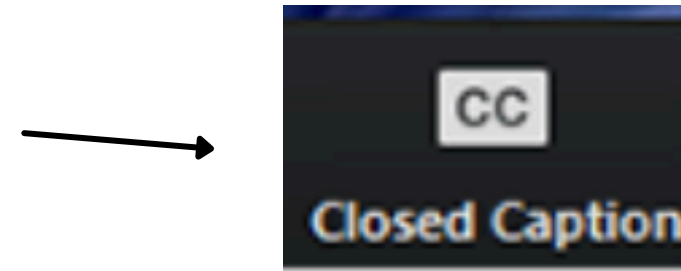# Bringing Allyship to Life: Implementing the Adult Ally Toolkit
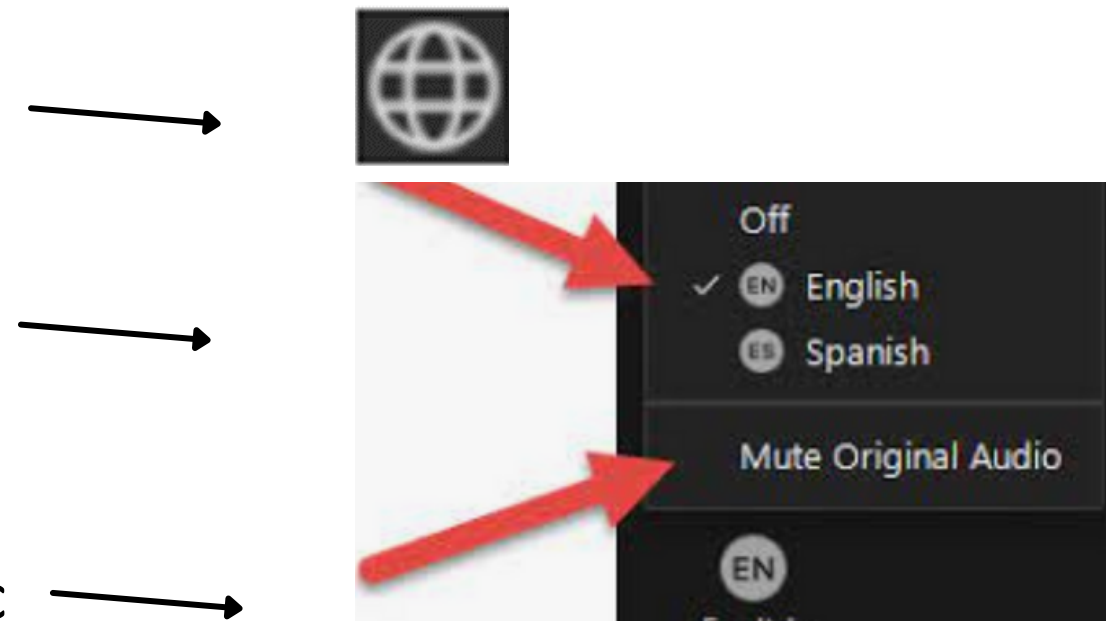
Using Closed Captioning

- To start using CC, click the caption button

Uso de la interpretación de idiomas

- Hagan clic en el icono de interpretación

- Seleccionen "Spanish"

- Después de seleccionar "español", hagan clic "Mute Original Audio"

Using ASL

To pin the interpreter, hover over the video of the participant you want to pin and click ...From the menu, click Pin.

Introductions:

Michael Scanlon

Erin Black

Please introduce yourself using the chat!

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Quick Toolkit Overview:

Adult Ally Toolkit & Podcast

Visit the post for more.

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What's Inside the Adult Ally Toolkit:

- Clear roles & expectations for adult allies
- Everyday practices that strengthen youth partnerships
- Tools for communication, relationship-building, and shared decision-making
- Stories, resources, and real examples from youth and adults in the field

How the Toolkit Supports You:

- Practical strategies you can use right away
- Templates and activities for your team
- A common language for youth–adult collaboration
- Designed to be flexible and adaptable

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Top 3 Barriers to Adult Allyship:

Barrier #1: Adults want to be supportive, but aren't always sure what their role is.

