What’s Included

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Freechild Will Help You Engage Youth Effectively.

The Freechild Institute for Youth Engagement will...

- Help your organization engage young people more effectively by working with the adults who serve youth and young people themselves.
- Increase the recruitment, retention and relevance of your youth programs, classes and more through advocacy, learning, coaching, evaluations and more.
- Establish, transform and sustain positive, powerful social change with youth in your issue or area.

Freechild uses more than two decades of experience and research including...

- Focusing on engaging people and youth voice in uniquely empowering, inspiring ways throughout community organizations, families, schools and beyond.
- Consulting more than 500 organizations including nonprofits, government agencies, K-12 schools and other organizations around the world.
- Facilitating human-centered design to transform lives and change the world, including strategic planning, organizational development, program re-creation, and more.

Following are details about the Freechild Institute for Youth Engagement. Contact information follows.
Our Story

In 2001, a group of youth advocates and young people across the North America banded together to establish an international project focused on youth power. Inspired by the A.S. Neill quote, “Free children are not easily influenced; the absence of fear accounts for this phenomenon. Indeed, the absence of fear is the finest thing that can happen to a child,” they named our project Freechild.

For more than 20 years, the Freechild Institute for Youth Engagement has supported young people changing the world. Working alongside individuals and organizations at the forefront of the worldwide youth engagement movement, the Freechild Institute has supported nonprofit youth-serving organizations, philanthropic foundations, government agencies, K-12 schools and others across the United States, Canada, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Australia, and beyond.

Regularly identified as an expert organization, Freechild partners by providing consulting, coaching, training, workshops, and other approaches bridging the gap between theory and practice. Organizations contract with Freechild to create background support, facilitate professional development, lead special projects and otherwise build the capacity of organizations and communities to engage young people in social change.

Providing dozens of free publications, Freechild Institute has published reports, manuals, guides, handbooks, curriculum and other materials on youth voice, youth engagement, youth workforce development, education transformation, youth rights, anti-adultism, holistic youth development, cooperative games, transforming family engagement, and more.

The Freechild Institute is home to SoundOut.org. Established in 2002, SoundOut.org works with education partners across the United States to promote Meaningful Student Involvement throughout education.

Almost immediately, SoundOut.org created deep relationships internationally with local partners, including the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Projecto Juventude in Brazil, and the Alberta Ministry of Education. Focusing on increasing the impact, purpose and outcomes of students throughout the education system, SoundOut.org released its now classic publication series on Meaningful Student Involvement, including the Guide to Students as Partners in School Change, Research, Stories and Resources to International acclaim, sparking a global movement for student voice. Uniting researchers and practitioners from dozens of countries, today this movement includes 1,000s of materials while SoundOut.org continues providing technical assistance, tools and professional development, as well as special projects and evaluation services, to schools around the world.

Now in our third decade, Freechild continues to innovate, educate and advocate for engaging young people in social change around the world. Read on for examples, past clients and collaborators, and recommendations for what we do.
Our Operations

The Activities

Anchored by our vision that all young people are engaged, everywhere, all of the time with purpose, power, passion and possibilities, the Freechild Institute focuses on highly ethical quality capacity building for individuals and organizations around the world. We connect youth, youth workers, leaders and others with the training, tools and technical assistance they need to foster just and equitable youth engagement throughout society through personal and organizational capacity building.

After more than 20 years, Freechild continues to provide boutique services for our partners that are laser-focused on our mission. They are:

- Building the movement for youth engagement among youth and within communities without access to services, funding, strategies or other mechanisms provided elsewhere
- Developing the skills, building the knowledge and nurturing the abilities of individuals and organizations to engage nontraditionally engaged children and youth with highly ethical training, tools and technical assistance, along with more
- Advocating for the youth ecosystem to actively keep young people themselves at the center of all activities, all programs, all decision-making and more that affects children and youth

The People

Adam F.C. Fletcher is the executive director of the Freechild Institute for Youth Engagement. Since 2001, he has led Freechild through innovations, re-imaginations and transformations that have kept the organization at the forefront of modern youth development practice, becoming recognized as a leading international expert on youth engagement. He is a sought-after consultant and trainer on many related issues, and stays connected with the field through special projects, research, coaching and other practices. He is also a published author, continuing education facilitator at Antioch University, and compelling motivational speaker.

