



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**

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



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CommonAction is able to support the distribution of this Handbook by facilitating training, speaking engagements, and consulting on everything covered herein. Please consider scheduling us for your next gathering, conference, or retreat.

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CommonAction is a national nonprofit Youth Voice organization in Olympia, Washington. CommonAction provides training and consultation to support organizations as they use this manual. For more information call (360) 753-2686, email info@commonaction.org, or visit www.commonaction.org



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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so much jargon out there that meaning of words is often lost, and terms like “Gen X” or “tweens” become meaningless and out-of-date almost as soon as they are printed.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 thereon 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, the Principles of Youth Voice, the Cycle of Youth Engagement, and barriers to Youth Voice. Chapter Two, **Why Does Youth Voice Matter?**, examines a variety of reasons why Youth Voice matters, including research and theory, as well as the issues addressed by Youth Voice, and myths about Youth Voice. Chapter Three, **Who is Youth Voice For?**, identifies the wide breadth of people affected by Youth Voice, featuring a variety of important populations Youth Voice works for - including young people and adults. This chapter also highlights ways to honor diverse Youth Voice.

Chapter Four answers the question, **When Should Youth Voice Happen?** This chapter explores the different times of life, times in the year, and important calendar days for Youth Voice activities. Chapter Five, **Where Does Youth Voice Happen?**, identifies several different locations where Youth Voice is engaged throughout our communities, including several

rubrics that explore the process of engaging Youth Voice in classrooms, community groups, after-school programs, and more. Chapter Six, **How Does Youth Voice Happen?**, examines different types of Youth Voice activities by exploring popular approaches to engaging young people throughout communities.

Continuing on the theme of “How Does Youth Voice Happen?”, the *Handbook* next offers twenty-plus workshop outlines for youth, teachers, youth workers, and other determined advocates. There is also an introductory resource collection that is packed with publications, websites, and organizations from around the world, as well as the first-ever Washington Youth Voice Directory, featuring Youth Voice examples and contact information 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 for 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 tackles 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 for 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!

A Word from the Author

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 hundreds of children, youth, and adults from across Washington and around the United States - but it was written solely by an adult.

Since 2000 I've been involved in Washington's statewide movement for Youth Voice, as well as on the national and international scenes. 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 have 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 found that Youth Voice can be so much more than what I originally thought. I want to share that with you.

The Youth Voice Movement in Washington is more than 30 years old, and there have been many accomplishments. In our state alone, there have been literally 100s of Youth Voice programs instituted; dozens of new organizations, conferences, and publications have been created; and hundreds of thousands of young peoples' lives have been touched. These accomplishments continue today in countless ways.

This publication stands on the shoulders of the giants 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 living together.

I hope that you find the *Washington Youth Voice Handbook* useful.



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.”

This is the Wisdom of Youth.

More youth need to be encouraged to define who they are, where they are from, and what they stand for – and what they stand against.

These could be the voices of wise elders from across Washington state, speaking strongly about issues that matter. They could be the voices of parents, concerned about their children. Instead, they are comments from young people, speaking with the passion and wisdom that comes from their age. As our world becomes more connected through technology and marketing, more youth need to be encouraged to define who they are, where they are from, and what they stand for - and what they stand against. These young people are working with adults in their communities to create positive, effective, and sustainable change in the world today. Across Washington State there is a growing movement that seeks to hear, strengthen, and empower young people. Young people 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. When the phrase “Youth Voice” is used in Washington, it is usually meant to describe the perspectives of teens. Occasionally, the phrase includes younger children. The definition used in this publication is meant to summarize these different intentions (see the next chapter for an explanation):

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

More than a Title

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.



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?

Engaging young people requires being aware, acknowledging, and infusing diversity throughout every activity.

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.

Considering the experiences of young people and the purpose of Youth Voice can help us create meaningful Youth Voice experiences for *all*

What does Youth Voice mean to you?

What does it mean to young people you know?

What does it mean when young people have never thought about Youth Voice before?

young people. **Youth Voice is the active, distinct, and concentrated ways young people represent themselves throughout society.** When we consider the words *active, distinct, concentrated,* and *community,* Youth Voice begins to take form and substance, especially for the young people involved.

To be **Active** with Youth Voice means engaging young people intentionally, instead of coincidentally. Young people are often engaged accidentally- just ask government officials who have met youth activists working to lower the voting age.

Distinct means that young people are seen as having their own views, separate from those of their parents or teachers. This is difficult for many adults to believe, particularly when young people are sharing particularly political perspectives. However, it is vital to recognize the engagement of young people as distinctive.

When focused on Youth Voice, **Concentrated** means engaging young people in a focused way, including the personal, structural, political, and financial support it needs to be effective. Youth Voice needs to be focused.

To **Represent** something is 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. Community is defined by identity: whether or not someone recognizes their membership is a separate issue.

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's powerful.

Youth/Adult Relationships Spectrum

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.

RESPONSIBLE Youth Engagement

- * Appropriate expectations
- * Equitable youth/adult partnerships
- * Equitable accountability

OVER-CONTROLLING

- * Youth forced to participate
- * Choices made for youth

OVER-PERMISSIVE

- * Adults disconnected from all activities
- * Youth given “free reign” without end

Over-Controlling Youth/Adult Relationships

Often reacting to a perception or misconception of youth “freedom,” over-controlling youth/adult relationships are defined by adults’ distrust and misunderstanding of young people. This type of relationship is often typified by locks on doors, coded language, and/or choices made for youth that often force them to participate.

Over-Permissive Youth/Adult Relationships

On the opposite end of the spectrum adults allow young people *too much* space. This is often a misguided attempt by adults who seek to be “friends” with children and youth; however, it is not honest. In the same sense that we would not give a 16-year-old keys to a car and expect them to teach themselves how to drive, neither should we simply give youth piles of cash and expect them to make wise social investments. Over-permissiveness often takes the form of ill-trained, under-informed young people acting without adult input.

Responsible Youth/Adult Relationships

The Kent, Washington-based Institute for Community Leadership trains students and adults about responsibility in terms of being able to respond, or being Response Able. Responsible Youth/Adult Relationships require adults who are able to respond appropriately to the demands of engaging youth throughout our communities. This often means providing training, engaging youth wisdom, and saying “no” when it is appropriate.

The last type of relationship should be the first on your mind as you continue reading this Handbook. Young people need the justice of responsible adults who are working for them in responsible ways;

How would you characterize your relationships with young people?

What are the outcomes of these different types of relationships?

What difference do personal relationships with young people make, versus professional ones?

partnerships are the pinnacle of that hope. Youth Voice is most authentic, most responsive, and most appropriate when it meets the demands of responsible youth/adult relationships.

By saying we want to engage Youth Voice we are also saying that Youth Voice is not being engaged otherwise.

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.

Many young people have tried to be heard in adult-led systems only to be turned away. School boards, nonprofit leaders, politicians, and teachers are notorious for actively *silencing* Youth Voice. The historical structures of many American institutions actually work against engaging young people. What is the solution? Many adults respond well to the *ethical* dilemma Youth Voice presents: By stifling young peoples' contributions adults are being *anti*-democratic. However, this argument bounces off many adults as well. This makes it necessary for youth and their adult allies to learn about the many different ways to leverage Youth Voice.

Discrimination against children and youth is the unique bias that many adults have towards other adults. Because of that, they often discriminate against young people. That bias towards adults is why discrimination against youth is often called *adulthoodism*. As stated earlier, adulthoodism - discrimination against children and youth - is a premise of every Youth Voice activity, whether or not we acknowledge it. By saying we want to engage Youth Voice we are also saying that Youth Voice is not being engaged otherwise. The absence of that engagement is caused by adulthoodism. The words we use, the programs we design, the ways we teach, and the relationships we have with children and youth are all influenced by adulthoodism. Even the most "youth-friendly" adult practices adulthoodism, usually unconsciously, be assuming that youth *need* them - which, while it may be true, is still discrimination. While that shows that discrimination is not always harmful, it also shows that adulthoodism is real.

There are many reasons why discrimination against children and youth exists, particularly from the perspectives of adults. Regardless of these reasons, discrimination against children and youth presents a set of double standards that consistently challenges Youth Voice. Following are some of the ways that happens.

Adulthoodism in Language

- ✓ "Act your age."
- ✓ "Why can't you be more like your older brother?"
- ✓ "Children should be seen and not heard."
- ✓ "What do you know, you're just a kid!"
- ✓ "Do as I say, not as I do."

Do you refer to people between the ages of 11 and 19 as “youth” or “youths”?

What difference does it make?

Where else do you see adultism?

How has adultism affected you?

Adultism 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

Adultism 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 are routinely made without students
- ✓ Classroom grades giving equal weight to adults’ judgment and performance while neglecting the students’ perspectives
- ✓ When teachers yell at students, they are controlling classrooms; when students yell at teachers, they are creating unsafe learning environments

Adultism in Communities

- ✓ Non-citizen status for people under 18-years-old
- ✓ Community problem-solving routinely neglects youth members
- ✓ Signs saying “Under-18s must be accompanied by adults.”
- ✓ Anti-cruising laws
- ✓ Media bias against youth that alternatively portrays youth as apathetic super-predators who are obese, stuck on computers, gang members.

Challenging the Challenges

There are many ways that young people and their adult allies can go about challenging discrimination against children and youth. Across Washington there are many examples of what this effort actually looks like. Following are some examples. Addressing the discrimination against Youth Voice is a challenge that many young people and adult allies take whole-heartedly, particularly when they are informed by powerful knowledge and engaged in powerful action. You can read more specific strategies in Chapter Six: How Does Youth Voice Happen?

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 adults are becoming aware of the need for *authentic* Youth Voice. Following are important points to keep in mind.

You can’t fool all the youth all the time.

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.

Community problems should be addressed by communities, and not foisted on the shoulders of young people working alone.

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.

Fun is nice, but knowledge is power.

The days of "pizza box youth engagement" are over - meaning that 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.

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.

There is no such thing as a "youth problem."

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.

Young people learn adulthood 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.

“[We must]...rise above the narrow confines of our individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.”

- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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 support 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.

Young people should be part of 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 become more than selfish and self-absorbed; they can become *whole*-community members. By critically examining media images of low-income seniors, middle class youth can understand the related connections between discrimination against seniors and adultism. When inner-city elementary students participate in service learning programs at suburban nature centers, they can learn to value nature in their own communities. Introduce young people to a variety of adult allies throughout your community. 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.

Chapter 1 Resources at The Freechild Project Website

- 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](http://www.freechild.org/allies_of_youth.htm)

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 between of 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 straight forward 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

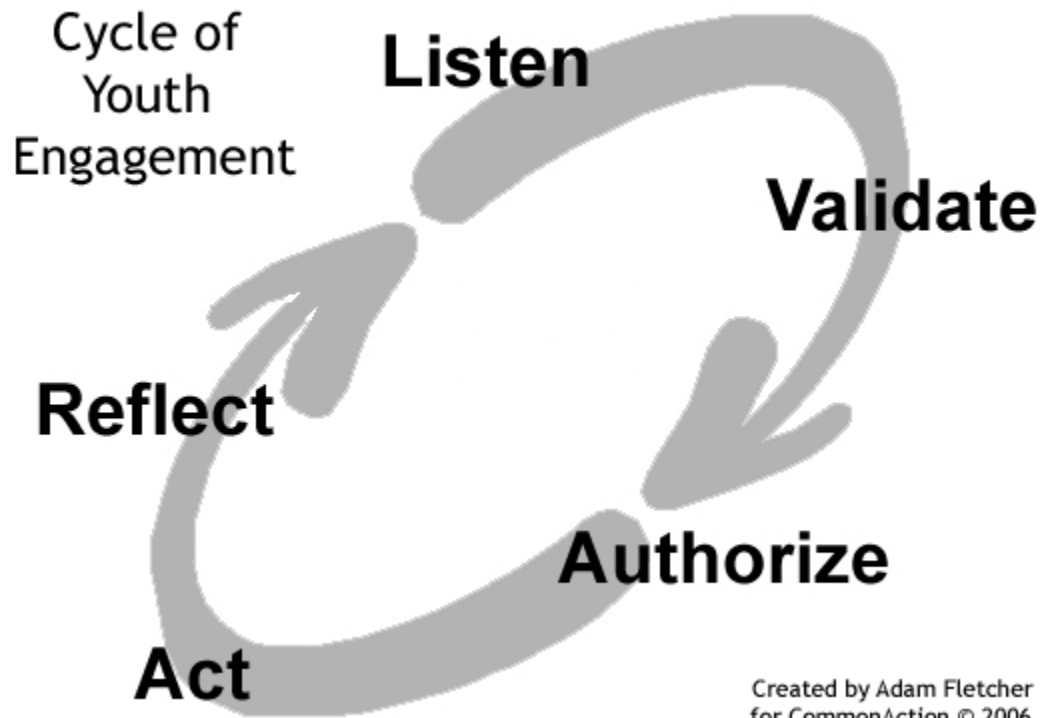
Decisions about young people should be made with young people.

- 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



After working with more than 100 K-12 schools and youth organizations across Washington, CommonAction created this “Cycle of Youth Engagement” to illustrate a clear process anyone can use to authentically, practically, and actively make Youth Voice powerful. 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

Start by *Listening* to Youth Voice.

Listen

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.

Validate

Next *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 of 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.

Authorize

Continue by *Authorizing 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.

Act

Proceed by *Taking Action With 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.

Reflect

Look Back By *Reflecting 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.



Chapter 2: Why Youth Voice?

Introduction

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 supports Youth Voice.

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.

Young people have the same right as adults to make their hopes, fears, dreams, and realities known to society...

Researchers across the United States and 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. 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.

Democracy Needs Youth Voice.

Youth Voice is essential to healthy democracy. In a time when citizen 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.

I 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.

