

**Ephebophobia** Fear of youth.

**Evolving capacities** Theory of learning extending beyond development which acknowledges changing abilities of young people over their lifetime and over course of human history, as opposed to youth development or grade levels.

**Participatory action** Engages the people affected by an action in identifying the problem, developing the response (action), carrying it out, and reflecting.

**Pedophobia** Fear of children or infants.

**Reflection** Deliberate examination, exploration, or recollection of personal and/or collective actions, often to establish connections between action and intentions.

**Student-centered** Activities in schools that are only focused on engaging students, either through curriculum or other activities.

**Tokenism** Any policy, structure or activity that limits Youth Voice to create the false appearance of engagement. Intentionally or coincidentally limits ability of young people to participate. May overemphasize or make youth exotic and different, or romanticize the abilities of young people.

**Youth/adult partnership** Intentional relationships between young people and adults that build and sustain engagement between generations.

**Youth development** Connects different ways young people gain skills and knowledge until the time they become adults.

**Youth-led** Any effort *fully* driven by people under 18, including conceiving, planning, enacting, reflecting, deconstructing, and re-envisioning something.
**Youth voice** The active, distinct, and concentrated ways young people represent themselves throughout society.
An Introduction to Youth Voice

“I care about these issues right now. Why should I wait to do something?”
“I can’t ignore the challenges my family faces anymore.”
“This affects our entire community and our entire community should take action.”

The Wisdom of Youth
The statements above could be the voices of wise elders from across Washington, speaking strongly about issues that matter. They could be challenges from parents concerned about their children. Instead, they are real comments from young people who are speaking with the passion and wisdom that comes from their age. As our world becomes more connected through technology and marketing, young people need to be encouraged to define who they are, where they are from, and what they stand for – and what they stand against. The young people quoted above are real youth working with real adults in their communities to create real, positive, effective, and sustainable change in the world today.

Our state is home to a growing movement that seeks to hear, strengthen, and empower young people. In rural areas, suburbs, downtown neighborhoods, government agencies, K-12 schools, and countless other avenues, children and youth are becoming active by making decisions, reflecting on learning, planning for action, and advocating for change throughout their lives, and throughout the communities they belong to. This is Youth Voice.

Defining Youth Voice
Lots of people in are talking about Youth Voice today. Over the last 15 years a grassroots movement promoting Youth Voice has emerged, counting among its ranks young people, parents, teachers, youth workers, researchers, and others. Politicians, government officials, and mainstream media are practicing using the phrase. But it seems like everyone has their own definition.

Over the last six years The Freechild Project has been partnering with young people and adults in communities across Washington to provide training, facilitate forums, conduct evaluations, coordinate original research, and help create new opportunities for communities to actively engage Youth Voice. Thousands of people have shared their ideas and beliefs about engaging young people and creating healthy, sustainable democracies where everyone belongs.
In many of these conversations youth and adults share their definitions of Youth Voice. From these experiences I have learned that when the phrase “Youth Voice” is used in Washington, it is usually meant to describe the unique perspectives of teens, distinct from those of adults. Occasionally, the phrase includes younger children. I have created the following definition to summarize a broad range of intentions and observations from children, youth, and adults across the state. Chapter 1 explores this definition in depth:

**Youth Voice** is the active, distinct, and concentrated ways young people represent themselves throughout society.

**More than a Name**

The *Washington Youth Voice Handbook* illustrates how Youth Voice requires action. It is more than “making kids heard” - it is actually empowering children and youth with purpose. Youth Voice is more than a goal for youth: it is an awesome avenue towards identifying and creating what is good for everyone, our common good. Engaging young people can build a strong sense of community, a commitment to civic action, and a passion for active learning. This book explores each of those outcomes, ultimately challenging readers to engage young people in order to strengthen democracy.

Democracy is more than a buzzword, a political party, or an old-fashioned idea from history books. In our state, it is at the center of community, and in the heart of learning. Democracy is an action, an attitude, and a journey that provides a hopeful, energetic, and responsible future for everyone in our society, including young people, seniors, parents, little brothers, big sisters, neighbors, leaders, and everyday people. Democracy is vital to our individual and collective good, now and in the future. Democracy is for everyone in Washington - and so is Youth Voice.

**Just a Beginning**

This publication represents a step I am taking towards fostering and sustaining the Youth Voice movement in our state. We consider the *Washington Youth Voice Handbook* to be a map, a toolkit and a clarion call to action. However, it is just a beginning.

Everyday there are young people across our state who commit to using their voices to change the world - but that is not enough. Experiences across our state consistently show that in order to *truly* engage Youth Voice, young people need to commit to engaging others’ voices. Similarly, any organization that is ready to commit to engaging youth does not need to just throw the doors open to youth. Instead, leaders and workers throughout the organization need to create the structures, transform the culture, and modify the purpose of the organization to reflect the commitment to Youth Voice.

By publishing this Handbook I hope to help young people, adult allies, organizations, and movements across our state take these steps. However, the choice is yours. These stories and lessons belong to all of us; all our state needs to do now is take action... then reflect, and learn, and... see page 61 for all the steps!
Chapter 1
What is Youth Voice?

What is Youth Voice? The definition in the first chapter says that “Youth Voice is the active, distinct, and concentrated ways young people represent themselves throughout society,” and that answers the question, right? Wrong. With all of the people, programs, organizations, and activities that claim to be “for” Youth Voice, what can this definition possibly mean?

Exploring the Meaning
When we think about the meaning of Youth Voice, we must consider where it comes from. Knowledge, identity, and action are the elements of everyone’s life experience. Life experience is influenced by so many factors! Families, schools, and communities are a kind of backdrop where culture, race, class, gender, education, religion, and other backgrounds shine. Engaging young people requires being aware, acknowledging, and infusing diversity throughout every activity.

The meaning of Youth Voice is also defined by its purpose. Youth Voice must also have purpose beyond just “listening to young people.” Years of experience and research have proven that in order to be effective, Youth Voice must have a purpose, a place within a larger project or greater goal. This means that Youth Voice cannot - and should not - be just about youth.

In the past, children and youth have easily mistaken the purpose of Youth Voice when they’ve heard that the only reason for their involvement is to hear their perspectives. When this happens, the message adults impress on youth is that they are the center of the universe. The well-meaning intention behind these efforts is usually meant to let young people know that while they are part of the community, they are not the whole universe. The mixed message therein does no justice to Youth Voice or to the other purposes at hand.

Purpose can be decided, imparted, or discerned in many ways - but the important part is for Youth Voice programs to actually have it. Whether saving the environment, sharing diverse perspectives, ending racism, creating alternative media, or building a pet shelter, Youth Voice should have a purpose that goes beyond simply listening to youth. That context encourages young people to identify themselves in a larger community with broader concerns than themselves - and that a central element to building democracy.

Youth Voice is the active, distinct, and concentrated ways young people represent themselves throughout society. Considering the experiences of young people and the purpose of Youth Voice can help us create meaningful Youth Voice experiences for all young people. When we consider the words active,
distinct, concentrated, and community, Youth Voice begins to take form and substance, especially for the young people involved:

- **Active** means young people are engaged intentionally, instead of coincidentally or passively.
- **Distinct** means that young people are seen as having their own views, separate from those of their parents or teachers.
- **Concentrated** means engaging young people in a focused way, including the personal, structural, political, and financial support it needs to be effective.
- **Represent** means to take the way you see something and share that perspective with someone else. We re-present ourselves, our families, our communities, and our society everyday.
- **Community** is any place that a young person belongs to, either physically, socially, or otherwise. This may include a neighborhood, an ethnicity, a church, or a sport.

### An Upside-Down Kingdom?

Sometimes, when people who have never heard about Youth Voice before are exposed to it for the first time, they react harshly. “Are you talking about kids running the show?” The answer is no. Youth Voice is not about youth taking over city hall, running wild in the streets, or making adults feel small. Youth Voice does not mean making upside down kingdoms where young people have all the power and force adults to obey. Instead, Youth Voice is a democratic activity that puts the *unity* in community.

Youth Voice can powerfully affect community engagement among young people and adults. While media often focuses on the negative aspects of youth, a growing number of communities across Washington have seen Youth Voice take action as young people become organizers, philanthropists, educators, and lobbyists. Young people are becoming active members of historically adult groups also, challenging adults to “change with the times” as they consider their organizations’ sustainability and effectiveness. Rather than creating “upside-down kingdoms,” Youth Voice fosters community engagement. That can challenge the rule of emperors, but in our democratic society, Youth Voice has a natural role, even an obligation, to be engaged.

Perhaps it is that power that concerns many people. The idea that young people are and should be substantive contributors to democracy challenges a lot of assumptions that adults have held for a long time. That includes the belief that children and youth are inept or incapable of meaningful involvement; research by the United Nations, among others, has firmly shown they are (see the Youth Voice Resource Section for more information). However, there is an important distinction to be made between Youth Voice and historical conceptions of youth empowerment and youth participation. Youth Voice is exists all the time, whether or not young people or adults acknowledge it, develop it or promote it. Empowerment waits for acknowledgement; participation waits for opportunities. While it is true that Youth Voice is not about letting “kids run the show,” it is equally true that Youth Voice can be engaged *everywhere*.

### Different Ways Adults Relate to Youth
Several years of working in youth development programs and schools will show almost any youth advocate that there are two reigning assumptions about working with young people in any type of program. The first assumption is that youth are always devious, scheming and plotting to cause trouble or take over the world, and because of that, they must be controlled all of the time. The second is that youth are always powerful, able, and ready to make change and take over the world, and because of that they must be empowered all of the time. Both of these assumptions are wrong.

The following “Youth-Adult Relationships Spectrum” provides a different way to view young people by placing relationships between youth and adults in the context of each other.

**Youth-Adult Relationships Spectrum**

![Spectrum Image]

Engaging young people can draw out the grand assumptions from people who work with children and youth. There are usually two specific extremes inherent in those assumptions: over-controlling and over-permissive relationships.

**Over-Controlling Youth/Adult Relationships** often occur when adults react to a negative perception or misconception of youth “freedom”. Taking the guise of concern for youth, over-controlling youth/adult relationships are defined by distrust or misunderstanding of young people. This type of relationship can lead to children and youth being infantilized, or made to feel like infants who are incapable or subhuman. Over-controlling can lead to locked doors, coded language, and/or choices made for youth that often force them to participate.

**Over-Permissive Youth/Adult Relationships** are the opposite end of the spectrum, when adults assume young people have too much ability. This can reflect a misguided attempt by adults who think “the best” of youth or want to be their “friends”. However, this is a disingenuous relationship, in the same sense that we would never give a 16-year-old the keys to a car and expect them to teach themselves how to drive. This type of relationship is often though of as empowerment, despite actually making some young people less able to exercise power. Over-permissiveness may take the form of ill-trained, under-informed young people acting without adult input.

However, the ideal relationship might be the most realistic, and the most responsive. **Responsible Youth/Adult Relationships** are typified by the Kent-based Institute for Community Leadership. They train students and adults about responsibility in terms of being able to respond, or being Response-Able. Response-Able Youth/Adult Relationships require adults to become able to respond appropriately to the demands of engaging youth throughout our
This type of relationship often creates adult allies and youth/adult partnerships. That often means providing training, engaging youth wisdom, and saying “no” when it is appropriate. It also means being an ally and partner with young people.

This continuum is not meant to imply that there is one way to treat all young people at all times. Circumstances can often justify the relationships young people have with adults. However, the premise behind the Washington Youth Voice Handbook is that many assumptions about these circumstances are either misguided or ill-informed. I believe that our communities need Responsible Youth/Adult Relationships. Engaging Youth Voice can provide the most authentic, responsive and appropriate engine for communities to create those relationships.

Challenges to Youth Voice

Any honest conversation about Youth Voice must address the challenges that young people and adult allies face when they work to engage children and youth throughout our communities. By their very existence, Youth Voice programs are made to respond to these challenges; ignoring them is not being honest about the purpose of Youth Voice. Racism, sexism, classism, homophobia... the list of challenges facing young people is enormous. However, one of the core challenges is a common experience that all people face early in their lives. That challenge is discrimination against children and youth.

Discrimination occurs anytime one thing is chosen before something else. That is often a good thing - otherwise, why wouldn’t we all steal our food instead of growing it or buying it? We all discriminate everyday. However, discrimination often excludes people because of false bias or prejudice.

Discrimination against children and youth is caused by the bias adults have for other adults that causes them to discriminate against young people. Bias for adults is called adultism. When something is based on adultism, it is called adultcentrism. While adultism is sometimes appropriate, adultcentrism is often inappropriate. Compulsory education can force students to disengage from the love of learning. Youth development programs can force youth to disconnect from adults. Almost every activity that is for young people is decided upon, developed, assessed and redeveloped without young people. That is adultcentrism.

Language, programs, teaching styles, and all relationships between young people and adults are adultcentric. The most “youth-friendly” adults are often adultist, assuming that youth need them - which, while it may be true, is still centered on adult perspectives. Adultism is not always harmful - but adultism is always real.

Adultism leads to a phenomenon of “little adults” - young people who are “adults-in-the-making”, rather than children and youth today. Adultcentrism leads to manipulating and tokenizing young people through Youth Voice activities. Despite the intention, that process often further disengages young people!
Adultism exists for a lot of reasons, including beliefs about the abilities of young people, roles of different people throughout society, and the nature of society. Those beliefs have sometimes lead to the fear of children, called pedophobia, and the fear of youth, called ephebiphobia. These fears drive much of society to segregate young people from adults, demonize youth in the media, and ostracize children from elders. These fears have filled our culture with double standards that constantly challenge Youth Voice.

Identifying Discrimination
Identifying different forms of discrimination against young people throughout our society is important. Following are some of those forms.

Discrimination against Young People in Language
✓ “Act your age.”
✓ “Children should be seen and not heard.”
✓ “What do you know, you’re just a kid!”
✓ “Do as I say, not as I do.”
✓ “You’ll understand it someday, just you wait.”

Discrimination against Young People in Youth Work
✓ Programs designed by adults for youth without youth
✓ Isolation of children and youth from adults
✓ Professional language does not allow youth to easily understand what is being done to them
✓ Evaluations engage adult staff and not youth participants

Discrimination against Young People in School
✓ Students are forced by law to attend schools that may not be effective
✓ Classroom learning relies on adults as sole-holders of knowledge
✓ Decisions about students, including learning topics, activities, punishments, budgeting and teaching methods are routinely made without students
✓ Adults routinely grade students without giving equal weight to students’ perspectives on their own academic achievement
✓ Double-standards in treatment, including when the belief that when teachers yell at students, they are controlling classrooms; when students yell at teachers, they are creating unsafe learning environments

Discrimination against Young People in Communities
✓ People under 18-years-old are virtual non-citizens without the right to vote or any tangible political representation and minimal influence
✓ Community problem-solving that routinely neglects youth members
✓ Business policies that allow for discrimination, such as “Under-14s must be accompanied by adults,” and “Under-18s cannot be managers.”
✓ Local laws that target youth, including anti-cruising and anti-graffiti laws
✓ Media bias against youth that alternatively portrays youth as apathetic super-predators who are obese, stuck on computers, gang members.

How YOU Can Resist Discrimination Against Young People
There are many ways that young people and their adult allies can challenge adultism. Addressing discrimination against Youth Voice is a challenge that
many young people and adult allies should take personally, especially when armed with meaningful strategies for powerful action. Following are a few strategies for resisting adultism:

1. Adults should strive to be a role model for other adults. Demonstrate in your own conduct and the way you talk that you oppose attitudes and behavior that debase, degrade, inflict injury on or promote animosity against young people of all ages.
2. Youth should get to know your adults, no matter where they are - school, youth programs, the library, everywhere. Support those who actually show they care above all about young people, that they have integrity and that they can be objective.
3. Insist that your youth program/classroom/religious community/organization sets high goals and expectations for adults, no matter what positions they are in, where they come from or how much education they have.
4. Carefully examine the media in your community. See if it is realistic, democratic, and free of adultist biases. If they are not, demand coverage that is.
5. Insist that youth development, educational, and behavior management practices be reviewed for effectiveness. These practices reveal what adults do not know, not what they do.
6. Volunteer as an adult ally for a youth program or school.
7. Talk with young people you know. Listen to them. Engage yourself in their lives as appropriate, and as you are capable.
8. Provide literature and resources about Youth Voice to young people themselves.

Tips for Addressing Discrimination Against Young People

Advocating for and sharing Youth Voice throughout a community often means being prepared for just about anything - on a moment’s notice. When facing adultism head-on, it can be important to be intentional in your efforts. Following are some tips when addressing adultism:

- Seek understanding by encouraging adults to examine adultism. Explore the feelings adults have about young people. Youth and adults should work together to find the source of frustration, resentment or treatment towards youth.
- Acknowledge anger and let youth and adults know that it is okay to feel anger - but remind them they do not need to act out their anger towards young people.
- Engage allies by asking an adult ally to address and explore adultism with other adults. If you are an adult trying to reach another adult, it can be powerful to bring young people directly into the picture.
- Remember that Youth Voice is for everyone, and that in easy times and struggling times, Youth Voice should be hard. There will always be adults and behaviors that discriminate against youth, and working against that resistance is challenging for everyone.
- You are not alone, and there are other people advocating for Youth Voice and struggling against adultism. Connect with others in your town, across Washington, and around the world - because they are out there!
- **Stay focused**, no matter how pointed the adultism might seem. Stay calm and try not to take it personally. Address behaviors, structures, and other things that can be changed.
- **Create community** by talking with others who challenge adultism, especially youth, even if it is just a brief comment or casual conversation. Adultism affects or has affected every single person in our society, and it takes persistence and teamwork to resist it.

### 8 STEPS TO AUTHENTIC YOUTH VOICE

As Youth Voice becomes more accepted throughout our communities, there are forces that will try to deceive, tokenize, or otherwise manipulate young people. While youth are often concerned with “keeping it real,” a growing number of people are calling for **authentic** Youth Voice. Following are important points to keep in mind.

1. **Don’t fool the youth.** The old saying, “You can’t fool all the people all the time” applies to young people, too. Using Youth Voice as a “rubber stamp” or as a “decoration” for adult actions is not acceptable to many young people or adults. Youth Voice activities should always avoid manipulating or tokenizing young people. Engage as many young people as meaningfully in as many functions of a project as possible. While it seems daunting, there are several ways that activities can be equitably led by young people. See Chapter 6 for more information.

2. **Work with young people - not for young people.** Don’t do for children and youth what they can do with you. Engage, encourage, and empower young people to take appropriate, purposeful, effective, and sustainable leadership for their own activities by providing training and coaching throughout every activity. Work to be an active, engaged ally to young people every time you can - not just when it is convenient. Children and youth need critical coaches throughout their lives, not just when they are in your class or program. Recognize the youth you work with throughout your community. See Chapter 5 for more information.

3. **Make “having fun” powerful.** The days of “pizza box youth engagement” are over. You can’t just throw a bunch of “fun food” into a room and expect young people to come and learn something meaningful. If the goal is recreation, then have young people plan the activity, lead it, and reflect on it afterwards. But why offer just recreation? Combine fun and learning, and change a young person’s life. Use active learning techniques throughout your program or class. Young people have diverse learning styles that can powerfully engage them in your program. See Chapter 3 for more information.

4. **Embrace change.** So you wanted to paint a mural in the park, but couldn’t get the funding. Along the way you learned about community history, recreation funding, gathering community donations, and planning a project. What was the greater lesson here - that you can’t just do anything you want to anytime you want to, or that you learned about the process for
neighborhood change that you can use throughout the rest of your life? Plan for setbacks and be ready to find the benefits to any challenges. Be adaptable. Planning today is not as rigid as it used to be, and young people today are more flexible than ever. Teach the benefits of change by “going with the flow” and striving to be calm in the center of chaos. See Chapter 4 for more information.