Working with contracted consultants across the country and beyond, the Freechild Institute for Youth Engagement is supported by a volunteer Advisory Board comprised of youth allies. Our advisory board includes:

- Hannah Sasse, student, Western Washington University
- Wendy Lesko, YouthInfusion.org
- Jill Feldman, WESTAT
- J. Cynthia McDermott, Antioch University Los Angeles
- Todd Johnson, Capital Region ESD 113
- Henry Giroux, McMaster University
Past Projects

Freechild Institute has consulted on many projects focused on youth engagement, community empowerment and more. Our approaches include systems thinking, liberating structures, collective impact, data analysis, strategic design, movement building, professional development and other strategies. Some of our most recent projects have included...

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America—The Freechild Institute consulted on a Youth Voice pilot program with this national organization. The main focus of the activities was to provide expert consultation for six pilot sites nationwide focused on engaging approximately 3,000 young people in decision-making in local agencies. Activities focused on project design, professional development, technical assistance and technical writing.

CHOICE Regional Health Network—Freechild led the design and facilitation of a dozen focus groups for 100 participants in six counties in Southwest Washington state to gather actionable qualitative focused on perceptions of and youth-led actions towards eliminating underage marijuana consumption in rural communities. The data was reported to program planners who used it for further youth empowerment campaigns.

Ocosta School District 21st Century Community Learning Center—Focused on student re-engagement and staff retention, this project included research and planning for a multi-part professional development series focused on increasing staff efficacy on working with disengaged students. Freechild facilitated workshops and provided ongoing technical assistance in 2022.

University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education Coalition for Equity—The Freechild Institute facilitated more than 20 professional learning activities to increase actionable awareness and knowledge for 185 school leaders in 12 regional education agencies in Delaware, Pennsylvania and New York. Focused on building justice, equity and belonging for students of color through student voice, this learning was implemented to benefit thousands of learners.

King County Superior Court—In 2018-2019, the Freechild Institute designed and piloted an innovative, practical program focused on youth engagement at home for youth diversion programs with 100 participating youth and parents assigned by the courts. Evaluations showed high degrees of participant learning and satisfaction with substantial interest in stopping repeat offenses because of the program.

More examples and references are available upon request.
Past Clients (Abbreviated)

**Local & State Nonprofits**

- Institute for Urban Development, Omaha, NE; Allegheny Partners for Out of School Time (APOST) Allegheny County United Way, Pittsburgh, PA; Alternatives, Inc., Hampton, Virginia; Anti-Defamation League of the Plains States/CRC, Omaha, NE; Arizona Dairy Council Fuel Up To Play 60, Tucson, Arizona; Auburn YMCA Youth Leadership Summit, Auburn, WA; Baltimore Mental Health Systems, Baltimore, MD; Capital Recovery Center/Olympia Downtown Ambassadors, Olympia, WA; Catalyst Miami/Human Services Coalition of Miami-Dade County, Miami, FL; CHOICE Regional Health Network, Olympia, WA; Boys and Girls Club of Thurston County, Tumwater, WA; CityYear Seattle, WA; Community Schools Collaborative, Burien, WA; Community Youth Services, Olympia, WA; Enterprise for Equity, Olympia, WA; Fremont Public Association AmeriCorps Program/Fertile Grounds, Seattle, WA; Georgia Network to End Sexual Abuse, Atlanta, GA; Guide, Inc., Lawrenceville, GA; Imagine Miami, Miami, FL; King County Partners in Prevention Program, Seattle, WA; King County Youth Development Executives, Seattle, WA; King County Youth Development Network, Seattle, WA; Let’s Move, Cheney!, Cheney, WA; MANY – Mid Atlantic Network for Youth, Pittsburgh, PA; Michigan Association of School Boards, Lansing, MI; North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center, Inc., Raleigh, NC; Olympia Free School, Olympia, WA; Para los Niños, Burien, WA; PeaceJam Northwest, Vancouver, WA; Pierce County Prevention Program, Tacoma, WA; Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest, Olympia, WA; Prairie Ridge Community Association, Tacoma, WA; Project Service Leadership, Vancouver, WA; Right of Passage Journeys and Chemical Dependency Professionals of Washington State, Randle, WA; Schools Out Washington, Seattle, WA; Seattle Metrocenter YMCA Foster Youth Program, Seattle, WA; Seattle Penny Harvest, Seattle, WA; SHIP of Frederick County, Frederick, MD; SOAR, Seattle, WA; Suncoast EarthForce, Tampa, FL; TeamChild, Seattle, WA; Together, Inc., Lacey, WA; Volunteer Center of Thurston, Mason and Lewis Counties, Olympia, WA; Washington Recreation and Parks Association, Olympia, WA; Washington State Action For Healthy Kids Coordination, Skokie, IL; Yakima Valley Farmworkers Clinic, Sunnyside, WA; Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together (YATST), Hardwick, VT; Youth and Family Leadership Institute, State College, PA; YWCA of Olympia, Olympia, WA; YWCA of Seattle, Seattle, WA; Vermont Principal’s Association, Montpelier, VT; Village Family Support Services Bureau, Caroline, Alberta, Canada;

