Institute for Community Research “Net” definition sheet

What do all the components of the Youth Leadership Development Model represent?

**The cliff:** This represents that there is usually distance between the youth who are part of a campaign and the foundation of the campaign itself (represented by the net).

**The teen:** The youth who are working on our campaign. They are close to the cliff but they can’t see over the edge. They don’t know where the edge is because they are wearing blinders.

**The wizards:** The adult facilitators. Our job is to support the youth we work with. We want to help them stand close enough to the edge of the cliff that they can look down and see the net, so they can understand how their actions will land on the net when they “throw” the actions off the cliff (in other words, when they decide to take action, we want them to know exactly how that action will support and strengthen the work that’s already happened). Traditionally, facilitators are down at the bottom of the image, near the net; the youth develop an action strategy and then the facilitators try to make sure that it will land on the net. We want to restructure that relationship so that the youth themselves see where their actions are going to land.

**The Cauldron:** the action strategies that are brewing (in the process of being developed). When an action strategy is fully developed the youth grabs it and throws it over the cliff (they execute their plan). Often times with this type of work, facilitators don’t bring the youth close enough to the edge of the cliff, so they can’t see where the action strategies are landing.

**The net:** (magical net) represents the foundation of the work that the youth are trying to accomplish. This includes: experiences that the team has gone through together; potential allies of the campaign; all previous work the campaign has done; any strategic plans or theories of change the campaign is based on; and the cumulative knowledge of the people involved in the campaign. All the work that has been put into the campaign will strengthen the net. It catches the action strategies to strengthen the campaign. The team needs to know where the action strategies are landing because they need to see the relation to the work they produce and how it relates to the goals of the campaign. They need to see the purpose of why they are doing what they are doing. And they need to see how it all connects. They need to see how this strengthens the campaign and how the benefits of it are shaping their future actions.

**The fairy dust:** This was our way of representing the cyclical nature of the work – the actions that land on the net feed back into the cauldron, where they will help develop new ideas and actions that they youth choose to take. Once an action lands on the net, it isn’t done – it continues to influence the work going forward.

**The action strategies:** the activities that the youth have done as part of their campaign. This can include an event they planned, social media work, trainings they participated in, and any materials and messaging they have developed to share with others.