5. **Don’t talk about “youth problems” anymore.** Young people are part of larger communities, and when they have a problem, their communities have a problem. Adults must quit referring to “youth violence” or “childhood obesity” as if youth and children are the only people in our society that are violent or obese. Community problems should be addressed by communities, and not foisted on the shoulders young people working alone. Encourage young people to critically reflect on their experiences throughout their community. By examining media, attitudes, and the structures around them young people can connect with broad struggles for social change throughout their communities. See Chapter 3 for more information.

6. **Teach young people about adultism when they are young.** When youth say demeaning things about other young people they are reflecting society’s larger perspectives towards youth, as well as their own opinions. Sometimes youth workers and teachers dismiss these comments with statements like, “It’s just a phase,” or “Don’t worry about it now - now’s for having fun!” While this may be well-meaning, the attitudes represented by these comments may be hurting the people Youth Voice seeks to empower. Examine everyday prejudice and uncover the bias against youth among youth. Challenge discrimination against children and youth in front of children and youth, as well as separately. By being a responsible advocate for Youth Voice you can illustrate the practice and possibilities of being an active ally to young people. Call out adults and young people who discriminate against children and youth. Challenge youth to identify and explore their own biases against their peers. Model anti-adultist perspectives towards young people whenever possible.

7. **Acknowledge young people in significant ways.** Patting someone on the back or giving them a certificate can only go so far. Despite adults’ outward expressions of support for Youth Voice, young people sometimes have very little actual authentic support from adults. The activities where Youth Voice is amplified can provide a lens to examine that reality. There are many ways to show authentic commitment to Youth Voice. A school might give students credit for participating in Youth Voice activities; organizations might provide all youth a cash stipend, and; individual adult allies may give young people letters of support, encouragement, and acknowledgement as they move along in life. Those are all tangible ways to show real dedication to engaging young people.

8. **Engage young people in something greater than themselves.** Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote that living nonviolence requires us to, “rise above the narrow confines of our individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.” When applied to Youth Voice this means that simply encouraging or allowing young people to advocate for themselves is not enough. Responsible adults who are committed to authentic Youth
Voice must seek to engage young people throughout our communities in issues affecting others. This way young people can see more than their own self-interest, actually becoming whole-community members. Recognizing the broad influences in the lives of children and youth is important; helping them identify allies throughout those different areas is vital, as well. Make community mapping, outside speakers, and field trips throughout your community a part of your program.

PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH VOICE

In 1997 the Washington Youth Voice Project published the following Principles in *Youth Voice Begins With You!* This book, along with these Principles, quickly became the national standard for creating partnerships between young people and adults. The Principles of Youth Voice were created with more than 500 youth from across the US, with the belief that these elements should be the cornerstone in all relationships that include children, youth, and adults.

**Respect:** You give it, you receive it

*Mutual respect and an appreciation for each member's contributions to the partnership are vital.*

- A culture of respect shatters stereotypes based on age.
- Young people respect adults who listen and ask challenging questions.
- Adults respect young people who invite them to share their skills, experiences, and resources.
- A culture of respect provides all participants to act on their dreams and learn from their mistakes.

**Communication:** Listen Up

*An honest and open exchange of ideas is crucial.*

- Young people are best heard when adults step back and young people speak up.
- Adults are best heard when they are straightforward and explain where they are coming from.
- All people’s ideas and opinions are valuable and must be heard.

**Investment:** It takes time

*Investing in the future is accepting young people as leaders today.*

- Young people and adults must first set their fears aside and take a chance on each other.
- Adults must provide young people with the information, training and support they will need to succeed. They must also develop their own abilities to work with young people.
- Young people must commit their time and energy to do the work and be willing to learn from adults.
Meaningful Involvement: Count us in

*Decisions about young people should be made with young people.*

- Involving young people from the beginning builds ownership.
- Adults need to support young people in taking on responsibility.
- Reflection helps everyone appreciate the importance of their work - for themselves, for their program, and for their community.
CYCLE OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

This Cycle was created after I examined more than 100 youth engagement activities in K-12 schools and youth organizations across the country. It is designed to illustrate a clear process everyone can use to engage young people throughout our communities. The most important tip here is to consider Youth Voice as more than simply hearing, checking-in, or talking to young people. Youth Voice is action, and action fosters engagement.

Explore the Cycle of Youth Engagement

1. **Listen to Youth Voice.** You know the drill: You’re at your desk one day during class, working away at an important project when a friend comes up to you really excited, saying, “Hey, listen to this…” You tilt your head a little, and maybe lean towards them, but you keep doing whatever you were. You’re not really listening, are you? You might be hearing them talk, and you might even understand what they’re saying - but you’re not really thinking about it or feeling it. That’s the difference between listening and hearing, and that’s where Youth Voice starts - when young people have an actively engaged audience to listen to their ideas, opinions, experiences, knowledge, and/or actions. However, listening is just the first step; Youth Voice requires more.
2. **Validate Youth Voice.** You’ve heard adults say it, and you might have said it yourself: “Oh, that’s really nice.” We try to say “nice” in just the right way, but to young people it seems really insincere. We think we’re doing the “right thing” by encouraging young people move forward, but in our heads we really thinking about the time we fell flat on our face from the same approach. Instead of hiding our true thoughts, it’s the job of adults to honestly validate what young people say or do by honestly reacting to it, how we sincerely feel or think about it. If we think an initiative will fail, we should say so. Validation means disagreeing - or agreeing - as we honestly believe, and respecting young people enough to explain why and search for alternatives, if appropriate.

3. **Authorize Youth Voice.** Authority is an awesome word that can be intimidating for young people as well as adults. However, without authority, Youth Voice is just a hollow cry in a loud argument. By building the skills of children and youth to engage in Democracy, adults can provide practical steps towards actual empowerment, instead of just words. As well as the skills, adults must engage young people in activities that are actually powerful, purposeful, and rewarding. As young people apply their new skills to practical action, Youth Voice gains the authority to make a difference.

4. **Act on Youth Voice.** Youth Voice doesn’t just happen - it must be actively engaged. Taking action for Youth Voice requires children, youth, and adults working together to make the space, place, and ability for young people to create change. Action can - and should - look different everywhere: from identifying the challenge, researching the issue, planning for action, training for effectiveness, reflection on the process, to celebrating the outcomes, Youth Voice is totally flexible - but the purpose of engaging youth is not. The purpose of Youth Voice is always to create, support, and sustain powerful, purposeful, and meaningful communities for everyone to belong to. An important caution: action is usually seen as the most important step. However, this makes positive outcomes the most important thing. Unfortunately, for many issues, positive outcomes rarely come, or if they do, not for the current generation of youth involved. For many young people, the next step can be the most important component of Youth Voice.

5. **Reflect on Youth Voice.** Reflection may be the most important ongoing step to engaging children and youth. When young people and adults critically assess and analyze Youth Voice, learning becomes a vibrant, intricate, and powerful tool for change. Reflection activities used should be appropriate for diverse learners - writing, acting, creating collages, and building activities are all good examples. Once your group has finished reflecting, those lessons should be incorporated into the next listening activity, to support a cyclical approach to Youth Voice.

**Considering the Cycle**

Think about this Cycle in classrooms, and ask yourself how students and teachers go through it. Continue using the Cycle to examine youth programs, foundations, and government agencies. Then step back from youth in general, and consider your own life specifically, including your school, work,
community, society... How does the Cycle apply to your life? Consider where these different steps fit into your world, and then you will be able to help more young people more powerfully.

Chapter One Critical Concepts
1) Engaging young people requires being aware, acknowledging, and infusing diversity throughout every activity.
2) By saying we want to engage Youth Voice we are also saying that Youth Voice is not being engaged otherwise.
3) Simply encouraging or allowing young people to advocate for themselves is not enough.
4) Community problems should be addressed by communities, and not foisted on the shoulders of young people working alone.
5) Discrimination against young people is a real and tangible barrier to Youth Voice that everyone can overcome.

Chapter One Critical Questions
1) What does Youth Voice mean to you?
2) What does it mean to young people you know?
3) What does it mean when young people have never thought about Youth Voice before?
4) How would you characterize your relationships with young people?
5) What are the outcomes of these different types of relationships?
6) What difference do personal relationships with young people make, versus professional ones?
7) Do you refer to people between the ages of 11 and 19 as “youth” or “youths”?
8) What difference does it make?
9) Where else do you see adultism?
10) How has adultism affected you?

Chapter One Freechild Project Resources
Basics of Youth Voice .......................... www.freechild.org/youthvoice.htm
Basics of Adultism .............................. www.freechild.org/adultism.htm
Basics for Adults ................................. www.freechild.org/allies_of_youth.htm
Chapter 2
Why Youth Voice?

More Than a Good Idea
A Congolese proverb says, “A single bracelet does not jingle.” That idea illustrates a core belief many people hold for engaging Youth Voice. However, there are dozens of other reasons why young people should be engaged everywhere in our communities.

Research Says Youth Voice Matters.
A broad body of research shows that Youth Voice is effective in a variety of settings for a variety of reasons. Almost every environment, activity, and issue that Youth Voice addresses has been studied in some form, and those results consistently demonstrate the validity of Youth Voice.

Researchers around the world have found that Youth Voice affects everyone that is involved, including youth and adults, as well as the organizations and communities they belong to. A nationwide research study found that Youth Voice helps community programs become more effective, lets adults feel more supportive of youth, and makes communities feel more connected to their members. School-based studies have discovered that when teachers intentionally engage young people in their classrooms, students become more engaged in learning and have higher attendance rates. Students who go to school do not drop out and are more likely to earn passing grades. Schools have also reported being safer, with better relationships between students and adults, and among students themselves. Researchers have also found that Youth Voice affects young peoples’ interest in voting, commitment to their community, and many other areas. For more about Youth Voice research go to www.freechild.org/research.thm

Democracy Needs Youth Voice.
Youth Voice is essential to healthy democracy. In a time when civic disengagement is tangible in low voting rates, young people are bucking the trend by volunteering more than ever. By embracing Youth Voice our communities can gauge the power of young people to solve serious social problems.

Young people have the same right as adults to make their hopes, fears, dreams, and realities known to society, even if (or especially because) they are young. It’s a long-term growth issue: if you meaningfully involve youth when they’re young, they’ll provide free promotion and stay around longer. It’s a clarity issue: when organizations really want to succeed, they engage the people who they affect the most - for youth-serving groups, that’s youth; for community-serving groups, that includes youth. Other young people believe
that it is a responsibility issue: if you can be tried in a court of law as an adult, you should be able to vote on the laws that made that action a crime.

Adults Need Youth Voice. Everyone, young and older, must acknowledge and examine our assumptions about young people. By exploring what we believe about young people both adults and youth can challenge ourselves to become better Youth Voice practitioners. This will allow communities to focus on what really matters, making activities more meaningful and outcomes more powerful.

Many adults believe Youth Voice is an inherently good thing to do, just because it feels right. Some adults had meaningful experiences in their communities when they were young, and want their children to share those, too. Others might have experienced the opposite, and know that they don’t want to continue that negativity. Business leaders often believe that Youth Voice is the best way to get customer input on products and services, while many adult community leaders believe that Youth Voice is the best way to ensure that youth will stay in communities as they grow older. It is essential

Each of these reasons is legitimate; in many areas across Washington, they are central to the future success of local communities. Many programs have reported anecdotal evidence of the effect of Youth Voice on their communities: youth stay in the area after graduation; seniors feel connected to the youngest generations, supporting important educational programs and civic activities for children and youth; and parents feel responsible, capable, and supportive of and for their children’s futures. Following are some more reasons to engage Youth Voice.

Youth Voice Addresses Many Issues
Youth Voice should be a community-driven strategy meant to engage young people in larger efforts. Young people should never be so limited that they can only speak for the issues that only affect young people. Youth Voice can address the issues of the families, neighborhoods, cultures, and other identities that young people have. Without those connections, Youth Voice can lead to alienation between children and youth, among youth themselves, and between adults and young people. This alienation robs young people of their sense of belonging and purpose. Many approaches to Youth Voice grew out of responses to particular kinds of demand. Identifying these approaches is important for two reasons: one, to show the breadth of issues that Youth Voice addresses; and two, to clearly demonstrate the sophistication of young peoples’ concerns. Youth Voice is often dismissed as “juvenile” or simplistic - however, the issues addressed here clearly illustrate the depth, breadth, and power of young people today. These are some of the issues Youth Voice addresses in communities across Washington.

Youth Voice Addresses Culture. Understanding our personal identity is central to developing strong community, and culture is a key to who we are. According to Wikipedia, culture includes codes of manners, dress, language, religion, rituals, norms of behavior and systems of belief. In a community or organization, culture can also include everything from billboards to music to greetings on the street. Many of Washington’s diverse ethnic communities have unique cultures. This includes the Lummi Tribe in the Bellingham-area. For
thousands of years this tribe has sung, danced, ate, worn, and shared their culture, celebrated for its richness and depth. However, over the last 25 years there was concern within the tribe that young people have not been learning about their culture. The Lummi Cedar Project teaches tribal youth about their culture, capturing the spirit of community organizing while engaging young people in authentic youth/adult partnerships that are transforming their community.

Youth Voice Addresses Media Bias. The youth-created media movement is one example that starts with stereotyping. Selling advertising in newspapers and on television is hard work. In the late 1980s and early 1990s many popular media outlets found that a way to spike sales was to sensationalize violence in our communities, especially when it focused on youth. Almost overnight mainstream news sources across Washington started casting young people as anti-heroes in stories about gang membership, bullying, drug use, and school shootings. At the same time, a number of media outlets reported an increase in research that painted youth as apathetic and meaningless, casting an entire generation of young people as “Generation X,” a group absent of identity and purpose. A lot of people, young and old, became infuriated about these stereotypes and the increasing alienation of youth. Out of this angst and concern came new programs such as Youth and Young Adults Media (YAYA Media) in Olympia, seeking to engage young people in analyzing negative stereotypes about youth and reporting positive news about youth, and their views on the world. These programs teach young people to analyze mainstream media, research the facts, and create their own media.

Youth Voice Addresses Service Learning. The service-learning movement, with Youth Voice embedded at its core, grew out of popular demand as well. From the time of John Dewey in the 1920s through the 1970s, community and classroom educators found that young people learned best by doing. The service learning method combines doing with purpose - and then proposes that the purpose should be to engage young people in learning through service. There are service learning projects in K-12 schools across Washington funded by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Learn and Serve America grant. In these projects students identify issues, research challenges, create projects, participate in meaningful projects and reflect afterwards. In turn they learn deeply about their communities and larger society. This idea is influencing other areas of schools today, as Youth Voice turns up in more education reform efforts everyday.

Youth Voice Addresses Self-Expression. Young people have unique expressions of creativity and energy that have influenced popular culture and society for at least 100 years. The VERA Project in Seattle is a youth-led, youth-focused arts organization that has raised community support, support from major rock bands, and government support to build a home for youth-led arts in the world-famous Seattle Center.

Youth Voice Addresses Leadership. Youth leadership programs today are often challenged to provide activities that are meaningful and impacting in the lives of our communities. This is not an issue for the Kent-based Institute for Community Leadership. ICL promotes Youth Voice in community leadership through their innovative poetry nonviolence workshops. Young people analyze the effects of racism in their lives and the lives of others, reflecting through
poetry. Then they share their knowledge with their communities through public performances, speeches, and throughout their lives.

**Youth Voice Addresses Sustainable Agriculture.** Understanding food production and owning the ability to raise food is empowering in an age of corporate farms. An Olympia nonprofit organization called Garden Raised Bounty empowers young people to address hunger and poverty through a program called “Cultivating Youth.” GRUB engages young people in hard work at local gardens, field trips to local farms, managing their own marketing program, and having meaningful interaction with seniors everyday.

**Youth Voice Addresses Community Representation.** While young people under 18 can’t vote, its particularly important to engage their voices in other ways. The Seattle Mayor’s Youth Council, directed by Metrocenter YMCA, advises city government on issues affecting youth in Seattle and provides input on city policies and hosts an annual Youth City Hall meeting for hundreds of Seattle youth. High school age youth work with the Mayor and other city leaders to learn about city government, earn community service hours and represent their communities. In 2004 youth in Seattle participated in a youth forum where they met a variety of candidates running for local and statewide offices.

**Youth Voice Addresses Youth Rights.** Young people in Washington have a long history of working for equal rights and responsibilities. In the late 1990s a young woman in Olympia was on a car trip with her sister and thought, “If you’re 16 and you’re driving, you are taking on the risk of a car crash. So why can’t you be an organ donor?” She found out that organ donors must be at least 18 years old and proposed amending the law to allow anyone over 15 to have an organ donor designation on their driver’s license, provided they have the consent of their parent or guardian. The Governor heard about her idea, held a press conference with this young activist, and as a result, the law was amended to allow more people to become organ donors.

**Youth Voice Addresses Hip Hop.** Hip hop is a unique cultural identity that combines dance, music, language, and other expressions that many urban youth identify with. The Puget Sound area has seen the birth of many youth-led hip hop production companies over the last several years. The MLK Hip Hop Show in Seattle is the nation’s largest annual celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s life, gathering thousands to celebrate through rap, break-dancing, poetry, and powerful speeches - all by young people.

**Youth Voice Addresses Philanthropy.** The spirit of serving others by committing financial support to our communities is being promoted by young funders who are raising money, identifying issues important to them, and providing financial support to projects that matter to them. Common Cents is a program at the Fremont Public Association. This program works in schools across Seattle to promote Youth Voice through philanthropy.

**Youth Voice Addresses Peer Education and Advocacy.** Peer mentorship was an early model of Youth Voice, actively positioning young people as teachers for their friends about issues affecting them. Today, dozens of programs in Washington engage young people to teach about issues that matter to young people. In 2003 the SAFTYE Network (Stop Auto Fatalities Through Youth
Efforts) had more than 250 youth-organized clubs working statewide to end reckless driving.

**Youth Voice Addresses Racism.** Native American youth in Seattle took action after years of racism at **West Seattle High School.** The school’s mascot had been the “Indians” for decades, and students were determined to change it. After forming a citywide coalition, the youth took their case to the school administration. Young people picketed at the school, made speeches to the mayor, the school board, and the Duwamish Tribal Council. After a year of action, the school district adopted a regulation banning Indian mascots. However, the most powerful challenge came from school alumni, who claimed that changing the mascot would impair the schools’ ability to raise money. The courts disagreed, and supported the students’ efforts to create change.

There are many other issues that Youth Voice addresses as well. Following are a few more examples.

- Youth representation in media
- Homeschooling
- Commercialization in schools
- Curfews
- Anti-war
- Education reform
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Landmines

**MYTHS ABOUT YOUTH VOICE**

It is great to sit in a room of allies and people who “get it”, but most people work in high pressure environments where Youth Voice seems quaint or non-essential. Following are some myths and realities for people who want to think “outside the box”.

**MYTH #1:** This all sounds good on paper, but my school/program/organization/community/region/agency/situation is different.

**REALITY:** While it is true that each community is different, Youth Voice is always present, whether or not it is utilized. It is important to remember that what works immediately and effectively in one may not have the same results in another; however, that is why every community needs to make its own space for Youth Voice. By recognizing the desperate necessity of engaging young people, all kinds of communities can benefit. Community groups, organizations, schools, and neighborhoods across Washington are relying on Youth Voice because young people are relying on them. Start by engaging young people in small and doable tasks, and work your way into larger projects over time. Eventually your community will have a successfully customized strategy for Youth Voice.

**MYTH #2:** Youth Voice is all about youth.

**REALITY:** Youth Voice cannot ever be “all about youth.” Without recognizing a larger community around them, young people and adult allies cannot call for Youth Voice. By specifically engaging young people, communities recognize Youth Voice as being about more than young people. Youth Voice is about
children, youth, and adults working in common - together. Youth Voice is about communities and democracy, and other people.