Youth Voice is often dismissed as “juvenile” or simplistic – however, the issues addressed here clearly prove the depth, breadth, and power of young people.

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 senses 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 and 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

Can you name at least three issues that are missing from this list?

- Culture
- Media bias
- Service-learning
- Self-expression
- Leadership
- Sustainable agriculture
- Community representation
- Youth rights
- Hip hop
- Philanthropy
- Peer education and advocacy
- Racism
- Youth representation in media
- Homeschooling
- Commercialization in schools
- Curfews
- Anti-war
- Education reform
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Landmines

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 and 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 Youth Adults Media (YAYA)** 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 and 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. Today service learning projects across Washington, funded by the **Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Learn and Serve America grant**, have children and youth identifying issues, researching challenges, creating projects, taking action, and conducting evaluations afterwards. In turn they are learning deeply about their communities and the larger society. This idea is influencing other areas of schools today, as Youth Voice turns up in more education reform efforts everyday.

Youth Voice and 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 and 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 and 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 and Community Representation

While young people under 18 can't vote, its particularly important to engage their voices in other ways. The **Seattle Mayor's Advisory Council** advises city government on issues affecting youth in Seattle and provides input on city policies. 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. Similarly, the **Seattle Student Voices Project** based at the University of Washington engages a broad range of diverse youth in representing their perspectives to politicians, media, and community members.

Youth Voice and 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 and 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 and 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 and Peer Education, 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 and 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 just some examples.

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

Chapter 2 Resources at The Freechild Project Website

Youth Voice Research..... www.freechild.org/research.htm
Youth Voice Issues..... www.freechild.org/issues.htm
Activist Learning..... www.yp3.org

MYTHS ABOUT YOUTH VOICE



MYTH: *This all sounds good on paper, but my school/program/organization/community/region/agency 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: *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: *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: *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!

Washington Youth Voice Spotlight

SECONDARY ACADEMY FOR SUCCESS



(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.

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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?

Introduction

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!

...Young people are becoming more diverse, and because of that Youth Voice is becoming more powerful and effective.

As individuals, there are countless many 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, in some American Indian communities, youth is seen as an important passageway to responsibility - but not as the end goal. Many

Is it necessary to “call out” youth from different communities?

What specific differences can youth voice make for the following different youth?

- *Youth from distinct cultures*
- *Disengaged youth*
- *Highly motivated youth*
- *Young women*
- *Migrant youth*
- *Elementary students*
- *Middle school students*
- *High school-age students*
- *Alternative school students*
- *Diverse socio-economic background youth*
- *Out-of-school youth*
- *Incarcerated youth*
- *ELL youth*
- *Homeless youth*
- *Foster youth*
- *Diverse learners*

communities of color and immigrant communities have a long history of promoting **AnakBayan** is a program for Filipino young people promoting 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. **DYVAS** (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, culled 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 neighborhoods 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 an 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

How do you stand to benefit from Youth Voice?

How can adults deny the validity of Youth Voice in their own lives?

Are there adults who should not benefit from Youth Voice, but do?

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. It also encourages young people to see the forces working for - and against - their communities.

Other adults who can benefit from Youth Voice include:

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

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. A vital academic ally to youth and adult allies worldwide, Henry Giroux, explains the need for Youth Voice like this:

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.

Chapter 3 Resources at The Freechild Project Website

- 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

5 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.



Chapter 4: When Does Youth Voice Happen?

Introduction

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 essential to think about the variety of ways time affects Youth Voice.

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 for Infants

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-goos" 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 for Children

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.

Infants, children, teens, young adults... Does the line stop there?

Is there anyone Youth Voice does not affect?

How, or why not?

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 for Teens

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.

“It takes a child to raise a village.”

- A New Youth Voice Proverb

Youth Voice for Young Adults

“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 examples to show the times when children and youth are engaged the most in Washington.

The Bandage Syndrome

Adults may be tempted see Youth Voice as a temporary fix to big problems. It is true that our organizations and communities have short-term problems; but it’s 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.

Election Season Tokenism

Election season politics are challenging for many segments of American society, youth included. 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

What are other challenges of time, in addition to this list?

- *The Bandage Syndrome*
- *Election Season Tokenism*
- *Quantity or Quality?*
- *Seasons of Free Labor*

as election season plays, 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.

Quantity or Quality?

Many organizations are using "quality management" theories to develop "client-driven" approaches to reform. Along the way they 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.

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

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

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 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

Chapter 4 Resources at The Freechild Project Website

Youth Voice in Schools..... www.freechild.org/education.htm
It’s a Younger World www.youngerworld.org
Reading about Young People..... www.freechild.org/ReadingList/youngpeople.htm

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 - complete.
- **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

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 5: Where Does Youth Voice Happen?

Introduction

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.

*Youth Voice can -
and should - happen
throughout our
society.*

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 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 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

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.

Are the differences between types of communities important enough to note?

What difference can Youth Voice make in these types of communities?

- *Suburban*
- *Rural*
- *Urban*
- *Isolated*
- *Reservations*
- *Military bases*

What types of communities are missing from this list?

(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.

SoundOut for Student Voice!

Examples, research, curriculum, class tools, and more await you at our SoundOut website!

www.SoundOut.org

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 throughout Schools

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

Young people are encouraged by youth-friendly spaces that are designed with young people.

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 in leading and growing programs. The **National Youth Congress** works with local, county, and state-funded community centers and other types of youth programs across Washington to make Youth Voice heard. By facilitating exciting gatherings for youth to discuss important issues, community center workers learn what is *really* on the minds of youth.

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

Where is missing from this list of places Youth Voice should be engaged?

- *Home*
- *Classrooms*
- *Boardrooms*
- *Community centers*
- *Parks and recreation programs*
- *Libraries*
- *After-school programs*
- *City hall*
- *Government agencies*
- *State legislature*

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.

Chapter 5 Resources at The Freechild Project Website

Section Investigating Youth Involvement www.freechild.org/SIYI/
This area of the website explores Youth Voice in community organizations, foundations, libraries, government, research, media, schools, and more.

On-Track Youth Voice Rubrics

Rubric One: Youth Voice in Classrooms

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



Rubric Two: Youth Voice in Community Groups

Starting Point	Fast Track	On Track	Side-Tracked
Public Commitment	Organization makes its support apparent in all activities, policies, and publicity.	Dedicated, sustainable, focused positions created.	One youth is a member of the board of director or the steering committee.
Staff Responsibility	Youth self-identify issues and resources they need to create change.	Young people engaged as regular staff or volunteers.	All staff claim to "support" Youth Voice while none actually engage young people.
Sustainable Support	Adult support for youth is made explicit through fiscal, material, etc.	Staff show full commitment through ongoing training, support, activities, and reflection.	Resources are not allocated to support Youth Voice in the organization or programs.

Rubric Three: Youth Voice in After School Programs

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



Rubric Four: Youth Voice in Foundations

Starting Point	Fast Track	On Track	Side-Tracked
Engagement Method	Foundation commits throughout policy, practice, leadership, and evaluation.	Grantmaking heavily supports Youth Voice through funding practices.	Youth Voice is among unstated funding interests.
Funding Priority	Young people involved in determining all priorities, grantees, monitoring, and reflection.	Youth-led funding activities support youth programs.	Youth Voice is critiqued among applicants and grantees without offering guidance or support.
Staff Infusion	All staff trained in Youth Voice and active programs underway throughout organization.	Staff trained and youth focus groups inform grantmaking.	Carefully selected young people participate in minimal funding activities.

Rubric Five: Youth Voice in Government

Starting Point	Fast Track	On Track	Off Track
Strategic Methods	Statutes and laws are changed to create permanent positions for young people to propose, influence, and advocate.	Community-wide Youth Voice strategies devised and implemented with long-range funding.	Community health fairs and city boards with no youth, or a citywide youth summit no adults allowed.
Dedicated Personnel	Young people are engaged through regular (paid), volunteer, elected, and other opportunities.	Trained staff develop and coordinate Youth Voice programs with active volunteer youth advisors.	“Youth councils” and Children’s Cabinets made of concerned adults without youth themselves.
Empowering Activities	Activities designed by youth/adult partners to promote Youth Voice throughout government.	Adults engage youth in advisory committees without actually affecting youth directly.	Youth Voice training for government workers without youth participants or trainers.



Rubric Six: Youth Voice in Organizational Transformation

Starting Point	Fast Track	On Track	Off Track
Attitude	All members express clear commitment to Youth Voice.	Leaders express clear commitment.	Youth are only people to express clear commitment.
Procedure	All activities reflect deliberate Youth Voice strategy.	Staff trained, but given no resources to engage youth.	Youth Voice stated priority without any actual change.
Policy	All policies are reformed to include Youth Voice.	Policies affecting youth reformed to include Youth Voice.	Other activity is required to participate in Youth Voice activities.
Culture	Youth Voice is acknowledged strategy for democracy-building throughout community.	Youth Voice seen as only strategy for democracy-building.	Youth Voice seen as novel/tokenistic tool for making young people happy or keep them “out of trouble.”

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?

Introduction

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 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 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, CommonAction has 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

Does a person have to start at number one and go through ten, or can these steps be taken as needed?

1. *Establish necessity*
2. *Raise awareness*
3. *Build capacity*
4. *Advocate action*
5. *Change attitudes*
6. *Modify procedures*
7. *Reform policies*
8. *Develop structures*
9. *Challenge indifference*
10. *Transform cultures*

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 is an Olympia-based program of CommonAction that 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.

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

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 indifferent 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.

*When communities
come together,
Youth Voice can
change the world.*

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.

Types of Involvement

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

Should Youth Voice affect more than what affects youth?

Can you imagine new ways that Youth Voice can be engaged in these settings?

- *Education*
- *Social entrepreneurship*
- *Board membership*
- *Teaching and training*
- *Media making*
- *Program evaluation*
- *Service learning*
- *Political campaigning*
- *Policy making*

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 CommonAction's 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 Roles for 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 Roles for 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 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 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.

What makes these roles okay or not okay for young people?

- *Receptacles*
- *Recipients*
- *Informants*
- *Promoters*
- *Facilitators*
- *Evaluators*
- *Decision-makers*
- *Advocates*
- *Researchers*
- *Planners*
- *Organizers*
- *Specialists*

Is it ever better to have no role in the community than one of these roles?

Why haven't these roles always existed for young people?

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 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 Roles 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

Closing

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 Resources at The Freechild Project Website

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

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.

Lessons Learned

- ✓ Youth Voice should be defined as the active, distinct, and concentrated ways young people represent themselves throughout society.
- ✓ Engaging Youth Voice requires being aware, acknowledging, and infusing diversity throughout every activity.
- ✓ First and foremost, Youth Voice is a tool to build democracy; learning, empowerment, engagement, and other outcomes are consequences of that focus.
- ✓ Not engaging Youth Voice is active discrimination against youth - and is not always a wrong, bad, or incorrect thing to do.
- ✓ Community problems should be addressed by communities, and not foisted on the shoulders of young people working alone.
- ✓ It is essential to engage Youth Voice in issues broader than those that only affect young people.
- ✓ Youth Voice already 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 to be built upon, not a whim to be dismissed.
- ✓ 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? You can learn more about taking action in the following workshops.

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 free 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.



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Preface

Introduction

Before you begin an ambitious journey to engage young people, you should think about their own journey, whether you are a youth or an adult, experienced or new. You might think about:

- How have you been engaged in the past?
- What have you learned from your experiences with youth as a youth or adult?
- What are the assumptions behind activities you have participated in without youth? With youth?

After you have thought about these points, you are ready to begin thinking about the facilitating the following workshops for youth and adult participants. These 24 workshops were originally designed in the late 1990s by the Washington Youth Voice Project and included in a publication called Youth Voice Begins With You! That publication is out-of-print, so with the permission of the author we have modified them here, revising them to consider the broad goals of Youth Voice today. All of the workshops are hands-on, and most engage youth and adults as equal partners.

Horizontal Learning Environments

There are a few important considerations that facilitators should keep in mind during these activities. They are not a mystery; however, they are not the same in every organization or community.

Tip 1: Be a Facilitator

Presenting any workshop can be challenging for the most experienced facilitator. A facilitator's job has three parts: lead the workshops, guide the reflection, and be enthusiastic. Enthusiasm is contagious! Also, share personal experiences and remember that as a young person, a student, a community member or an adult ally, you have knowledge and experience that you can and should share. Also, remember that the mood of the facilitator will set the tone for the entire workshop. So strive to be positive and have fun with these workshops!

Tip 2: Create Guidelines & Goals

Have participants create ground rules or guidelines before you begin a workshop. Brainstorm potential rules and write them down - but avoid too many rules. There are three essential guidelines:

- Safety first. Never compromise the safety of yourself or others.
- Challenge by choice. If someone wants to sit out, that's cool.
- HAVE FUN!

Every group should have some specific goals that all players agree on. Some goals have included:

- Break down the barriers that may exist between students such as race, sex, background, and social status.
- Build a sense of teamwork and purpose.
- Show that everyone has different strengths and abilities to offer the group and that no one is better than anyone else.

Tip 3: Think about Framing & Sequencing

The purpose of these workshops is often set during the introduction, or *framing*, of them. Framing can happen as an analogy where the facilitator creates a magical place where dangerous things can happen without new knowledge. Or the workshops can be simply presented without metaphors, and with just a simple prompt that alerts participants to look for deeper meaning. Another important consideration is the order in which you present workshops, or *sequencing*. If a group has never learned together, it might be to follow the sequence presented in the following section. This order is proposed to help youth and adults “soften” their personal space bubble. If a group is more comfortable with each other, try “bursting” the bubble by digging right into deeper workshops. It is important to try to put “heavy” workshops after less intensive ones, to build a sense of rest and preparedness.

