

*LEADERSHIP UMC 2010-2011
Light of the World Small Group Project
Supporting Research Summary*

Youth Minister/Leader

- Adults in youth ministry should not see other “secular” activities as necessarily a threat to their church involvement.
 - Social involvements hang together and work together. They are not competing. People who are involved in many things tend to be involved in religion too. We found that with the most religiously engaged teens, the religious dimension of their lives has connections with other parts of their social lives. These teens have overlapping networks of involvements—sports, school, volunteer activities, and church. What this means is that their religious life or church life is not an isolated satellite. All of the aspects of their lives work together and these teens are stronger in their life of faith.
- Youth Minister/Leader must be prepared to stick with this for a long time and don’t see it as a stepping stone to other ministries.
- Youth ministry must work with parents and not against them.
 - When it comes to parents’ views, 62 percent of attending parents say their church has been very or extremely helpful in raising their teen and 73 percent report that ministry to teenagers is very important in their church.
- Youth ministers have typically short tenure:
 - It has to be the congregation that makes it important. The congregation has to say this is a real priority and respected enough to pay for it. Youth ministry cannot be done on the cheap.
- A key distinction between maintaining a youth group and building a dynamic youth ministry is the existence of a clear, compelling vision.
 - “Vision is the God- given ability to imagine an attractive and exciting future for a group of people and uniting them for a common purpose”(Boshers, 1997). Vision is where you are ultimately going.
- Youth leaders must be open-minded, creative, and willing to help youth discover what God is calling them to be and do.

Youth

- The challenges for some youth involvement may be the lack of transportation and parent involvement.

Parents

- It is not enough for parents to simply drop their youth off at activities. They must be active participants in the youth program, beyond helping to run fundraisers and serving as retreat chaperones.
 - The most important change within our church should be the inclusion of programming for parents of children and teenagers.
 - The first priority must be to empower the parents.
 - A greater emphasis on incorporating bible studies and seminars on important family issues like recovering from divorce, preparing for parenting an adolescent, enriching your marriage, teaching your children Christian values, and understanding your teenager—all which would serve as windows to building faith maturity in the parents of children.

Conclusion

Young people will respond if the challenge is tough enough and hard enough. Youth wants a master and a controller. Young people were built for God, and without God as the center of their lives they become frustrated and confused, desperately grasping for and searching for security” (Manser, 2001). Our youth are crying out for answers and direction to cope with life’s many challenges. God is ready to give them a purpose and meaning for their lives. By developing a youth ministry that looks to God for guidance, our youth will learn that there is an answer to the questions they have been asking. Never forget that if we don’t show them that God is the answer to these questions, they will begin to look elsewhere in the world for answers.