

Reflection Facilitation Examples

Discuss

- **Quotes in Print:** Faculty can use quotes throughout the course to initiate student reflection. Assign students a page of quotes and ask them to pick one that represents their experience with service learning. Students can then explain why they chose a particular quote. Faculty can assign this as a one-minute paper in class (for reading aloud to the rest of the class upon completion) or as an out-of-class assignment.
- **Quotes in Song** Faculty can use this variation on quotes throughout the course. Students find a song in which the singer uses lyrics that describe their thoughts about the service experience. Students may find a whole song or only partial lyrics. If students have access to the song, have them play it at the end of a reflection session, after students have explained why these lyrics relate to their service experience. If students prefer to write their own lyrics for a song, allow this as an option. The class session in which these songs are “performed” usually has a festive atmosphere. Faculty may want to provide “concert souvenirs” or don concert wear to contribute to the spirit of the sessions. (Gwen Stewart, Miami-Dade College)
- **Quotes on the Wall** Faculty could post quotes throughout the classroom. Student select a quote that is meaningful to them and then the student could explain why in a small group.
- **Four Corners** – Faculty can use this exercise to assist students in clarifying their values and exploring the knowledge base for student opinions. This exercise can be used anytime during the course. Name each corner of the classroom as follows: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. Instruct students to go to the place in the room for which they most identify after you read certain statements. Faculty can create questions based on classroom content and/or the service experience. For example, faculty may say, "I believe that individual rights are more important than the rights of the larger community," or "I believe that service to a community is the responsibility of all citizens," or "I believe our government has the responsibility to solve world problems." Once students have gone to their respective places, allow time for students to discuss with other group members their reasons for standing where they are. Have each group report back their reasons for why they believe what they do, and then allow others to "switch" to a different group if they have changed their minds. Continue discussion, and then repeat the process for as long as time allows.

- **It's My Bag:** Students find a bag at home (any bag) and fill it with one (or two, depending on time) item(s) that remind them of how they feel about their service learning project. Students bring the filled bag to the reflection session, and explain their item(s) to the rest of the class. The item(s) that they bring usually turn out to be inspiring visual aids that bring out excellent comments. Students are given a chance to think metaphorically about their experience and connect the abstract with the concrete. (James Wolf, Miami-Dade College)

Journaling: A Primer

Journaling is one of the best reflection tools. Ideally, the program or project would allow for a ten to fifteen-minute period every day for students to journal; preferably at the end of the day or during/after a debriefing. It is helpful if instructors provide substantial structure to insure quality, conscientious journaling, and even more helpful if the person leading the reflection activity is journaling him or herself! Regardless of the time allotted, it is important to encourage participants to write whatever comes to mind, and to not worry about grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. This entails a commitment to confidentiality that nobody will ever share what they have written unless they want to. You also want to be definite and clear about the time allotted, (five to fifteen minutes) and let them know when it is almost finished.

Writing Activities

- **One Minute Paper** (*or however long they may need*) - At the end of a class session, ask students to record their learning from the day, deeper understandings, biggest questions, uncertainty, and so forth. This activity lets students reflect on learning and builds their writing ability simultaneously. You can ask students to share their papers and/or thoughts.
- **Reflection Journal** or eCampus Discussion Board - This can be an ongoing assignment throughout the entirety of the course. The instructor can choose to have students write in them weekly or as often as they please. The journal can then be collected and returned by the instructor at different points throughout the course. If you have access to eCampus, the instructor could also require a weekly discussion post that promotes course content reflection. This allows students to reflect, but also the option to converse with other students and see multiple insights.
- **Exit cards:** Brief note card reflections turned in at the end of each class period. Students are asked to reflect on disciplinary content from class discussion and explain how this information relates to their service involvement. Exit cards can be read by instructors in order to gain a better understanding of student experiences. Instructors

may want to summarize key points and communicate these back to students during the next class.