**MYTH #3:** We only need to focus on Youth Voice when there are problems to deal with.

**REALITY:** Anyone who works with communities needs Youth Voice everyday to keep them honest, connected, effective, and realistic. And let’s face it - our communities have never existed without challenges - perhaps that is because we keep waiting to engage young people. Young people can contribute to everyday projects as well as crisis intervention.

**MYTH #4:** It is too hard to engage young people when I can just do the work myself.

**REALITY:** Any seasoned Youth Voice practitioner will tell you that it is an everyday challenge to engage young people. However, there are everyday rewards as well: adults feel more satisfaction about their jobs, that organizations become more successful meeting their missions, and that youth feel more connected to the world around them. Young people are also resources in and of themselves: our communities cannot afford to deny the abilities they possess any longer, and with their seemingly boundless capacity to contribute, children and youth may be our state’s most sustainable, renewable energy source!

**Chapter 2 Critical Concepts**

1) Young people have the same right as adults to make their hopes, fears, dreams, and realities known to society.
2) Youth Voice is often dismissed as “juvenile” or simplistic - however, the issues prove the depth, breadth, and power of young people.

**Chapter 2 Critical Questions**

1) What issues do youth face that are not been addressed in this section?
2) How can adult perspectives change the way society perceives issues that affect and addressed by Youth Voice?
3) What should Youth Voice address that it may not already?

**Chapter 2 Freechild Project Resources**

Youth Voice Research ........................................ www.freechild.org/research.htm
Youth Voice Issues ................................. www.freechild.org/issues.htm
Activist Learning .................................................. www.yp3.org
(Bothell, WA) The results are in: students have a definite vision of what schools should be like that can help educators make schools better. Their visions include: equal treatment for students, interactive, self-driven, integrated learning; self-assessment; safe, comfortable learning spaces; and modern, diverse, relevant materials.

In the spring of 2004, more than 100 students in a public alternative high school in suburban Seattle partnered with teachers and students from other area high schools to create a plan for meaningful student involvement in their school. The first step in the Secondary Academy for Success (SAS) plan was a series of skill-building and planning workshops for a self-selected group of students who were interested in changing their school. These students formed the nucleus of the Student Leadership Team at SAS. The Student Leadership Team laid out a series of objectives and activities that focused on creating an all-day, student-facilitated forum where students could discuss the successes and challenges in their learning experiences.

Goals for the forum included students becoming central contributors to the school improvement process at SAS; students experiencing meaningful involvement as both facilitators and participants, and; students developing a concrete course of action for school change, culminating in a student presentation to school staff. As one adult facilitator commented, the purpose of this forum was for “Students actually changing schools. And.. students and teachers... work[ing] together to make that real.” Another adult said, “We’re going to talk about how we learn best. We want to know what you think is important to learn. And the next part of that is how you want to learn.”

The students and adults involved believed that this route would provide a vital accountability loop to students about the outcomes of their contributions, and validate student voice. The initial steps of the process included training a group of ten to twelve students as student forum facilitators. The students participated in teambuilding, self-awareness, and critical thinking activities in preparation for their roles as facilitators at the whole-school forum. During these sessions students wrote the discussion questions and sampled a variety of activities in a one-day training event.

Dozens of students and teachers are holding hands in the middle of the old cafeteria. On “GO!” they start twisting and contorting like a giant circular caterpillar, sending a pair of hula hoops over their bodies and around their group. The forum was a success. The Student Leadership Team worked with teachers to lead discussions with 70 other students in small groups. After participating in icebreakers and an activity about styles of communication, students discussed what they thought were challenges in schools, and what they thought needed to change. Throughout the day there were several initiative exercises and breaks.

Continued on next page...
Suggestions came in many forms, including these thoughts about “the perfect school” from students:

“We think the perfect school would be a school where the teachers are not as much teachers as they are students, and everybody works in a group together on the same projects. And the teachers and students would have respect for each other.”

“Students can pursue their learning in or outside of the school, in formal course work or independent studies. In each case the student writes a contract with a stated goal of learning.”

“The governance of the schools should be handled through your sub-committees, where anyone can join and participate.”

“I want to learn history by like traveling...not traveling, but like going on field trips, going places - museums and stuff. I don’t want to learn from a book. I want to actually do things.”

One Student Leadership Team member noted, “These [students] really want a place that they can go that is something that they like. A school where they can learn what they want to learn and that they can be comfortable... and be equal with everyone.”

After the forum, the Student Leadership Team compiled notes from the Forum into a written report that was presented to the entire student body in classroom meetings, and to the local board of education. Every student in the school had the opportunity to respond to the findings and to the Forum overall. Reflecting on that process, one Student Leadership Team member said, “It is interesting how much alike different people are as far as their opinions on school are.”

The report also included recommendations on actions that the school can take, and ways to create an environment that supports meaningful student involvement at SAS.

Ultimately, this Forum is just the tip of an iceberg. As one adult at the Forum reflected afterwards, “These [students] have never ever talked about school like this before in their lives. And it freaks [them] out. So of course they are going to run off, because they don’t even know if adults are really listening. They don’t even know if what they are saying matters. So what needs to happen now is that school needs show them that ‘yes, it matters. We are listening.’”

As one student said, "Just the fact that everyone in the whole room agrees on what a school should be like, but there isn’t one like that here, shows why we needed this.” Through the Student Voice Forum and Student Leadership, SAS has begun that transformation and created a foundation for a successful - and meaningful - future for all students.
Chapter 3
Who is Youth Voice For?

It Is Not All About You

It seems obvious to say that Youth Voice is for young people - but it’s not. Or at least, it’s not just for young people. Parents, teachers, youth workers... everyone involved in the lives of children and youth can benefit from Youth Voice!

Youth Voice is for All Young People and Adults...

- Different ages
- Different cultures
- Different races
- Different genders
- Different interests
- Different abilities
- Different learning styles
- Different communities
- Different experiences
- Different families
- Different backgrounds
- Different attitudes

As individuals, there are countless rewards to being heard and acknowledged throughout our lives. Being engaged gives us a feeling of control over ourselves and the world around us. Being engaged makes us feel more connected to our communities, and citizenship becomes tangible, real. When we’re engaged we learn more, too. Seeing how history, government, and current events are relevant our communities become more meaningful for us. When communities become more meaningful, it becomes important to recognize the strengths throughout them, and in Youth Voice, diversity is the main strength.

In communities across Washington, young people are becoming more diverse, and because of that Youth Voice is becoming more powerful and effective. Culture in the community, quality of learning, and the kinds of support young people have at home, in school, and throughout the community are shaping Youth Voice into a driving force for positive change. This diversity must become incorporated into any effort to engage, develop, or sustain Youth Voice.

Diverse Engagement for Diverse Youth

Communities across Washington are growing and changing everyday. The diversity of young people isn’t obvious just from looking across the room. Each of the following considerations explore why Youth Voice matters throughout many of the diverse identities young people have. The concept of acknowledging diversity was introduced in the first chapter; here it is spelled out. Each of the following sections explores the role diversity plays in Youth Voice. The examples provided clearly illustrate that Youth Voice is not just for middle-class white teens; rather, they show that Youth Voice is for all young people, with particular regard for their identity.
Youth Voice is for Youth from Distinct Cultures. Many different ethnic and cultural communities have different ways of engaging young people. In mainstream American culture youth are seen as a commodity: shoes, soda, music, clothes, sports, movies, cars, and even lifestyles are marketed using the ideal of Youth as a selling point. By contrast some American Indian communities see the period of being a youth as an important passageway to responsibility - but not as the end goal. Many communities of color and immigrant communities have a long history of promoting Youth Voice. AnakBayan is one such program, where Filipino young people promote Youth Voice through leadership development and community action. Youth Voice acknowledges, examines, challenges and affirms ethnic and cultural diversity.

Youth Voice is for Disengaged Youth. Young people who appear disengaged from youth programs or classes often want very much for their voices to be heard. Successful Youth Voice programs for disengaged youth usually focus on the direct experiences in these young peoples’ lives, such as improving disengaging teaching methods or developing conflict meditation skills. At Secondary Academy for Success, an alternative high school in Bothell, disengaged youth are meaningfully involved in school decision-making, often becoming expert advocates for Youth Voice and education.

Youth Voice is for Highly Motivated Youth. Providing engaging and sustainable activities for students who are academically and socially successful is challenging to the most experienced teacher and youth workers. By giving these young people opportunities to lead “cascading voice” experiences - where students encourage Youth Voice from younger students - is a particularly successful strategy for these young people. YouthLink is a youth leadership program in Bellevue. Young people participate in conferences, community service, youth training, and peer mentoring activities.

Youth Voice is for Young Women. There are few opportunities for young women to make their unique experiences, voices, and actions heard throughout our society. Deliberately engaging young women strengthens their voices and engages their communities in powerful change. DYYAS (Develop Youth Voice and Speak) youth employment program of the nonprofit Powerful Voices in Seattle empowers free expression through community involvement and language for girls.

Youth Voice is for Migrant Youth. Students who move to different areas of the country or continent throughout the school year face particular challenges that can benefit from Youth Voice. Their constant movement, which may follow the farm season or other economic cycles, may conflict with the intentions of adults who work with them. Teachers may feel pressure to “catch up” migrant students to regular classroom learning goals, and youth program workers might feel discouraged at what they perceive as their inability to support these students. Fortunately, Secondary Education for Migrant Youth (SEMY) is an OSPI-affiliated program providing outreach for migrant and bilingual youth. They provide meaningful leadership and service activities where young people positively affect their communities, their families, and their own lives, effectively challenging negative perceptions.

Youth Voice is for Elementary Students. Youth Voice is often seen as the domain of teenagers, thus the name Youth Voice. Young children are
sometimes seen as incapable of informing, making, challenging, or reflecting on what is routinely done to them, without their input. However, the phrase “Youth Voice” applies to the energy of children by encapsulating the potential of their roles as active, meaningful, and significant contributors in their lives. Everyday elementary-age students contribute Youth Voice in service learning activities. Elementary students begin to associate their families within their larger communities, and can strengthen their own voices by mapping their influence and authority in their community. Students at Ridgeview Elementary School in Yakima participated in a SoundOut Student Voice Program where they helped plan formal school improvement activities. This program centered in Youth Voice, teaching students important skills and engaging them in powerful conversations about learning.

Youth Voice is for Middle School-Age Students. When working with young students, Youth Voice seems like a great idea that inherently feels good. However, perhaps more than any other age group, positive experiences with Youth Voice are essential to middle school students. Youth development relies on identity and belonging during these years, and Youth Voice is central to strengthening those traits. Positive experiences with Youth Voice can help young people feel empowered and purposeful, and create a pathway for action throughout their teens. For others, Youth Voice can make difficult experiences less challenging, and make difficult adults less alienating. In middle school young people can strengthen their sense of community-belonging through youth councils and advisory committees that guide decision-making and improve services. For more than five years hundreds of middle school students in Vancouver participated in PeaceJam. This national program brought Nobel Peace Prize winners to Vancouver to inspire and help students design powerful projects to promote peace and nonviolence in their community.

Youth Voice is for High School-Age Students. In high school there are a lot of opportunities to connect young people to change. That can mean opening the doors of service learning, media-making, political action, and other methods. In some communities that means making new doors where none exist. Youth Voice makes sense for high school-age students as a learning tool, a community connection, and a lifelong influence. High school students can conduct broad examinations of social, educational, political, legal, or cultural bias against young people, and develop specific and concrete projects that respond to their observations. Youth at Dayton High School participated in a SoundOut School Forum to help their teachers and principals understand what works for students. After listening to student voice, a group of student leaders worked with adults to plan several action projects designed to improve their school.

Youth Voice is for Alternative School Students. Students in alternative schools across the state may be at these schools because it is their “last stop” before dropping out or being expelled. They may also see their schools as a “last chance” to graduate on-time. They generally have a high need for ownership over their learning and belonging to a community. By engaging young people in alternative schools adults can foster and support feelings of ownership, belonging, purpose, and empowerment among students who desperately need - and want - those experiences. Alternative school students can create classes, evaluate their own performance, teach peers and train teachers, as well as make decisions about every facet of learning. Hiring teachers, planning school budgets, and designing curricula are part of a normal
day of learning at NOVA Project, a public alternative high school in Seattle. Youth Voice is central to the school, as students teach, evaluate, and lead learning with adults everyday.

Youth Voice is for Youth from Diverse Socio-Economic Backgrounds. Class and economic backgrounds make important differences in Youth Voice. Many young people today are sedated by mass media, cull into believing that the brands they wear and the soda they drink are the most important ways their voices can be heard. In many middle class communities it has become a cultural norm for young people to be habitually disengaged from the decision-making that affects them most. Similarly, young people in low-income areas may feel routinely distrustful and angry towards adults, as their interactions are regularly marked by negativity. Young people from affluent areas may feel overly influential and controlling of the situations in which they are engaged. Each of these differences is important to acknowledge. Youth who participate in anti-tobacco programs across the state reflect this commitment. The American Cancer Society helps youth leaders and their adult partners in Washington build strong youth coalitions for tobacco prevention and advocacy through the SpeakOut! Youth Initiative Program. Workshops are held regularly across the state, participants receive a toolkit, and can apply for mini-grants to help challenge smoking.

Youth Voice is for Out-of-School Youth. Whether young people homeschool, "unschool," or dropout of school, Youth Voice can provide an effective way to continue learning, engaging, and interacting with the communities they live in. By creating projects, leading programs, or evaluating their own life experiences, Youth Voice can become an expectation - not an exception - in daily life and learning. The Olympia Free School provides a central location for many unschoolers to gather and learn from each other. For the last several years they have facilitated student-led classes and events promoting Youth Voice for youth and adults. Their newspaper, *Natural Learning*, features regular articles on unschooling, as well.

Youth Voice is for Incarcerated Youth. The situations that incarcerated youth face are clearly different from young people in the community - but their need to be heard, acknowledged, and empowered is just as vital. Youth Voice in juvenile justice programs can be realized through reflective writing that simply shares the stories of youth. By encouraging incarcerated youth to critically examine their experiences, adults can empower these young people to learn from their mistakes. Then, by working with supportive adults, incarcerated youth can be successful contributors to their future by creating a life plan based on their past experiences. *Gateways for Incarcerated Youth* is a cultural learning program based at The Evergreen State College in Olympia. Gateways promotes Youth Voice at two youth detention centers by teaching young people of color about heritage, culture, art, and empowerment.

Youth Voice is for Young English Language Learners. In many communities where English is not the primary language, Youth Voice can be a blurry phenomenon. Sometimes young people are the main English translators for their parents. This happens because parents do not have the time to learn English, because they cannot afford classes, or because schools or youth programs do not have the financial ability to hire a professional interpreter. The inevitable misunderstandings sometimes lead to a distrust of children and
youth. Sometimes, the reverse happens: youth workers and teachers can sometimes mistake youth voice for the parents’ voice. Applying newly-learned English language skills to their daily lives through Youth Voice programs can help make English more purposeful, enjoyable, and meaningful.

**Youth Voice is for Homeless Youth.** Physical, mental, or emotional abuse, parental alcoholism, poverty, multi-generational homelessness, and myriad other factors drive children and youth onto the streets. Programs designed to meet the needs of these young people can actually do the greatest justice by acknowledging youth. Meaningful decision-making, skill-sharing, life planning, and reflection on their lives can lead homeless youth to reengage as community members. This sense of belonging has as many positive affects as there are factors that make youth homeless in the first place, if not more. A program in Olympia called **Partners in Prevention Education** educates homeless youth about community issues and empowers them to create change through action-oriented programs.

**Youth Voice is for Foster Youth.** Growing up in unstable situations, sometimes being forcibly removed from family, being thrust into the lives of strangers... these aren’t ideal situations for engaging young people. However, when young people participate in the decision-making that affects them most, they consistently report feeling empowered, purposeful, and stronger. Research shows these experiences build resilience and belonging. Foster youth can be engaged in designing life plans, informing system operations, and consulting their learning and living situations, as well as many other ways. The **Mockingbird Society** is a nonprofit organization in Seattle providing foster youth and other marginalized young people with opportunities to express themselves and make change in Washington’s Child Welfare System. Mockingbird provides a newspaper, advocacy opportunities, and programs that promote Youth Voice in systems reform.

**Youth Voice is for Diverse Learners.** Another form of diversity comes in the different ways that people learn. Everyone has a different style of learning that allows them to learn best. In 1983, researcher Howard Gardner identified seven types of distinct learning styles he called “Multiple Intelligences” to show that different people learn in different ways. The best Youth Voice programs reach each type, and have young people identify where they are themselves.

- **Linguistic Intelligence** - Learners focus on language and how it is used. They might remember names, places, and dates easily, and spell words quickly. Youth Voice programs can focus on words, sounds, and meanings, and spend a lot of time reading and writing.

- **Musical Intelligence** - Learners focus on music, rhythm, and pitch. They concentrate more when music is played, sing to themselves a lot or make up songs to remember details. Youth Voice programs involve these learners in making music, analyzing music, and teaching other people music.

- **Logical-Mathematical Intelligence** - Learners focus on patterns, numbers, and logical relationships. They are good at math problems, puzzles, and mental challenges. Youth Voice programs can use computers, graphic design, and logic activities.
Spatial Intelligence - Learners focus on shapes, locations, and distances. They are good designers and builders. Youth Voice programs can focus on community planning, building design, and creating charts and maps.

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence - Learners focus on physical skills and movement. They are good actors, athletes, and craftspeople who do not like to sit still. Youth Voice programs teach these young people through constant activity.

Interpersonal Intelligence - Learners focus on understanding and dealing with other people. They are very social, often trying to understand peoples’ motives and feelings. Youth Voice programs can focus on communication, and give young people opportunities to organize their communities.

Intrapersonal Intelligence - Learners focus on understanding themselves. They are self-sufficient, confident, and opinionated, and do things on their own. Youth Voice programs can empower young people by giving them more control of their surroundings and through self-driven activities.

There are many ways that young people identify themselves, and adults often miss the mark. Rather than simple categories or convenient definitions, trying seeing the complexity in some of the following ways youth identify themselves:

- Gender
- Race
- Culture
- Language
- “Street” smarts
- Online identity
- Peer reputation
- Athletic involvement
- Economics
- Neighborhood
- Grade level and school
- Sexual orientation
- Gangs and clubs
- Music preference
- Family make-up
- Spiritual/religious beliefs

Youth Voice is for Adults

Adults can benefit as much as young people from Youth Voice - if not more. Job satisfaction, feelings of effectiveness, and connectedness are the obvious advantages of Youth Voice for adults; however, each adult position has its own rewards. Following are some different outcomes for the different situations where adults benefit from Youth Voice.

Youth Voice is for Educators. Instead of seeing young people as empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge, teachers can learn from and teach students to learn from their own experiences. Youth Voice also happens when students evaluate themselves and their classes; when students teach classes; and when students can speak openly about schools. The Small Schools Project is a statewide effort to promote small learning communities where students are partners in learning. This emphasis on Youth Voice encourages teachers to engage young people in authentic and meaningful ways.

Youth Voice is for Youth Workers. Youth programs are often done to young people. Instead, when young people are engaged, youth programs are done with young people, or by young people themselves. Young people can plan, research, facilitate, evaluate, and advocate for programs they are affected by.
The Freechild Project has worked with dozens of youth organizations across Washington to design comprehensive Youth Voice programs. Their approach focuses on utilizing youth worker knowledge to develop community-wide approaches to Youth Voice.