Tip 4: Reflect, Reflect, Reflect

One way to highlight the necessity of workshops for youth and adults together is in the reflection afterwards. An easy way to see the relevance of reflection is to picture workshops as a circle: you start with an explanation what you are going to learn and frame its purpose and goals to the group. As the activity progresses, the facilitator taking a more hands-on or less guiding approach as needed. Finally, group reflection helps participants see how they met the goals of the workshop, and helps them envision the broader implications. Then the group has come full-circle. Remember to bring it all back to reality with the reflection. Reflecting on the workshops is vital to bring the group back to the reason why they’re playing games.

The following types of questions can be useful in reflecting:

- Open-ended questions - prevents yes and no answers. “What was the purpose of the game?” “What did you learn about yourself?”
- Feeling questions - requires participants to reflect on how they feel about what they did. “How did it feel when you started to pull it together?”
- Judgment questions - asks participants to make decisions about things. “what was the best part?” “Was it a good idea?”
- Guiding questions - steers the participants toward the purpose of the activity and keep the discussion focused. “What got you all going in the right direction?”
- Closing questions - helps participants draw conclusions and end the discussion. “What did you learn?” “What would you do differently?”

Tip 5: Make Meaning *With* Participants

At their best, the following workshops can serve as bridges between young people and adults, and between Youth Voice, learning, and

community building. They can reinforce the need for communication, co-learning, and collective action. At their worst, these workshops can actually be tools of oppression and alienation and serve to support vertical practices that isolate young people from adults everyday. In the words of educator Paulo Freire, “A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favor without that trust.” In this sense, Youth Voice requires that we all become humanists who engage adults with youth, followers with leaders, and teachers with students. We must all become Youth Voice.

Tip 6: Create Safe Space

It is vital to create, foster, and support safe spaces youth and adults to learn together about Youth Voice. In a society that is openly hostile towards critical perspectives from young people, youth need support when they make their voices heard. Likewise, adults face challenges when they partner with youth, and they need support as well. Establishing a safe space is powerful, positive, and hopeful, and hope is a requirement for Youth Voice.

Tip 7: Co-train Adults with Youth

Youth and adults need training - together. When possible, and appropriate, facilitate workshops with mixed groups of youth and adults where they can learn about Youth Voice as partners. This emphasizes that everyone is a co-learner in the process of engaging Youth Voice, discouraging experienced participants from lauding their knowledge over others. You can create the conditions that support young people and adults learning together either by clearly stating expectations or having the group come up with them, and then holding the group to the expectations.

Tip 8: Learning is a Process - Not an Outcome

Encourage participants to view learning about Youth Voice as a process that has no end. There are no experts in Youth Voice - only people with a little more experience. However, even experience cannot teach us what we do not seek to learn. John Dewey once wrote that we should seek, “Not perfection as a final goal, but the ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining is the aim of living.” This is true of Youth Voice. Youth and adults should use action as a starting point for a lifelong journey that includes learning, reflection, examination, and re-envisioning democracy in our communities.

Tip 9: Embrace Challenges

Since Youth Voice is a process, it is important to understand THAT there will be difficult times ahead. One of the keys to sustaining long-term Youth Voice is establishing the expectation that criticism will come - and that is good. We cannot grow without criticism. In a society where adults routinely criticize youth without suitable avenues for youth to criticize adults, we must be aware of the outcomes of our actions. Embrace these challenges and learn from them.

Workshop Structure

The following workshop outlines can assist you in facilitating activities for young people and adults. This isn't an expert's guide that is set in

stone; each workshop should be altered to meet your needs and particular situation. When you use these workshops for social change work, the role of the facilitator is very important and must be intentional.

Each workshop outline is structured the same way. Elements include:

Facilitator's Notes

- Introduction
- Goal
- Time
- Materials
- Space
- Considerations

Activities

- Individual Steps

Optional Activities and Variations

- Individual Steps

A Note on Evaluation

Workshops on Youth Voice, just like all workshops for and/or about young people, are often evaluated on two factors:

- Presentation - How well was the information presented and how well did the presenter facilitate?
- Content - Did it make sense, and was it appropriate?

The following workshops dig deeply into Youth Voice issues, and while the questions above are important, they should be accentuated with the following considerations:

- Depth - Was the content of this workshop meaningful and relevant?
- Purpose - Was this workshop clear to me?
- Application - Do I have practical next steps or realistic considerations to keep in mind in the future?

Best wishes! Please email me with your notes, feedback, and experiences from these workshops, and take care. Send an email to adam@freechild.org

Workshop Resources at The Freechild Project Website

Games Guide www.freechild.org/gamesguide.htm
Training Materials..... www.freechild.org/Firestarter
Youth Voice Reading www.freechild.org/ReadingList

Intro to Youth Voice

Workshop 1

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is a hands-on, interactive session featuring reflection and critical thinking skill development. It is designed for mixed groups of youth and adults, with no more than 40 participants.

Goal: When this session is complete participants should be able to...

- Define Youth Voice in a variety of settings throughout the community
- Identify currently existing Youth Voice in the community

Time: 180 minutes

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers

Space: Enough room for the group to split up into small groups. It will be necessary to move chairs in order to conduct the icebreaker.

Considerations: Throw in a break at some point during the workshop. The case study activity near the end is optional, and can be omitted to allow more time for discussion in the small or large groups.

ACTIVITIES

1. [3 min] Introduce yourself, review the agenda, and go over the goals.
2. [10 min] Choose an ice breaker, and make sure the game ends with everyone in small groups of all youth or all adults. See www.freechild.org/gamesguide.htm
3. [20 min] Each same-age small group should answer the following questions and records their answers on flip chart paper.
 - What does the other age group do that really bothers you and makes it difficult for you to work together?
 - What do you do that gets in the way and makes it difficult for youth and adults to work together?
 - What do you really like or value about working with youth/adults?
4. [10 min] Have each small group report back to the whole group. Pick top barriers from all the groups by choosing the ones that are most common or that, if solved would make things a whole heck of a lot easier.
5. [20 min] Break into small, mixed-age groups. Assign each group one of the top barriers, and have them develop strategies for preventing and/or overcoming the barrier.

6. [20 min] Have each group report back to whole group.
7. [10 min] Review the Principles of Youth-Adult Partnerships from Chapter One, "What is Youth Voice?"
8. [10 min] Have each participant take a moment to write a reflection on two things they can do personally in the next two weeks. After that, they should brainstorm two things they can do in their program or organization in the next two months to make youth-adult partnerships work. Have people refer back to the lists of strategies generated if they get stuck. Ask for individuals to share so others can get additional ideas by listening.
9. [5 min] Evaluate and close the session.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

- [20 min] If time allows, take an example from the group of a project in progress or up-coming situation in which youth and adults are or will be working together. Have that group member give the background (people involved, what is going on/will happen, current or anticipated barriers, etc.) and have the rest of the group try to come up with solutions for the person's problem.

Intro to Youth Voice for Adults

Workshop 2

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This workshop for up to 40 adult-only participants includes a self-reflection activity, learning fundamentals of Youth Voice, critical thinking, and basic program planning.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Examine personal experience for relevant lessons affecting Youth Voice
- Understand the concept of Youth-Adult Partnerships

Time: 120 minutes

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers

Space: Enough room for the group to split up into small groups. It is necessary to move chairs in order to conduct the icebreaker.

Considerations: During visualizations, make sure you keep your own opinions and/or editorial comments to yourself. Participants should have the opportunity to construct their own visions without your personal input. You'll want to throw in a break at some point during the workshop. The case study activity near the end is optional.

ACTIVITIES

1. [5 min] Introduce yourself, go over the agenda, and review the goals.
2. [10 min] Choose an icebreaker, making sure that the game ends with everyone in small groups of 5-8.
3. [30 min] Begin the reflection by reading the following at a comfortable, relaxed pace. Your tone should be quiet and calming. Give people time to bring up the images in their heads and really remember them. You can add to or subtract from this script as needed.

Begin by asking each group to sit down and get comfortable. Explain that you will lead them through a reflection activity that sends them back in time to when they were teenagers. Ask them to close their eyes. Then ask them to imagine that it's [use today's date] during their X grade year in school—If the group consists of people who work primarily with one age group (e.g., fourth graders) use that school year. Otherwise chose a year in school for them. A year in middle or high school works best. Start by saying...

“Think about getting up in the morning. What time is it? Does someone wake you up? Who? Do you get up easily or is it a pain? What is your morning routine? Do you take a shower, bath, or do your hair? What are you wearing? Are you ready in a few minutes? An hour? Who else is around in the morning? Do you have to help anyone else get ready?”

“Now you leave for school. How do you get there? Bus, drive, get a ride, walk, bike? Do you go with others? What does the building look like? How do you feel about the place? What do you do when you first get inside? Do you go to your locker? Hang out with friends? Who are your friends? How do you feel about them?”

“What is your first class of the day? Who teaches it? Do you like the subject? Do you like the teacher? What are your favorite classes? What classes do you dislike? Why? What about lunch? Where do you eat? What did you eat? Do you have any meetings?”

“Now it is the end of the school day. Do you play a sport, have an activity, have a job, do your homework, hang out with friends? What adults do you encounter: coaches, advisors, administrators, or bosses? When do you get home? Do you eat dinner with your family? Do you do homework, or *pretend* to do homework? Do you watch TV? Talk on the phone? What time do you go to bed? How do you feel at the end of the day?”

4. [15 min] After a pause, ask participants to return to the present and open their eyes. Tell them you understand that the exercise may have reminded them of some painful or personal memories, and perhaps of some humorous ones, too. Reassure them that no one will be forced to share, but that you're going to ask each small group to take a moment to share general reactions. It might be useful to journal alone for a moment on the following questions:
 - What was good about being young?
 - What was not good about being young?
5. [10 min] Ask each group to report back to the large group, and share some of their reflections.
6. [50 min] Tell the group that through a variety of small and large group conversations you are going to examine their current involvement throughout their community. You can ask each individual to think about the neighborhood groups, clubs, committees, boards, religious groups, friends, family, and volunteer work they do. Then ask them to imagine being a young person doing that work.

You might next ask participants to remember back to the visualization and what it was like to be a teenager. Ask “How would it affect your current community involvement if you had no desk, no way to take phone calls for most of the day, probably limited access

to a computer and transportation. How do you remember interacting with adults? How did they treat you?

7. [15 min] In the following conversation participants discuss barriers to Youth Voice. Barriers are limitations, obstacles, or challenges that youth and adults face. Have each group brainstorm answers to the following questions and record their answers on flip chart paper.
 - What do adults do that gets in the way and makes it difficult for Youth Voice?
 - What do young people do that gets in the way and makes it difficult for Youth Voice?
 - What other barriers to Youth Voice exist?
8. [10 min] Have each small group report back to the whole group, and pick the top barriers.
9. [25 min] Assign each group one of the top barriers. Ask them to develop strategies for preventing and/or overcoming the barrier, and report back to whole group.
10. [10 min] Briefly discuss the Principles of Youth-Adult Partnerships from Chapter One, "What is Youth Voice?"
11. [10 min] Have each participant take a moment to write two things they can do personally in the next two weeks to promote Youth-Adult Partnerships. Then have them write two things they can do in their programs or organizations in the next two months to put Youth-Adult Partnerships to work. Have people refer back to the lists of strategies generated if they get stuck.
12. [5 min] Evaluate and close.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

- [20 min] If time allows, take an example from the group of a project in progress or up-coming situation in which youth and adults are or will be working together. Have that group member give the background (people involved, what is going on/will happen, current or anticipated barriers, etc.) and have the rest of the group try and come up with solutions for the person's problem.

Are You Ready for Youth Voice?

Workshop 3

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This inquiry-based workshop for up to 40 participants shares fundamentals, engages participants in evaluating their programs and organizations, and planning for Youth Voice. It can be adapted for use with youth and adults; however, it is primarily for adult organizational staff.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Consider broad implications of Youth Voice
- Examine factors affecting Youth Voice
- Develop practical applications for Youth Voice

Time: See “Considerations” section; up to 125 minutes are needed.

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers

Space: See the following heading, “Considerations”; space use is variable.

Considerations: There are two sections to this training that you should be aware of:

Section 1: Preparing for Youth Voice is about deepening your understanding of what you are trying to do, why you’re doing it, and what you expect out of it. It also means deepening your understanding of what it’s going to take to make a partnership really work. In fact, a group may decide that it isn’t ready to involve young people. That’s okay. It is better to recognize that fact rather than investing a lot of time creating frustration.

Section 2: Assessing Readiness is designed as a set of activities that may be conducted separately in a series of short sessions or all together in one long session. The time required for each activity is noted in a range—you can spend a little or a lot of time on each activity depending on the size and needs of the group. Most of the activities involve discussion.

ACTIVITIES

Section 1: Preparing for Youth Voice

1. [10 min] Before getting started in engaging young people, there are some key questions to examine: Write the underlined words on a flip chart.

- What is your vision for Youth Voice in your program?
- What is your motivation for engaging Youth Voice?
- What expectations do you have about Youth Voice?
- What roles will Youth Voice play?
- What resources exist to ensure success for Youth Voice?

2. [20 min] The following is a visualization that should be read in a comfortable, relaxed pace, in a quiet and calming tone. Give people time to bring up the images and really experience them. Modify this script as needed. Ask the group to sit down and get comfortable. Explain that you're going to lead them through a visualization that lets them imagine their ideal for youth involvement. Ask them to close their eyes. Then begin...

"Imagine that it's three years from now and you've got the perfect situation for Youth Voice. What does it look like? What are people doing? What roles do the youth play? The adults? On which issues are they focused?"

"Now take a closer look. How does it feel? How are people interacting? What do you hear people saying? How do they share power?"

"Now step back a bit. How does your program look or feel different? How is it benefiting the organization? The youth? The adults? What is 'ideal' about it?"

