

Reflecting on Service: Suggestions and Practices

Below is a collection of reflection techniques. Use the codes to help decide when during the project to use them. Consider the needs of your group and create activities based on their needs. Have fun!

	<i>* can be used for assessment</i>	<i># pre-service activity</i>	<i>+ during service activity</i>	<i>\$ post-service activity</i>
* \$				Hand out note cards to everyone. Ask them to write one word that describes the entire experience of the service project. Use the cards to lead a discussion. After the discussion ask people to reconsider the question.
# +				Present a few works of art and discuss what meanings maybe hidden in it; have the participants create a piece, focus on conveying a thought/meaning about the project (facilitate a discussion about hidden/not obvious information)
* # \$				K-W-L: Make lists of what the participants already <u>know</u> about the project/topic; what they <u>want</u> to learn, and what they actually <u>learned</u>
* + \$				Have participants journal, but end each with a question. Assign buddies and have the buddy respond to the entry and the question
* # + \$				Use a long sheet of butcher paper, draw a line width-wise. Have everyone write a response to two related questions. Examples: what did you learn and how did we make a difference; What is homelessness and how can it be resolved?
* + \$				Put 6 sheets of paper on the walls – divide the participants into 6 groups: have each one answer a question; move to the next one after 3 minutes. Questions: What happened as a result of the activity? What academic skills were used? How does what you learned today apply to other situations? What challenges did you face and how did you resolve them? What would you do differently if you could? What do you want to learn next as a result of this activity?
\$				Ask students to bring in music that reflects the experience to them. Listen and discuss
# + \$				Fact or Fiction – have everyone write down a statement about the service project (the community to be helped, the actual work, the location, the time, the objectives, etc) Facilitate discussion about stereotypes, myths, potential issues, obstacles, successes, etc
+ \$				Create a timeline of events –include pictures, words, and drawings. These could be personal thoughts or actual events relating to the project. Review for discussion
* # + \$				Have the group shout out a list of words about the project, classify them under themes. Discuss differing perspectives
# + \$				Have everyone bring an object that represents an aspect of the service and explain the connection
# + \$				Have students make a collage to express how they view their service site and their service.
+ \$				Write letters-to-the-editor or to government officials that address issues important to the community organizations with which they are working and that can help inform the general public.
# + \$				Have students view a video or documentary to elicit discussion about critical issues that relate to their service experiences.
# + \$				Have participants take a Myers-Briggs type test to discover how they view the world – check out the Kolb Learning Theory for a different interpretation (E/I is Active / Reflective; T / F relates to Concrete Experience / Abstract Conceptualization). Have the students reflect on how this will or already has influenced their experience
\$				Ask students to create a map that shows how their service-learning experience connects to issues at

	the state/national/global level and where community involvement and citizenship fit in.
* + \$	Have students maintain a print or electronic reflective journal. Writing in journals is widely used by service-learning programs to promote reflection. Use free-writing, open-ended statements, write about an incident, write from a different perspective, or pose a question relating to the project and have people respond to it.
+ \$	Use case studies or scenarios for students to act out and discuss something they did not know how to handle during their service in the community.
# + \$	Find articles, poems, stories or songs, or ask students to create their own, that relate to the service students are doing and create and discuss questions around relevant issues.
# + \$	Find community events that students can attend together and discuss afterwards.
# + \$	Have guided discussion questions in groups that challenge students to think critically
# + \$	Have a speaker on a certain issue that relates to the students' service experiences.
* \$	Have students create a guide for upcoming students who participate. Include personal insights and suggestions for improvement
# \$	Have participants write a letter to themselves describing how they currently feel about the project, what they think will be hard, easy, different, what they want to accomplish, etc. After the project is completed, give the letters back and discuss.
* + \$	Ask and discuss the questions: "What happened?", "So what" (did it make a difference? why or why not), and "Now what?" (where do we go from here; how will this continue to impact your life)
# + \$	Define service – use the service inventory handout or a discussion about what is service, how has your understanding of it changed, what kind is more meaningful/necessary/honorable, who can serve, who should serve, etc
# + S	Put a few quotes about service on the wall. Allow participants to write responses to the quotes on sticky notes (or on the same piece of paper) and post them. Spend time reading everyone else's responses.
S	Yarn Web – have the participants stand in a circle. Have one student start off holding one end of a ball of yarn and pass the ball to another person, saying something like: what they will bring to the next project, what they learned, something they appreciate about the next person, etc. Continue until the ball is unwound completely.
\$	Create an alphabet book (or use the project/organization's name) and illustrate it with a sentence, thought, or picture for each letter
+	Role play a situation or conversation from some point in the day – something serious or something mundane or something funny. Do not let it turn into a bashing session!
+ \$	Have students discuss an obstacle or situation they didn't know how to handle. Role play potential resolutions
# + \$	Have students create a pie chart of their feelings regarding the project. Use colors to represent emotions and discuss the color choices
+	Give "feedforward" to one another – instead of focusing on what happened, focus on what can be done in better or differently in the future. Focus on solutions, not issues.
# + \$	Council Process – sit in a circle and pass a talking stick (could be a rock, ball, feather boa; anything with meaning to the group). Only the person with the "stick" can talk, all others must listen. Set rules to be brief, from the heart, no put-downs/cross-talk. Consider instituting a topic of discussion
# + \$	Write a poem about the experience
+ \$	Fly on the wall – ask participants to think about a moment of the day and then to consider it from the perspective of a fly on the wall (or other non-participatory thing found at the site). Have them write a