Youth Voice is for Community Activists. While some movements rely on youth energy to create change in their causes, many do not. Young people should be more than the subjects of change - they should be the drivers and motivators. Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA) is striving to stop violence against women. Their Youth Voice program is called the Young Peoples Liberation Project, and is for young people who want to work to end all forms of violence and oppression through activism and community-organizing.

Youth Voice is for Government Workers. Everyday government agencies on the city, county, and state levels make decisions for youth without youth. Many of these decisions are consistently out-of-touch with the realities young people face everyday. Acknowledging this dilemma, the Children’s Administration recently established a statewide youth advisory board named Passion to Action. This board is made up of 20 current and former foster youth, ages 13-24, from across the state. The group meets quarterly to discuss policy, explore activities, and help inform Children’s Administration programs.

Youth Voice is for Researchers. When youth describe researchers who have worked in their schools or communities, sometimes they describe people from different planets who are isolated from reality. Engaging young people as research designers, administrators, and evaluators breaks down the barriers of academia, and reinforces powerful learning.

Other adults who can benefit from Youth Voice include:

- Parents
- Senior citizens
- Parks workers
- Teachers
- Business owners
- Neighborhood leaders
- Police
- Counselors
- Religious leaders
- Social workers

Keep It In Context
Before racing off to “shove” Youth Voice down someone’s throat, it is important to consider the context for advocacy. Every individual child, youth, or adult has a stake in Youth Voice - but every child, youth, and adult also responsible for neglecting, denying, silencing, or otherwise shutting down Youth Voice. Henry Giroux is a vital ally to youth and adult allies worldwide. Recently he explained the need for Youth Voice, saying,

The futures we inherit are not of our own making, but the futures we create for generations of young people who follow us arise out of our ability to imagine a better world, recognize our responsibility to others, and define the success of a society to the degree that it can address the needs of coming generations to live in a world in which the obligations of a global democracy and individual responsibility mutually inform each other.
Youth Voice is about democracy and individual responsibility, providing a real way for those two great big ideas to come together in the lives of all young people. If everyone just understood that, Youth Voice would be a daily reality in almost every young person’s lives. That is the context for Youth Voice that everyone should understand.
WAYS TO HONOR DIVERSE YOUTH VOICE

Identifying diversity is important - however, it’s just the first step. Following are important tips for students and adults who want to act on what they know.

1) **Transform sympathy to empathy.** Discrimination affects people for many more reasons than their age: race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and academic performance affect whole communities everyday. Learning about discrimination in all its forms strengthens understanding about Youth Voice. After exploring discrimination, it is easier to understand why we should not do anything for young people; we should do it with them. This is the first step to honoring diversity among youth, particularly for adults, because young people are distinct from adults.

2) **Take personal action, and encourage others to do the same.** Identify your diversity and learn about how other people identify themselves. Everyone is affected by ignorance, and everyone can benefit from learning and doing more to support diversity. Encourage your peers, family, class, and community to examine and act to support diversity. Individual and collective action encourages deeper understanding about Youth Voice.

3) **Challenge ignorance and examine assumptions.** When a young person in your group says or does something that is hurtful, hateful, disrespectful, or biased, call it out. Either individually or as a group, call out what was said or done, discuss what or how it could be different, and commit to challenging the person or situation to changing. Talk about differences within your group. Encourage young people with mixed ethnic, racial, religious, educational, economic, or other backgrounds to examine how they are similar and different.

4) **Acknowledge that discrimination affects all youth differently.** Young people share a lot in common because of their age: curfews, no voting rights, and “No children without parents” signs in stores affect everyone under 18. There are differences, too: young people from low-income neighborhoods have different experiences than those from affluent communities. Identify, examine, and embrace these differences. Acknowledge those differences on your own and with young people.

5) **Find diversity everyday.** There is diversity in every group of young people. Talk about the diversity in daily life by exploring differences at home, at school, in spiritual beliefs, in appearances, in thinking, and other ways with your entire group. Share perceptions and learn (or unlearn!) from each other. Create opportunities for young people to dialogue about Youth Voice with young people in foster homes, juvenile detention, drug treatment centers, and other areas. Bring young people to ethnic fairs, refugee resettlement centers, and other settings where they can be exposed, challenged, and engaged to incorporate diversity into Youth Voice.
YOUTH VOICE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Following is a simple assessment communities can use to identify who needs Youth Voice, as well as who and for whom Youth Voice is engaged. These questions are adapted from work by Michael Fielding; see more online at www.soundout.org/framework.html

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Sharing Youth Voice

- Who is allowed to speak?
- To whom are they allowed to speak?
- What are they allowed to speak about?
- What language is encouraged / allowed?
- Who decides the answer to these questions?
- How are those decisions made?
- How, when, where, to whom and how often are those decisions communicated?

Listening to Youth Voice

- Who is listening?
- Why are they listening?
- How are they listening?

Action

- What action is taken?
- Who feels responsible?
- What happens if aspirations and good intentions are not realized?
Chapter 3 Critical Concepts

1) All Youth Voice is not the same.
2) Young people are becoming more diverse, and that diversity makes Youth Voice is becoming more powerful and effective.
3) Youth Voice inherently challenges unacceptable circumstances.

Chapter 3 Critical Questions

1) Is it necessary to “call out” youth from different communities?
2) Can Youth Voice affect different youth in different ways? How?
3) How do you personally stand to benefit from Youth Voice?
4) How can adults deny the validity of Youth Voice in their own lives?
5) Are there adults who should benefit from Youth Voice, but do not?
6) Are there adults who should not benefit from Youth Voice, but do?

Chapter 3 Freechild Project Resources

Youth Voice for Parents .............................. www.freechild.org/parents.htm
Youth/Adult Partnerships 101 ............ www.freechild.org/yapartnerships.htm
Reading for Adult Allies............ www.freechild.org/ReadingList/adultallies.htm
Chapter 4
When Does Youth Voice Happen?

No Time like the Present
Time affects Youth Voice in a number of ways. Young people inherently lose their Youth Voice as they grow older. Children inherently become more capable of expressing Youth Voice. Adults often forget, disconnect, or deny Youth Voice as they grow older. Despite that complexity, it is essential to think about the variety of ways time affects Youth Voice, from hour-to-hour, day-to-day, and year-to-year. There are important developmental, social, educational, familial, and cultural considerations that affect when Youth Voice happens.

It is also important to remember young people themselves. Even though they don’t carry PDAs or fancy desktop planning calendars, children and youth often have important times during their days when they are responsible for showing up, attending, participating, leading, watching, or belonging in certain places.

Times of Life
When in life should Youth Voice start? Simply said, it should arise everyday starting at birth. Acknowledging the Principles of Youth Voice, including respect, communication, investment, and meaningful involvement, can promote engagement throughout a young person’s life.

Youth Voice happens during for infancy. Parents who deliberately respond to their infants’ needs in holistic ways lay the foundation for lifelong community engagement. Respecting young babies can mean encouraging their “personhood” - that is, being as attentive, courteous, and deliberate about them as you are with older people. Experts suggest close physical time between parents and children creates the strong personal attachment that can lead to strong community bonds. A father who nurtures his baby, rather than avoiding or “handing off” responsibilities, supports strong engagement. Developing a strong sense of community is important at this phase as well. When small children are surrounded by caring adults they learn that their responsibility is to care.

When an infant “goo-goo”s at you, listen to them. They will learn that when they speak, their voice has impact. Listening to a child’s voice is the first step of the Cycle of Youth Engagement. It is also important to give young infants your undivided attention for at least short periods of your day. This shows young children that their presence and activity is important enough for you to stop your day and be with them.
Youth Voice happens during childhood. Investing in children can mean building their skills and giving the time, resources, and space needed in order to share responsibility with them. However, it also means developing the skills and investments adults need to succeed, as well. Communicating with toddlers and children means talking with them, not at them. That’s a skill that adults usually have to learn, starting with unlearning their previous behaviors. Acknowledging children’s voices can be important for self-worth. It can also help form a community expectation. As adults, engaging children requires us to change our behavior while we strive to mold the behavior of children. However, this is an essential developmental phase where children form their sense of identity, purpose, and belonging within their larger village. Part of this expectation is to turn a popular idiom on its head: Instead of, “It takes a village to raise a child,” think about what it means to say, “It takes a child to raise a village.” That’s what Youth Voice is about.

When children go through hard times, they usually figure out how to “deal with it.” This ability, called resilience, is a powerful skill. However, children need to learn how to use it positively. Design Youth Voice activities to teach children how to rely on community as a collective benefit that can help them. That will build up the positive power of young people to change not just their own lives, but the communities around them.

Youth Voice happens during teen years. Being meaningfully involved should extend throughout a teenager’s world: Home, school, community centers, town hall, parks, libraries... each of these environments where teens belong should actively strive for Youth Voice. Considering the rest of this handbook, it is difficult to restate the obvious: The responsibility for Youth Voice, or the lack thereof, does not fall on the shoulders of young people. Rather, it is the adults throughout their lives who deny their own obligation to struggle, strive, and drive towards complete Youth Voice throughout our communities. As teens are engulfed by this expectation throughout their waking (and sleeping) hours, they will develop, sustain, and expand their comprehensive connections to their communities.

Recognize your personal responsibility for Youth Voice by setting out to be an ally to youth, even when you do not feel welcomed or accepted. There is more than one way to be an ally. Educate yourself about youth activities in your community. Try being a silent partner to a youth group by raising money among your friends. Write letters to the editor, speak to the city council, or talk with parents in favor of Youth Voice. Gather some adult friends and drop-in at the local teen center - not as a volunteer staff member, but as someone who is coming to teens on their own ground. Hang out. When youth do accept your allyship, embrace it and go crazy - see the workshop section of this book.

Youth Voice happens during young adulthood. “Youth,” as a time of life, is about change at home, in school, and throughout our communities. Youth Voice is no exception, and as youth become young adults we can foster and sustain their engagement. One important strategy is to teach youth about giving back what they have received, or reciprocity. This powerful transition moves young people from being those who are engaged to being those who engage others. However, young adulthood is a cautionary place in time as well: the forces of work, college, and social life pull at the desire to be involved throughout one’s community. As a consequence, many young adults actually disengage from the
involvement that once sustained them. Therefore, it is essential to develop and
maintain partnering relationships with young adults as they move along this
transition. Adults need to encourage young adults to stay connected through
concrete action and involvement throughout their communities.

Do not let go of young adults. Spend time together so they learn what
responsible adults do, from bill-paying to participating in committees to
leading protests. Teach young adults that adulthood is about responsibility and
privilege in equal measures, and they will neither turn away from it nor lose
their connection with youth.

The Challenges of Time
There are many challenges, barriers, and pitfalls to consider while planning
when to engage young people. The following list draws on a variety of
e.xamples to show the times when children and youth are engaged the most in
Washington.

Challenge #1: The Bandage Syndrome. Adults may be tempted see Youth
Voice as a bandage that provides a temporary fix for serious problems. While it
is true that our organizations and communities have short-term problems, it is
also true that these problems are almost always a part of larger issues.
Successful communities engage young people as part of a long-range effort for
sustained community change. The length of action committed to engaging
young people can serve as a litmus test for the amount of sincerity there is
towards Youth Voice in a community, as well as being an indicator of
sustainability.

Whidbey Island provides a powerful model of sustainable Youth Voice that
provides a solution to the Bandage Solution. The vision for Island Coffee House
in Langley is of to promote a fresh, vigorous presence for youth
entrepreneurship on South Whidbey. Adult-supervised youth are trained as
baristas and learn customer service and business skills as they volunteer in the
coffee shop. All proceeds from Island Coffee House go to support youth
programs on South Whidbey.

Challenge # 2: Election Season Tokenism. Election season politics are
challenging for the many segments of American society that are tokenized for
their votes. As politicians increasingly recognize the necessity of the “youth
vote” they become quickly interested in “youth issues.” A common approach to
this is setting up youth forums or rallies where photo opportunities are all over.
There will often be youth speakers, passionately sharing their positions, as
well. The dilemma of these approaches is that young people increasingly
identify these efforts as election season ploys, and if that politician doesn’t
follow through on campaign promises, youth may actually become more
disenfranchised than before. To avoid this tokenism, some politicians are
working to engage youth throughout the year, instead of just election season.

For more than 10 years Project Citizen has challenged Youth Vote Tokenism by
engaging young people in learning how to monitor and influence public policy.
Students use this curriculum to work together to create a portfolio related to
public policy issue that they have researched and documented. Classes may
also enter their portfolios in a local showcase with other classes. Winners
advance to annual state and national showcases coordinated by the Center for Civic Education.

**Challenge #3: Quantity or Quality?** Many organizations are using “quality management” theories to develop “client-driven” approaches to reform, which encourage them to look to youth to identify problems and solutions. The temporary nature of these emergency responses often stop when everything appears to be functioning, and young people are often left by the wayside while the organization’s staff roll along without them. Young people need consistent, meaningful action, and Youth Voice requires sustainability. One successful approach to fostering on Youth Voice is to develop regular, meaningful activities with young people that go beyond quick fixes and provide constant feedback and action.

An interesting approach to answering the question of quantity or quality in Youth Voice comes from the field of law education. 19 communities statewide engage young people in legal proceedings through **Youth Courts**. For over 20 years these programs position young people as the judges and juries of their peers in real legal cases. The outcomes often include community service, reduced crime, and increased investment in youth by the community and in communities by youth.

**Challenge #4: Seasons of Free Labor.** In communities across the state Youth Voice is used as coded language to disguise trash pick-up or graffiti removal programs. Generally the assumption is that by being involved in community service activities youth will become invested, and therefore engaged, in their communities. However, the unfortunate reality of this assumption is that young people can generally see through the false advertising. Worst yet, they often react to this deception adversely. According to a participant in a recent Youth Voice workshop, “Adults think that just because we’re kids, we are the ones polluting and trashing places. But we’re not.” In many of these cases, community officials are searching for free labor, and automatically turn to youth to provide it. Fortunately, the days of simple community service being regarded as successful Youth Voice strategies have ended in Washington. Youth Voice requires meaningful youth-driven change, and that means meaningful action.

At least one Youth Voice program in Washington substantiates what some people might think is “menial” labor. Youth involved with the Institute for Community Leadership have learned that in order to have a successful organization, neighborhood, or activity, they must be responsible in more ways than just sharing their voice: at ICL’s **Jack Hunter O’Dell Education and Reflection Center** youth are responsible for many aspects of caring for the building and the land, including janitor-type work and environmental stewardship. Suddenly, these less-than-favorable activities become important, not only to adults, but to young participants as well.

**Perspectives on Time**

Developmental research about children and youth has clearly shown that people **literally** see time differently at different ages. That means that while infants have no conception of time, young children are beginning to try and comprehend the structure of time. By the time they are seven or eight, many
children are reading clocks - however, they have little conception of what “future” or “past” means, particularly over the long range.

While they are able to comprehend the future, by their early teens most people are focused on the present. That is particularly important for Youth Voice programs as they plan action, because these young people have a particular need to see immediate outcomes. By their late teens young people are becoming more future-focused, and need opportunities to learn responsible future planning skills. Young adults are often solely focused on the future, and need opportunities to stay connected with the experiences they had as young people while moving positively forward.

Considering the time of day, the time of week, the season of the year, the year of life, and the time of life that young people and adults are living are all essential to Youth Voice. While the differences may feel overwhelming, they can be successfully navigated. Instead of just “giving up” on young people, it is vital that...

- Adults work with children and youth to help them understand adult conceptions of time.
- Young people help adults understand their perspectives, too.

Keep those vital points in mind when:

- Having a discussion
- Planning an event
- Writing a story
- Reflecting on activities
- Setting deadlines
- Inviting others to join
- “Sequencing” a workshop
- Doing a project

**MAKE A YOUTH VOICE CALENDAR**

The following tips can help you think about the timing of Youth Voice programs while you make your own Youth Voice Calendar.

- **Constantly check-in.** Young people have schedules, too. Find out what their important dates and times are, including when school starts and ends, when tests are, holidays, track meets, and other activities.
- **Give heads-ups.** Friendly reminders are appropriate; nagging and complaining about attendance are annoying. Make sure everyone is on the same page.
- **Competition sucks.** Remember that children and youth may have a lot pulling on them: school, family, synagogue, or youth programs often compete for attention. Don’t compete - compete.
- **Leave time for learning.** Reflection should happen regularly between planned sessions. Don’t overwhelm people with too much at once.
- **Make time for fun.** Young people want to have a good time. Make sure there are always times for a good time. Remember that when adults are having a good time, young people are probably having a good time, too. Just check-in and ask.
Days declared by the government and service organizations every year can easily accentuate and engage Youth Voice. These include religious events, school breaks, and other important days in your community.

**Annual Youth Voice Calendar**

There are annual days that have already been developed where Youth Voice can be engaged in particularly effective ways. Following are some examples; consider whether your local community or state has days that will work as well.

**January**  Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Holocaust Remembrance Day

**February**  African American Heritage Month, American Heart Month

**March**  Women’s History Month, Cesar Chavez Day

**April**  Youth Service Day, Volunteer Week, Earth Day

**May**  Memorial Day, Cinco de Mayo, Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, Older Americans Month

**June**  Gay Pride Month, Flag Day, Children’s Day

**July**  U.S.A. Independence Day, Parent’s Day

**August**  Community Build Day, Youth Day

**September**  Hispanic Heritage Month, Labor Day

**October**  Disability Awareness Month, Make a Difference Day

**November**  American Indian Heritage Month, Election Day, Veterans Day, Family Volunteer Day,

**December**  AIDS Day, Human Rights Day

### Chapter 4 Critical Concepts

1) It is essential to think about the variety of ways time affects Youth Voice.
2) “It takes a child to raise a village.” - Youth Voice Proverb
3) The time of day, the time of week, the season of the year, the year of life, and the time of life that young people and adults are living are all essential to Youth Voice

### Chapter 4 Critical Questions

1) Infants, children, teens, young adults... Does the line stop there?
2) Is there anyone Youth Voice does not affect? How, or why not?
3) How do young people and adults see time differently?
4) What are other challenges of time?

### Chapter 4 Freechild Project Resources
Youth Voice in Schools ...................... www.freechild.org/education.htm
It’s a Younger World .............................. www.youngerworld.org
Reading about Age ...................... www.freechild.org/ReadingList/youngpeople.htm
Chapter 5
Where Does Youth Voice Happen?

Mapping Youth Voice
There are countless places in every community where young people could be heard everyday. Each of these places has a special assignment for children and youth. In schools young people are expected to be learners; in stores youth are expected youth to be shoppers, and; in libraries young people are expected to be readers. These expectations are not bad; but they do offer an opportunity to identify where Youth Voice can happen.

There are other places where young people never go, but these places affect them every day. Adults don’t often consider it, but these sorts of places are all over. City Hall makes decisions about laws, regulations, planning, and programs; school district offices make decisions about classes, budgets, and curriculum; hospitals focus their services on patients, including children and youth; community centers and neighborhood associations are for young people, and usually not with them. Again, these places are not bad, only under-informed.

Youth Voice is Everywhere
Youth Voice can - and should - happen throughout our society, in the places where they belong and the places that affect them. That includes large geographic areas; small learning communities; outdoors in nature, and in homes, hospitals, hospices, and hallways in our neighborhoods, schools, halls, legislatures, and across the state.

How often do young people actually think about, share, and act on their ideas, knowledge, opinions, and experiences in these places? Youth Voice happens in different types of institutions, organizations, and communities across Washington. Following are several different types, as well as considerations for those Youth Voice activities.

Youth Voice happens where we live.
Youth Voice begins at home. There are a lot of ways that young people can contribute to decision-making that directly affects them, like helping plan meals and decorating their own bedrooms. Young people can also contribute to decisions that affect the whole family, like whether moving across town is a good idea, or when its time to buy a new couch, comparing buying a new one versus a used one. Youth Voice at home is encouraged by having children advocate for their own needs (with consideration to others’ needs), speak up
for themselves to adults, and by adults advocating for their children when needed.