Ask participants to draw a picture of their vision, either individually or as a small group. Then have them share in small groups or the whole group, depending on number of participants.

3. [40 min] The following is a dialogue-oriented activity with separate questions for youth and adults. The activity may be conducted as small group discussions by reading through the questions and giving individuals the chance to write down some thoughts. Then break up into small groups to discuss the following questions.

- Do you think it will enhance your work?
- What is it about involving young people that interests you?
- Did someone give you a similar chance when you were young?
- Do certain funders require it?
- Have young people demanded it?
- Was it a request from the board?
- Have young people demanded more involvement?
- Are you getting pressure from others? Whom?

Have the small groups report back to the large group. This is particularly critical if in a mixed group of youth and adults.

Section 2: Assessing Readiness

4. [10 min] These following steps are an organizational analysis that is primarily for adults, and may be used with young people. Begin the

activity by instructing participants to write the mission or purpose of their organization at the top of a page. Have them draw a “map” (an “organizational flow chart”) of the organization beneath the mission statement. The map should include individuals, departments, programs, and people affected by the programs, with lines between any connected people or projects.

5. [5 min] Have each participant highlight where youth fit into the chart.
 - What roles do young people currently play?
 - How does Youth Voice fit within the overall mission and activities of the organization?
 - Are young people volunteers? Recipients of services? Interns? Committee members? Participants in events?
6. [10 min] Discuss the possibilities for changing or expanding Youth Voice.
 - How could involving young people be a more effective or efficient way to meet an accepted goal of the organization?
 - How can Youth Voice contribute to the work of the organization?
7. [10 min] Based on the organization’s mission and experience, have the group discuss the possibilities for changing or expanding Youth Voice.
 - How could Youth Voice be engaged to make your organization more effective or efficient?
 - What are the potential benefits to the organization?
 - How can Youth Voice contribute to the work of the organization?
8. [15 min] The final activity is an assessment primarily for adults and asks participants to take a look at the resources required to make Youth Voice work. Based on their expectations, organizational maps, and lists of possible youth roles, use the following questions to guide discussion:
 - What kind of support structure do you have for Youth Voice?
 - Is someone willing and available to work with young people to recruit, orient, train and provide ongoing support?
 - How willing and available are other staff and adults to attend Youth Voice training?
 - What kind of space in your office can youth use?
 - Are funds available for the costs that will be incurred?
 - How will you deal with issues of accessibility: Location, transportation, safety, incidental expenses?
 - Am I aware of liability concerns for involving youth?
9. [5 min] Close by asking for new insights people have gained or how ideas about their perspectives about Youth Voice might have changed.

Youth Voice Readiness *WORKSHEET*

Are Adults Personally Ready for Youth Voice?

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
I respect young people.	1	2	3	4	5
I am willing and able to give up some power and control.	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy being with young people.	1	2	3	4	5
I am comfortable with chaos.	1	2	3	4	5
I am patient.	1	2	3	4	5
I listen carefully to people.	1	2	3	4	5
I am willing to admit when I'm wrong.	1	2	3	4	5
I like to try new and different things.	1	2	3	4	5

Are Youth Personally Ready for Youth Voice?

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
I respect adults.	1	2	3	4	5
I am willing and able to take on more responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
I want to try new and different things.	1	2	3	4	5
I am open to guidance when trying new things.	1	2	3	4	5
I listen carefully to people.	1	2	3	4	5
I am willing to ask questions.	1	2	3	4	5
I am willing to admit when I am wrong.	1	2	3	4	5

Youth Voice Options *WORKSHEET*

How am I planning to engage Youth Voice?

Program design	Org management	Mission planning
Facilitation	Staff evaluation	Staff training
Program eval	Mapping	Staff hiring/firing
Planning	Budgeting	Policy-making
Researching	Advisory	Board of Directors
Other positions? _____		

What roles will young people have?

Volunteers	Advisors	Paid Staff
Full-voting	Leaders	Paid interns
Other positions? _____		

Why will young people be engaged?

New circumstance? Explain: _____

Existing circumstance? Explain: _____

Youth-led concern? Explain: _____

Other positions? Explain: _____

When will Youth Voice happen?

One day	One week	One month
One quarter	One year	Ongoing
Other timelines? _____		

How many young people will be engaged?

Few (1-15)	Some (15-35)	Many (35-100)
A lot (100+)	Multi-community	Other size

Who will be involved?

Disengaged youth	Urban youth	Rural youth
Youth of color	Low-income youth	Homeless youth
Other youth? _____		

Who will support Youth Voice?

One paid staff	Multiple paid staff	Older youth
Volunteer	Other? _____	

Is financial support provided to support Youth Voice?

Available: \$ _____ Not available Other? _____

Breaking Stereotypes

Workshop 4

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This workshop is a communication-oriented session, engaging youth and adult participants through role playing, intergenerational dialogue, critical thinking, and cooperative problem-solving. A mixed group of youth and adults is required, with no fewer than 15 and no more than 100 participants total.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Identify constructive and restrictive behaviors between youth and adults
- Examine stereotypes of youth and adults at work in current activities
- State how youth and adults prefer to be treated and interact with each other

Time: 60-120 minutes

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers

Space Required: Large room with enough open space in the front for people to act out short scenarios.

Considerations: Role-plays are a lot of fun and provide the chance for people to act out situations in a non-threatening manner. These role-plays are designed to start the conversation about the role of respect in building youth-adult partnerships. People will explore how different behaviors are interpreted and how they can best convey respect. The purpose of these scenarios is to have the groups act as they think the characters would act, thus creating stereotypes of current activities.

You will need to set up these scenarios ahead of time as best you can, getting volunteers and assigning them their roles. Many of the roles require that different people in the same scenario be given instructions separately. Most of the volunteers will need a few minutes to plan out their scenarios.

If you've got the right numbers, you may be able to have everyone participate in one scenario and give the whole group a few minutes to get prepared. You may choose as many scenarios to do as you feel appropriate and as time allows. You may create new scenarios and/or want to adjust the details of the scenarios to make them more relevant to your group. Given the open-ended nature of the scenarios you'll need to cut them off at a certain point otherwise they'll go on and on.

These scenarios don't need to reach a resolution! You simply want them to raise issues and create an illustration, and then process them with participants - otherwise, the scenarios can be acted out too long.

ACTIVITIES

1. [5 min per small group] Following these activities have participants break into small groups and assign one group one scenario. You should take each small group aside and share their directions as detailed below. The group should have just a few moments to talk about their scenario, and then just a few minutes to act it out to the large group.
2. [10 min per small group] After each scenario, refer to specific examples of behaviors you observed acted out and ask the following questions. Make a list of issues on flip chart paper of each major issue.
 - What just happened?
 - Why do you think that happened?
 - For the participants in the scenario: How was what happened different than what you expected? Why?
 - How did you feel about your role?
 - What issues/problems surfaced?
3. [5 min] Staying in the same groups, assign each group a new scenario and give them the list of issues for that scenario. Their task is to re-create that scenario, but this time, considering the issues, make it work as effectively as possible.
4. [10 min per small group] Re-play the new and improved scenarios. After each one, hold a brief discussion, asking:
 - What was different?
 - How well did it work?
 - For the participants, how did you feel this time?
 - Is there anything you'd still change?
5. [15 min] After all the scenarios have been re-played, hold a group discussion:
 - Were there any reactions people had in any of the scenarios that surprised you? Why?
 - How did people show respect to each other?
 - What kinds of things do youth and adults do or say that gets misinterpreted? Why?
 - How can such misunderstandings be prevented?

The Meeting Scenario

Facilitator Directions: Privately give “Youth” instructions to one actor, and “Adult” instructions to several actors playing adults. Don’t share each group’s instructions!

Youth: You have been asked by the principal of your school to attend a meeting about after-school programs because you’re

involved with the community service club at school and help run an after-school tutoring program at the nearby middle school. You get out of school at 2:30, which is when the meeting starts and it will take you half an hour to get there by bus. You haven't been given any information on the project so you're not sure what it's all about. You figure you can just go and listen at this first meeting and that there will be students from other high schools, too.

Adults: You are members of a coalition of community organizations and businesses that are trying to improve after-school programs for elementary and middle school youth. You are having an important meeting to decide the type of activities which will be offered. You were told by the city (which is going to fund the programs) that you must have a student actively involved in your organization. Some people are against including a young person, believing that they will prevent getting work done. Some of you, however, are looking forward to hearing what youth really want from after-school programs. The meeting started at 2:30, and it is 3:00 now. The student representative is not yet present. Your character should broadly be well-meaning but un-helpful, polite but somewhat condescending. Don't do introductions. Don't explain what's going on. Ask the youth actor vague questions about what youth want.

The Recruiting Scenario

Facilitator Directions: Give the following directions to one actor playing an adult and a group of several youth at the same time.

Youth: It's lunchtime. You're hanging outside with friends, eating.

Adult: You're recruiting people for an exciting new after-school community service program where people gain great job skills and have a lot of fun. Go talk with the group of youth.

The Presentation Scenario

Facilitator Directions: Give the following directions privately to one youth presenter and a mixed group of youth and adults as the audience.

Audience: It's Friday afternoon. You have just attended an assembly. It's a three-day weekend coming up. A guest speaker is coming soon.

Youth Presenter: You are a guest speaker in the class. You've spent hours putting this presentation together on how to get money for college and how to find a job after school. You really want to help. You have just walked into the classroom.

The Home Scenario

Facilitator Directions: Give the following directions at the same time to two adults playing parents and two-four youth playing their teenage children. It's okay to reverse the roles and have adults play the teenagers and youth play the adults.

Youth: It's the big game of the season this Friday. Everybody is going to be there. You want to go and then go to a party afterwards. You want the car but know grandma and grandpa's 50th anniversary is coming up.

Adults: Its grandma and grandpa's 50th anniversary this Friday and you've planned a big surprise party for them. You need the kids there to help and you know grandma and grandpa would be pretty upset if they weren't there.

The Restaurant Scenario

Facilitator Directions: Give the following directions separately to one-two actors playing adults with a group of several youth, and one other actor playing an adult waitperson.

Group: You are having a meeting at a local restaurant about and upcoming community service event you're planning. Because you are meeting, you haven't really had any time to look at the menu.

Waitperson: Young people come into your restaurant all the time and they're usually very loud, rude and don't leave you a tip. You don't really like or have much patience for them. You really wish they'd stop coming. Adults, of course, are a different matter entirely.

Other Possible Scenarios

- A young person being interviewed for a job
- A student having a conference about grades with a teacher
- A youth and an adult co-chairing a meeting

VARIATIONS

Try having youth and adults reverse roles—this highlights their perceptions of how the other group acts. Also, rather than using pre-determined scenarios, have the group brainstorm possible youth-adult scenarios, break up in to small groups, and then each small group creates a scenario to act out.

Examining Media Bias

Workshop 5

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is a communication workshop for 8-40 youth and adult participants that uses intergenerational dialogue, critical thinking, personal creativity, and group analysis to examine media bias.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Identify popular media images and messages about youth and adults
- Examine how messages affect relationships between youth and adults

Time: 105 minutes

Materials: A wide collection of newspapers and magazines of all kinds that will be re-purposed; scissors, blank paper, glue sticks, pens, and crayons for each small group. If possible, music playing while work is happening. Before the workshop begins, make sure supplies are distributed among the tables, with additional supplies in a central location.

Space: Workspace for each small group

Considerations: Reality and media images often don't match, especially when it comes to young people. Images of adults are distorted in mainstream media, as well. This activity gives youth and adults a chance to look at the images put forth by the popular media and assess how those images have influenced their feelings and ideas about each other and themselves.

ACTIVITIES

1. [5 min] Split people up into groups, depending on time and group size.
2. [30 min] Instruct each individual participant to pretend they are aliens who know little of your culture. You want to compile some information for the folks back on your planet about what it means to be a young person and what it means to be an adult. However, all you've got to work with are the newspapers and magazines before you.

Every participant should work individually to create two pictures, including one showing what it means to be an adult and another showing what it means to be a youth. You can make a collage, put together a collection of words, create a symbolic representation of the "typical" youth or adult, anything - just be creative! Keep a few questions in mind: What do youth do? What do adults do? What are

youth or adults like? What's important to know about youth? Adults? What are their relationships to each other like?

3. [20 min] Have individuals within each small groups share among themselves. Each person describes his or her picture and what the picture says about what it means to be a youth or an adult according to popular media. To save time, you could have half of each group focus on youth and the other half focus on adults.
4. [5 min] After each member has reported to their small group they should work together to create a group definition for "youth" and for "adult."
5. [5 min] Each small group should present their work, sharing their definition and descriptions with the large group. The facilitator should listen for themes and compile a list on flip chart paper.
6. [10 min] Discuss participants responses to the art they have made.
 - What doesn't seem very realistic to you about these images and the definitions/descriptions? Why?
 - What does seem realistic? Why?
 - What's missing?
 - How do you feel about these images?
 - How do you wish they were different?
 - How do these images get in the way of youth and adults working together?
 - What things can people do to improve the situation?
7. [15 min] For the closing activity, ask participants to stand in a circle, shoulder to shoulder. Explain to participants that after spending the whole workshop exploring media bias, they are invited to "Stand and Deliver." This requires individuals to come to the center of the circle, one at a time, and declare something they are going to do to fight media bias against young people. Give ample time for everyone to speak if they want to, but don't force everyone to talk either. This activity might require the facilitator starting it, so be sure to have an action in mind before you start.