**National Nonprofits**

- Academy for Educational Development, New York City, NY; Action For Healthy Kids, Skokie, IL; America’s Promise, Chevy Chase, MD; American Cancer Society Northwest Region speakOUT program, Seattle, WA; American Institutes for Research Technical Assistance Program, WA, DC; Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Tampa, FL; Casey Family Programs, Seattle, WA; Children’s Defense Fund, WA, DC; Cloud Institute for Sustainability Education, New York City, NY; College Success Foundation, Issaquah, WA; Communities for Learning, Floral Park, NY; Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, Houston, TX; EarthForce, Denver, CO; Generation YES, Olympia, WA; Grantmaker’s Forum on Community and National Service, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; Grantmaker’s Forum on Education, WA, DC; Institute for Democratic Education in America, Portland, OR; National Network for Youth, WA, DC; National PTA, Chicago, IL; National School Board Association, Chicago, IL; National Youth Rights Association, WA, DC; One World Now!, Seattle, WA; Small Schools Project, Seattle, WA; YouthBuild USA, Sommerville, MA; Society for Organizational Learning, New York City, NY; Students Taking Charge, Skokie, IL; Youth Service America, WA, DC

**Federal Government Agencies**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Division of Adolescent and School Health, Atlanta, GA; Corporation for Community and National Service, Washington, DC; U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC; U.S. Department of Agriculture Children, Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR), Washington, DC
01 Freechild’s Past Clients & Collaborators (continued)

**Local & State Government Agencies**
City of Auburn WA; City of Bellevue Parks and Recreation Department YouthLink, WA; City of Cheney Parks and Recreation Department, WA; City of Ephrata, WA; City of Everett Youth Summit, WA; City of Lincoln Jobs Center, NE; City of Manchester Youth Commission, CT; City of Olympia, WA; Idaho Governor’s Commission on Service and Volunteerism, Boise, ID; King County Superior Courts, Seattle, WA; Nebraska Commission on Community and National Service, Lincoln, NE; New Mexico Public Education Department Advanced Placement, Santa Fe, NM; New York State Student Support Services Center, LeRoy, NY; Vermont State Department of Education HIV/AIDS Program, Montpelier, VT; Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families, Olympia, WA; Washington State Department of Health, Olympia, WA; Washington State Department of Social and Human Services, Olympia, WA; Washington State Employment Security Department Washington Service Corps, Lacey, WA; Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board GearUP Program, Olympia, WA; Washington State Office of Homeless Youth, Olympia, WA; Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Olympia, WA; Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Learn and Serve America Program, Olympia, WA; Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction School Improvement Program, Olympia, WA; Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Title V and Innovative Programs, Olympia, WA; Washington State School Boards Association, Olympia, WA; State of Arizona Department of Education Coordinated School Health, Tucson, Arizona