Where Youth Voice happens has to do with where young people actually live. Young people who live in the middle of Vancouver have different circumstances to consider than those who live in Royal City, Pullman, Forks, Bothell, or Welpinit. Those differences are significant, and they matter when trying to engage children and youth.

**Youth Voice is for Suburban Communities.** On the outskirts of cities across Washington suburban communities face unique challenges engaging young people. These sometimes include trying to connect with families who are new to the area. Suburban youth may feel they lack a focus or reason to making Youth Voice real, as they may see many of their needs already met. It can be difficult to physically involve young people who are physically disconnected from each other by lack of roads or public transportation. Suburban communities may also have high numbers of young people who are at home alone after school and who lack parental support for participating in Youth Voice programs. It is also difficult to incubate Youth Voice in communities that lack a physical center or downtown. Belonging is central to Youth Voice.

**Youth Voice is for Rural Communities.** Small towns and remote areas share some issues in common with suburban communities. They both have challenges with transportation, and getting to any central geographic “hub” can be tough. These communities face other challenges as well, including what some people call “brain drain.” This phrase usually summarizes the loss rural communities feel when large percentages of young people move away because of a lack of opportunities. Young people who stay in the area may feel like they live in a “black hole” where their voices, their dreams, and their lives never escape. Small, local economies suffer when there is a blow to the area, such as the loss of an important industry or lack of highway access. The resulting poverty can make it difficult for young people to feel hopeful, as if they don’t have any ability to create change in their lives or the lives of their communities. Hope is central to Youth Voice.

**Youth Voice is for Urban Communities.** Inner-city areas rely on hope. The experience of many urban youth shows that urban neglect, a common issue in inner-city neighborhoods across the state, can steal hope. For many young people it is hard to feel hopeful when you don’t have food on the table. Safe schools, glaring financial inequities, and negative relationships between youth and police are a sampling of the issues urban youth face.

Other communities where there are particular challenges and rewards of engaging young people. They include:

- **Isolated communities** in extremely rural areas
- **Reservation communities** where culture and heritage is strong, and
- **Military base communities** with largely transient populations.

**Where We Learn**
Learning in classrooms, after-school programs, at home, or around the community provides excellent opportunities to engage young people. Children
and youth can share responsibility for planning what they want to learn, how they want to learn it, and where they learn. They can work with adults to create realistic, tangible learning goals; when finished, young people can evaluate their accomplishments, learning experiences, and learning environments. In schools and community centers, young people can help teachers discover which teaching strategies are most effective and what methods work best. Youth Voice can help education administrators make student-centered decisions, and policy-makers create more effective laws and regulations that govern schools. Young people are also engaged when students lead classes, research learning, plan new schools, and advocate for education.

**Youth Voice is for Classrooms.** The pressure is on schools across Washington to improve teaching and learning. As educators struggle to encourage achievement from kindergarten to twelfth-grade, they are discovering Youth Voice makes a difference. At **Spanaway Elementary School** in the Bethel School District students are participating in a program to honor student voice. Forth, fifth, and sixth grade students are involved in regular activities designed to amplify Youth Voice. Students then compile their findings in documents they share with teachers and the principal. **Friday Harbor High School** recently completed a similar process with school-wide student forums. Students shared what they thought was really good, what could change, and what should remain the same in their schools. After a group of students analyzed that information, they worked with teachers to create an action plan to address the issues students felt most important.

**Youth Voice is for the Entire School.** Students are also working to change schools in other ways. At **Foster High School** in Tukwila a group of students worked with school administration to create the Multicultural Action Committee. The MAC recognized that there is a gap between the school and the local community, and is working to bridge that gap. They have hosted cultural appreciation events and **Mix It Up Day** at their school, and are planning service activities in the local community.

**Where We Play**
Learning happens all of the time, with and without adults, in and out of schools. Out-of-school programs provide young people with safe, supportive environments to expand their learning in healthy, constructive ways. However, these programs share the responsibility schools have by needing to actively strive to engage young people in meaningful learning. Youth Voice can be a source for those experiences.

**Youth Voice is for Community Centers.** Youth Voice doesn’t happen in a vacuum. By involving young people in recreational activities with adults and seniors, our communities grow stronger and stay together longer. Dances, game nights, and block parties encourage youth to mix with adults in safe places; classes and training opportunities that bring adults and young people together help them learn from each other and see each other as partners, not enemies. Youth can also make good staff at community centers - when they’re engaged...
Youth Voice is for Parks and Recreation programs. Green spaces, play places, and nature are important to everyone - especially children and youth. Who better to help plan and grow outdoor areas than those who use them? Young people can learn through service projects in parks about biology, ecology, and neighborhood design; and park staff can discover what works best in parks. Youth Voice can also activate in parks leadership, advisory councils, advocacy campaigns for better parks, program evaluation and park redesign. Youth in Tonasket led a project called the B3 Skate Park. The project raises money to build a recreational area that will have a skatepark, BMX track, baseball, football and soccer fields.

Youth Voice is for Libraries. Public libraries can bring together communities by making knowledge accessible to young people and adults. Young people are encouraged by youth-friendly spaces that are designed with young people. Featuring a section to the interests of young people, like popular culture and youth action, and hiring youth as staff, are both positive strategies. Youth have also served as full members on library guidance committees. Youth involved with the King County Library System participate in the national Urban Libraries Council Youth Partnerships Council. Each year young people from across the nation attend a three-day conference where they receive leadership training, plan a national project, and learn about teen programs in libraries.

Youth Voice is for After-School Programs. Programs that affect young people most can engage young people most effectively, purposefully, and deliberately. After school programs for children and youth can focus on Youth Voice, responding to what young people see as their most pressing needs and fulfilling their grandest dreams. Rather than adults designing programs from their imaginations, program coordinators are looking to youth for inspiration, guidance, support, and leadership. Many programs have engaged young people as program planners, project leaders, and as program evaluators.

Where We are Governed

While youth programs and schools are logical places where Youth Voice happens, there are more public places where it is increasingly essential to infuse children and youth as partners with adults.

Youth Voice is for City Hall. Local governments are in the unique position of being able to foster and support Youth Voice as a benefit the whole community. Many towns and cities have created youth advisory councils where Youth Voice measures the impact of regulations and laws affecting youth. Other municipalities have actually created positions for young people on existing committees including parks and recreation, libraries, and community planning. In White Center the Teens Creating Tomorrow Youth Council has helped inform city policy, as well as creating art for a new downtown restoration project.
Youth Voice is for Government Agencies. Young people can be effectively engaged by local and state government administrators who are committed to serving communities. Research, program planning, budget decisions, and other activities have each been completed by children and youth serving on special committees, advisory boards, action councils, and in youth staff positions. The Clark County Youth Commission provides young people ages 11-19 the opportunity to provide their perspectives to the Board of County Commissioners, county departments, and community organizations. The Youth Commission informs these groups about issues important to youth, makes suggestions on how to address the issues important to youth, and provides instruction on how to build positive partnerships with youth.

Youth Voice is for the State Legislature. A growing number of politicians, lobbyists, and state government officials are relying on Youth Voice to make their policy decisions more effective, responsive, and inclusive of their constituents. Recently, Washington's legislature has also seen many issues addressed solely by young people who research, organize, educate, and advocate for changes in the laws and regulations which govern our communities. They include ending strip mining, starting the Legislative Youth Council, and lowering the voting age.

**MAPPING YOUTH VOICE**

Use this chart to map all of the places in your local community where Youth Voice could and/or should be engaged. This is designed to be more than typical places - think about the community broadly...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Places you can list without thinking about it...</th>
<th>Cultural places...</th>
<th>Places where social and economic status matters...</th>
<th>Religious places...</th>
<th>Other places where identity matters...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5 Critical Concepts

1) Youth Voice can - and should - happen throughout our society.
2) Young people who live in the middle of Vancouver have different circumstances to consider than those who live in Royal City, Pullman, Forks, Bothell, or Welpinit.
3) Young people are encouraged by youth-friendly spaces that are designed with young people.

Chapter 5 Critical Questions

1) Where should Youth Voice be that it is not right now?
2) Are the differences between types of communities important enough to note?
3) How does Youth Voice need to change for your communities?
4) What communities are missing from this book?

Chapter 5 Freechild Project Resources

Section Investigating Youth Involvement.................. www.freechild.org/SIYI/
On-Track Youth Voice Rubrics

The following charts are designed to help you envision the broadest possible applications of Youth Voice throughout your communities. “Even if you’re on the right track you can still get run over if you don’t move.” - Will Rogers

Rubric One: Youth Voice in Classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Fast Track</th>
<th>On Track</th>
<th>Side-Trackeded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stronger Learning Connections</strong></td>
<td>Students &amp; teacher partner to design, implement, evaluate classroom learning.</td>
<td>Teacher facilitates student-informed classroom learning.</td>
<td>Students graded on their engagement in learning without any input into teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Greater Student Authority</strong></td>
<td>Classes co-taught by students with teachers as mentors.</td>
<td>Solely student-led classes and activities across school day.</td>
<td>Teacher self-designs classes to promote Youth Voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whole School Improvement</strong></td>
<td>Class dedicated to engaging students throughout school improvement efforts.</td>
<td>Students encouraged to use out-of-school time to engage self and others in actions to change schools.</td>
<td>Students taught about effects of school reform without knowing how they can do anything to challenge it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rubric Two: Youth Voice in Community Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Fast Track</th>
<th>On Track</th>
<th>Side-Trackeded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secure Public Commitment</strong></td>
<td>Organization makes its support apparent in all activities, policies, and publicity.</td>
<td>Dedicated, sustainable, focused positions created.</td>
<td>One youth is a member of the board of director or the steering committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase Staff Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>Youth self-identify issues and resources they need to create change.</td>
<td>Young people engaged as regular staff or volunteers.</td>
<td>All staff claim to “support” Youth Voice while none actually engage young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustain Long-Term Support</strong></td>
<td>Adult support for youth is made explicit through fiscal, material, etc.</td>
<td>Staff show full commitment through ongoing training, support, activities, and reflection.</td>
<td>Resources are not allocated to support Youth Voice in the organization or programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Rubric Three: Youth Voice in After School Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Fast Track</th>
<th>On Track</th>
<th>Side-Tracker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase Program Commitment</strong></td>
<td>Diverse young people initiate, plan, direct, implement, reflect, and evaluate activities with coaching from adults.</td>
<td>Young people guide activities with adult leadership.</td>
<td>Adults lead all activities without regard for youth input or feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secure Youth Support</strong></td>
<td>Adults provide necessary guidance through coaching, training, resource-sharing, and networking to all young people.</td>
<td>Organization follows through with small group of young people.</td>
<td>Adults occasionally seek support of youth when convenient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provide Staff Development</strong></td>
<td>Staff provided with initial and ongoing training opportunities that grow their commitment and ability.</td>
<td>Staff assigned to attend initial training not directly related to Youth Voice.</td>
<td>Position filled by unsuspecting volunteer operating without training or materials.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rubric Four: Youth Voice in Foundations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Fast Track</th>
<th>On Track</th>
<th>Side-Tracker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deepen Youth Engagement</strong></td>
<td>Foundation commits throughout policy, practice, leadership, and evaluation.</td>
<td>Grantmaking heavily supports Youth Voice through funding practices.</td>
<td>Youth Voice is among unstated funding interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prioritize Funding</strong></td>
<td>Young people involved in determining all priorities, grantees, monitoring, and reflection.</td>
<td>Youth-led funding activities support youth programs.</td>
<td>Youth Voice is critiqued among applicants and grantees without offering guidance or support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transform Giving Strategy</strong></td>
<td>All staff trained in Youth Voice and active programs underway throughout organization.</td>
<td>Staff trained and youth focus groups inform grantmaking.</td>
<td>Carefully selected young people participate in minimal funding activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Rubric Five: Youth Voice in Government

| Purpose | Fast Track | On Track | Side-Track
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secure Long-Term Government Commitment to Youth Voice</strong></td>
<td>Statutes and laws are changed to create permanent positions for young people to propose, influence, and advocate.</td>
<td>Community-wide Youth Voice strategies devised and implemented with long-range funding.</td>
<td>Community health fairs and city boards with no youth, or a citywide youth summit no adults allowed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dedicate Personnel to Youth Voice</strong></td>
<td>Young people are engaged through regular (paid), volunteer, elected, and other opportunities.</td>
<td>Trained staff develop and coordinate Youth Voice programs with active volunteer youth advisors.</td>
<td>“Youth councils” and Children’s Cabinets made of concerned adults without youth themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secure Broad Support for Youth Voice</strong></td>
<td>Activities designed by youth/adult partners to promote Youth Voice throughout government.</td>
<td>Adults engage youth in advisory committees without actually affecting youth directly.</td>
<td>Youth Voice training for government workers without youth participants or trainers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Rubric Six: Youth Voice in Organizational Transformation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Fast Track</th>
<th>On Track</th>
<th>Side-Track</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change the Attitude</strong></td>
<td>All members express clear commitment to Youth Voice.</td>
<td>Leaders express clear commitment.</td>
<td>Youth are only people to express clear commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modify Procedures</strong></td>
<td>All activities reflect deliberate Youth Voice strategy.</td>
<td>Staff trained, but given no resources to engage youth.</td>
<td>Youth Voice stated priority without any actual change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reform Policy</strong></td>
<td>All policies are reformed to include Youth Voice.</td>
<td>Policies affecting youth reformed to include Youth Voice.</td>
<td>Other activity is required to participate in Youth Voice activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transform Culture</strong></td>
<td>Youth Voice is acknowledged strategy for democracy-building throughout community.</td>
<td>Youth Voice seen as only strategy for democracy-building.</td>
<td>Youth Voice seen as novel/tokenistic tool for making young people happy or keep them “out of trouble.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Washington Youth Voice Spotlight:
ALEX JONLIN

(Olympia) Taking the Washington State Legislature by storm is seen as a great strategy for lobbyists and advocates who want to change state law. For some reason, it is seen as exceptional for young people. But after recent campaigns by youth to lower the organ donor age, gain support for student representation on school boards, and lower the voting age, our state legislators may have thought they’d seen it all. That was until they met Alex Jonlin.

In 2005, at the age of 11, Alex began a systematic campaign to encourage the Legislature to engage Youth Voice. His first proposal was for an “Office of Children’s Opinions,” where young people from across the state could take their concerns to be aired. While many legislators scoffed at this idea, Jonlin quickly found supporters for some measure of the idea. He soon started promoting a bill to create the Washington State Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

This Council would essentially act as a sounding board for Youth Voice. Young representatives, chosen by their local Legislator, would be presented with bills on a range of topics affecting young people, including education, health, and other areas. The youth members would share their perspectives and experiences, and the adult Legislators would take that into account when making decisions.

Alex took this bill to a wide range of politicians from the Westside and the Eastside of the state. He met resistance from several legislators who thought youth were incapable of providing substantive feedback or opinions. He also met with supporters who wondered why this had never happened before. After several months of negotiations the bill went for a vote.

Alex won.

In 2005 the Washington State Legislative Youth Advisory Council was created. However, in a seemingly cruel twist of fate, the legislators set the lower age limit of the Council at 14 years old, effectively not allowing Alex to join for three years. That doesn’t faze Alex, who sits with the Council in its regular sessions and shares his thoughts as a non-voting member. Meanwhile the Council has forwarded a proposal to amend the bill to lower the membership age.

Alex reports that the Council is off to a start, and that their abilities grow regularly. They receive ongoing assistance from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction’s Student Engagement Office. Alex hopes that in the near future the Council will promote youth councils in communities across Washington, and that Youth Voice will grow everywhere.
Chapter 6
How Does Youth Voice Happen?

Intention vs. Coincidence
Youth Voice doesn’t just happen - but it also doesn’t take a crystal ball or any magical powers. That is because Youth Voice is different from simply speaking - it is doing. Youth Voice is an action that requires young people to speak by doing, and adults to speak by listening.

Youth Voice does a lot in Washington. Like a comic book superhero, Youth Voice fights against everything that harms our communities: Racism, classism, homophobia, ignorance, and violence are part of a day's work in this movement. However, in a more realistic fashion, young people are engaged in changing the society they belong to everyday. From school improvement to government reform, youth worker training to program evaluation, Youth Voice is seemingly everywhere. To understate it, Youth Voice does a lot in our state. The question then, is, “How Does Youth Voice happen for you?”

Youth Voice Works in Knowable Ways
Many adults are attempted to treat Youth Voice as mysterious or alien, as if the actions and perspectives of young people cannot be known. This is especially true when young people and adults come from different backgrounds. However, there are very specific avenues for Youth Voice throughout our lives.

Youth Voice Happens in Relationships. When pressed with creating “results” that can be measured, many adults begin to recognize the value of Youth Voice. From the time that a person is a baby they should be engaged in families with parents, guardians, siblings, and extended family; then in their neighborhood as neighbors and citizens; then in school with adults in school and their peers; and throughout their community, as members, leaders, participants, and more.

Youth Voice Happens in Action. Learning, planning, leading, evaluating, researching, teaching, facilitating... Youth Voice can happen throughout all the activities that occur in schools, youth-serving organizations, government agencies, hospitals, and each of the environments that serve children and youth.

Youth Voice Happens in Change. Many adults make the assumption that engaging young people in recognizing, analyzing, celebrating, and/or reflecting on the outcomes of any given activity should only happen when there is measurable success. However, successful Youth Voice should happen throughout the outcomes identification, assessment, and response times, when many important decisions about programs, activities, and communities are made.
Strategies to Foster Youth Voice

Through our research and partnerships with dozens of the organizations across Washington, I have identified several different strategies that young people and their adult allies have taken for integrating Youth Voice throughout our institutions and organizations. They are: Establish Necessity, Raise awareness, Build Capacity, Advocate action, Change attitudes, Modify procedures, Reform policies, Develop structures, and Transform cultures.

Strategy #1: Establish Necessity.
By the time the average youth leaves high school they have at least 12 years of experience in schools. In many professions, anyone who has that much time under their belt is seen as an expert - especially teaching. However, young people are usually the last ones consulted for their knowledge. That is changing in a number of high schools across Washington.

In 2004, students from three high schools across the state gathered for the Changing SPACES retreat. Sponsored by OSPI, this retreat engaged students in critically examining their experiences in school. Students reflected on their learning and created exciting plans with adult leaders from their school to make school a more engaging place for students. This helped establish the necessity of Youth Voice for three communities where there was no emphasis beforehand.

Strategy #2: Raise Awareness.
Over the last three years the Office of Student Engagement at OSPI has charged students with the awesome responsibility of teaching their peers about education reform. Student2Student is a statewide effort to raise awareness and enthusiasm among incoming ninth graders about the new graduation requirements that affect all learners. While they have been excellent teachers, these students have also provided proof positive to adults that peer education matters. In the process have they have raised the profile of Youth Voice along the way. In Olympia a group called Get It Right worked for several years to raise the public’s consciousness about youth by writing letters to the editor, staging “youth-ins” at local city meetings, and more.

Get on the radar by using media to raise awareness among your peers and throughout your community. Popular media including print and the Internet allow you to create the content. Try making a MySpace page or making a zine about the issues that you care about.

Strategy #3: Build Capacity.
Building individual capacity means helping people increase their knowledge about a given subject, such as Youth Voice or the particular subject addressed by the activity. It also means developing the skills of children, youth, and adults to successfully engage Youth Voice. That includes communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, and other action-focused skills, as well as planning, reflection, and critical thinking skills. Building organizational capacity includes creating and training strategic positions, as well as conducting regular evaluations and holding challenging, but necessary, critical conversations about Youth Voice.
The Freechild Project has been providing Youth Voice-focused skills development and program planning for young people and adults across Washington for more than five years. Their trainers have worked with thousands of individuals in more than 100 organizations and programs across the state.