Getting Acquainted with Stories

Workshop 6

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is an identity and communication-oriented workshop for a mixed group of 12 to 100 youth and adults. Identity and communication are explored throughout this workshop where participants explore experiences and ideas affecting Youth Voice.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Distinguish between individual and group identity
- Identify lingering questions about Youth-Adult Partnerships
- Relate personal stories to Youth-Adult Partnerships

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers, large rectangular shaped Post-it pads in two colors, and writing instruments such as pencils, pens, or online blogs for the whole group. Before the workshop, hang sheets of flip chart paper on two walls of the room. Designate one wall “youth” and the other “adults.” Also, create a poster with the following two statements on it and hang it closed so that participants cannot see it. The poster should say, “The experience and/or knowledge I have of this group, which leads to some tension, or distance I feel is...” and “What I want to know about this group is...”

Space: Lots of wall space and enough room to accommodate the entire group.

Considerations: This workshop is about identity: who we are and what it means to be individuals. Participants will have the chance to examine the questions they have about youth and adults and to get some answers. It also gets preconceptions - and the experiences that have led to those preconceptions - out in the open in an anonymous manner. In addition, people get the chance to tell personal stories.

Be aware issues may arise making people angry, upset or uncomfortable. People don't like feeling labeled or put into boxes. Also, individuals may have stories that are difficult to hear. Remind individuals that recognizing and acknowledging stereotypes is the first step to changing them. The exercise works very well with large groups although with small groups you'll have greater opportunity to debrief.

ACTIVITIES

1. [10 min] Start by giving the group an overview of the activity. Then begin by asking the group to define “identity.” What does it mean to

identify as part of a group? What does having an identity mean to you?

2. [10 min] When you have a working definition, explain the following:

“Everyone has different groups they identify with. Those groups often include race or ethnicity, gender, occupation and relationships. Age is another major one of those groups. It is also one of the most evident differences in this group.

“However, within ‘youth’ and ‘adults’ there are other groups. For example, within the group of ‘adults’ you’ll also find ‘parents,’ ‘teachers,’ and ‘workers.’ Among a group of ‘youth’ you will find ‘athletes,’ ‘students,’ and ‘son/daughter.’

“However, rather than simply labeling people, sometimes titles can be negative or judgmental—and more often than not, those are the labels applied to youth. For instance, many youth despise being called ‘kid’ or “juvenile.” Be aware.

Instruct participants to take a piece of paper and write at the top “Youth” or “Adult,” depending on which group they identify with. Under that, write that names of one to three other groups that you strongly identify and connect with as a youth or adult. Explain that the purpose is to create sub-groups of youth and adults to discuss what it means to identify with an age group.

3. [5 min] Have participants report back, and create a list of 3-8 subgroups for “Youth” and 3-8 subgroups for “Adult,” depending on the size of the overall group. Write the name of each of these groups at the top of a flip chart page on the wall. Draw a line down the middle of each page.
4. [5 min] Pass out four pieces of adhesive note paper (think Post-its) to each person and make sure everyone gets the same color. Ask them to think about their experiences with youth or adults or any of the sub-groups, and to write their answers on the Post-its. You might say,
 - “What has frustrated you about the other group? Why does this frustrate you?”
 - “What questions do you have for this group?”
5. [20 min] After several minutes, ask them to pick two groups they feel the greatest distance or tension with or have the most pressing question for. Give participants two Post-its notes and have them respond to the two questions you reveal on the poster you made before the workshop (see “Considerations”). Encourage them to mill around and add additional pages of flip chart paper as necessary. As a reminder, the questions are...
 - The experience and/or knowledge I have of this group, which leads to some tension, or distance I feel is...
 - What I want to know about this group is....

As participants finish writing, have them post their notes on the appropriate pieces of flip chart paper. People then mingle around, reading statements.

6. [20 min] Have participants identify a question they can respond to and stay by that question. Encourage everyone to choose a unique question, and when everyone is in place, have half the group go and ask questions of the people left standing with their questions. When that group is done, switch groups and answer the rest of the questions.
7. [20 min] Gather the group back together in a circle. Explain to them that you are going to ask three questions, and you want everyone to think about their answer. A few people can share their thoughts with the group after each question; however, no one is obligated to share.
 - What is one thing you will remember over the next week that you just heard, felt, or thought?
 - What is one thing you want that you just heard, felt, or thought that you want to react to?
 - Do we ever have opportunities to ask open, frank questions to young people and/or adults in the rest of our lives? What do those look like?

The facilitator should read each question slowly, individually, and give the group several moments of silence between questions. After each question, you might ask, "Does anyone have anything to share?"

NOTE: This activity can raise emotions that the group has not shared before. Make sure you create the safe place for expression or share avenues for people to share their feelings before the workshop ends.

Words as Weapons and Tools

Workshop 7

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is an inquiry-based workshop in which 8-40 participants will identify and explore the role of language between young people and adults. Participants explore the role of language in Youth Voice.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Identify underlying issues between youth and adults
- Understand how language is perceived
- Lay the foundation for respectful communication

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers

Space: Big enough for the group to work

Considerations: Language plays a big role in perception and belonging to a group. Talking about language is a good way to get at issues that underlie tension between youth and adults. It is important that this exercise not get too personal. Remind individuals to focus on *characteristics*, not individuals. That means making general comments rather than, "Oh, it is stupid when (my mother, youth volunteer, x teacher, the project director) says this." Encourage people to laugh and use this exercise as a fun way to vent and to get some issues out on the table.

ACTIVITIES

1. [10 min] Split group up into youth and adults. Depending on the size of group, you may want to create small groups among the youth and the adults. Hand out flip chart paper and markers and ask each group to appoint a recorder. Tell the groups they will have ten minutes to brainstorm as long a list as possible of things they never want to hear the other group say again.
2. [10 min] When the group is finished, have them pick the top ten words or phrases they dislike and to briefly list the reason(s) for each one.
3. [20 min] Each small group should report back to the large group, with an opportunity for the large group to respond with questions, comments, or other responses after each small group. For this segment, the facilitator should remain quiet, allowing the group to answer its own questions and pose its own questions.

4. [15 min] After each small group has presented, the facilitator should pose the following questions. Ask the group to stay focused on discussing the assumptions and reasoning behind each phrase:
 - Were there any surprises?
 - Was anything missing?
 - For adults, did you see anything on the young people's list that you remember *not* wanting to hear when you were young?

Take note of common themes presented by participants.

5. [5 min] When complete, without a break, hand out a new sheet of flip chart paper to groups, this time with the question, "What kinds of things do people want to hear from each other?"
6. [5 min] When the group is finished, have them pick the top five words or phrases they like and briefly list the reason(s) for each one.
7. [15 min] Each small group should report back again with the facilitator again remaining quiet. After each small group has presented share these questions:
 - Were there any surprises?
 - Was anything missing?
 - For adults, did you see anything on the young people's list that you remember *wanting* to hear when you were young?
8. [5 min] Close by asking participants to say what they have learned about communicating effectively with the other age group.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

- [20 min] After everyone has presented their thoughts on both questions, have them role play contrasting examples. Give volunteers words or phrases that appear to be opposites, and ask them to make up a scene where youth and adults say what the other *does not* want to hear, and say what they *do* want to hear. This can provide a good segue into the next workshop.

Short Listening Activities

Workshop 8

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: The following workshop uses a collection of short communication exercises to focus participants on barriers to listening and skills for overcoming them. The exercise is meant to be fun while raising awareness of the work involved in listening closely.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Be aware of communication styles between young people and adults
- Identify new personal capacities for listening

Time: See “Activities”

Materials: See “Activities”

Space: See “Activities”

Considerations: Each activity consists of a short description along with several suggested debrief questions. Mix and match exercises, do them all, or supplement them with other information. After doing a couple of the exercises, facilitate a general discussion about what it means to listen, how you can best do it, and how people can apply what they have learned from these activities.

ACTIVITIES

Pair Observations

Materials: None

Space: Enough for people to work in pairs.

1. [20 min] This exercise shows us how little we perceive even when we are supposedly paying focused attention on someone. Have the group divide into pairs (Person A and Person B) and sit face to face. Person A asks person B the following four questions:

- What is your name?
- Where were you born?
- What makes you happy?
- What makes you sad?

When those questions are complete, switch and have Person B ask Person A the questions.

2. After all pairs have interviewed each other, have them sit back to back. Then the facilitator should ask the following four questions to everyone, one question at a time. Pairs should share their answers to each other out loud:

- What color hair does your partner have?
- Does your partner wear glasses?
- What was your partner wearing?
- What type of shoes does your partner have?

When everyone is finished bring the group back together to discuss how many people got the right answers. You may change the interview questions to something that may relate more directly to the work of the group.

3. You can reflect on this activity by asking:
 - Were people able to answer the second four questions? Why or Why not?
 - What does this tell us about how we listen and communicate?
 - What affected expectations have on communications?
 - How might one improve communication based on what you've learned from this activity?

Listening and Not Listening

Materials: None

Space: Enough for people to work in pairs.

1. [30 min] This exercise illustrates some of the specific behaviors around listening and not listening and gives people the opportunity to experience what both experiences feel like.
2. Have the group divide into pairs. Ask the pairs to come up with a simple situation in which one person (Person A) is talking to another (Person B)—for example, a friend telling another about his/her day, a student asking a teacher about a homework assignment, etc.
3. Each person in the pair then chooses one of the roles. When you tell them to begin, person A starts talking. Person B is to do everything he or she can to demonstrate that they are not listening. Let this go until it is clearly time to stop (about 2-3 minutes).
4. Create a list of “not listening” behaviors. Then challenge participants to three it again, this time with Person B doing everything he or she can to demonstrate he or she is listening. Make a list of what people did this time that was different.
5. You can reflect on the activity by asking:
 - How did it feel when Person B wasn't listening?
 - When he/she was listening?
 - Which was easier? Why?
 - How do you know when someone is really listening to you?

Explaining a Process: Communicating Back to Back

Materials: Blank paper and pencils for half the group. Slips of paper with simple drawings on them for the other half.

Space: Enough for people to work in pairs

1. [30 min] Ask the group to divide into pairs. Ask the pairs to sit back to back and designate themselves Person A and Person B. Person A is given a slip of paper with a simple design (preferably abstract). Person A attempts to explain the design and instruct Person B in how to draw it. Person B may not talk! They have 10 minutes (variation: After 5 minutes, tell them that Person B may now talk). If time allows, have partners switch roles, shuffle a new design, and have them try again.
2. Most likely, the drawings will look nothing like they should, illustrating the importance—and the difficulty—of clear communication. This shows us clearly that what we think we are saying may not be what others hear. Reflect on this activity by asking:
 - What strategies for describing the picture seemed to work? Why?
 - In what situations might those kinds of strategies also be useful?
 - How can you be clearer and more precise?

Explain that the clearer we are in our communication, the less likely we are to run into misunderstandings (and the anger and confusion that can accompany them).

Focusing with Body Language: Impulse Circle

Materials: none

Space: Enough for the group to stand in a circle

1. [10 min] The Impulse Circle can be used to help a group focus and concentrate. The group should stand in a circle and hold hands. Facilitator squeezes the hand of the person on their right, sending an impulse around the circle. The group sees how quickly they can do this.
2. After a couple times around, add a second impulse. See if they can keep two going at once.
3. Ask participants to do the activity in silence or with their eyes closed. Ask:
 - What is difficult about this activity? Why?
 - How might you make it easier? Why would that help?

Challenging Assumptions about Language: Making PB & J

Materials: A loaf of bread, jam, peanut butter, knife, plate, towel

Space: A table with the group around it

1. [25 min] This activity demonstrates assumptions we make about language. Set up materials on the table, and ask for two volunteers. Assign one to be the sandwich maker and the other to be the sandwich director.
2. Explain to the group that the sandwich maker is an alien from another planet and has only the most rudimentary understanding of your culture, let alone your language.

The sandwich director's job is to instruct the alien in the art of making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich making using only words, with no actions.

The audience's job is to call foul if they think the sandwich director is using concepts or words that are too sophisticated (such as "open the jar," or "pick up the knife") or otherwise committing fouls, like pointing.

2. Reflect on the activity by asking:
 - How do your assumptions about what people understand affect communication?
 - How can we change that effect?
 - What happens when you make too many assumptions and aren't clear enough?
 - How can you apply what you have learned to other communication?
 - It's much easier to get work done when you have common understanding.

Feedback Techniques

Workshop 9

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is a skill-building workshop that can either have a group of youth or a mixed group of youth and adults, with no fewer than 8 participants and no more than 25.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Foster effective communication between youth and adults

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers

Space: Enough for the group to spread out and work in pairs

Considerations: Communication is one of the biggest barriers to young people and adults working together. Everyone knows how to talk, but surprisingly few people know how to communicate. It is a skill (so you don't automatically know how to do it) and takes some practice. However, the skills developed for giving and receiving feedback are definitely Western European in origin. There are other ways to communicate and other skills that go with them.

ACTIVITIES

1. [15 min] Introduce the term "feedback": Feedback is a means of letting someone know how their behavior affects you—positively or negatively. Then share the "Feedback Model and Rules Handout" following this activity. You may want to use that page as an overhead.

Keep reading for directions on how to demonstrate this feedback model briefly by using a volunteer as a partner.

2. [5 min] Explain how participants will practice feedback. Tell them to think of a situation in which they wanted to tell someone else about something they did that was hurtful, annoying or otherwise difficult. Tell participants that they will work in threes. One person will practice giving feedback, one will listen and one will observe.

Share the following roles with participants:

- *The feedback giver* starts by telling the listener what the situation is, and about the role the listener will play.
- *The observer* simply notes if the person practicing feedback is following the "rules" of feedback.
- *The listener* listens and then gives the response which he or she sees fit.

- *The feedback giver* makes another statement, again using the model. Then participants stop.
- *The observer* shares observations and the recipient shares how it felt to get feedback.

If you only have a few people or don't have much time, you can have the listener double as the observer and do the exercise in pairs.

