Service-Learning Reflections

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Reflection is the Hyphen in Service-Learning

It is what links the experience in the community with the learning goals of the classroom.

Without it the service underachieves in its role as an instrument of learning.

Without reflection, a service experience can actually reinforce students’ negative stereotypes.
“Reflection”

Latin for “bend back”
   To turn one’s mind’s eye back on the experience that already happened to gain meaningful insights

What we see in the mirror
   To see ourselves from the outside

Thus, reflection involves learning about what is out there as well as about ourselves in relationship to it.
The Spiral of Learning through Reflection
But Reflection Must Be Guided

What do you want students to learn?

1. Subject matter (facts/understandings)
2. Skill development (critical thinking, communications, etc.)
3. Personal development (career exploration, values, etc.)
4. Civic responsibility (commitment to community)
Provide Prompts for Each Learning Type

1. Application of the subject matter to the real world ("Theory X does/does not fit in this case.")

2. Skills ("I learned to conduct an interview." “My style became more directive with the children at Sulphur Springs Elementary School.”)

3. Personal development ("I discovered that I really like to work with the elderly.” “I discovered that I have difficulty with people who are _______”)

4. Civic responsibility ("Kids need to become more involved in their community if their voice is to be heard.")
Reflection Needs to be Continuous and Parallel the Learning Growth

Early—first impressions and simple descriptions of what is happening/try to remove judgments
Once comfort level is reached—explanations of what is happening
Finally—what impact does this have? How has it transformed me?

What?/So What?/Now What?
Reflection Requires Frequent Feedback

Not just handed in at the end
The learning has to be guided (to move up the spiral)
Facilitators and not instructors

  Suggestive comments and not criticisms (even when express very prejudicial interpretations)
  Ask to look for alternative explanations rather than saying they are wrong

Look for change over time—real learning is transformational
Types of Reflection Activities

Individual

Journals (see handout)
- Stream of consciousness
- Double entry—experience/course material
- Critical incident—”ah ha moment”/what happened and how it changed you

Reflective Essays
- more structured questions
- Introduction to Urban Studies WA’s

Portfolios
- outline what you want in them
Introduction to Urban Studies

WA #1
Which service-learning project in Sulphur Springs are you doing? What do you expect to learn from it? How do you expect it will change you?

WA #2
In your own words, explain the two opposing theories of the causes of poverty that Tough describes. Using what you know about poverty in Sulphur Springs, critically analyze these theories.

According to Tough, what does Canada mean by “contamination”? What is your service-learning project and, using specific examples, how does it promote this goal?

Etc.
Types of Reflection Activities

**Group**

**In-class dialogues**
- Share experiences
- Relate to readings
- Students learn to become active listeners and to make non-accusatory comments

**E-mail or Blackboard discussions (monitor)**

**Final Presentations**
Final Presentations

Closure/celebration for all participants
Product for the community
Student Planned

WA #5 What is the purpose of the presentation? What major points should be communicated? What would be the best way to communicate these?

Classroom time to prepare

Allow for community/student dialogue at the end (joint reflection)
A Photo OP!!!!!!!