As highlighted in "Understand Your Role", many adults want to help but feel unsure:

- "Am I leading too much?"
- "Am I stepping back too far?"
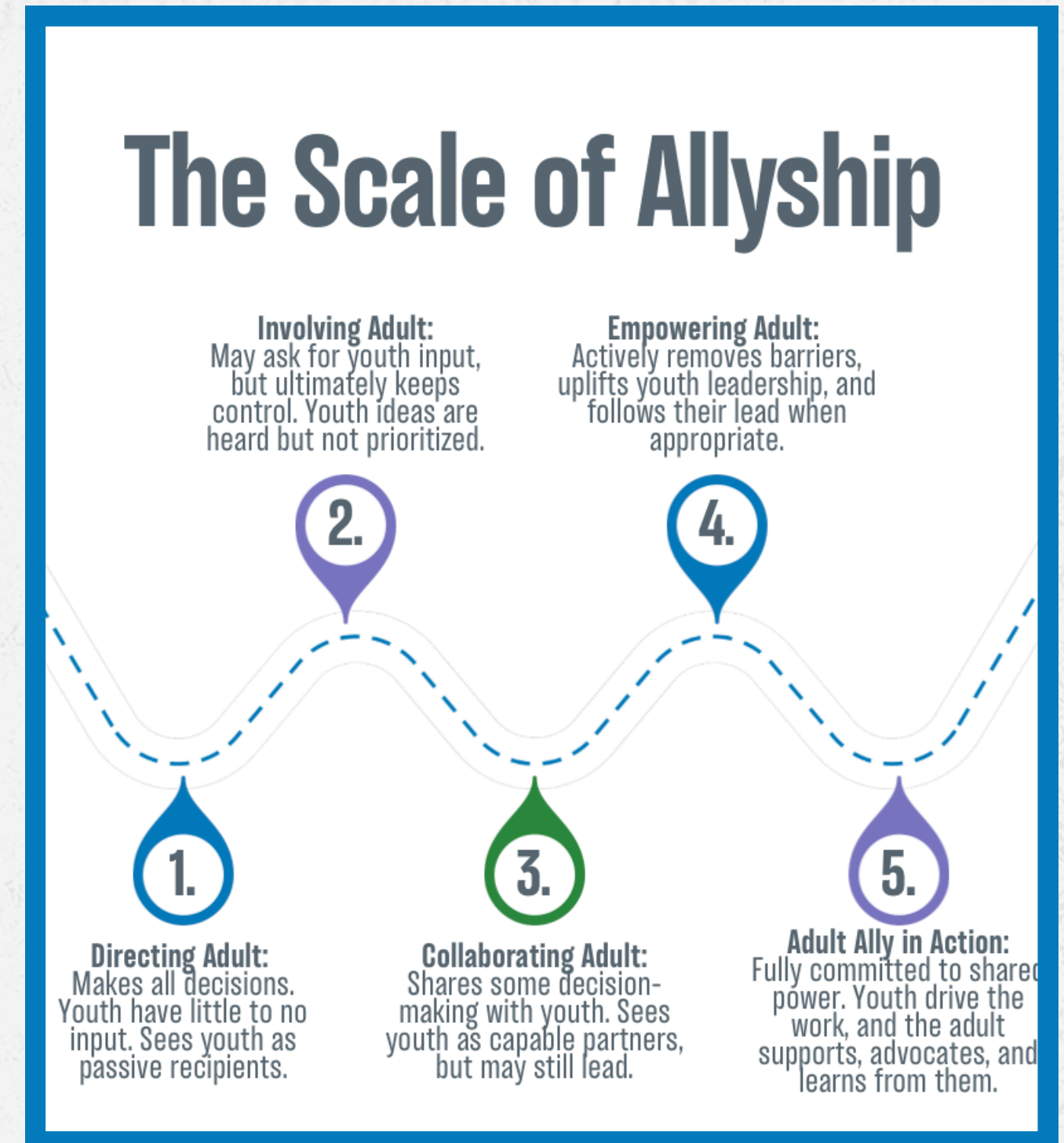- "What does sharing power actually look like?"

Barrier #1: Adults want to be supportive, but aren't always sure what their role is.
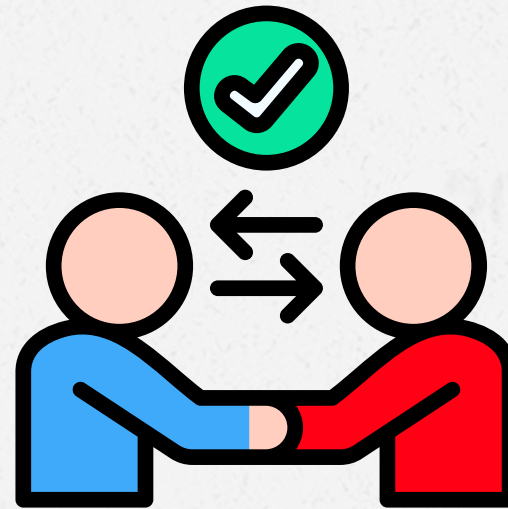
Use the Scale of Allyship
From Directing Adult → Empowering Adult → Adult Ally in Action