3. [30 min] One by one, participants will practice giving feedback. Allow for about five to seven minutes for each round, reminding people to switch so they will have enough time to rotate the roles.
4. [10 min] Close by reflecting on the following questions:
 - What did it feel like to give the feedback statements?
 - How did you feel about the response of the recipient?
 - Observers: what were some of the difficulties you noticed people having?
 - What was it like to hear feedback?
 - During what situations would this technique be useful? Why?
 - During what situations wouldn't it be useful? Why?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- [15 min] If time allows, have people practice feedback again, but this time positive feedback. Tell each participant to identify a situation in which he or she wanted to tell someone about something the person did that he or she really appreciated. Let people know that feedback often feels awkward and artificial at first, but that it gets easier and more comfortable with practice.

Feedback Model and Rules *HANDOUT*

Use the following model to provide practice giving and receiving feedback:

I feel [feeling] when you [behavior] because [impact on you].

- *Instead of* “You irresponsible jerk! Where were you yesterday? We can never count on you!”
- *Try* “I felt irritated when you didn’t show up at the meeting yesterday because we had to postpone our goal setting.”

Rule 1: Focus on behaviors and actions, not personality.

- *Instead of* “You’re a totally domineering loudmouth!”
- *Try* “I felt frustrated at yesterday’s meeting when you interrupted several people to make your own points because I didn’t get to hear what they had to say.”

Rule 2: Be specific and concrete, avoiding vagueness and generalizations.

- *Instead of* “You are always late for things.”
- *Try* “I was upset when you came late to the event because I had to do your work as well as my own.”
- **TIP** If you can’t come up with a concrete example, think again about the feedback you are trying to give. Is it accurate, or just your perception?

Rule 3: Time your feedback well.

- *Don’t* give feedback so long after the actual incident that he\she has trouble even remembering.
- *Don’t* give feedback so soon after the incident that the person isn’t really ready to hear it.
- *Don’t* give feedback when the person isn’t ready to listen. For example, he/she is on the way out and doesn’t have time, is with a group of people, or is in a bad mood.
- *Do* pick a good time and place so that you both can be focused and capable of listening.

Rule 4: Do no harm.

- *Don’t* just go off on someone so that you feel better. Check your attitude and your motivations for giving feedback *before* you speak. Ask yourself why you want to give this person feedback.
- *Do* sincerely try to give people information that is going to help them and be reasonable with your expectations.

Rule 5: Deal with one item of information at a time.

- *Don’t* say, “I feel angry when you don’t take out the trash or do the dishes or pick up your things or vacuum the floor because this place is a mess!”
- *Don’t* confuse the receiver with lots of big words or go into a long drawn-out speech and get straight to the point.
- *Do* pick one thing to focus on for now.

Jargon Flags

Workshop 10

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is a communications activity for a variable number of youth and adults that deals with language in organizations. It focuses on clear communication between youth and adults.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Develop awareness of how language is used
- Define unknown terms

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: One piece of paper and a marker for each participant

Space: Enough for participants to fit into a comfortable circle.

Considerations: Language can define a group - you know you belong when you can “talk the talk”. Jargon Flags can provide a mechanism to break down the walls of exclusion that language can create. Remember this workshop should be *fun* - if people can treat it as a game, they won’t feel attacked if and when a flag is raised on them.

ACTIVITIES

1. [10 min] Begin by giving participants a piece of paper, and asking them to make a flag of any shape. They can carefully rip the paper into any shape. When everyone is finished, collect the flags.
2. [35 min] Sort the flags and mix them up, and then hand out one flag to each participant. Then ask everyone to take a minute and think of the subject that they know the most information about, whether a hobby or a school topic or work or anything they can talk for 30 minutes about. Choose one speaker from the circle to start with, and then explain that you are going to ask them to talk about their information until you stop them.

Before the speaker begins, ask every other person in the circle to raise their flag every time the speaker uses a word they don’t understand. When a flag goes up, the person raising it says the word, and the person who said the word has to give a definition. Give each person a minute or so to talk, and then stop. When everyone is done, reflect with the group on the purpose of the activity.

VARIATION

Turn it into a competition: Who can have the most flags raised? The fewest? Have fun and make sure people are communicating clearly.

Power, Trust, and Respect

Workshop 11

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is an inquiry-based activity that requires a mixed group of youth and adults for at least 8 people, and as many as 60. Participants explore differences in how they view important aspects of Youth Voice.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Build common understanding of certain words and concepts
- Critically examine the role of power, trust, and respect in Youth Voice

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers; a writing utensil and paper for each participant

Space: Enough room for people to work in small groups

Considerations: People generally assume that their understanding of a certain word is the same thing another person understands. Oftentimes people haven't really examined what they mean by using certain words. For particularly tricky words—like power, respect and trust—you can get in a fine mess if group members define their terms very differently. This exercise asks a group to look closely at some key terms and talk about what they really mean.

ACTIVITIES

1. [5 min] Explain to participants that in this workshop they will be exploring some issues that are very important to Youth Voice. Then write the following terms on a sheet of flip chart paper.

- Power
- Trust
- Respect
- Support

Ask participants to jot down a definition for each term. Explain that these definitions should be based on their individual experience with it – no dictionary definitions allowed! You might ask participants to write about what the term *really* means to them. They can also feel free to use drawings or symbols, as long as they can explain what the symbols mean.

2. [10 min] After everyone has had a chance to write about it, have participants split it into small groups. Participants should share their

definitions in their small groups and talk about why they defined it that way.

Have groups report back. While they talk, record key words on a sheet of flip chart paper, including phrases or ideas explaining each word.

3. [15 min] As a whole group, discuss the definitions specifically:

- What were some of the differences in interpretation of the words? Why?
- Did the understanding of the word change? Why? How?

Next, discuss some of the issues more closely associated with each term:

- Are there different kinds of power, trust, and/or support?
- Where do these concepts come from?
- How do you get power, trust, and/or support?
- What happens when you are unsupported? When you are not empowered? Not trusted?
- What kinds of responsibilities go along with these terms?
- What does your culture say about these terms?

4. [15 min] Close by asking how power relates to youth and adults working together, and talking about what is important to remember when they think about these terms.

VARIATIONS

- **Mural** - Put a big blank piece of paper (the kind that comes on the roll) on the wall. Have people draw images or symbols or words that represent power (or respect, trust, etc.) to them. Use the mural to prompt discussion.
- **Mind map** - Write one of the terms in the middle of a big piece of paper. Have people write related words or phrases around it, and words related to those words or phrases. Draw circles around all the words and draw lines between connected words.
- **Tableaux** - Have small groups discuss the term for a few minutes. Then have them create a scene (everyone must be involved, people can represent objects, no one can move or talk), which represents the term. The large group then talks about what they saw represented in the tableaux.
- **Skits** - Similar to Tableaux, but this time team members create short (two or three minute) skits. This time people can move and talk. Again, the large group talks about what they saw represented in the skit.

Ground Rules

Workshop 12

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is an inquiry-based workshop for at least five and as many as 60 youth and adult participants, particularly groups that will be working together for a long time.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Discuss how people prefer to work together
- Establish commonly accepted principles of dealing with each other

Time: 25 minutes

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers

Space: Enough to hold the entire group

Considerations: It's critical for groups working together to take time to discuss the rules or guidelines by which they collectively agree to abide. These rules can be as simple as "Show respect" or "Be on time." The activity is important because it gives people the opportunity to set boundaries before they begin working together.

ACTIVITIES

1. [5 min] Explain to the group the importance of setting ground rules, and mention that ground rules are best when kept simple, basic and few in number.

Ask people to think about a group of people that worked well together. What was it about that group that worked so well? Facilitate a brief discussion.

2. [15 min] Ask for potential ground rules. Write several suggestions on a flip chart.

Make sure everyone understands each rule and does not have any issues with any of them. Ask for questions, concerns, or if someone needs clarification about the terms.

When you feel sufficient discussion has taken place, ask everyone who feels they can support and uphold these principles to raise their hands.

3. [5 min] If the group is one that will be working together for some time, you may want to discuss consequences for straying from the ground rules. This is a level of detail that many find unnecessary. Often, the group itself will informally enforce rules such as "listen to each other" and "Show respect." Post the rules for all to see.

Group Strengths and Weaknesses

Workshop 13

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is an inquiry-based workshop for as few as eight and as many as 40 youth and adult participants. Activities explore essential issues that are relevant to Youth Voice.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Help people get to know each other better
- Establish respect by building awareness of the talents and capacities in the group

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers, blank paper and crayons for each participant; draw a large shield on a sheet of flip chart paper before the workshop, and write one of the phrases from Activity 1 in each box.

Space: Enough for participants to work in small groups

Considerations: Building respect means learning to see people as individuals and as resources. Far too often we tend to assume that because of their age, youth have less to contribute in terms of skills and abilities than adults. When youth and adults are going to be working together on projects it is particularly important to take time to find out individuals' gifts and capacities. Since many people are uncomfortable talking about what they're good at - it might feel like bragging- you'll need to ask the question in several ways. It's also important to encourage people to think creatively and include things that might seem insignificant to them.

ACTIVITIES

1. [5 min] Before the workshop begins split people into small groups and hand out paper and crayons to each group. Present the outline of a shield on a piece of flip chart paper. Each box should have one of these phrases in it:
 - Things you enjoy doing
 - Things you can build or make
 - Things you know about
 - A successful experience you had
 - Other strengths and things you are good at

2. [15 min] Instruct participants to draw a similar shield with 5 boxes on their pieces of paper. Then tell them that in each box they are to draw symbols that answer the questions in the corresponding box on the flip chart paper. Encourage participants to be creative, think broadly, and include little things.
3. [5 min] When they are almost finished, ask participants to turn their paper over and write three weaknesses or things they wish they were better at or things they would like to change about themselves.
4. [20 min] After participants have had enough time to finish, ask them to share their pictures in small groups. Each person should explain everything on the front of the picture and read at least one thing she or he wrote on the back. Ask the other people in the group to listen for clues about other strengths each speaker might have. After each person is done explaining his or her shield, the rest of the group should ask questions or suggest other possible strengths.
5. [5 min] When everyone in the group has reported out, ask each group to create a master list of strengths and skills.

After each group is finished, ask them to post their lists, and ask participants to look around and read what each group has posted.

6. [15 min] Close with a couple of the following questions, or your own:
 - How does it feel to talk about your strengths?
 - What was it like to listen to others' strengths?
 - Does anything surprise you?
 - What do the lists tell you about this group?
 - Is there anything missing that we are going to need?

The Silent Circle

Workshop 14

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is a critical thinking workshop for as few as eight and as many as 40 youth and adult participants. It explores a critical element of engaging Youth Voice.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Build trust among group members in a relatively low-risk environment

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: None

Space: Enough for group to stand in a circle.

Considerations: This activity may sound easy, but many people have strong reactions to the simple act of walking forward with their eyes closed. Depriving yourself of sight demands that you put trust in other members of the group. This exercise prepares group members for more high-risk trust building activities, and for taking action as a team.

ACTIVITIES

1. [5 min] Begin by having the group stand in a loose circle, about an arm's length between each person.

Explain to participants that one at a time, each person is invited to walk cross the circle with their eyes closed. Once each person has crossed the circle, the two closest people will gently stop them by placing their hands on the walker's shoulders.

Then those two people will turn the walker around and send them across the circle again. When the walker finishes crossing again they will be turned around again. This time, when the walker reaches the other side they are invited to open their eyes and rejoin the circle. One at a time, each person will cross the circle this way. There should be complete silence until everyone has crossed.

Before the group begins, the facilitator should demonstrate the process for participants.

2. [15 min] One at a time, everyone in the group should take a turn. Remember the essential rule of any cooperative game: Challenge by choice. That means that if someone does not want to try, that is okay - as long as they understand the impact that has on the rest of the group.

3. [10 min] Once everyone has completed the activity, you can close by asking the group:
- How did you feel doing this activity?
 - Was it harder than you expected?
 - What was the most challenging thing? The most surprising?
 - What did you learn by taking the walk?
 - What did you learn by observing others?

Group Appreciations

Workshop 15

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is a skill-building activity for youth and adults that can be used with any number of participants.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Understand that their group forms a “community” of its own
- Acknowledge the strengths of the group as a whole and among individuals

Time: 5-15 minutes

Materials: None

Space: Enough for group to break into pairs separately from others.

Considerations: This short and simple activity has a variety of uses and adaptations which all serve to focus group awareness on the talents and contributions of members. At the same time, sharing appreciations builds one’s confidence in oneself and in the group.

ACTIVITIES

1. Explain to the group that, “The goal of this activity is to share something you appreciate about someone in the group. The variations and ways by which you structure this positive feedback are endless. While the options are endless, there are a couple ground rules:
 - Nothing negative may be said
 - The person receiving appreciation cannot respond, but must simply accept the good things being said about him or her.
 - Everyone at some point must have a chance to be appreciated.

VARIATIONS

- Pick a different person at the end of each meeting who will hear appreciations from the rest of the group for seven minutes.
- Write each person’s name on a separate piece of paper and put it up on the wall during a retreat. People write appreciations on the papers.
- For every person in the group, go around the circle and have everyone else say one word that expresses a positive thing about that person.

It's in the Bag

Workshop 16

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is a critical-thinking workshop for youth and adult participants. As few as eight and as many as 40 participants can join.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Raise levels of trust and openness in a group
- Make group members aware of each other as individuals
- Have individuals get to know each other better

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Paper lunch bags, scissors, glue m magazines, pens, crayons, and other art objects (string, glitter, stickers, stamps, etc.) as available. Boom box and music, if available.

Space: Sufficient table or floor space to work alone without disruption.

Considerations: This fun, simple exercise helps break down barriers between youth and adults by giving them the opportunity to really express themselves.