- **Double-entry Journal:** When using a double-entry journal, students write one-page entries each week: Students describe their personal thoughts and reactions to the service experience on the left page of the journal, and write about key issues from class discussions or readings on the right page of the journal. Students then draw arrows indicating relationships between their personal experiences and course content. This type of journal is a compilation of personal data and a summary of course content in preparation for a more formal reflection paper at the end of the semester. (Cross and Angelo, 1993)
- **Photo Essay** This is an alternative approach to written reflection, which allows students to use their figurative and literal “lenses” to view their service experience and how it relates to the classroom. This is a good final project/presentation technique. Students use photographs to reflect on their service experience and can weave a main theme or concept learned in class to actual photo documents. These projects are also excellent ones to share with the campus community, the service sites, for year-end celebrations, or college and other local publications.
- **Clusters:** Have people shout out words or phrases that describe the day. Ask each person to take two minutes to write five or six words in random spaces on their journaling page. You could highlight the interconnectedness of everything, the web of life, Quantum Physics, or whatever and ask them to do a free write focusing on those five or six items and how they are related.
- **The Critical Incident:** Choose an incident that involved the entire team and give them a couple of minutes to think about the incident. Then ask them to write a detailed, factual report of what happened, making sure to answer the four “W” questions, “who, what, where, when.” You can then have participants share their stories to see how they differ from another.

In this journal, students analyze an event that occurred during the week. By answering one of the following sets of prompts, students are asked to consider their thoughts and reactions and articulate the action they plan to take in the future:

- Describe a significant event that occurred as a part of the service-learning experience.
- Why was this significant to you?
- What underlying issues (societal, interpersonal) surfaced as a result of this experience?
- How will this incident influence your future behavior?

Another set of questions for a critical incident journal includes the following prompts:

- Describe an incident or situation that created a dilemma for you in terms of what to say or do.
 - What is the first thing you thought of to say or do?
 - List three other actions you might have taken.
 - Which of the above seems best to you now and why do you think this is the best response? (Julie Hatcher, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis)
- **Dialogue:** This is a good journal choice for developing observation and communication skills. Ask participants to pay special attention to conversations they hear throughout the day, including light conversations between staff and volunteers, volunteers and sponsors or stakeholders, etc. Ask them to pay special attention to mannerisms, accents, and the tone of the conversation. Later, have the participants pick a dialogue and duplicate as closely as possible how it went. This should be done in a light-hearted manner on a light-hearted day to avoid a “bashing” session. This is an exercise that gets better with time, as their observation and retention skills improve.

Students submit loose-leaf pages from a dialogue journal bi-weekly (or otherwise at appropriate intervals) for the faculty to read and comment on. While labor intensive for the instructor, this can provide continual feedback to students and prompt new questions for students to consider throughout the course. (Suzanne Goldsmith, 1995)

- **Different Perspectives:** A great one for developing empathy skills. Ask participants to recall a specific occurrence from the day that involved some degree of conflict. Ask them to assume the viewpoint opposite that which they actually held during this conflict (or the viewpoint they were the least empathetic with) and write a description of the conflict from this perspective. This can include what happened, their role in it, what they want, what they envision as the ideal solution.

Good debriefing questions are, “How did it feel to do this writing, how were you able to get in their shoes or how was it difficult, what is one thing you realized through this writing.”

- **The Fly on the Wall:** Ask participants to take a couple moments to reflect on the day (where they’ve been, what they’ve done, whom they’ve worked with, tools they’ve used). Then ask them to pretend they were a “fly on the wall” observing but not participating in the scene, and write a short descriptive passage based on their observations. You can also use any animal or plant or person that was near the project site.

