



Canadian Association for Community Service-Learning  
l'Association Canadienne pour l'Apprentissage par le Service Communautaire

## Reflection Tools for Faculty

### Reflection defined...

In relation to community service-learning, reflection is “the link that ties student experiences in the community to academic learning” (Eyler and Giles 1999:171). Hutching and Wutzdorff (1988:15) define reflection as “the ability to step back and ponder one’s own experience, to abstract from it some meaning or knowledge relevant to some other experiences”. From a pedagogical standpoint, reflection clarifies, for the student, how course content can impact on how we understand community and how community experience can reshape how we view course content.

### Reflection Tools for Faculty

*Two tools that can be used for reflection are journaling and discussion (see Jakubowski 2003:26).*

### Journaling

*Journaling provides a medium through which students can record their actions and observations, as well their emotional and intellectual reactions to community experiences (Sullivan-Caitlin 2002:44).* When students are asked to keep a journal they should be advised that part of the assignment is quite personal and subjective, while the other part of the assignment is more structured and involves application. In essence, there ought to be three sections to each journal entry. During the first section, students are asked to **describe** what they have seen and done during their community experience. The second section involves **reflecting on/reacting to** the experience. Specifically, students are asked to journal about their emotional reactions to the experience. For example, what has been meaningful? What has been disappointing? The final section of the journal, from an academic standpoint, is the most important and usually the most challenging for students. This is the **apply** section. During the application section of each journal entry, students are asked to explain how their community experiences are related to the concepts, ideas, and theories that are being studied in their related courses.

## Discussion

Beyond the journal-- a more personal reflection tool, is discussion. Discussion invites more structured reflection. Through discussion, experiences are "collectivized" (Arnold et al. 1991:54), allowing more voices to be heard and similarities and patterns among experiences to be identified. Discussion is a valuable reflection tool in a number of respects (Brookfield and Preskill 1999:6-7):

1. It helps participants reach a more critically informed understanding about the topic or topics under consideration.
2. It enhances participant's self-awareness and their capacity for self-critique.
3. It fosters an appreciation among participants for the diversity of opinions that invariably emerges when viewpoints are exchanged openly and honestly.
4. It can act as a catalyst to helping people take informed action in the world.

**Through reflection, students develop a better understanding of their roles as "citizens" in the world.**

**For more information on using reflection to enhance learning, the reader is encouraged to visit Campus Compact's site Using Structured Reflection to Enhance Learning Through Service:  
[www.compact.org/disciplines/reflection/](http://www.compact.org/disciplines/reflection/)**

### WORKS CITED

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