ACTIVITIES

1. [5 min] Explain to the group that you are going to make personal bags. Each participant should make their bags independently, and if you have music to play, put it on once "work time" begins.
2. [25 min] Let participants know that they have about 20 minutes, and explain the first task for everyone to do is using the outside of the bag, draw, write, and otherwise represent how you believe others see you, things that people generally know about you, and things you tell people.

On the inside of the bag draw, write, or otherwise represent how you feel you are, including things that people generally don't know about you and things you usually don't tell people. Make sure to tell the group that no one has to share anything on the inside of the bag.

3. [25 min] When everyone has finished, ask people to pair up and share the outside of their bags and one thing from the inside of their bags. When everyone has done that, ask the pairs join with another pair and repeat. If time and numbers allow, have quartets join together and share again.
4. [5 min] Debrief in the large group. You might ask, "How do you feel about this activity? What did you learn? What was difficult/easy? Why? Any surprises?"

Lava Rocks Problem Solving

Workshop 17

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: Activity for 8-40 youth and adult participants working in teams. The activity is designed as an experiential way of pulling together lessons from previous communication and teamwork.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Practice solving a problem as a team
- Highlight issues of leadership, support, communication and power by creating a stressful situation
- Practice patience in the face of frustration

Time: 120 minutes

Materials: One 6" x 6" "lava rock" for each 2 of your group members. Rocks, logs, carpet squares, or paper can be used - whichever is most convenient. If your group has 9 people, you should have 4 items.

Space: An open, grassy field about 20 yards long is optimal; large indoor space is workable.

Considerations: A deceptively simple exercise, this activity quickly develops rich lessons for how groups work together - especially when they are frustrated. Frustration is a key component of this activity so it is absolutely critical that the group be allowed to work through mistakes, false starts, and slip-ups. Be warned that watching a group struggle in this manner can be just as frustrating for the facilitator. Be patient, it really does take at least an hour to complete. Pay close attention to the actions and interactions of group members.

ACTIVITIES

1. [15 min] Tell participants story that the group is being chased and they need to get across a field of hot lava. Give the group their "lava rocks" and explain that when they step on these magic rocks they will not sink into the lava. Their challenge is to figure out how to get the entire group from point A to point B (both marked by scotch tape on the floor or lines in the dirt), from one side of the Hot Lava Pit to the other.

Explain that only one person can be on a plate at a time, and the plates may be picked up and moved. Participants should know that the key to the game is that only part of the team will be able to cross the field at once. A time limit can also be placed on this game. If people are talking, take one of the lava rocks away. You can return it when they show more cooperation.

Ask if the group has any questions about the rules - however, do not answer any questions about how they should do it, and do not let them discuss it.

Notes for During the Activity

The most common solution to the activity is to bunch up closely on the lava rocks with two or more people standing on each one. The team will then hand the iceberg at the back up to the front, slowly creep forward and then repeat until they reach the far shore.

If participants are completely stuck, tell them that they have five minutes to get everyone on the lava rocks. This often helps them get the idea that they have to put rocks close together.

If desperate, you can give them the chance to return to the starting point, talk for a few minutes and then begin again in silence. These techniques can also help control the time it takes to complete the activity, thus ending with sufficient time to debrief. Dealing with frustration is crucial.

2. [15 min] When the group has completed the task, give them a moment to celebrate their success. Then sit down to talk about it. The debriefing of this activity is critical.

The key to debriefing this exercise is to keep good running notes on specific actions of both individuals and the group during the activity and then call their attention to those actions during the discussion. Pay attention to the roles taken by the youth and by the adults. Who makes the first move? Who is out in front? How do they work together? What kinds of tensions do you see?

Listen to group member comments and help them relate the lessons to other situations they might be in, or might have already encountered, especially for groups that will be working together in the future.

Opening Questions

- How did it feel when I gave the rules?
- How did it feel when you first got started?
- How did you feel when you ran out of rocks/logs?
- How did it feel to get off on the other side of the river?
- How did it feel to slip off the iceberg and begin again?
- How did people at the front feel? The back? The middle?
- What was hard? What was easy? Why?

Questions about Power *(continued on next page)*

- How did the group decide what to do?
- Did the team have a plan? Did everyone understand that?
- What kinds of leadership did you see?

- Were there differences in the roles young people took and the roles adults took? How so?
- In what ways did youth and adults work well together? In what ways didn't they? How could you tell? What would you change? Why?

Questions about Communication and Respect

- What was it like not to be able to talk?
- What other forms of communication did you use?
- What did you learn about communication?

Questions about Support and Trust

- How did you know you were being supported by others?
- What kinds of things did people do that were supportive?
- What was it like to have to hang on to each other?

Questions to Apply Learning

- What was useful about doing this exercise?
- How is this group like other groups you have been a part of?
- What does this tell you about what it takes for youth and adults to work together?
- What have you learned about how you work in a group?

Probing for Problems

Workshop 18

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is an inquiry-based, situation-oriented planning workshop for mixed groups of youth and adults. It is designed for a minimum of four participants, and a maximum of 40.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Anticipate potential problems and develop preventative solutions
- Examine specific barriers to partnerships

Time: 30-60 minutes, depending on the number of people and desired amount of detail.

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers.

Space: Enough for the group to work together or in teams.

Considerations: Often people are aware of the barriers that prevent young people and adults from working together. They may even be able to list them out in detail. However, knowing the problematic issues is not enough, It's important to solve them ahead of time when possible. In this activity, participants select a specific upcoming event—it's got to be a real one - and devise solutions for how to get around the major barriers.

ACTIVITIES

1. [5 min] Begin by asking the group to select a specific upcoming event that they are working on. It may be a meeting, a workshop, a conference, a focus group, a banquet - anything - as long as it involves young people and adults working together. Have someone in the group give a brief description of the event, its purpose and the key players.
2. [5 min] From a list of the top barriers that get in the way of youth and adults working together, have the group select three to six that are major concerns for the event.

NOTE: If you haven't conducted the Youth Voice 101 workshop with his group, and thus developed a list of barriers, select from the following:

- Lack of trust
- Lack of respect
- Lack of resources
- Poor communication
- Not listening
- Unclear expectations

- Unclear motives and agendas
 - Stereotyping
 - Fear and power issues
 - Tokenism
 - Bad attitudes/stereotype of activities
3. [15 min] In teams or as a large group, go through each of the barriers the group chose one by one. If you are conducting the workshop in teams, you may want to assign a different barrier to each team to address. For each barrier have the group create two or three strategies for dealing with that barrier when it comes up. Encourage participants to create strategies that are both concrete and realistic so that the group can implement any one of them.
 4. [5 min] To close this activity, ask participants if their thoughts about the barriers have changed. You might ask if they learned anything about planning activities for which youth and adults will be working together, or if they might change the way they plan events in the future.

Planning For Roadblocks

Workshop 19

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is an inquiry-based planning workshop for young people and adults that requires at least four and as many as 16 participants.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Acknowledge issues and concerns
- Anticipate and plan for problems before they occur

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers and several index cards or slip of scrap paper for each participant, along with a writing utensil

Space: Enough to accommodate whole group.

Considerations: Even after discussing power and respect, laying ground rules, building teams, defining terms, and talking about structural barriers between youth and adults, issues often remain. Concerns may be raised by people in the organization who have not been a part of the process of involving youth. Workshop participants themselves may have concerns. Therefore, it is critical to get the issues out on the table and address them. Without clear and open communication, the group runs the risk of having the issues surface later to sabotage their work.

ACTIVITIES

1. [5 min] Start this workshop by distributing two or three index cards or slips of scratch paper to each participant, and place the rest within reach.
2. [10 min] Ask participants to spend a few moments thinking quietly to themselves about their greatest worries and fears about the Youth Voice activities they are building. Tell them to imagine worst-case scenarios—or even the most annoying scenarios. Examples include over-burdened staff, adults not following through on their promises, slow board meetings, adults taking over, youth misrepresenting the agency in public, etc.

Ask participants to write each concern on an index card or scrap of paper, and tell them not to write their names on the cards. Writing anonymous concerns allows people to admit to worries that they might otherwise not express.

3. [10 min] Collect cards from participants and read them aloud, creating a master list on flip chart paper. If there are a lot of issues,

create priorities by having people come up and place check marks by the three they are most concerned about.

4. [20 min] To begin this activity, if the number of issues and/or the number of participants is small enough (no more than 10) you can work in the large group. Otherwise, break the large group into smaller groups of four to eight participants.

Each small group should spend several minutes brainstorming...

- At least three ways to prevent this concern from occurring
 - At least three ways to deal with it if it happens
5. [10 min] When everyone is done, ask each small group to share their discussion with the large group.
 6. [10 min] To close, ask if there is a concern that wasn't addressed that someone feels is critical. If time allows, address it then. Otherwise, make sure it will be discussed at some point in the near future.

Creating Common Action

Workshop 20

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is an action-oriented planning workshop for youth and adults with a minimum of eight and a maximum of 40 participants.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Simulate the challenges of planning a project
- Have a group examine how they function under pressure

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: A long, untangled rope and an outdoor plot of land with some obstacles. Before the workshop the facilitator should plot the course with this rope. Read the activity for directions.

Space: Outdoors, with some variation in terrain

Considerations: This activity has the potential to cause great strife within a group as it involves functioning - or, more accurately, dysfunctioning - under both pressure and physical strain. You will want to debrief the activity carefully if conflict is evident, and be prepared for possible anger directed at you as a facilitator. With all that said, this activity is an excellent metaphor for the difficulties encountered in projects and how projects comes together and succeed.

ACTIVITIES

1. [5 min] Explain to the group that this activity involves screeching together in tight quarters. Anyone who feels uncomfortable participating (due to claustrophobia, twisted ankle, whatever) can coach from the sidelines.

Ask the group to stand in a circle. Tell participants to take a big step forward, then another, then another. Keep doing this until there is no circle. Instead, you should have one big mass of loosely packed people.

2. [5 min] Explain to the group that you are going to take the rope and wrap it around them. The rope should be tight enough to the group to stay up; however, if needed ask the outside group members to hold onto it. Make sure ahead of time that the rope is cleared of tangles and will wrap without you having to clear it.

Then briskly pace out, and explain, a short but mildly challenging course that should involve at least having to navigate a couple steps or a one-to-two foot wall, going around a tree or bush and maybe under a pole, all depending on the terrain you have to work with.

Then explain that to participants that their task is two-part: To travel through the course while finding out something new about a person they are standing near. Ask if there are any questions, and give them the “Ready, set, go!”

3. [10 min] While the group is working, pay attention to what they do and how they do it. What kinds of roles do people take on? What sort of conflict arises? What attitudes and emotions are surfacing?
4. [15 min] When the group is finished, encourage them to celebrate their success (or anger, or frustration), and then ask the following questions:
 - How did it go? What happened? What was it like? For the people on the outside of the circle? On the inside?
 - How did it *feel*? For the people in the front? Middle? Back?
 - What worked? What didn’t work?
 - Did the group have a plan? Why or why not? Was everyone included in the plan?
 - How many people found out something new about someone near them?

NOTE: Call any specific behaviors to attention and ask what was going on.

5. [10 min] At this point you should have received enough input from the group to make a couple points. Generally, the people in the front of the group just take off and then get frustrated because the people behind them are not moving fast enough. The people in the middle will notice the people in the front are going and decide that they had better start moving, too - even though they aren’t really sure what’s going on. Meanwhile, the people in the back often have the rope digging into them and are calling for people to slow down - and their calls which usually go unheeded!

Draw connections with participants by asking if anyone has had the experience of being in a group where they were in the “back or in the “middle.” What is it like? If few people were able to find out something new about someone near them, ask why. Often a group will lose track of part of what it set out to do when things start getting crazy. What would you do differently if you were to do this again?

Usually people will say, “plan!” Make the point that in a group that is often the first thing to be avoided - or forgotten. Ask everyone to think about how they will make sure that people in the “front” hear what people in the “back” are saying. Remind them that in Youth Voice programs participation of the whole group is needed. Keeping this activity in mind, how can everyone ensure their whole group is involved as they work together?

If participants indicate they learned something new about the people close to them, ask people to share their insights.

Letting Go & Taking Charge

Workshop 21

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is an inquiry-based planning workshop that requires a minimum of eight and a maximum of 40 participants.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Further explore the roles of power, respect and trust in Youth Voice
- Prepare adults to let go of some power and young people to take some responsibility

Time: 120 minutes

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers

Space: Space large enough for the whole group plus at least one break out room; more will be needed if the group is so large that it requires several small groups.

Considerations: This discussion offers participants the opportunity to bring together the lessons of the preceding activities and conversations, and begin applying them. It allows time for youth to talk as a group and adults to talk as a group. Be aware that some people may be a little uncomfortable with this, believing that if they are to work in partnership they need to do all their work together. But young people and adults both need time to talk among themselves. Each age group has specific issues that are likely only to come out with the support of their peers. Participants will close by reporting to each other what they discussed and creating agreements for how to work together.

The discussion questions included here are suggestions. You may want to change them depending on the dynamics of the group and issues that have come up over the preceding exercises. The important thing is for adults to talk honestly amongst about how they feel at the prospect of youth taking power, and for youth to talk honestly amongst themselves about how they feel at the prospect of taking some real responsibility.

ACTIVITIES

1. [10 min] Explain to the group that it will be split into teams of young people and adults for the next hour, but will reconvene to report on their discussions. Then split group into youth and adults and have them use separate rooms so that each will have the opportunity for completely open discussion.
2. [45 min] Select questions from each of the following two lists for discussion by the appropriate groups, and give them to the groups. Once groups have their questions they should begin conversations:

Youth

- How do you feel about working with adults?
- What does it mean to you to take on some significant responsibilities for this project/program?
- How will it affect your time for school, your relationships with your friends, your involvement in other things? What scares you? Excites you?
- Overall, what are your top three worries about taking this kind of responsibility?
- Usually, youth expect that adults will know what to do, and they expect that adults will have an answer. How do you feel knowing that these adults aren't going to have answers all the time and they're not always going to know what needs to be done next?
- What are your top three worries about working with adults?

