

Our Only Hope: Reclaiming the Future of Youth

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Handbook*

Definition of Youth Voice

Youth voice refers to the distinct ideas, opinions, attitudes, knowledge, and actions of young people throughout our society.

A Crisis of Disconnection

- Youth are disconnected in our communities
- Youth are disconnected from our public good
- Youth are disconnected from their own futures

Youth Voice is Missing in Our Communities

- At home
- In school
- During youth programs
- Throughout our neighborhoods
- Across our state
- In our shared history

Youth Voice is Missing

- No decision-making for the public good
- No positive affect on the whole community
- Repeat participation in poor community activities

Barriers to Youth Voice

- Perspectives of Adults
- Structures of Disconnection
- Young people themselves

A Conspiracy of Hope

- Washington has an untold history of engaging youth voice
- New youth/adult partnerships are being created
- The future is still ahead

An Untold History of Youth Voice in Washington State

- Early common history of the state
- 1960s and 70s youth empowerment activities
- 1980s and 90s community building orgs
- 1990s and 00s youth voice programs

New Youth Voice Opportunities

- Birth to 25+ opportunities are on the rise
- Community-wide approaches
- Powerful outcomes are being proven

Five Point Plan for the Future

Point 1

- **Promote community-wide accountability** for the problems that affect the whole community

Point 2

- **Engage every young person** in every community as a powerful and purposeful partner

Point 3

- Encourage and **educate every adult in every community** about the potential of youth voice

Point 4

- **Create safe and supportive opportunities** for youth voice throughout every community in Washington State

Point 5

- **Infuse youth voice** throughout the structures that affect every young person everyday

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"Our youth are not failing the system; the system is failing our youth. Ironically, the very youth who are being treated the worst are the young people who are going to lead us out of this nightmare."

- Rachel Jackson

The Freechild Project

- Resources for social change led by and with young people
- www.freechild.org

SoundOut

- Promoting student voice in schools
- www.soundout.org

Washington Youth Voice Handbook

- www.commonaction.org/publications.htm