**International Organizations**
Alberta Ministry of Education Student Engagement Office, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada; Alberta School Boards Association, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada; Center for Studies and Research in Education, Culture and Community Action (CENPEC), São Paulo, Brazil; Community Organisers, London, United Kingdom; Connect for Youth Participation, Sydney, Australia; United Nations Development Program/Programa Juventude, São Paulo, Brazil

**Higher Education**
Antioch University, Los Angeles, CA; Eastern Washington University Child Studies Department, Cheney, WA; Harvard University Graduate School on Education, Cambridge, MA; University of Indianapolis Center for Excellence in Leadership Learning, Indianapolis, Indiana; University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education Coalition for Equity, Philadelphia, PA; University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, Pittsburgh, PA; University of Washington College of Education, Seattle, WA; University of Washington GEAR UP Program, Seattle, WA; Washington State University Center for Bridging the Digital Divide, Pullman, WA

**Philanthropic Foundations**
Carnegie Corporation, New York City, NY; HumanLinks Foundation, Bothell, WA; Philanthropy Northwest, Seattle, WA; Surdna Foundation, New York City, NY

**Private Companies**
Athena Group, Olympia, WA; Campaign Consultation, Baltimore, MD; Capstone Press, Mankato, MN; Dare Mighty Things, San Diego, CA; Learner-Centred Initiatives, Inc., Floral Park, NY; Seattle Seahawks/Seattle Sounders, Seattle, WA; Social Moguls/Seattle Sounders, Seattle, WA; School District, Whitecourt, Alberta, Canada; Marin County Department of Education, San Rafael, CA; Ocosta School District 21st Century Community Learning Center, Westport, WA; Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES, New Hartford, NY; Onondaga-Cortland-Madison Counties BOCES, Syracuse, NY; Oregon Trail School District, Sandy, OR; Oswego County BOCES, Mexico, NY; Puget Sound Educational Service District, Renton, WA; San Rafael School District, Marin, CA; Santa Barbara County Service Learning Initiative, Santa Barbara, CA; Schenectady Public Schools, Schenectady, NY; Seattle Public Schools Office of Equity and Race Relations, Seattle, WA; Seattle Public Schools Service Learning Seattle, Seattle, WA; Seattle Public Schools Small Learning Environments Conference, Seattle, WA; Seattle Public Schools Youth Engagement Zone, Seattle, WA; Sumner School District, Sumner, WA; Yakima Public Schools, Yakima, WA
Recommendations

“The Freechild Institute’s work is especially relevant in getting young people to participate in the realms of politics and critical education.” — Henry Giroux, Global Television Network Chair in English and Cultural Studies, McMaster University, Ontario, Canada

“We engaged Freechild’s leader Adam Fletcher to provide guidance for a new, large-scale youth initiative. After informing our design of the program, he delivered a compelling keynote address for a conference attended by seven hundred elected officials from rural communities across North Carolina. He also authored a publication on how to start a youth program in a rural community and served as the lead trainer for a workshop based on that publication. His talents are many—He is an original thinker; delivers strong content based on good science; is a highly capable writer; adapted the program to complex situations statewide; and is both a talented speaker and educator/trainer. His enthusiasm is out the roof, and he is liked equally well by both youth and adults.” — Elaine Matthews, former Senior Vice President, North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center, Raleigh, North Carolina

“Adam is a great facilitator and leader of youth and adults! Easy to work with, focused on a clear message and adaptable in every situation. It was a pleasure to work with Adam. He is committed to youth development and knows how to navigate change while remaining edgy enough to appeal to young people. Adam will do excellent work for your next event or any long-term development work.” — Helena Stephens, City of Bellevue Family, Youth and Teens Services Manager, Bellevue, Washington

“Freechild Institute is the truest champion of youth voice and youth rights. They are one of the coolest and most dedicated orgs I’ve met in the world of youth development. Adam’s writings and programs on youth engagement and development are part of my arsenal of best practices for young people. Highly recommended.” — Al Duncan, Trainer, Publisher, and Youth Advocate

Additional references are available upon request.
Section 02

Engaging Adults Who Serve Youth
Engaging Adults Who Serve Youth

The Freechild Institute provides consulting services for nonprofits, government agencies and K-12 schools focused on engaging adults who serve youth. According to Adam Fletcher, “Engagement happens anytime people choose the same thing over and over.” Freechild works with organizations to help them provide logical, powerful, purposeful and positive ways to make this happen. Some of the issues in our consulting have included engaging people in...