**Strategy #4: Advocate Action.**
For students in the Seattle Student Equity Project, awareness isn’t enough. Throughout the 2006-06 school year they are working in teams throughout 20 high schools in the Seattle area to conduct advocacy and education projects for their peers and teachers focused on diversity, race, and meaningful student involvement. These projects take awareness to the next level by giving students the avenues and creating the platform for real action.

Use action as a tool for learning. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Paulo Freire challenges activism without learning, encouraging organizers to see beyond simply acting for the sake of doing something. Instead, educators and youth workers should infuse learning with doing, and vice versa.

**Strategy #5: Change Attitudes.**
While dreaming of the world changing is a first step, Teen Talking Circles sees more value in changing the way people feel about young people. Focused on promoting Youth Voice through dialogue among youth and between youth and adults, Teen Talking Circles provide young people with opportunities to reflect and dream of new realities for themselves and their communities.

Margaret Mead made the essential point that adults must show young people that Youth Voice will be taken realistically. Remember that when you change the way that people feel, you change the way people live. Provide meaningful training and other opportunities for people to reflect on their experiences throughout their communities. Encourage critical exploration as well as action-oriented outcomes.

**Strategy #6: Modify Procedures.**
According to their website, the Kirkland Youth Commission provides a “vital check and balance” to adults who make decisions about youth. Working with agencies throughout their county, these young people review policies, programs, and budgets that affect children and youth. They provide valuable insight and ideas for adults whose decisions affect young people everyday. The City of Lacey wanted to engage Youth Voice throughout city decision-making. So instead of creating a special youth-only group, they infused positions for young people throughout several city commissions. This has allowed adults throughout the city government to gauge Youth Voice and hear the power of youth in action.

It is not enough to simply talk about engaging Youth Voice; instead, it is imperative to actually do something. Change the processes and activities of your program or organization to actively involve youth in your programs.

**Strategy #7: Reform Policies.**
In 2003 the Seattle Young People’s Project Youth Undoing Institutionalized Racism (YUIR) group recognized that the only way to truly emphasize the
diverse history of the United States in Seattle Public Schools was to get a policy implemented that would establish a consistent standard throughout all schools. Working through activist and district channels, YUIR won a policy-change in the district that allowed all high schools to use Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States* to teach social studies courses.

There is an old adage that says, “Keep your feet on the ground and your eyes on the sky.” The Seattle Young People’s Project continues to challenge education policy, this time on the state level. Their Education Justice Project is raising awareness about the effects of standardized tests, and working to take them out of graduation requirements statewide.

**Strategy #8: Develop Structures.**
In Spokane the Chase Youth Commission was designated early in the 1990s to provide ongoing opportunities to young people to be meaningfully involved throughout their community. This structure has been supported by city money, with regular staff and budgets that allow them to provide powerful opportunities. This is also the case in several other towns and cities, including Bellevue, Everett, and elsewhere.

Keep in mind that creating a great rule, guideline, or law is largely worthless if there is no way to implement it. Many organizations are already squeezed financially before Youth Voice programs are mandated; make sure there is money behind the policy you are advocating.

**Strategy #9: Challenge Indifference.**
Labeling youth as apathetic implies that they choose not to be otherwise. However, in communities that routinely discourage young people from becoming meaningfully involved in their communities, what looks like apathy is actually a conditioned response. Organizations across Washington that aim to engage Youth Voice are responding to that reality, especially those listed in the Washington Youth Voice Directory.

Consider the variety of people who are indifference to Youth Voice: they are young, middle age, and older. They are wealthy and poor, suburban, rural, and urban, and they are educated as well as under-educated. Then think about yourself. Each person has to ask themselves how they have personally been indifferent to Youth Voice, then ask others, and then plan their responses from that understanding.

**Strategy #10: Transform Cultures.**
It is hard to truly track the long-ranging effects of cultural change, particularly when it comes to Youth Voice. However, one community in Washington shines above others. For more than 10 years the Vashon Island community has been working to embrace and empower Youth Voice. Through a variety of approaches, including the Vashon Island Youth Council, the community has come close to acknowledging youth as equals in all areas.

The old song might have been more effective if it had implored young people to, “Teach your community well...” Education, advocacy, and action promoting Youth Voice can start at the youngest age. Make sure that elders, parents, and young children are included throughout Youth Voice activities. Make
opportunities for the community to become involved together, learning and doing and transforming the world together. When communities come together, Youth Voice can change the world.

Avenues for Youth Voice
There are a variety of ways that organizations across Washington have found to engage young people. The following are ten different forms of action that Youth Voice is taking in our state. An important note to consider: Youth Voice happens when young people are engaged in taking action to benefit their communities. The actions that happen can and should be reinvented for every group in each neighborhood.

Youth Voice in Education. Youth Voice must be grounded in learning. Communities can educate young people about the dire circumstances our society faces, including racism, classism, democratic disengagement, and other social inequities. After they have gained deepened understanding about what affects them, their families, and our society, young people can be effective agents and sound out about what truly matters. Institute for Community Leadership engages young people in critical learning about social justice issues and society, teaching them vital history, current issues, and concrete skills along the way. Those young people then engage in a variety of actions to illustrate the power of their new knowledge.

Youth Voice in Social Entrepreneurship. When young people use business methods to meet the needs of their communities, they are engaging in social entrepreneurship. In Langley, youth run a coffee shop to employ local youth and give young people a safe, youth-friendly place to hang out. This form of social entrepreneurship engages young people in planning, operating, evaluating, and supporting young people everyday.

Youth Voice in Community Organizing. Mobilizing youth and adults around issues that matter to local communities is difficult, challenging work. Luckily, youth from a growing number of communities across Washington are leading the charge for issues that matter to them and their larger communities. The Seattle Young People’s Project supports youth-led activism and education that addresses issues important to youth throughout the community. This community organizing engages young people in training, motivating, leading, and protesting injustices that young people and their communities face.

Youth Voice in Board Membership. Many organizations are beginning to recognize the benefits of engaging young people in the decisions that affect them most. In school districts, non-profit groups, and government agencies across Washington young people are becoming board members and growing Youth Voice. The Washington State Board of Education includes two student representatives every year in their decision-making processes. Youth Voice can be heard in issues that students address and programs they propose.

Youth Voice in Teaching and Training. In schools and community organizations educators across Washington are recognizing the creativity and effectiveness of engaging young people in teaching and training. More than 100 schools across Washington participate in Student2Student, a program where twelfth grade students teach eighth and ninth grade students. This program, coordinated by
the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, helps students understand new graduation requirements, why they exist, and what difference they make. Another program called GenYES engages students as teachers to train classroom teachers about technology. Dozens of schools in Washington have computers integrated in their classrooms, as well as expert student trainers, because of GenYES.

Youth Voice in Media Making. “Youth Run Wild!” “Teens Dangerous to Selves, Others,” “Youth Violence Skyrockets.” The headlines are sensational, and young people are demonized. Since the early 1970s newspapers and television news have routinely portrayed young people as apathetic, criminalistic, violence-prone, and/or underachieving. Early in the 1980s a small movement formed to combat this negative press, and in the 1990s it spread throughout Washington. Today, many youth and adults are determined to tell the truth about young people by analyzing popular media and creating new avenues for news by and for young people. Reel Grrls, a nonprofit organization in Seattle, operates after-school media & technology training programs that empower girls to critique media images and to gain media technology skills.

Youth Voice in Program Evaluation. It only seems logical that the programs that are designed for youth should be evaluated by youth. In 2002 the King County Workforce Development Council piloted a program called Strengthening Programs through Youth Consultation & Evaluation, or SPYCE. The youth in SPYCE conducted peer evaluations of more than a dozen WDC-funded youth programs across Seattle and King County. Along the way they learned about program evaluation, developed evaluation tools and methods, administered surveys, conducted focus groups, analyzed data, and prepared presentations about their findings.

Youth Voice in Service Learning. Service learning is a method to engage young people in learning through community action. Garden Raised Bounty, or GRuB, is a nonprofit program in Olympia that engages young people in building gardens for seniors or low-income people in their community. In the process they learn about sustainable agriculture and cultural differences. Another example comes from Lewis and Clark High School in Spokane, where twelfth grade students have a class called Practicum in Community Involvement, or PICI. In this course they design service projects at nonprofits throughout the city that meet specific learning goals in the course, like project planning, current events, and learning about an important civic issue.

Youth Voice in Political Campaigning. While most youth cannot vote, young people can be truly engaged throughout the political process. In 2003 the Vashon Island Youth Council lobbied the state legislature to end the development of a mining operation on Maury Island in the Puget Sound. The Olympia chapter of the National Youth Rights Association gained media attention from across the country with their campaigning for a lower voting age in Washington. Their campaign successfully gained access to important legislators, as well.

Youth Voice in Policy-Making. In dozens of communities across Washington young people are informing, advocating, and evaluating policy-making on the local level. Youth in Lacey and Kirkland can join city committees as full-voting members, raising issues in such areas as libraries, parks and recreation, and
city planning. Youth in Seattle can participate in an advisory committee that informs the **City of Seattle Police Department**. Senator Rosemary McAuliffe, from Bothell, maintains a youth council that informs her decisions, as well. The youth of several Native American tribes across Washington have opportunities to inform their communities’ decision-making in youth councils and other activities.

**Youth Voice in Other Methods.** There are a number of other ways to engage young people. Some include creating Youth Councils and Commissions, hosting youth-only forums, and creating Action Research projects for youth. Online Networking is also gaining popularity as a tool for engaging young people.

**Roles for Young People**

Standard programs for youth development and education programs first became popular in the early 1900s. These models were really diverse, but essentially looked as children and youth as having one job in any class or program, that of recipient. Programs were created, delivered, and evaluated according to how adults perceived how young people received them. That problem with that approach is that children and youth are inherently seen as lesser-than.

In my ongoing research focused on Youth Voice several new roles keep appearing as popular methods for deeply engaging young people. The following activities may address issues that affect children and youth or issues that affect our larger communities. They show that young people can and do learn from every activity they participate in. As the Cycle of Youth Engagement illustrates, the most important part of any position for young people is to learn, and according to John Dewey, “We do not learn from doing - we learn from thinking about what we do.”

**Traditional Models of Youth Voice**

Whether or not they acknowledge it, many organizations have been engaging Youth Voice for a long time. The following activities are examples of traditional roles for Youth Voice.

**Youth as Receptacles.** Treats the experiences, ideas, and knowledge of young people as unimportant or meaningless by allowing adults to “dump” their knowledge on youth without their input.

**Youth as Recipients.** The notion that children and youth are incapable of making or taking informed, practical, and powerful choices and action that affects themselves and others.

**Youth as Informants.** Children and youth know things about children and youth, and that much cannot be disputed. Focus groups, advisory boards, interviews... all information sources, all for different reasons.

**Youth as Promoters.** “Who better to sell stuff to youth than youth themselves?” That quickly explains why mall stores can pay so little to workers - they want youth to work there, and presumably youth can live on less because of their reliance on their parents.
New Models of Youth Voice
With the development of new technology, new learning experiences, and different avenues for participation throughout our communities, young people have assumed, been assigned, and have co-created new roles for Youth Voice.

Youth as Facilitators. Knowledge comes from study, experience, and reflection. Engaging young people as teachers helps reinforce their commitment to learning and the subject they are teaching; it also engages both young and older learners in exciting ways.

Youth as Researchers. Identifying issues, surveying interests, analyzing findings, and developing projects in response are all powerful avenues for Youth Voice.

Youth as Planners - Planning includes program design, event planning, curriculum development, and hiring staff. Youth planning activities can lend validity, creativity, and applicability to abstract concepts and broad outcomes.

Youth as Organizers - Community organizing happens when leaders bring together everyone in a community in a role that fosters social change. Youth community organizers focus on issues that affect themselves and their communities; they rally their peers, families, and community members for action.

Youth as Decision-Makers. Making rules in classrooms is not the only way to engage young people in decision-making. Committees, board membership, and other forms of representation and leadership reinforce the significance of Youth Voice throughout communities.

Youth as Advocates - When young people stand for their beliefs and understand the impact of their voices, they can represent their families and communities with pride, courage, and ability.

Youth as Evaluators. Assessing and evaluating the effects of programs, classes, activities, and projects can promote Youth Voice in powerful ways. Young people can learn that their opinions are important, and their experiences are valid indicators of success.

Youth as Specialists - Envisioning roles for youth to teach youth is relatively easy; seeing new roles for youth to teach adults is more challenging. Youth specialists bring expert knowledge about particular subjects to programs and organizations, enriching everyone’s ability to be more effective.

More Engaging Models for Youth Voice
Each of the following roles can be a successful way to engage young people. Every position is different, offering a variety of perspectives and actions for youth to share their perspectives and take action.

- Advisors
- Designers
- Teachers
- Grant-makers
- Lobbyists
- Trainers
- Philanthropists
- Politicians
✓ Recruiters
✓ Social entrepreneurs
Creating Engage Lifestyles
Youth Voice is a logical starting point for any organization that wants to serve its constituency more effectively. It is also a powerful avenue for actually changing the lives of young people. By taking a constructivist approach to Youth Voice, communities can truly sustain young peoples’ engagement throughout society. That means acknowledging what young people already know, expanding their exposure to, knowledge of, and opportunities to generate new thinking. All of the models above can help educators weave an intricate blanket of engagement that captures people for all their lives.

TOP TEN YOUTH VOICE ACTIVITIES

It is important to understand that just because a lot of people do something does not mean that it is the right thing to do. A recent informal scan of Youth Voice programs and projects across Washington found 10 types of activities happen more often than any other across our state. However, even the most popular activities often do not go through the entire Cycle of Youth Engagement. Following is the list; reflect on whether you think they meet the challenges presented throughout this handbook.

10. Social Entrepreneurship - When young people create for-profit ventures that benefit society, they are “social entrepreneurs.”

9. Community Organizing - Working for social justice by bringing together diverse members of local neighborhoods and interests makes youth more than “activists” - they are organizers.

8. Board Membership - Nonprofits, educational agencies, and governments provide ways for youth to represent themselves and their communities.

7. Media-making - Creating websites, newspapers, TV shows, and other avenues for expression and awareness can propel Youth Voice.

6. Service Learning - By connecting classroom learning goals with local action, Youth Voice becomes central to education.

5. Training - Leading younger people, older people, and peers through new learning makes Youth Voice vital to knowledge creation and sharing.

4. Program Staff - Youth working in professional settings to deliver programs, and lead organizations is a powerful expression of Youth Voice.

3. Program Evaluation - Youth Voice can be fully realized when youth evaluate the programs, services, and institutions in their communities.
2. **Advisory Councils** - Youth councils allow young people to practically and directly influence adult decision-making.

1. **Forums** - Gathering groups of young people on particular topics can centralize and focus Youth Voice for the larger community to ingest.

What do you think of these activities? Have you participated in any of them as a youth? Why or why not? If one of these activities was announced in your community, would you participate? Why or why not?
LESSONS LEARNED IN YOUTH VOICE

There have been few standards proposed for Youth Voice. Past efforts have often glossed over specific issues that affect young people and their communities everyday by being too vague, or too specific. Perhaps that is the fault of standards. However, an increasing number of programs, organizations, and communities across Washington State have called for them. Summarizing everything that has been covered in this Handbook would be difficult, but here is an attempt.

Critical Concepts

✓ Youth Voice is the active, distinct, and concentrated ways young people represent themselves throughout society.
✓ Youth Voice requires awareness, acknowledgement, and commitment to infusing diversity throughout every activity.
✓ Youth Voice is a tool to build democracy; learning, empowerment, engagement, and other outcomes are consequences of that focus.
✓ By not engaging Youth Voice adults discriminate against youth. That is not always good or bad - but it is always discrimination.
✓ Community problems should be addressed by communities, not as “youth problems” or “grown up” problems.
✓ It is essential to engage Youth Voice in issues broader than those that only affect young people.
✓ Youth Voice currently addresses a broad range of issues throughout our communities, and it is vital to acknowledge those current contributions.
✓ Young people have the same rights as adults to make their hopes, fears, dreams, and realities known to society.
✓ Youth Voice is the one bond that unites all young people throughout our society and around the world.
✓ The transience of youth is a foundation for transformative social change that should be built on.
✓ Communities have different needs that can and should be addressed by and through Youth Voice.
✓ Young people and adults must build their personal capacity to engage and sustain Youth Voice.
✓ Every public institution in society is morally responsible for developing their structural capacity to engage and sustain Youth Voice.
✓ Youth Voice is an action that requires young people to speak by doing, and adults to speak by listening.

What do you think of these Essential Points? Learn more about taking action in the following workshops.
RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

In a growing number of communities across the state young people and their adult allies are betting on Youth Voice to lead to civic engagement, which is that perfect mix of investment, engagement and ownership in the public good that makes being a community member meaningful. I have identified five Rules of Engagement for Youth Voice.

Rule #1: Every community should engage every young person. Learning ability, age, outward interest... none of these should be seen or addressed as barriers to Youth Voice. Instead, these are points to build upon and learned from. Youth Voice is an active, intentional process whereupon young people become purposefully compelled as allies and partners.

Rule #2: Youth Voice does not end at the doors to a youth program. Young people must be active within their families and throughout their communities. That goes far beyond classroom assignments or community service. Consistently providing young people with active roles in democratic governance, powerful opportunities for cultural expression, and meaningful experiences of freedom of speech throughout their community can open the doors for Youth Voice.

Rule #3: Every adult in a young person’s life should feel responsible for engaging that young person throughout their communities. Only through the constant encouragement and focus of parents, teachers, youth workers, principals, religious leaders, counselors, and other supportive adults will young people feel there is a real investment in their lives that extends beyond their own interests. Every young people should feel that community success is their personal responsibility; likewise, every adult should feel that Youth Voice is theirs.

Rule #4: Give a young person a lesson about democracy and they’ll think for an hour; teach them how to be a democrat and they will learn a lifetime. Being a (lower-case) democrat is a job that many adults aspire to impart to young people without every being explicit in their intentions. Every young person must have a meaningful understanding of the nature of democracy, the purpose of community, the course of the community action, and the arch of civic engagement. From kindergarten through graduation, adult allies have more than the opportunity to teach young people about democracy; they have an obligation.

#5: Youth Voice is never done. Will Rogers once said, “Even if you’re on the right track you’ll get run over if you don’t move.” We live in a world of transition and change; young people change with the times, and often with the days. Do the same old thing and we’ll get the same old outcomes we’ve always had. Many adults report that young people have changed more in the last 5 years than communities have in the last 25. That gives adults a lot of opportunity to learn from children and youth - and to change communities to really engage Youth Voice. Engagement in change is at the core of lifelong engagement; that should be what community are all about.
ADVICE FROM YOUTH

In more than 300 of my workshops for youth we have collected answers to one question over and over. “What is one thing you would tell adults about Youth Voice?” Following are some of the answers collected.

- “If you honestly want to listen to Youth Voice, it will show and we will know it.”
- “Plan what you want to do, show us the plan, then let us work with you to write a new plan together.”
- “Make us laugh and don’t bore us too much. But don’t treat us like little kids, either - we are almost adults.”
- “Every kid in the room should be important.”
- “Not everybody wants to talk - and that’s okay!”
- “Don’t assume I am going to come. You should ask me.”
- “Nobody likes to be bribed. Don’t give away stuff if we don’t earn it.”
- “Be yourself and do what you’re supposed to.”
- “We have our own networks, and adults don’t know about all of them. Ask us who we know.”
- “Don’t bash people who aren’t there just because they’re not there. You don’t know what is going on in their lives and you shouldn’t assume.”
- “Be casual and not all serious. We’re in junior high and we have fun - that’s our way.”
- “Share stuff that you want to see us do, and don’t act like you don’t know. I know you know.”
- “Talk to everyone and get them into it, too. I want to meet new people.”
- “Make it hard and real - that’s life!!!”
- “I want to change the world. I want you to help me.”
- “Voice = Power, Power = Respect, Respect = Responsibility, Responsibility = Voice”
WHAT NOW? PERSONAL NEXT STEPS...