	description of the moment in that perspective.
+ \$	Place participants in groups of no more than three and have them share the most unusual story that happened during the project. Everyone should have a story. Gather the group and share the stories.
* + # \$	Divide participants into groups no larger than 10 people and schedule separate times to meet with each group. Ask questions about the experience that encourage self-expression (avoid the automatic yes-no response). This will facilitate deeper, more involved conversations.

Why Do We Reflect?

Reflection allows participants to link their experience to a larger picture and more substantial context in order to better understand the issues at hand and identify potential solutions. A good practice is to follow the “what, so what, now what” model. In this participants describe the experience, interpret it through thoughts, feelings and questions, then give meaning to it by exploring the contributions made, the actions needed or by making a commitment. Reflection ought to be intentional, integrated, inclusive, ongoing, challenging, and inspiring. In service-learning it is a way to connect the academic material to the experience and in other service experiences it is a way to develop an understanding of social justice and social policy as well as personal development.

Best Practices of Reflection

1. Reflection should occur before the service-learning experience, during and after. Ongoing, high quality reflection can help to develop and improve student’s complex thinking skills and problem solving abilities
2. Reflection activities should clearly link the service-learning experience to the academic standards and curriculum objectives. If a service-learning project takes place out of school, verification activities should link to learning objectives for the project.
3. Frequent opportunities for discussion of service should be provided so students can interact with their peers, mentors and those they serve.
4. Reflection activities should allow students to explore and clarify their feelings and thinking.
5. Students should be included in the planning of reflection activities so they have ownership the process.
6. Reflection activities should incorporate various learning styles (e.g. visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc.) and experience to encourage students to think in different ways
7. Teachers should provide continual feedback to students so they can improve their critical thinking and analytical skills during the reflection process.

Source: *Learn & Serve America: National Service-Learning Clearinghouse Program; California State University, Fullerton Volunteer Center*

Tips for Using Reflection as Assessment

- Establish benchmarks.
- Provide for formative; not just summative assessment.
- Provide credit for learning; not just for service.
- Link reflection to learning goals in syllabus.
- Clearly articulate criteria (rubrics).
- Provide students opportunities to assess their own personal goals.
- Assess the project (community needs and partnership).
- Assess the course (learning goals).
- Assess collaborative learning.
- Include all the stakeholders.

Source: <http://training.fema.gov/emweb/downloads/ShoemakerLSU508.ppt>

Wisdom on Service

“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world. The unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.” - George Bernard Shaw

“Nothing will ever be attempted, if all possible objections must first be overcome.” - Samuel Johnson

“You cannot travel on the path until you have become the Path itself.” – Buddha

“Don’t curse the darkness – light a candle.” – Chinese proverb

“We didn’t inherit the land from our fathers, we are borrowing it from our children.” – Amish belief

“The best test, and the most difficult to administer is: Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, free more, autonomous, more likely to themselves become servants?” – Robert Greenleaf, Servant Leadership

“All...are caught in an inescapable web of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny...I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the inter-related structure of reality.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

“We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are.” - Anais Nin

“I was taught that the world had a lot of problems; that I could struggle and change them; that intellectual and material gifts brought the responsibility of sharing with other less fortunate; and that service is the rent that each of us pay for a living...the very purpose of life, and not something you do in your spare time or after you have reached your personal goals.” - Marian Wright Edelman

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead

“You will find meaning only by sharing in the responsibilities, the dangers and the passions of your time.” – President Lyndon Johnson

"I have always seen life personally; my interest or sympathy or indignation is not aroused by an abstract cause but by the plight of a single person . . . Out of my response to an individual develops an awareness of a problem to the community, then to the country, then to the world." - Eleanor Roosevelt

"An education that teaches you to understand something about the world has done only half of the assignment. The other half is to teach you to do something about making the world a better place." - Johnnetta Cole

“To give of one’s self; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition...to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived--that is to have succeeded.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson



STUDENT
AFFAIRS

Office for Community Engagement

"Service-learning engages students in education, and helps connect their personal lives and community responsibilities with their own academic achievement." – Anne Bryant

"Effective democracy depends upon people who are committed to doing what's best for the neighborhood as a whole. Citizen service is more important than self-service. Service-learning transcends political boundaries." – Jim Geringer