

## Reflective learning

### Guidance to Reflective learning

Reflection is a fundamental component of service-learning. It turns a simple service experience into a meaningful learning experience.

Reflecting on community experiences deepens the learning and insights and strengthens our commitment to community involvement and social responsibility.

### 3 Areas to creating reflective insights: What?; So What?; Then What?

There are three different areas to cover in creating reflective insights: what happened in the Service-Learning project, what was gained from the project and what difference it makes for the future.

#### **What?**

Objectively describe the project:

- What happened?
- What did you observe?
- What issue is being addressed or population is being served?
- What were the results of the project?
- What events or "critical incidents" occurred and how did you manage?

#### **So what?**

Describe what impact it made on you and the community you served, discussing your feelings, ideas and analysis of the service experience:

- What was learned?
- What difference did the event make?
- Did you learn a new skill?
- How is your experience different from what you expected?
- What impacts the way you view the situation/experience?
- What did you like/dislike about the experience?
- What are some of the pressing needs in the community?
- How did this project address those needs?
- Is there anything you would do differently now the project has been completed?

## Then what?

Consider the broader implications of this service experience:

- What are the root causes of the issue/problem addressed?
- What contributes to the success of a project like this?
- What hinders success?
- What learning occurred for you in this experience?
- How can you apply this learning in your local or global projects?
- If you could do the project again, what would you do differently?
- How can modify this project to suit different communities?

## The 4 important Cs of Reflection

When you are designing or describing or facilitating reflection activities, it can be helpful to follow four guiding principles:

**Continuous:** Critical reflection is an ongoing process. Individuals should process before, during, and after any projects or service-learning experiences they have. Reflection should be a consistent process through a person's education and is integral to a holistic approach to learning.

**Connected:** Critical reflection should ask students to connect their emotional experiences with the content and theories they have learned in their academic courses. Reflection is not simply a descriptive debrief. It is a way of drawing connections among our personal experiences, perspectives and disciplinary theories. Critical reflection enhances deep learning.

**Challenging:** Critically reflecting is not an easy process. It should challenge assumptions and push students to think deeply about themselves, the ways they relate to others, and the things they learn and to think "outside the box-authentic" thinking. This also means that faculty support should be an integral part of this process through discussions, feedback and examples of deep reflection and setting flexible learning outcomes.

**Contextualized:** When building reflective practice, consider where this kind of work is most valuable. Think about how reflection will complement a service-learning community experience, discussion or other class activity. How this SL experience can be adapted and expand in the future.

## References

1. Eyler, J., & Giles, D. E. (1999). *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
2. Eyler, J., Giles, D.E. & Schmiede, A. (1996) *A practitioner's guide to reflection in service-learning*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University.