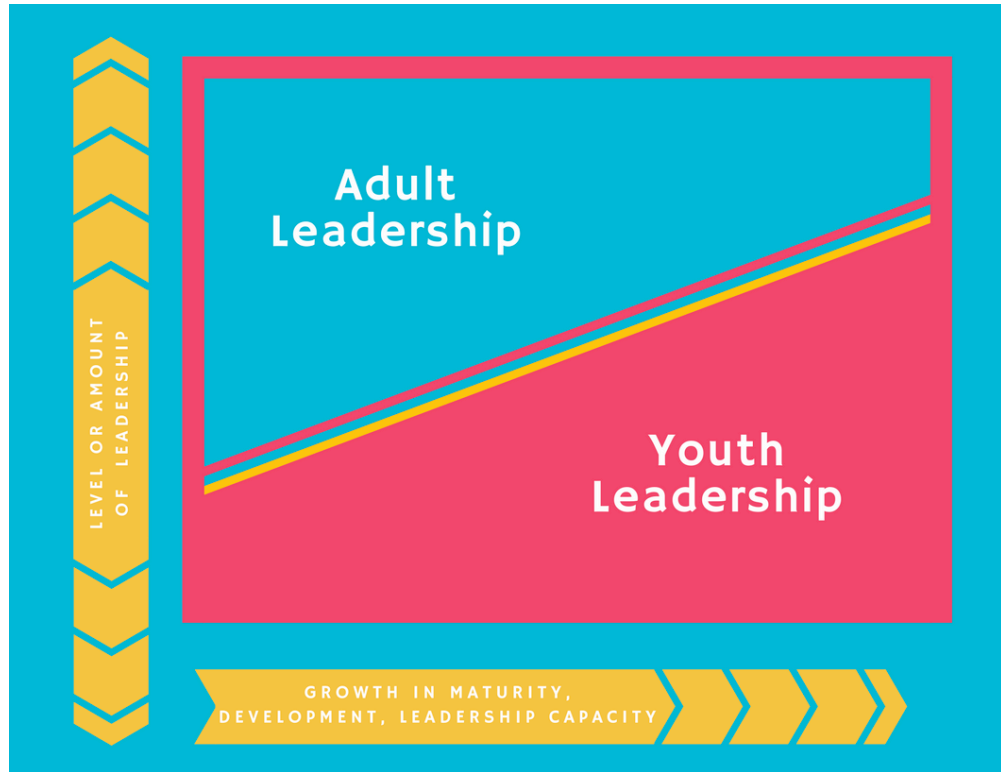


Youth / Adult Shared Leadership

Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministries



When it comes to leadership development for youth in our association, whether a group or project is nominally led by an adult or a group of youth, the leadership will always be shared. The difference between these two approaches lies in the ratio of youth leadership to adult leadership.

This Youth/Adult Shared Leadership spectrum illustrates how youth take on additional leadership as they grow in maturity, development, and leadership capacity. Note that at no point does one group completely eclipse the other; this is the essence of good shared leadership. Even in an adult-led model, providing opportunities for youth to learn how to lead is essential. Conversely, when there are youth with tremendous leadership ability, adults are still part of the equation, checking in, supporting, raising difficult questions, and serving as a resource.

It's tempting to look at this graph and see a linear progression for a group or project, but that rarely happens. Youth may be moving toward taking on greater responsibility for their own leadership and spiritual development, but when active

and capable youth leaders graduate, the remaining youth with less experience will need more direction. A group or individual may have taken on more than they could handle and feel reluctant to have that much responsibility again in the near future. Shared leadership requires careful attention to where to draw the line between sets of responsibilities. Adults working with youth should constantly reassess and reevaluate that line to ensure the right balance of support and challenge for youth leaders.

One way to share leadership, particularly when an individual or group of youth don't yet have the leadership experience to handle an event on their own, is to assume the role of facilitator. Rather than planning, organizing, and running the program or project yourself, you'll model how to plan, effectively coaching youth so they can do it in the future. In this role, you're neither spectator nor dictator. Your role is to guide those developing their leadership skills. If, for example, a youth group is planning a service event, your role as facilitator would be to guide the group through a conversation to decide what kind of project or topic they'd like to address. You help them sort through conflict, narrow their choices, and then make an action plan. You lead them through each step, involving them in the entire process.

On the other end of the Youth/Adult Leadership Spectrum, using the above example, the youth in your group would be facilitating their own decision-making process. However, you still have a very important role to play as mentor.

