

Reflection Activities

When constructing reflection activities, instructors should consider the following:

- Reflection activities should involve individual learners and address interactions with peers, community members and staff of community agencies.
- Students with different learning styles may prefer different types of activities. Instructors should select a range of reflective activities to meet the needs of different learners. Reflection can happen during ungraded one-minute papers, class discussion and role plays, journals (written or visual), quizzes and exams, reading responses, and in many other contexts.
- Different types of reflection activities may be appropriate at different stages of the service experience.
- Reflection activities can involve reading, writing, and telling. Some examples of reflective activities are briefly described below:

1. **Case Studies**

Assign case studies to help students think about what to expect from the service project and to plan for the service activity. Use published or instructor developed case studies that are based on past service learning projects.

2. **Journals**

Ask students to record thoughts, observations, feelings, activities, and questions in a journal throughout the project. The most common form of journal is free-form. The journal should be started early in the project and students should make frequent entries. Explain benefits of journals to students such as enhancing observational skills, exploring feelings, assessing progress and enhancing communication skills. Faculty should provide feedback by responding to journal entries as well as holding class discussions of issues/questions raised in the writings, or develop further assignments based on students' journal entries.

3. **Structured Journals**

Use structured journals to direct student attention to important issues/questions and to connect the service experience to class work. Instructors should provide students with prompts and guided reflection questions to ensure that they are learning course content through reflection. Some parts of the journal may focus on affective dimensions while others relate to problem-solving activities.

4. **Team Journals**

Use a team journal to promote interaction between group members on projects and to introduce students to different perspectives. Students can take turns recording shared and individual experiences, reactions and observations, and responses to each other's entries.

5. **Critical Incidents Journals**

Ask students to record a critical incident during each week of the service project. A critical incident refers to events in which a major decision was made, a conflict occurred, or a problem was resolved. The critical incident journal provides a systematic way for students to

communicate problems and challenges involved in working with the community and with their teams and can thus help in dealing with the affective dimensions of the service experience.

6. **Portfolios**

Ask students to select and organize evidence related to accomplishments and specific learning outcomes in a portfolio. Portfolios can include drafts of documents, analysis of problems/issues, project activities/plans, or an annotated bibliography. Ask students to organize evidence by learning objectives. In addition to such “documentation,” portfolios also should include students’ reflections about what they have learned, how they learned it, and why the learning matters.

7. **Papers**

Ask students to write an integrative paper on their service project. Journals and other assignments can serve as building blocks for developing the final paper.

8. **Discussions**

Encourage formal and informal discussions with classmates, other volunteers, and community partner staff to introduce students to different perspectives and to challenge students to think critically about the project.

9. **Presentations**

Ask students to present on their experience and discuss it in terms of concepts and theories discussed in class.

10. **Interviews**

Interview students on their experiences and the learning that occurred during their project. Students can also interview each other.

See Also:

- Battistoni, Richard M., *Civic Engagement Across the Curriculum: A Resources Book for Service-Learning Faculty*, Appendix B, “Reflection Questions that Tap Civic Dimensions,” Campus Compact, 2002.
- Gelmon, Sherril, B., et al, *Assessing Service-Learning and Civic Engagement*, Campus Compact, 2001.
- Peace Corps: <http://www.peacecorps.gov/wvs/educators>
Helpful tips and information on lesson plans & stories, multimedia, and service learning