- Social Services
- School Transformation
- Democracy Building
- Neighborhood Improvement
- Family Connections
- Employment and Economics
- Public Health
- Entrepreneurship
- Volunteerism

The services the Freechild Institute provides vary according to the organization. Working as partners throughout the process, together Freechild and the organization assess challenges and needs, identify pathways to improvement, and take action for change. The Freechild Institute provides 360 degree services as well. Some of these include...

- Organizational Development
- Strategic Planning
- Professional Development
- Curriculum, Program, and Strategic Design
- Pre- and Post-Assessment
- Report Writing
- Internal and Public Presentations
- Professional Coaching
- Strategic Thinking
- Human Centered Design
- Focus Groups & Process Evaluation
- Technical Manuals

Freechild’s consultancies range from serving large-scale international nonprofit organizations to government institutions to K-12 schools committed serving youth more effectively.
New Roles for Youth

The Freechild Institute teaches adults including teachers, parents, social service workers, government staff, and others new and exciting ways to engage young people in social change. Working with researchers and practitioners around the world, Freechild has created a series of powerful tools for moving communities to new spaces together in order to foster positive, powerful social change.

**ADULT THEMES**

- Building Community With Youth
- Making Involvement Meaningful throughout K-12 School Systems
- Engaging Historically Disengaged Youth in Social Change
- Fostering Equitable Youth/Adult Partnerships
- Supporting Youth Engagement to Transform Society
Confronting substantial challenges and acknowledging discomfort are keys to engaging people in changing the world.

Serving as a partner in youth engagement, Freechild provides dynamic, responsive services to meet client needs.

Engaging people in learning, teaching and leadership are important for connecting historically disconnected people in action.
Section 03  

Engaging Youth With Equity
Because of our experience, knowledge and longevity, the Freechild Institute is an internationally recognized advocate for Youth Voice. Youth Voice is any expression of any young person about anything, anywhere at anytime for any reason. Supporting organizations with the most current theory and practice, Freechild facilitates organizational transformation and community empowerment that engages young people and supports adults being effective in their efforts. The Freechild Institute’s work in the area of Youth Voice has included…

- Positive Youth Development
- Meaningful Student Involvement
- Modern Youth Leadership
- Youth-Led Social Change
- Juvenile Justice Reform
- Student Voice in Learning & Leadership
- Volunteerism
- Systems of Care Reform
- Public Policy Making & Governance

Freechild works to support engaging historically disengaged Youth Voice throughout society. Some of the ways we do this includes…

- Youth Training and Learning
- Movement Building and Advocacy
- Program Assessment and Improvement
- Adult Professional Development
- Curriculum and Program Offerings
- Social Media
- Freelance Writing
- Online and In-Person Outreach
- Research and Evaluation Services

Our clients and collaborators include international, national, local and hyperlocal programs and organizations. International NGOs, federal and state/province government agencies, and local coalitions have all engaged Freechild in moving youth voice for more youth power to change the world in positive, powerful ways.
New Roles for Youth in Society

Building on a 50-plus year tradition of youth engagement across the United States and around the world, the Freechild Institute has established new methods, developed new models and created new pathways to engage historically disengaged youth in powerful new ways recognized by practitioners and researchers around the world.

YOUTH THEMES

Youth as Partners
Ending Discrimination Against Young People
Engaging the Disengaged
Youth/Adult Partnerships
Modern Youth Leadership
Youth Voice 101
The Basics of Student Voice
Engaging historically disengaged youth in positive, powerful new ways is a keystone of Freechild’s consulting practices.

Cultural humility, intellectual integrity, critical thinking and fostering meaning is key for Freechild’s work with youth.

Freechild Institute staff teach through example by listening and learning with empathy and reciprocity.
Get In Touch

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