“What do I do now?!?” You have made it through the text of the *Handbook*, and you are more than a little overwhelmed. *Don’t fret!* As carefully shown throughout this guide, there are things that you can do *today* that help you personally, organizationally, and socially foster Youth Voice throughout society.

Start Personally: Next Steps for Young People and Adults

- Reflect personally about your experience being young.
- Examine your personal experiences with Youth Voice.
- Identify what your beliefs about young people are.
- Examine your beliefs about young people. Why do you have them? How do you act them out?
- Stop discounting people because of their age.
- Stand up to others that discount people because of their age.
- Identify an adult(s) to have honest conversations with about being young.
- Have **honest conversations with other adults** about being young.
- Have **honest conversations with young people** about being young.
- Read books, websites, blogs, and other forms of expression by young people about topics you are interested in, your job or profession.
- Start a group, join a group, or offer personal support to a group of young people promoting Youth Voice in your community, school, or organization.
- Contact current Youth Voice activities and learn about them. See the *Washington Youth Voice Directory* in this handbook.
- Use the training workshops in this handbook to create personal, organizational, and community investment in Youth Voice.
- Evaluate your organization using the evaluation at the end of the workshop section.
- Contact local officials and write a letter to the editor to advocate for Youth Voice.
- Explore books, websites, blogs, and other forms of expression about society, Youth Voice, and advocacy.
- Provide training in your community using this handbook.
- Learn about issues that are important to people throughout your community by having conversations with people you want to know.
- Join a group that is not focused on youth or youth issues.
- Consistently represent the interests of young people or your community in professional, social, and other activities.
Summary
There are so many different positions young people can have that there should be no reason why your community is not engaging Youth Voice right now! The following sections of the Washington Youth Voice Handbook are designed to help you understand how Youth Voice actually happens in our state.

Chapter 6 Critical Concept
1. Youth Voice is different from simply speaking - it is doing... it is an action that requires young people to speak by doing, and adults to speak by listening.
2. “The children, the young, must ask the questions that we would never think to ask, but enough trust must be re-established so that the elders will be permitted to work with them on the answers.” - Margaret Mead
3. When communities come together, Youth Voice can change the world.

Chapter 6 Critical Questions
1. Is there one path a person needs to take in order to engage Youth Voice throughout their organization or community?
2. Why do some strategies for engaging Youth Voice work better than others?
3. Should Youth Voice affect more than what youth themselves? Why or why not?
4. Can you imagine new ways that Youth Voice can be engaged in education? What about nonprofit boards, in teaching others, media-making, or policy-making?
5. What makes a roles okay or not okay for young people to have?
6. Is it ever better for young people to have no role in the community than one of these roles?
7. Why haven’t these roles always existed for young people?

Chapter 6 Freechild Project Resources
Youth Voice Actions ......................... www.freechild.org/actions.htm
Action Resource Center ....................... www.freechild.org/action.htm
Reading on Youth Action ................... www.freechild.org/ReadingList/tools.htm
Youth Voice Planner

Most project planning with young people is too complex. Too many considerations, too many forms, too much confusion. This is an easy-to-use planner with thoughtful questions that focuses you on doing excellent Youth Voice projects - instead of just talking about them.

Overview

- What is your Youth Voice project idea?
- Why do you want to do a Youth Voice project?
- Who is affected? Who should be involved?
- Where is the Youth Voice project going happen?
- When will the Youth Voice project happen?
- How will the Youth Voice project happen?

To-Do’s

- What are the different tasks that have to happen in your Youth Voice project?

Milestones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Who’s Responsible?</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adjust your plan along the way as needed - this is just a piece of paper. When you are doing make sure to reflect! What an excellent project!

Youth Voice Assessment

How do you know how Youth Voice is doing in your program, class, organization, or community? This is an evaluation of Youth Voice that can be conducted by young people and/or adults that offers a lens that you can learn through. It can be used by anyone who wants an honest, thorough examination of Youth Voice.

Goals The Youth Voice Assessment should...

1. Identify current successes and challenges throughout programs, classes, organizations, or communities that want to engage Youth Voice
2. Suggest specific avenues for young people and adults to collaborate on in order to foster substantive Youth Voice in their programs, classes, organizations, or communities

Considerations

- The focus of this Youth Voice Assessment is simply Youth Voice, and the role that Youth Voice has throughout specific programs, classes, organizations, or communities.

- This evaluation was designed to explore every major factor within Youth Voice in order to spur individuals and organizations towards growth.

- Before starting, determine why, who, how, and what the Youth Voice Assessment will be used. Is it something that individuals can take “mental note” of, and then set aside? Or is it an intentional assessment that will help shape future growth? Before you begin, review each section and determine whether the appropriate people are present to answer all the questions.

- There are many different options for using this tool. Choose your option before beginning. Different options include:
  - An individual activity for one person sitting at a desk
  - A small group activity for a committee, board, or leadership team
  - A large group activity conducted with trios or small groups from specific or similar types of organizations

- When finished, carefully review your answers and spend time determining next steps according to other workshops in this publication and the strategies for Youth Voice from throughout the Washington Youth Voice Handbook.
CULTURE

1. Do all young people feel safe to speak? How, or why not? If not, how can they?

2. Do all young people feel safe to participate? How, or why not? If not, how can they?

3. How are the perspectives and actions of young people being engaged? How, or why not? If not, how can they?

4. How are the perspectives and actions of young people respected? How, or why not? If not, how can they?

5. How are the perspectives and actions of young people responded to? How, or why not? If not, how can they?

ACTION

1. Have young people determined what constitutes Youth Voice? How, or why not? If not, how can they?

2. Have young people worked with adults to identify community issues, challenges, or problems? How, or why not? If not, how can they?

3. Are young people engaged in analyzing the situation? How, or why not? If not, how can they?

4. Have young people worked with adults to identify possible solutions or goals for their communities? How, or why not? If not, how can they?

5. Do young people feel fully informed about what matters to them? How, or why not? If not, how can they?

6. Are young people engaged in creating the action agenda? How, or why not? If not, how can they?
7. Are young people equitably involved with adults and other young people in deciding action priorities? How, or why not? If not, how can they?

8. Are young people engaged in approving the programs, services, and activities to implement the action? How, or why not? If not, how can they?

9. Are young people engaged in monitoring the implementation of the action? How, or why not? If not, how can they?

10. Are young people engaged in evaluating the impact of the action and related programs and activities? How, or why not? If not, how can they?

**YOUTH READINESS**

1. What steps have been taken to ensure that the level of participation is appropriate for the ability of the young people involved?

2. Describe the ways that the developmental needs of young people are taken into account?

   ✓ Are there leadership skills training opportunities available? How, or why not? If not, how can there be?

   ✓ Are there knowledge building training opportunities available? How, or why not? If not, how can there be?

   ✓ Is the self-image and confidence of young people built appropriately? How, or why not?

3. Does the program, class, organization, or community allow for varying levels of engagement from young people?

**ADULT READINESS**

1. Do adults feel fully informed about the issues, policies, programs, services, and/or activities that affect young people? How or why not? If not, how can they be?

2. Have adults received significant training and support in order to engage young people successfully? How or why not? If not, how can they?
3. Do adults have enough resources to successfully engage young people? How or why not? If not, how can they?

4. Do adults follow the Cycle of Youth Engagement, i.e. Listen, Validate, Authorize, Act, Reflect?

5. Describe the ways that the developmental needs of adults are taken into account.
   ✓ Are there leadership skills training opportunities available? How, or why not? If not, how can there be?
   ✓ Are there knowledge building training opportunities available? How, or why not? If not, how can there be?

6. Does the program, class, organization, or community allow for varying levels of engagement from adults?

MOTIVATION

1. Is the push for Youth Voice driven by young people? How or why not?

2. Is the push for Youth Voice driven by the needs of adults? How or why not?

3. Is the push for Youth Voice driven by external factors? How, or why not?

4. Do young people feel pressured to be involved? Why? How can they not?

SUSTAINABILITY

1. Do young people and adults participate in combined training activities? How, or why not? If not, how can they?

2. Are young people engaged in training other young people to participate? How, or why not? If not, how can they?
3. Is there an active process to recruit new young people when others leave? How, or why not? If not, how can there be?

4. Are young people satisfied with their involvement? How do you know? If they are, how are they? If they are not, why not? If not, how can they be?

5. Are adults satisfied with their involvement? How do you know? If they are, how are they? If they are not, why not? If not, how can they be?

6. What steps are taken to overcome youth disengagement and fluctuating involvement throughout their community?

7. What steps are taken to overcome adult disengagement and fluctuating involvement with young people?

ASSESSMENT

1. How does your program, class, organization, or community provide for formal and informal feedback from young people on the process of engagement? If it does not, how can it?

2. How does program, class, organization, or community assess Youth Voice? If it does not, how can it?

3. Are the events, activities, and numbers of participants measured? If not, how can they be?

4. Are the levels, motivations, and impacts of young people monitored and reported? If they are not, how can they be?

5. Are there formal evaluations of Youth Voice completed by young people and adults? If there are not, how can they be?

6. Is a Youth Voice community impact evaluation conducted? If one is not, how can it be?

7. Are the views of young people collected and distributed to young people and adults? If they are not, how can they be?
BARRIERS

1. Are the barriers to Youth Voice acknowledged and addressed? If they are not, how can they be?

2. Do young people understand the intentions of the process, action, and outcomes for the program, class, organization, or community where Youth Voice is engaged? If they do not, how can they?

3. Do young people know who made the decisions about Youth Voice and why they were made? If they do not, how can they?

4. Is Youth Voice recorded, reported in writing, and distributed? If it is not, how can it be?

5. Do young people receive a report (verbal or in writing) on the decisions made because of Youth Voice? If they do not, how can they?

6. Were false and negative assumptions about young peoples' abilities to participate deliberately addressed by young people and/or adults? If they were not, how can they be?

7. Are all adults clear about the organization's intent for Youth Voice? If they are not, how can they be?
There are a variety of Youth Voice activities in Washington. The following is a short list of programs, organizations, and opportunities across the state, including examples from throughout the Washington Youth Voice Handbook. Each listing includes a description and contact information, current as of June 2006.

1. **AnakBayan** is a group of Filipino and Filipino American youth in the Seattle-area who study and educate others about the rich culture and proud revolutionary heritage of the Filipino people. Find more at www.anakbayan.org

2. **Bellevue Youth Council** is offered by Bellevue YouthLink to meet and discuss current and future Youth Link projects, hear updates from the action teams, and share local events in school and the community. Find more at www.youthlink.com/council.asp

3. **The Bend-It! Extravaganza** was held in 2006 in Seattle to create an accessible anti-oppression based festival where art and activism are integrated, and the event was led by and for queer young people. Find more at www.bend-it.org

4. **Chase Youth Commission** is provided the City of Spokane to be a community leader in the identification of issues affecting youth, serve as an advocate for youth needs and improvement in youth policies, involve youth in the community decision-making process, recognize accomplishments of children and youth and promote the value of youth in our community, and develop new programs, initiatives and resources for youth. Find out more at www.spokanecity.org/services/documents/smc/?Chapter=04.23

5. **Clark County Youth Commission** is a program of the Clark County Department of Community Services that provides a youth point of view to a variety of government agencies and community organizations. Find out more at www.youthcommission.org

6. **Colville Youth Commission** is offered by the City of Colville to engage youth in advising and making recommendations regarding policies, programs, planning, budgets, staffing and other matters relating to the quality of life of Colville area youth. Find out more at www.colville.wa.us/docs/YOUTH_C.pdf

7. **Des Moines Youth Council** is provided by the City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department, and has held teen dances and assisted at the
Halloween Carnival and the Spring Egg Hunt. Find out more at www.desmoineswa.gov/dept/parks_rec/teen/teen.html

8. **Environmental Justice Youth Advocates** works with youth to develop leadership skills through youth-led community organizing and outreach in Seattle. Youth learn about social justice issues, go on environmental field trips, staff booths at events and volunteer on door knocking events. Find out more at http://www.ccej.org/campaigns.php4

9. **Everett Mayor’s Youth Council** advises the Mayor on issues affecting youth in Everett and provides youth input on the Mayor’s policies. Find out more at www.everettwa.org/default.aspx?ID=313

10. “**Game of Life: Attitudes & Choices**” **Youth Wellness Conference** is a Youth Voice project of the Kent Police Youth board where young people create and implement the conference with the mission of providing the learning, opportunities and resources to their peers to promote healthy choices and positive community involvement. Find more at www.ci.kent.wa.us/police/programs/gameoflife.asp

11. **Gateways for Incarcerated Youth** is a program at The Evergreen State College in Olympia that provides cultural awareness classes, speakers, and writing projects for young people in juvenile detention centers in western Washington. Find more at www.evergreen.edu/youthinaction/

12. **Generation YES** is a company in Olympia that provides curriculum to schools focusing on engaging students teaching teachers how to use technology throughout schools. Their nonprofit wing, Generation Y, facilitates programs in schools and communities around the world. Find more at www.genyes.com

13. **Health ‘N Action** is a program at King County Health Services engaging young people in advocating for systemic changes at the agency. Find more at www.metrokc.gov/dchs/mhd/childrenservices/h’naction.htm

14. **Homeless Youth for Peace and Empowerment** is a program of Peace on the Streets by Kids from the Streets. The program engages homeless young people in using Youth Voice to advocate for themselves through workshops, community meetings and youth outreach. Find more at www.psks.org

15. **Hood Canal Institute** is a service learning project where students use deep science information to develop analyses and projects that serve to protect and ensure a healthy future for all the residents of the Canal. Find more at http://www.hoodcanalwatershed.org/x1017.xml

16. **Island Coffee House** is a coffee shop run by youth/adult partnerships in Langley that is designed to support youth programs throughout the area. Learn more at www.swcec.com/IslandCoffeeHouseinfo.html

17. **Issaquah Youth Advisory Board** helps to implement the ideas and wishes of youth in the Issaquah School District through community service and leadership as well as provide a ‘youth voice’ to better Issaquah and the
surrounding areas. Find out more at http://www.ci.issaquah.wa.us/ccbindex.asp?ccbid=29

18. **Kirkland Youth Council** helps promote mutual respect, ensure that the voice of youth is heard, and create and encourage opportunities for youth to give back to the community. Find out more at www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/depart/parks/Youth_Services/Youth_Council.htm

19. **Leadership Poetry Workshops** are a program of the Institute for Community Leadership in Kent. ICL is a multi-racial, diverse, mobilized organization that engages young people as they inspire personal character transformation and social change, creating positive models of human relationships. Find more at www.icleadership.org

20. **Lummi CEDAR Project** is a nonprofit youth organization for the Lummi Nation that provides cultural and educational programs for young people throughout the local community. Find out more by calling (360) 384-2341.

21. **Mockingbird Times** is a newspaper created by the Mockingbird Society in Seattle. Young people who are in or have experienced the foster care system write about their experiences and ideas for the monthly publication. The **ASK-Y Coalition** is an advocacy group sponsored by the Mockingbird Society that brings together youth and adults to advocate for children and youth across the juvenile justice, mental health, chemical dependency, foster/kinship care, and youth homelessness systems. Find more at www.mockingbirdsoc.org

22. **Multicultural Action Committee** is a program at Foster High School in Tukwila that engages students as advocates, trainers, and more. Find more at  www.tukwila.wednet.edu

23. **National Youth Congress** is a nationwide effort to promote Youth Voice in communities and government programs is a program of Bembry Consulting Services in Seattle. They conduct youth forums, training for parents and youth, and more. Partners include the National Recreation and Park Association. Find more at www.nationalyouthcongress.org

24. **Native Youth Action, Cross-Cultural Youth Leadership Development and Action Program, and Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (GLBTQ) Youth Program** are programs of the American Friends Service Committee in Seattle. Find more at www.afsc.org/pacificnw/seattle.htm

25. **Olympia Youth Media Festival** features music, art, and videos created by young people with the goal of promoting youth culture. Find out more at www.olyfilm.org/whatyougot

26. **Reel Grrls** is a nonprofit youth organization in Seattle that believes it is important for young people to critically evaluate popular media they are exposed to. Equipped with skills to critically consume media, Reel Grrls empowers young people with the tools to make their own media. Find out more at www.reelgrrls.org
27. **Seattle Student Voices Project** is a classroom curriculum promoting Youth Voice in political processes and institutions, increasing voting and improving the competence of individuals to participate in the public sphere. Classroom visits and forums are held with candidates and partnerships are forged with local media to produce positive coverage of young people and their involvement with the political process. Find out more at http://depts.washington.edu/ccce/civiceducation/studentvoices.htm

28. **Seattle Mayor’s Youth Council** advises the Mayor on issues affecting youth in Seattle and provide youth input on Mayor Nickels' policies. Find out more at http://seattle.gov/mayor/issues/myc/

29. **Seattle Police Department Youth Advisory Council** - Find more at www.cityofseattle.net/police/youth/Youth_Council/

30. **Seattle Student Equity Teams** - A program of the Equity and Race Relations Office at Seattle Public Schools that engages students as evaluators and project creators to address race issues within their schools. Find out more at www.soundout.org/features/SPS-SEP.htm

31. **Speak Out! Youth Initiative** - A program of the Northwest Region of the American Cancer Society. Young people are engaged to advocate against teen smoking and for youth action. There is an annual leadership training, a regional network, and more. Find out more at www.acsspeakout.org

32. **SPLAT!** (Students Protesting Lies About Tobacco) is a program of Together, Inc. in Thurston County whose mission is to promote healthy lives by informing and helping all whom are affected by tobacco. Find out more at www.thurstonplat.org

33. **SoundOut and The Freechild Project** - Provides resources, training, and technical assistance on Youth Voice in schools and communities. Find out more at www.freechild.org and www.soundout.org

34. **Students Together Advocating Nonviolence and Diversity (STAND)** - A club at Olympia High School that addressing violence among youth. Find more at http://olympia.osd.wednet.edu

35. **Stonewall Youth** - Supports, informs, and advocates for bisexual, lesbian, gay, transgendered, queer and questioning youth up to 21 years old. Find more at www.stonewallyouth.org

36. **Student2Student** - A program at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction in Olympia. A student-driven project to help entering high school students understand what they need to do to graduate and help them make the most of their high school years. Find more at www.k12.wa.us/S2S/

37. **Summer Organizing Institute, Garfield Youth Undoing Institutional Racism and the Annual Young Women’s Conference** - Programs of the Seattle Young Peoples Project. SYPP engages young people by encouraging them to express themselves and to take action on the issues that affect their lives. Find more at www.sypp.org
38. **Tacoma Youth Voice Forum** - A City of Tacoma Parks and Recreation Department program that engages young people through a dance and forum for young people to speak out on issues that concern them. Find out more from Robert Joyce at (253) 591-5321 or robertj@tacomaparks.com

39. **Teen Talking Circles** - A program of the Daughters Sisters Project. They are safe spaces where youth can tell the truth about their lives, look at the issues they're living with, and practice Compassionate Listening, nonviolent communication, and what it takes to maintain healthy, sustainable relationships. Find more at www.daughters-sisters.org

40. **University Place Youth Council** - Provides constructive activities and positive role models for the youth of University Place. UPYC also provides community support by assisting with community and local charities or events. Find out more at www.ci.university-place.wa.us/ParksandRec/youthcouncil.asp

41. **Vashon Youth Council** - A nonprofit youth organization that provides a youth-led gathering place called the Crux, provides a focus for community Youth Voice, and advocates for important issues. For more information contact yve@earthlink.net

42. **Washington State Legislative Youth Advisory Council** - A Washington State Legislature program that serves as a voice for youth, examining issues of importance to Washington youth, vocalizing concerns to legislators, and working to promote youth participation in state and municipal governments. Find out more at www1.leg.wa.gov/Legislature/LYAC/


44. **YMCA Earth Service Corps and Youth & Government** are programs that teach the value of serving others while becoming more committed to one’s community. Find about Earth Service Corps at www.yesc.org; Find more about Youth & Government at www.youthandgovernment.org

45. **Young Producer’s Project, Coyote Junior High Animation Media, Media Underground, Breaking the Stereo, and Making of Tribes** - Programs at 911 Media Arts Center. 911 is a Seattle nonprofit organization with a variety of Youth Voice programs that focus on media analysis, creation, and empowerment. Find more at www.911media.org

46. **Youth and Youth Adults Media** - YAYA Media connects communication resources with underserved youth and young adults in Thurston County. Digital video production, editing and storytelling, increasing the technical skills, community involvement and leadership capacities of youth and young adults. Find more at www.olyfilm.org/whatyougot/2006/YAYAinfo.htm

47. **Youth for Justice Program** - The Washington State Office for the Administrator of the Courts provides this program which in turn offers
communities across the state and around the nation with information, materials, training, and other resources to start Youth Courts. They also act as the coordinating agency for the Washington State Youth Courts Committee, with more than 19 members. Learn more by emailing Margaret.Fisher@courts.wa.gov

48. **Youth in Action** - A program of the Washington Department of Health that engages young people in fighting tobacco use. Young people participate in a variety of clubs, conferences, media-making projects, and other activities. Find more at [www.doh.wa.gov/Tobacco/youth/youth.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Tobacco/youth/youth.htm)

49. **Youth Integration Grant** - A program of the Northwest Workforce Development Council in Bellingham to develop a series of activities and projects that engage young people. They include a series of forums on Youth Voice, surveys, and more. Find more at [www.youthworksnw.org](http://www.youthworksnw.org)

50. **Youth Connection** - A program of the United Way King County that promotes Youth Voice through service learning and volunteering. Find more at [www.uwkc.org/volunteer/youth/](http://www.uwkc.org/volunteer/youth/)

51. **Youth Action Convergence** - A program at the Downtown YMCA in Olympia. Find out more from Rochelle Gause at (360) 357-6609.

