



## Reflection Tools for Students

### Reflection defined...

In the context of community service-learning, reflection is about processing the service experience through careful considerations about the meaning within the experience: what did you see, who did you meet, why is there a need for such services in the first place, and how does your experience help you to explore or explain the content of your academic course or the program in which you're involved. The act of reflection, therefore, serves as the bridge between experiences and learning.

Taking the time to pause and think about the community service-learning (CSL) experience creates the potential for CSL to be an active, transforming process.

### Tools for Reflection

- Group Discussions
- Group Activities
- Readings
- Journals
- Online Discussions
- Presentations
- Essays
- Photo Reflections
- Service Contracts and Logs
- Portfolios

### Why Reflect?

- Acknowledges that we learn through our life experiences and how we process those experiences.
- Creates the potential for community service-learning to be an active, transforming process
- Offers the opportunity to process the service experience by writing about and/or discussing reactions, exploring feelings and stereotypes, thinking about how your participation is helping or hurting, root causes of community issues, what perpetuates problems in the community, how the agency is addressing these issues, and actions that students and others can take to help address the problem in more ways than just volunteering.
- Ensures you are making a difference at the community agency
- Makes your service experience more meaningful
- Allows us to learn, improve and grow as individuals

## Setting Goals and Journaling

Two of the most common forms of reflection in community service-learning involve goal setting and keeping a personal journal. Setting goals for both the service to be provided and the learning that will occur, is a form of pre-activity reflection that helps to give you direction and to plan for maximizing your experience. Journals are a great tool for ongoing reflection throughout the community service-learning experience. You may want to keep a journal whether or not it is a course or program requirement, as it has been found to be tremendously helpful in making meaning of your experiences in the community. In some cases, journaling will be a mandatory course requirement, and in this circumstance it is important to clearly understand the expectations of your instructor concerning journal creation and submission.

## Goal Setting

### Goal:

- Statements describing what you want to accomplish.
- The ends toward which your efforts will be directed.

### Objectives:

- Specific descriptions of the learning expected from this experience
- Description of the activity or service to be provided and the expected outcomes
- Tools to measure the impact of the learning opportunities and the provided service

### SMART objectives

Specific – is it clear what has to happen?

Measurable – how will you know it has been achieved?

Attainable – are you being realistic?

Result-oriented – does this progress you towards your goals?

Time-limited – when should you have achieved it?

## Journaling

### Questions to get you started:

- Describe the people you met at your service placement site.
- Name three things that stuck in your mind about your service experience.
- Describe the atmosphere of your service placement site.
- Describe some of your interactions.
- What connections do you see between your service experience and what you're learning in your courses? How does it relate to course readings, lectures, discussions?
- What have you learned about a community or societal issue?
- How did this experience challenge any stereotypes or assumptions you've had?
- What public policies are involved and what are their implications?
- What are the root causes of the problems you are observing through experience?
- What are some solutions to the problems you are observing? What is your role in addressing these problems?
- What have you learned about yourself?
- How was your volunteer experience contributed to your growth in any of these areas: civic responsibility, professional development, intellectual pursuits, etc.?
- What was the best/worst/most challenging thing that happened in your volunteer placement?
- Do you feel a part of the community in which you are involved?
- How do you define community?
- Has your definition of learning or education changed through this experience?

### Tips for Journaling

- Be honest about your observations, feelings, etc...
- Don't turn your journal into a log book of tasks, events, times and dates.
- Write freely and don't feel restricted by grammar, spelling and other details.
- Write in your journal regularly, even if it's just to jot down ideas, thoughts, etc... that you can go back to later to elaborate on.

### WORKS CITED

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