

The University of New Orleans Service Learning Program

Guide for Intentional Reflection

Reflection allows students to see connections between learning in the classroom and their work with community partners; it helps students to strengthen critical thinking skills. It encourages students to move beyond mere description and toward interpreting their community experiences, personal strengths and challenges, and cause-and-affect relationships. Meaningful reflection can be conducted in a group setting, in the classroom, at the community organization, or individually through course assignments. One approach Eyler and Giles (1996) suggest is described as the Four C's. This approach includes: (1) continuous reflection: reflection that happens before, during and after an experience; (2) connected reflection: link theory and structured classroom learning to the serve experience and practice; (3) Challenging reflection: reflection topics should be challenging and even uncomfortable, but should be posed in a respectful learning environment, and; (4) contextualized reflection: activities are meaningful and appropriate to the students' experiences.

Reflection Prompts and Activities

<p>Journaling Journals can be private, shared with other students or the professor, used for dialogue, and it can be used for the students to highlight terms and concepts discussed in class, which they also experienced during their service learning activity. Journals can also be hand written or completed through private or shared online media like a blog.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the need your community partner/ project is addressing? • How is the community partner or project addressing the need? • Why are you needed? What is your role? • What are some of your perceptions about the population you are working with or serving? Do you have any fears working in this community? (Early in the semester) Address this again at the end of the semester. Did these perceptions or fears change? • What do you hope to gain from this experience? (Early in the semester) What did you gain from this experience and what was your impact? (Toward the end of the semester) • How does your service learning experience relate to the course objectives? • How are your values expressed through your work with the community partner and project?
<p>Field Notes, Ethnographies and Case Studies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the population you are working with or serving. • Describe your perceptions about the population you are serving, your fears, and your role with the community partner or project. • Describe the organization and community partner’s workplace environment. What are the values, attitudes and organizational structure of the organization? • What are the challenges and needs your community partner/ project is addressing?
<p>Presentation Presentations can be made to a class, a community group or the community partner the student(s) worked with.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the community partner’s workplace environment, their values, and mission. What was your role? • What do you hope to gain from this experience? (Early in the semester) What did you gain from this experience? (Toward the end of the semester) • What was the most valuable service you offered your site? • What have you learned about your self as a result of this project and how were you challenged? • How will you continue to be involved in this issue?
<p>Letters to the Editor, attending public hearings, meet with elected officials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the need your community partner/ project is addressing? • How is the community partner or project addressing the need? • How does your academic knowledge and skills apply to the needs being addressed by the community partner? • What should others know about this issue? What should they do about this issue?
<p>Creative Projects This could include making a portfolio of photos and potentially displaying them in an event or showcase. This could also include creating a video, interactive blog or other creative project demonstrating reflection.</p>	
<p>Group Discussions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop solutions: Invite class to break into small groups and select a facilitator. Ask them to identify one community issue or problem their community partner is working to address or an issue discussed in class. Group members offer ideas on how the issue may be solved. The facilitator can choose whether the group needs to reach a consensus or if they should continue to discuss other options for solutions.

Guidelines for Assessing Reflection

An excellent resource on guidelines for assessing reflection is Bringle and Hatcher’s “Reflection in Service Learning: Making Meaning of Experience” in their *Introduction to Service Learning Toolkit* (1999). Bringle and Hatcher write:

Designing reflection activities for a service learning class requires careful thought about the nature, structure, and function of each component. These considerations must incorporate other class assignments...In addition, we have suggested that effective reflection should observe the following five guidelines: reflection activities should (a) clearly link the service experience to the course content and learning objectives; (b) be structured in terms of description, expectations, and the criteria for assessing the activity; (c) occur regularly during the semester so that students can practice reflection and develop the capacity to engage in deeper and broader reflection; (d) provide feedback from the instructor about at least some of the reflection activities so that students learn how to improve their critical analysts and develop form reflection practice, and (e) include the opportunity for students to explore, clarify, and alter their values. (p. 116)

Bringle and Hatcher also include a table (See Table 2) by James Bradley from “A Model for Evaluating Student Learning in Academically Based Service” (1995). Using table may help to assess a student’s level of engagement reflection and it could also be used to by the students to evaluate their own level of engagement as reflective learners.

An additional resource for assessing reflection is Molee, Henry, Sessa and McKinney-Prupis’s “Assessing Learning in Service-Learning Courses Through Critical Reflection” in *Jounral of Experiential Education* (2010). the article, the authors describe and evaluate a three-step process called the DEAL Model which “moves students (a) **D**escribing their service-learning experience, to (b) **E**xamining this experience in light of specified learning objectives for *academic enhancement, personal growth, civic engagement*, to (c) **A**rticulating their Learning in reflections” (p. 241).

The authors describe a coding method to assess the depth learning which includes a score of 0 if the student does identify and describe a concept. The student scores a 1 if clearly identified and described a concept, a 2 if the student clearly applied the concept in the service learning concept, and a 3 if the student was able to identify, describe, apply, analyze, and synthesize the concept. If did all of the above, and also evaluated the concept, the student received a 4.

Table 2 Bradley's Criteria for Assessing Levels of Reflection	
<u>Level One</u>	
1.	Gives examples of observed behaviors or characteristics of the client or setting, but provides no insight into reasons behind the observation; observations tend to become dimensional and conventional or unassimilated repetitions of what has been heard in class or from peers.
2.	Tends to focus on just one aspect of the situation.
3.	Uses unsupported personal beliefs as frequently as "hard" evidence.
4.	May acknowledge differences of perspective but does not discriminate effectively among them.
<u>Level Two</u>	
1.	Observations are fairly thorough and nuanced although they tend not to be placed in a broader context.
2.	Provides a cogent critique from one perspective, but fails to see the broader system in which the aspect is embedded and other factors that may make change difficult.
3.	Uses both unsupported personal belief and evidence but is beginning to be able to differentiate between them.
4.	Perceives legitimate differences of viewpoint.
5.	Demonstrates a beginning ability to interpret evidence.
<u>Level Three</u>	
1.	Views things from multiple perspectives; able to observe multiple aspects of the situation and place them in context.
2.	Perceives conflicting goals within and among the individuals involved in a situation and recognizes that the differences can be evaluated.
3.	Recognizes that actions must be situationally dependent and understands many of the factors that affect their choice.
4.	Makes appropriate judgments based on reasoning and evidence.
5.	Has a reasonable assessment of the importance of the decisions facing clients and of his or her responsibility as a part of the clients' lives.

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