- **The Free Write:** The easiest and perhaps most effective journaling method, wherein people that think they “can’t write” or “have nothing to say” realize how much and how well they can write. For a predetermined amount of time participants engage in continuous writing by keeping their pens moving . . . even if only to write, “I don’t know what to write.” It is helpful to trigger the free-write with an open-ended sentence such as “I don’t think I’ll ever forget . . .” or “If I could do one thing differently, I would . . .” or make up your own! Let participants know when they are nearing the end of the writing time, and then ask them how it went.
- **Highlighted Journal:** Before students submit the reflective journal, they reread personal entries and, using a highlighter, mark sections of the journal that directly relate to concepts discussed in the text or in class. This makes it easier for the instructor to identify how the student is reflecting on his or her experience in light of course content. (Gary Hesser, Augsburg College)
- **The Letter:** Have participants write a letter to themselves, a relative, a historical figure, a political figure, etc. describing the project and what it means to them, or ask for some piece of advice, etc.
- **Three-part Journal:** Students are asked to divide each page of their journal into thirds, and write weekly entries throughout the course. In the top section, students describe some aspect of the service experience. In the middle of the page, they analyze how course content relates to the service experience. And finally, an application section prompts students to comment on how the experience and course content can be applied to their personal or professional life. (Robert Bringle, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis)

Playful Activities

- **Starburst Activity** - Design four reflection questions that will help connect experiences to the learning outcomes you wish to emphasize. Assign each question to a starburst color, handout starburst candies to the students and have them answer the questions that correlate with their color. You can do this activity with M&Ms, stickers or anything else with different colors.
- **Popcorn** - Use a type of ball or balloon and write various numbers all over it. Create a reflection question that corresponds with each number. Throw the ball to someone in the room, and they select one of the numbers their fingers land on. They answer the question and then pass the ball to another student.

- **Group Collage** - Creating a collage is a more nontraditional approach to student reflection. This technique enables students to express feelings and learning from the service experience and also allows for a creative collective statement about aspects of an issue facing a community. Collages are excellent projects and can be developed in concept and final product over the entire length of the course. Students can use various sources (magazines, newspapers, other art materials) to build their mural. Faculty can use class time or out-of-class time for this work. Faculty need to define well the criteria for evaluation of content, yet allow freedom for means of expression.

Sample Questions

- What is service? What is the difference between service and volunteering?
- Has your definition of service changed? Why? How? Should everyone do service?
- Describe a problem the team has been having. List possible solutions.
- Make a list of the skills used and learned on this project.
- What have been the best and worst parts of this project?
- Describe a person you met on your project. What are their attitudes about the project, where might those attitudes have come from?
- What communities/identity groups are you a member of? How might this be related with your commitment to service?
- Have you ever felt hopelessness, despair, discouragement or burnout related to your service? How have you dealt with this? How can reflection help?
- What are some of the problems facing the world today? (mind map) How does your service connect or address these issues?
- Identify a person, group, or community that you got to know this year, who is significantly “other” for you. What are the needs or challenges facing them that particularly got to you? What is one way in which you’ve allowed yourself to be changed as a result of knowing these folks?
- What community need, work challenge, or public issue have you given the most deliberate, critical, analytical thought to this year? What are some factors and facts you looked at, data you considered? Who or what resources did you consult?
- Over the next two years, what’s one issue or challenge you would like to be a more respected authority on? How will this be a challenge for you?
- Dedicating ourselves to service rather than selfishness or our own comfort can be scary. We risk honestly getting to know others who are different, and come face to face, day after day, with pain, abuse, hatred, violence. What are two fears or inner worries you have, that somehow keep you from being the person of service you hope to become? What is something in your life that brings your courage, that gives you hope?
- What is one way in which you expect the community you are serving to nourish, nurture, or satisfy you? What are two ways you will take responsibility for that community?
- Summarize the most important things you will take with you from the experience.
- Your commitment to service can involve many things, including keeping your word (also being realistic when we say “yes”) and resisting the temptation, at least some of the time, to move on to new causes and needs. Think of something this year that you really didn’t want to continue doing, but you kept doing it the best you could. Was there something you got out of that?
- How is the concept you are currently learning about in class reflected in a recent situation at your service site? What are the similarities and differences between the concept and reality?