52. **Youth Organizer Training and Legislative Action Project** - Programs of the Odyssey Youth Center in Spokane. Odyssey is the only drop-in center for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth east of the Cascades. Find more at [www.odysseyyouth.org](http://www.odysseyyouth.org)

53. **Youth Voice Tip Sheets and Youth Voice Begins With You** - Publications created in the 1990s by the now-defunct Washington Youth Voice Project, these tools were fundamental to many groups in Washington and across the country. Find out more at [www.projectserviceleadership.org](http://www.projectserviceleadership.org)
Youth Voice Resource Guide

While Washington is home to some excellent Youth Voice resources, it is important to recognize that every program here is part of the national movement promoting Youth Voice, action, and empowerment. Following is a short list of websites, publications, and organizations that address a variety of Youth Voice activities. They are the best-known and largest sources available today for Youth Voice. For the most exhaustive, up-to-date listing of Youth Voice resources available today, make sure to visit www.freechild.org.

National Organizations Supporting Youth Voice

Building Leadership Organizing Communities (BLOC)
A national network of youth organizers and activists. BLOC exists to elevate the leadership of young people in all social justice sectors; as well as nurture, strengthen and unify a social-justice youth agenda and youth movement in communities across the country. Movement Strategy Center, 1611 Telegraph Ave. Ste 510, Oakland, CA 94612. (877) 888-BLOC. www.blocnetwork.org

Centre for Excellence in Youth Voice
A Canadian federal government program that finds, describes and builds models of effective strategies for engaging youth in meaningful participation and making healthy decisions for healthy living. They are committed to assisting health professionals, youth-serving professionals, parents and communities to adapt and adopt models of effective Youth Voice by engaging youth in planning, executing and being involved in program leadership. 23 Isabella St, Toronto, ON M4Y 1M7 Canada. (416) 597-8297. www.tgmag.ca/centres

Children, Youth, and Environments (CYE) Center for Research and Design
CYE is an international, multidisciplinary network of researchers, policy makers and practitioners working to improve the living conditions of children and youth by improving young people's capacity for meaningful participation in the processes that shape their lives. University of Colorado, College of Architecture and Planning, Campus Box 314, Boulder, CO 80309. (303) 735-5199. http://thunder1.cudenver.edu/cye

Community Partnerships with Youth (CPY)
CPY is a national training, resource design and technical assistance organization that specializes in Youth as Trustees of their communities, Youth in Governance, and Youth as Philanthropists. 6744 Falcon Ridge Crt, Indianapolis, IN 46278. (317) 875-5756. www.cpyinc.org

Do Something
Seeks to inspire, award, and celebrate the work of young people to change their world through an interactive website, community training, classroom
curricula, and monetary prizes. 423 West 55th St, 8th Fl, New York, NY 10019. (212) 523-1175. www.dosomething.org

Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development
Partners with foundations, organizations, youth, and adults to spark creative processes, build on existing assets and resources, and generate practical tools and resources. 6930 Carroll Avenue, Ste 502, Takoma Park, MD 20912. (301) 270-1700. www.theinnovationcenter.org

Movement Strategy Center (MSC)
MSC is committed to advancing the next generation of leaders for a sustainable progressive movement. We are building local, regional and national networks of young activists across issues, constituencies and geographies. 1611 Telegraph Ave, Ste 510, Oakland, CA 94612. (510) 444-0640. www.movementstrategy.org

Parents Leadership Institute
Works to foster healthy parent-child relationships that will last a lifetime by providing classes, workshops, support groups and leadership training courses for both parents and professionals. PO Box 1279, Palo Alto, CA 94302. (650) 322-5323. www.parentleaders.org

Points of Light Foundation
Provides resources and training to organizations focusing on youth involvement and service learning. 1400 “I” St, Ste 800, Washington, DC 2005. (202) 729-8000. www.pointsoflight.org

Program for Youth and Community
Renown researcher Barry Checkoway’s program aims to strengthen the active participation of young people in the institutions and decisions that affect their lives. It includes projects which build the capacity of young people and adult allies to increase individual involvement, build organizational capacity, and create community change. UM School of Social Work, 1080 S. University Ave. Ann Arbor, MI 48109. (734) 763-5960 www.ssw.umich.edu/youthAndCommunity

Youth Activism Project
Encourages young people to move their ideas into action by advocating before school boards, city council and in other public policy arenas. Offers books, training and other resources as well as free materials and technical assistance for youth-led adult-supported community change. PO Box E, Kensington, MD 20895 (800) KID-POWER www.youthactivismproject.org

Youth Leadership Institute (YLI)
Designs and implements community-based programs that provide youth with leadership skills in the areas of prevention, philanthropy, and policy and civic engagement. Building on these real-world program experiences, YLI creates evidence-based curriculum and training programs that enable us to engage in social change efforts across the nation, all while promoting best practices in the field of youth development. 246 First Street, Ste 400, San Francisco, CA 94105. (415) 836-9160. www.yli.org

Youth On Board
Prepares youth to be leaders and decision makers in their communities and strengthens relationships between youth and adults. 58 Day Street Somerville, MA 02144. (617) 623-9900 x1242. www.youthonboard.org

Youth Venture
Strives to reach and support any young person nationwide who has a dream about how to make a difference, and the commitment to make it happen. 1700 N. Moore Street, Ste 2000, Arlington, VA 22209. (703) 527-4126 x 316. www.youthventure.org

Websites Promoting Youth Voice

At The Table (ATT) is grounded in the conviction that institutions and communities benefit from the voices of young people, ATT shares examples, resources, and data from organizations across the U.S. interested in youth involvement. Online at www.atthetable.org

Children as Partners (CAP) brings young people and adults from around the world together to share what they think, what they know and other helpful information. Online at www.iicrd.org/cap

Child Friendly Cities (CFC) is an UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre initiative that focuses on youth involvement throughout communities. The website is a tool for exchanging information, sharing data and networking among communities around the world. Users can access information about the activities, objectives and methodologies of CFC projects, links with CFC partners and examples from Child Friendly Cities world-wide. Online at www.childfriendlycities.org

The Freechild Project seeks to connect young people to social change efforts around the world. Freechild highlights thousands of organizations, publications, websites, and resources from hundreds of topic areas focused on youth involvement. Online at www.freechild.org

One-Stop Youth Participation Shop is an easy-to-use resource website promoting youth participation as part of a government initiative to promote youth-centered services. Online at www.mcs.bc.ca/yps

SoundOut promotes student voice in schools through an online portal that provides examples, research, publications, discussion forums, and organizations to students, educators, and others. Online at www.soundout.org

TakingITGlobal is an online community made of more than 100,000 young people around the world. These youth collaborate on projects, express themselves, and participate in vibrant discussions about technology, involvement, and democracy online. Online at www.takingitglobal.org

Teens as Community Builders highlights accomplishments of young people across the United States by telling stories of youth who are doing positive things to improve their communities. Online at www.pps.org/tcb
Voices of Youth is a UNICEF project that encourages young people around the world to become positively involved in their communities. Online at www.unicef.org/voy

What Kids Can Do features stories from students across the United States who are leading community and school change projects. Online at www.whatkidscando.org

Publications Promoting Youth Voice

15 Points to Successfully Involving Youth in Decision-Making
By Youth On Board. Covering the essential elements of successful project planning, this manual provides stories, hints, and tools to make your project successful. Adam Fletcher contributed to the most recent revision. Order it from www.youthonboard.org

Adults as Allies by Barry Checkoway. This publication increases the awareness of the role of adults in youth involvement by posing questions, offering activities, and providing stories that highlight effective intergenerational interaction. Download at www.wkkf.org/pubs/YouthED/Pub564.pdf

At the Table: Making the case for Youth in Decision-Making: Research Highlights from a Study on the impacts of Youth on Adults and Organizations by the Innovation Center. Summary of key research findings from the Youth in Decision-Making research study (see following). Download at www.theinnovationcenter.org

Beyond Resistance! Youth Activism and Community Change edited by Shawn Ginwright, Pedro Noguera, and Julio Cammarota. Academics study the current implementations of Youth Voice activities across the country and their effects on communities, policy, and more. Order from your local bookstore.

Building Community: A Tool Kit for Youth and Adults in Charting Assets and Creating Change by The Innovation Center. This publication makes it possible for individuals and groups everywhere to bring an inclusive, asset-based approach to youth involvement in their community. Filled with detailed information and case studies, it gives users what they need to create youth adult partnerships and lasting community development. Order at www.theinnovationcenter.org

Children and Young People’s Participation by Child Rights Information Network. This issue of the CRIN Newsletter reviews how far children and young people’s participation has progressed, through a series of international overviews and thematic case studies. The overviews present the state of youth involvement around the world, examine key barriers to effective participation and suggest specific recommendations, based on experience, to improve future practice. Case studies describe examples of children’s participation in a variety of contexts. Download at www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/crinvol16e.pdf

Children’s Participation in Sustainable Development by Roger Hart. A new edition of Hart’s classic, this book is a central text for anyone interested in studying youth involvement in communities. It introduces organizing principles,
successful models, practical techniques and resources for involving children in a variety of social projects. Order at www.earthscan.co.uk

**Creating Youth/Adult Partnerships** by the Innovation Center/ National 4-H Council. For those just beginning to explore youth-adult partnerships as a strategy for community and organization building, this book offers a step-by-step tools to prepare youth and adults to work as a team. Designed with even the most novice trainer in mind, this curriculum provides activities that challenge preconceptions, explore benefits, assess readiness and build trust to strengthen their work in partnership. Order at www.theinnovationcenter.org

**The Declaration of Accountability on the Ethical Engagement of Young People and Adults in Canadian Organizations** by First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. This document shares a wide-ranging perspective of youth involvement, calling for organizations and communities to see beyond past activities and to identify and practice powerful ethical approaches to engaging youth. Despite the reference to Canadian organizations, this document is useful communities around the world. Download from www.fncaringsociety.com/projects/ethicalYouthEngagement.html

**The Evolving Capacities of the Child** by Gerison Lansdown. The principle behind recognizing the ‘evolving capacities’ of the child recognizes that as young people acquire enhanced competencies, there is a diminishing need for protection and a greater capacity to take responsibility for decisions affecting their lives. The purpose of this publication is to open the discussion and promote debate to achieve a better understanding of how children can be protected, in accordance with their evolving capacities, and also provided with opportunities to participate in the fulfillment of their rights. A necessary read for all youth involvement practitioners. Download at www.unicef-icdc.org/publications/pdf/evolving-eng.pdf

**Future 500: Youth Organizing and Activism in the United States** by Jee Kim, Mathilda de Dios, Pablo Caraballo, et al. This is the most comprehensive detailing of youth-led organizing ever published. The book details hundreds of organizations across the U.S., identifying them by location, issue-orientation, and constituency. Order from your local bookstore.

**Making Space/Making Change: Profiles of Youth-Led and Youth-Driven Organizations** by the Young Wisdom Project of the Movement Strategy Center. This publication is a powerful tool highlighting the successes and challenges of operating authentic Youth Voice programs. There are in-depth features on six programs across the nation, providing vital details and tips. Download at www.freechild.org/ReadingList/reviews/MSMC.htm

**Maximum Youth Involvement: The Complete Gameplan for Community Change** by Wendy Schaeztel Lesko. This manual answers nearly 100 questions on how adults and organizations can support young people as equal partners and effective advocates in changing community norms and policies plus a 40-page Appendix with reproducible checklists and interactive skill-building activities. Order from www.youthactivismproject.org
Meaningful Student Involvement Guide to Students as Partners in School Change by Adam Fletcher. Provides a concise introduction for educators on how to empower student voice in schools by engaging students as decision-makers, and more. Includes useful theoretical models, practical considerations, and valuable examples from across the United States. Download at www.soundout.org/MSIGuide.pdf

Measuring the Magic: Evaluating and Researching Young People's Participation in Public Decision-Making by Perpetua Kirby. This report examines the different ways in which involving young people in decision-making could be measured and evaluated. It recommends a number of different ways of effectively evaluating work in a variety of settings. Download at www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/files/2643_MeasuretheMagic_001.pdf

The Power of an Untapped Resource: Exploring Youth Representation on Your Board or Committee by the Youth Adult Partnerships Project. This handbook was created by Alaskan youth for boards or committees interested in including young people. It lists basic criteria for creating an effective board that includes youth representation, including: how to prepare boards for youth involvement; create a position; choose representatives; address legal issues; recruit youth; and educate youth members. Download at www.aasb.org/PDF's/AASBpubs/HansB_bklt.pdf

Promoting Children's Participation in Democratic Decision-Making by Gerison Lansdown. Makes the case for a commitment to respecting children's rights to be heard and the need to consolidate and learn from existing practice. It draws on much of the already published research and thinking in the field and on a wide range of international initiatives. In so doing, it seeks to provide practical guidance on the lessons learned to date in working with children as partners. It is a contribution to the development of tools for those who see children's rights to be heard as a means of promoting and protecting their other rights. Download at www.asylumsupport.info/publications/unicef/democratic.pdf

Re-focusing the Lens: Assessing the Challenge of Youth Involvement in Public Policy by Phillip Haid, Elder C. Marques and Jon Brown. This short paper explores successful models of youth participation in policy development and identifies barriers to meaningful youth involvement in the policy process, based on case studies. Download at www.iog.ca/publications/lens.pdf

SoundOut Student Voice Curriculum by Adam Fletcher. This is the first collection of lesson plans for classroom teachers focused on engaging student voice ever published. Includes a variety of hands-on, project-based activities that teach students about learning, the education system, school reform, and how students can be meaningfully involved in all three! Order from www.soundout.org

Taking the Initiative: Promoting Young People's Involvement in Public Decision Making: International Reports by the Carnegie Young People Initiative. This report provides insights into the policy and administrative infrastructure that makes it possible for governments to conceptualize and implement program for young people. It underscores the importance of youth participation in informing policy and programming for young people. Countries
featured in the report are Barbados, Uganda, Lithuania, Portugal, Denmark, South Africa and Germany. Download at www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/cypi/publications/taking_the_initiative

Younger Voices, Stronger Choices: Promise Project’s Guide to Forming Youth/Adult Partnerships by Michael McLarney and Loring Leifer. An important primer on involving youth in meaningful ways, co-written by a youth and an adult. This is the foundational text for many other books on youth involvement. Order from your local bookstore.

Youth in Decision-Making: A Study on The Impacts of Youth on Adults and Organizations by Shepherd Zeldin, Annette Kusgen-McDaniel, and Dimitri Topitzes. This report discusses the impacts young people have on adults and organizations when they are involved in significant decision-making roles. It will be of interest to policy-makers and practitioners, and concludes by commenting on the conditions that are needed to allow organizations to include more youth in their decision-making processes. Order at www.theinnovationcenter.org

Youth Participation and Community Change edited by Barry Checkoway and Lorraine Gutierrez. Academics and organizational leaders from across the U.S. explore current research and action happening in communities around the country. Includes a great number of examples and wonderful descriptions from a variety of programs. Order from your local bookstore.

Youth Voices in Community Design Handbook by the California Center for Civic Engagement and Youth Development. This is a spectacular, free how-to guide on getting youth involved in local policy making and community planning. The handbook provides a step-by-step guide to Youth Voice and is supported by an extensive online library of articles and activities. Download at www.youthvoicesoncommunitydesign.org/

Youth Voice: A Guide for Engaging Youth in Leadership and Decision-Making in Service-Learning Programs by Jonna Justinianno and Cynthia Scherer. The purpose of this guide is to provide service learning practitioners with basic information on Youth Voice - how to engage youth in leadership and decision-making in programs. This guide highlights what youth voice is, why it is important and models of Youth Voice that have been implemented by service learning practitioners. Download at www.kidsforcommunity.org/pdf/tools/youthguide.pdf
Additional information

The Washington Youth Voice Handbook was created to fill a perceived void: There is no other introductory manual about youth voice, youth involvement, or Youth Voice currently in print. However, several sources were drawn from in order to create this publication, the most important of which being:

Youth Voice Begins With You! A Resource and Training Manual for Young People and Adults Building Communities Together, by J. Kurkoski, K. Markendorf, and N. Straw, out-of-print. It was created for the Washington Youth Voice Project in the mid-1990s. For more information contact Project Service Leadership at www.projectserviceleadership.org

The Co/Motion Guide to Youth-Led Social Change, by L. Dingerson and S. Hay. This out-of-print manual was published by Alliance for Justice.

Sounding Out Optimism: Youth writings of hope and dedication, by Institute for Community Leadership, is available from their website at www.icleadership.org


Supporting Websites

The material in the Washington Youth Voice Handbook can be supplemented by other publication by Adam Fletcher. Specifically:

- SoundOut Student Voice Curriculum. (2009)

These publications are available to order or download from the websites below.

SoundOut promotes Student Voice in curriculum, leadership, and school improvement throughout K-12 schools and districts. Learn more at www.soundout.org

The Freechild Project Connecting young people and social change around the world through training programs and one of the largest online resource collections globally. Learn more at www.freechild.org
washington
youth voice
handbook
by adam fletcher

the what, who, why, where, when and how youth voice happens

20+ workshop outlines
a youth voice directory
a resource guide

Author Adam Fletcher is an internationally recognized expert in youth engagement, utilized as a thought leader on youth voice and power. His work has been featured in various publications and presentations around the world.