Adults

- How do you feel about working with young people?
 - What does it mean to you to have youth taking on some of the power and responsibility to this project/program?
 - How does it feel to let go of some of the control?
 - Adults in our culture are expected to have all the answers for youth. How does it feel to be in a situation where you can't have the answers?
 - Part of having respect for someone means letting them try out their ideas, even when you are sure it's a mistake. How do you feel knowing that at some point you will witness a young person fail?
 - What are the top three worries you have about working with youth as partners?
3. [15 min] Each group should close by discussing the following questions. They should use flip chart paper to create lists they can use to report back to the large group.
 - What will you need to do to make Youth Voice work?
 - How can young people help adults, and adults help young people?
 4. [10 min] Have the groups come back together. Spokespeople from each group give a report on what they talked about, ending with their lists about what will make Youth Voice work. Give each group a chance to ask questions of the other and respond to their report as needed.
 5. [5 min] Close by creating a very short list of three to five ideas of things the group can do together to make Youth Voice work, including once a month hour-long teambuilding activities or critical information-sharing meetings. You may also want to have each participant take a moment to write one thing for themselves personally that he or she will try to do in the future.

Ideal Partners

Workshop 22

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This is an inquiry-based workshop identifying essential roles for young people and adults, requiring a minimum of four and a maximum of 40 participants

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Identify their goals for youth/adult partnerships
- Understand where youth/adult partnerships can benefit our society

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers

Space: Floor space or tables with enough space for teams to spread out a large sheet of flip paper (2 sheets of flip chart paper taped together lengthwise)

Considerations: We often talk about what an individual needs in order to work with youth or adults. However, it is useful to get these ideas out in the open and down on paper. This helps people see what is really expected and evaluate what is realistic. This activity engages people by showing their creative sides. It gives them the chance to symbolically represent the ideal characteristics and abilities of an ally.

ACTIVITIES

1. [5 min] Break people up in two teams of 4-8, depending on the size of the group. Keep teams all youth or all adult.
2. [15 min] Tell each team that you will give them a large piece of paper on which they will draw the outline of a person. Tell them that after the outline is complete, they will illustrate it with the kind of characteristics or abilities that an ideal youth or adult partner would have. For example, draw big ears on the person to indicate ability to listen.

If you really want to get into it, give them a piece big enough to actually outline someone on it. Start with youth teams drawing ideal adult partners and adult teams drawing ideal youth partners. If you have time, have them do both.

3. [10 min] Have teams present their drawings. Create a master list of characteristics as each team reports back.
4. [10 min] Reflect on the workshop by asking:
 - Which characteristics do you think are most important? Why?

- Are these realistic? Why or Why not?
- (If in a mixed group) How do you feel about the ideal partner the other teams came up with?
- Do you have any concerns?
- Would you add anything?

If the group is ongoing, keep the drawings hanging around to remind participants what they're striving for.

Creating Roles for Youth and Adults

Workshop 23

FACILITATOR NOTES

Introduction: This inquiry-based workshop for youth and adults requires a minimum of four and a maximum of 40 participants. This activity was adapted from *Youth Empowerment: A Training Guide*, which was published in 1990 by Camp Fire.

Goal: When this session is complete, participants should be able to...

- Provide the opportunity to carefully think through how to involve youth in programs
- Deepen understanding of the work and commitment required for effective Youth-Adult Partnerships

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers; copies of the worksheets from the end of this workshop.

Space: Enough to accommodate the group

Considerations: While not necessary, it is helpful if participants have first completed *Exploring Group Strengths and Weaknesses* and *Youth and Adults as Ideal Partners*, both located in the *Youth Voice Workshops* section. Greater knowledge of individual strengths and interests, as well as what is needed to be an effective partner, helps to ground this activity in reality.

ACTIVITIES

1. [10 min] Start by splitting the group into teams with between five and eight participants, depending on size of group. Teams need to be mixed with young people and adults. Half the teams will work on roles for adults; the other half on roles for youth.
2. [5 min] Hand out the appropriate worksheets to each team and ask participants to work in their groups to complete them.
3. [15 min] When all the teams are finished, teams should report back on the roles they developed. Allow for questions and comments.
4. [15 min] Close with a discussion, including:
 - What was it like to create these roles?
 - How realistic do you think the descriptions are? Why or why not?
 - How can you apply these ideal job descriptions to your work?

Defining the Ideal Role for a Young Person *HANDOUT*



Describe the ideal role for young people to promote Youth Voice here:

Answer the following questions about the role:

1. Is this a meaningful role? What is its usefulness to the program, class, organization, or community?
2. Will this position lead to greater responsibility for young people in the program, class, organization, or community?
3. What does adequate support from adults look like? How do adults know how to support Youth Voice?
4. What skills, training, experience, and knowledge will a young person gain from this role?

Answer the following questions about possible candidates for this role:

5. What young people will really want to fill this role? Is this role something that will interest some youth? Why or why not?
6. What knowledge, skills and attitudes are necessary to succeed in this role?
7. How can there be reasonable expectations for young people to succeed in this role, considering:
 - Schedules
 - Quantity of work accomplished
 - Quality of work accomplished
 - Depth of knowledge about a subject
 - Types of training
 - Responsibility for others
 - Degree and kind of supervision
 - Formal reporting requirements
 - Other parts of the role

Defining the Ideal Role for an Adult *HANDOUT*



Describe the ideal role for an adult to promote Youth Voice here:

Answer the following questions about the role:

1. What will this adult specifically need to know to successfully engage Youth Voice?
2. How is this different from existing roles in your program, class, organization, or community?
3. What kind of resources (time, training, other) will the adult need in order to be successful?

Answer the following questions about possible candidates for the job:

4. What knowledge, skills attitudes, and other qualifications are necessary to succeed at this role?
5. How could you determine if someone was suited for this role?
6. What other questions would you ask?



Assessing Youth Voice

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 Diagnostic Tool 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 Diagnostic Tool 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 Diagnostic Tool 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*.



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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?



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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?



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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?



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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?



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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?



Washington Youth Voice Directory

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** - A group of Filipino and Filipino American youth 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** - Offered by Bellevue YouthLink. The council meets to discuss current and future Youth Link projects, hear updates from the action teams, and share local events in school and the community. Find out more at <http://www.youthlink.com/council.asp>
3. **Chase Youth Commission** - 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
4. **Clark County Youth Commission** - A program of the Clark County Department of Community Services. They provide a youth point of view to a variety of government agencies and community organizations. Find out more at www.youthcommission.org
5. **Colville Youth Commission** - Offered by the City of Colville. They assist with 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
6. **Des Moines Youth Council** - Provided the City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department. Some accomplishments during the 2005-2006 school year include successful teen dances, assisting at the Halloween Carnival and the Spring Egg Hunt. Find out more at www.desmoineswa.gov/dept/parks_rec/teen/teen.html

7. **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>
8. **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
9. **"Game of Life: Attitudes & Choices" Youth Wellness Conference** - A Youth Voice project of the Kent Police Youth board. Young people create and implement the youth 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
10. **Gateways for Incarcerated Youth** - A program at The Evergreen State College 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/
11. **Generation YES** - A private company 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
12. **Health 'N Action** - 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
13. **Homeless Youth for Peace and Empowerment** - 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.psk.org
14. **Hood Canal Institute** - 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>
15. **Island Coffee House** - 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
16. **Issaquah Youth Advisory Board** - Seeks and 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>

17. **Kirkland Youth Council** - Helps to 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
18. **Leadership Poetry Workshops** - 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
19. **Lummi CEDAR Project** - 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.
20. **Mockingbird Times** - 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. Find more at www.mockingbirdsociety.org
21. **Multicultural Action Committee** - A program at Foster High School in Tukwila that engages students as advocates, trainers, and more. Find more at www.tukwila.wednet.edu
22. **National Youth Congress** - A nationwide effort to promote Youth Voice in communities and government programs is a program of Bemby 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
23. **Native Youth Action, Cross-Cultural Youth Leadership Development and Action Program, and Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (GLBTQ) Youth Program** - Programs of the American Friends Service Committee in Seattle. Find more at www.afsc.org/pacificnw/seattle.htm
24. **Olympia Youth Media Festival** - Featuring music, art, and videos created by young people with the goal of promoting youth culture. Find out more at www.olyfilm.org/whatyougot
25. **Reel Grrls** - 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

26. **Seattle Student Voices Project** - 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>
27. **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/>
28. **Seattle Police Department Youth Advisory Council** - Find more at www.cityofseattle.net/police/youth/Youth_Council/
29. **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
30. **Seattle Youth Involvement Day, Youth Candidates Forums, Mayor's Youth Council** - Programs at 2V/ACT, a nonprofit organization in Seattle supporting Youth Voice. Formerly known as Seattle Youth Involvement Network. Find more at www.2vact.org
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. **SoundOut and The Freechild Project** - Programs of CommonAction, a national nonprofit organization based in Olympia that provides resources, training, and technical assistance on Youth Voice in schools and communities. Find out more at www.commonaction.org
33. **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>
34. **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
35. **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/

36. **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
37. **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
38. **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
39. **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
40. **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
41. **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/
42. **Washington State Substance Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee** - A 30-person group that includes two young people. Find more at <http://www.ltgov.wa.gov/Publications/tap/TAP2001/youthactemp/e4.html>
43. **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
44. **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/YAYInfo.htm

45. **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
46. **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
47. **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.youthworks nw.org
48. **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/
49. **Youth Action Convergence** - A program at the Downtown YMCA in Olympia. Find out more from Rochelle Gause at (360) 357-6609.
50. **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
51. **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.projects-service-leadership.org



Youth Voice Resources

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.tmag.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>

CommonAction

Provides leadership, development, training, and consultation for community organizations, schools, government agencies, and foundations interested in promoting meaningful Youth Voice. Also coordinates The Freechild Project and SoundOut. PO Box 6185, Olympia, WA 98507. (360) 753-2686. www.commonaction.org

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 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 20005. (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 through publications, customized workshops, and technical assistance. 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) www.atthetable.org

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.

Children as Partners (CAP) www.iicrd.org/cap

CAP brings young people and adults from around the world together to share what they think, what they know and other helpful information.

Child Friendly Cities (CFC) www.childfriendlycities.org

This UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre initiative 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.

The Freechild Project www.freechild.org

Seeking 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.

One-Stop Youth Participation Shop www.mcs.bc.ca/yps

An easy-to-use resource website promoting youth participation as part of a government initiative to promote youth-centered services.

SoundOut www.soundout.org

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

TakingITGlobal www.takingitglobal.org

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.

Teens as Community Builders www.pps.org/tcb

Highlights accomplishments of young people across the United States by telling stories of youth who are doing positive things to improve their communities.

Voices of Youth www.unicef.org/voy

A UNICEF project that encourages young people around the world to become positively involved in their communities.

What Kids Can Do www.whatkidscando.org

WKCD features stories from students across the United States who are leading community and school change projects.

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

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.

The Evolving Capacities of the Child

By Garrison 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

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 Schaetzel 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/PDFs/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.californiacenter.org/voices

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

Citations

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. This manual is currently out-of-print; however, it was created for the Washington Youth Voice Project and a small number of copies may be available from Project Service Leadership at www.projects-serviceleadership.org

The Co/Motion Guide to Youth-Led Social Change.

By L. Dingerson and S. Hay, S. (Out-of-print) Alliance for Justice.

Sounding Out Optimism: Youth writings of hope and dedication.

By Institute for Community Leadership.

Rohnke, K. (1988). *Silver Bullets: A Guide to Initiative Problems, Adventure Games and Trust Activities*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

What is CommonAction?

CommonAction is a national nonprofit youth engagement organization located in Olympia, Washington. Our mission is to create uncommon solutions to common problems by engaging young people and adults together for democracy. CommonAction develops strategic training, consulting, implementation, and evaluation services for those who are most capable of facilitating society-wide youth engagement, including schools, community organizations, and government agencies.

Programs

CommonAction has developed ambitious and exciting programs to raise awareness, foster commitment, and provide greater support and opportunity for young people to become engaged in their communities.

SoundOut: Promoting Student Voice in curriculum, leadership, and school improvement throughout K-12 schools and districts across the U.S. SoundOut provides professional development for educators, curricula for the classroom, training for students, frameworks for planners, and online resources for everyone. 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. Freechild offers interactive, action-oriented Youth Voice training globally, and resources to all who ask. Learn more at www.freechild.org

Contact

For more information about our programs, including training and consulting that supports the *Washington Youth Voice Handbook*, contact the CommonAction office today.

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Author **Adam Fletcher** is an internationally recognized expert in **youth engagement** with more than fifteen years of experience **working with young people** and adults in **schools and community-based organizations** across the nation. He has written more than a dozen publications focused on **social change, youth engagement, and meaningful student involvement**. Today he is the Executive Director of CommonAction in Olympia, Washington.

On the Washington Youth Voice Handbook, Adam Fletcher, and Freechild:

“Reading the Washington Youth Voice Handbook is like watching a superb athlete whose movement seems effortless.”

- **Wendy Lesko**

“Adam Fletcher’s work is especially relevant in getting young people to participate in the realms of politics and critical education.”

- **Henry Giroux**

“Adam Fletcher is a fast driver into the new millennium.”

- **Harris Wofford**

“By far the largest repository of projects, ideas, and organizational links, Freechild provides more than adequate information to help students brainstorm ideas in order to start their own initiatives.”

- **School Library Journal**

Freechild is... is critical to understanding as well as galvanizing youth programming and participation.”

-**American Planning Association**



CommonAction, a nonprofit youth engagement organization that provides programs, training and consultation to support Youth Voice throughout Washington State, across the nation, and around the world.

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