- If the situation is different in practice (at your site) than in theory (in class), why do you think this is? Why might agencies and people do things differently than theory? What explains the difference? If the situation is the same or similar in practice and theory, what can you predict about the outcomes for the clients the agency serves? Will efforts be successful? Why or why not?
- How is the agency or school meeting the needs of its community, and are these efforts effective? Using information you are learning in class and at the site, critique the agency's efforts using a SWOT analysis (Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (internal and external)).
- List some alternative methods for meeting the needs of the population you are serving. Based on what you are learning in class, why would these methods be good responses to the issues or problems you have observed?
- Before you interact with the agency's clients or school's students, what expectations, assumptions, and "prejudgments" do you have? Where did these come from, and why do you think you have them?
- After doing service learning for a few weeks, how have your previous expectations assumptions and prejudgments about the nature of the agency or its clients changed or strengthened? Why?
- At your service site, what are you learning about the people or agency you are serving?
- Point out any information you are learning in class that reinforces or challenges what you know from your service experience.
- How is this agency or school valuable to its community and our society? What role does it play in the community?
- What useful skills did you discover while serving? How might you apply these newly discovered skills in other situations?
- How did you refine existing skills and develop new ones?
- Did you use a skill at your service site that you didn't think you would need or use? Why?
- Describe something you learned as a result of a disappointment or a "failure" during your service experience. How does this new learning translate into your life beyond this class, i.e., how will you apply this learning after this course ends?
- What is happening that is positive about your experience? What does this tell you about yourself or about the site?
- How does this experience connect to your long-term goals, and what knowledge from your service activity will you utilize to reach these goals?
- How have you changed as a result of this service experience? How will these changes influence your future behaviors?
- Describe ideal citizens and what qualities they possess, what values they hold, and what actions they take within their communities. How has your service experience informed your image of an ideal citizen?

Reflection is a crucial part of service learning, which allows students to look back on, think critically about, and learn from their service experience. Reflection may include acknowledging and/or sharing of reactions, feelings, observations, and ideas about anything regarding the activity. Reflection can happen through writing, speaking, listening, reading, drawing, acting, and any other way you can imagine. Reflection is what distinguishes service learning from volunteering and community service.

Reflection activities vary and can be both formal and informal in nature. Designing effective reflection activities often depends on the nature of the course material and the stated learning objectives in the course.

Effective Reflection:

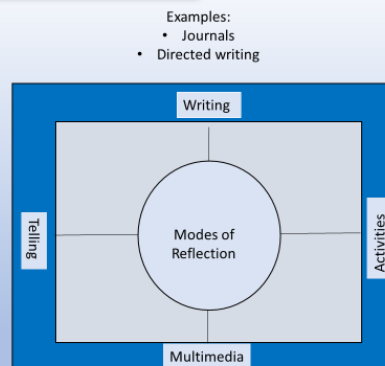
- Links service to course objectives and fosters civic responsibility
- Occurs throughout the course and not just at the end
- Is structured, guided, purposeful, with well-defined criteria for evaluation
- Challenges current realities, perhaps creating cognitive dissonance and/or conflict
- Goes beyond the descriptive nature of the experience and asks students to interpret and evaluate the relevance of their experience in relation to classroom knowledge with real life service experience
- Asks students to apply new information to real-life problems and situations

The 4 C's of Reflection (from Collier and Williams)

1. **Continuous:** Reflection must take place before, during, and after the completion of the service project to be fully useful.
2. **Challenging:** Effective reflection involves pushing ourselves out of our comfort zones to make new connections between concepts and to think in new ways.
3. **Connected:** Successful reflection can serve as a bridge between the service experience and our discipline-based academic knowledge.
4. **Contextualized:** Effective reflection is framed in a manner that is appropriate for the context in which the service experience takes place.

Reflection in Action: The Learning-Doing Relationship (Collier and Williams)

Examples:
• oral class presentation
• class discussion



Examples:
• Journals
• Directed writing

Examples:
• role playing
• Interviewing classmates

Examples:
• photo/video essay
• collage