- Name where you currently operate
- Co-create expectations with youth
- Practice "guide on the side," not "leader in front"
- Share decisions, not just tasks

The Scale of Allyship

Involving Adult: May ask for youth input, but ultimately keeps control. Youth ideas are heard but not prioritized. **2.**

Empowering Adult: Actively removes barriers, uplifts youth leadership, and follows their lead when appropriate. **4.**

1. Directing Adult: Makes all decisions. Youth have little to no input. Sees youth as passive recipients.

3. Collaborating Adult: Shares some decision-making with youth. Sees youth as capable partners, but may still lead.

5. Adult Ally in Action: Fully committed to shared power. Youth drive the work, and the adult supports, advocates, and learns from them.

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Barrier #1: Adults want to be supportive, but aren't always sure what their role is.

Culture Barriers

- "That's how we've always done it" mentality.
- Risk-averse culture discourages experimentation or innovation.
- Lack of psychological safety to give feedback or try new approaches.

Resistance to Change

- Comfort with the status quo — people prefer familiar routines.
- Fear of loss — power, autonomy, expertise, or job security.
- Change fatigue from previous failed initiatives.
- Perceived irrelevance — staff may not see why the change matters.

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Top 3 Barriers to Adult Allyship:

Barrier #2: Youth leaders feel unheard or tokenized in decision-making spaces.

From "Is the Space Youth-Led...or Just Youth-Labeled?"
- Youth invited to speak but not shape decisions
- Inaccessible meetings, agendas, materials
- "Youth voice" without real influence

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Barrier #2: Youth leaders feel unheard or tokenized in decision-making spaces.

Moving from Room A → Room B:

- Co-create agendas & timelines
- Share materials accessibly
- Compensate youth
- Ensure input → action
- Use the Allyship Elevator: hold the door, don't control the buttons

Is the Space Youth-Led… or Just Youth-Labeled?

Room A:

- One young person with a disability was invited to represent "youth voice"
- The meeting is at 8:00 AM, in a room with no accessible transit nearby
- The agenda is pre-set — and already time-crunched
- Slides include tiny fonts, no image descriptions, and no breaks
- Youth are asked to share their story, but not invited to shape decisions
- Accommodations were available "if requested in advance"
- The adult facilitator thanks the youth and moves on
- No follow-up. No payment. No impact.

Room B:

- Ten young people with disabilities were co-creators of the project
- Meeting times were chosen with youth input and accessibility in mind
- Agendas were built collaboratively — and include breaks and options
- Materials are shared in plain language and multiple formats
- Youth are leading key discussions — and asking adults to reflect
- Accommodations are standard, not special requests
- Youth receive stipends and next steps to stay engaged
- Their ideas aren't "nice to hear." They shape what happens next.

As you read, ask yourself:
"Which room have I helped create? Which room am I willing to build next?"

34.

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Top 3 Barriers to Adult Allyship:

Barrier #3: Relationship-building isn't prioritized in fast-moving programs.

From "Building Relationships & Everyday Allyship":
- Systems value compliance over connection
- Youth don't know if adults are "safe" or authentic
- Trust requires consistency that programs often skip

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Barrier #3: Relationship-building isn't prioritized in fast-moving programs.

Relationships must be the <u>foundation</u>:

- Show up consistently
- Lead with listening
- Use Relationship Mapping
- Share stories (storytelling = trust-building)
- Build small routines that communicate: "I see you. I'm here."

Language Matters.

Don't say this:	Try this instead:	Why it matters:
"They're just not ready yet."	"What support could set them up for success?"	Centers youth potential instead of doubt.
"We're letting them help."	"They're leading this project, and we're here to support."	Shifts from tokenism to shared leadership.
"That's cute!"	"That's powerful — thank you for sharing that."	Affirms youth ideas as serious and meaningful.
"I know what's best for them."	"Let's ask what they need — they know their experience best."	Centers lived experience and autonomy.
"These kids…"	"The young leaders I work with…"	Respects youth identity and avoids belittlement.

The way we talk to and about young people matters — our words can either shrink their voice or fuel their confidence. When we choose language that empowers, we're not just being kind — we're showing youth they belong, they're trusted, and they're meant to lead.

44.

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YOUR TURN!

What barriers are you currently experiencing?

- What gets in the way of allyship in your setting?
- Where do youth tell you they feel unsupported?
- Which toolkit tools could support you here?

Questions?

And a massive **THANK YOU** for being here – continue your journey by exploring the full Adult Ally Toolkit — and share it with your team, youth, families, and partners to help bring this work to life. We truly are stronger when we learn from one another.

Adult Ally Toolkit & Podcast
Visit the post for more.
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