



Reflection 101

Why Reflection?

Reflection *makes meaning* of the service experience. It enables us to continuously grow in our leadership. It enables us to express how the service has influenced our insight and perspectives about the life of another person, and helps on our journey to a deeper understanding of self, world, and community.

What is Good Reflection?

Good reflection links experience to learning. It is guided (facilitated, led), occurs regularly over the duration of the service, allows for feedback and assessment by the others, and fosters the exploration and clarification of values. *Good reflection is continuous, connected, challenging and contextualized.*

- Continuous: Before, during and after the experience
- Connected: The experience is directly linked to the goals and outcomes of our learning/program
- Challenging: We are challenged to think about what we experienced, underlying systems, and how privilege and power ties into service and learning
- Contextualized: The service experience informs learning and learning informs the service experience

Reflection Examples for Service Activity

Reflection can and should be kept simple enough to be effective in the time available and for the level of service engaged. Reflection on a neighborhood leaf clean-up, for example, might be quite different than reflection on tutoring, or on serving food to the homeless.

1. *Writing*: journals, poetry, essays--is one of the most common forms of reflection. Many students are more comfortable writing about things than speaking about them.

Example: Students each write a question that has arisen from their service experience. They pass the question on, anonymously, to another student in the room. In a brief paragraph, the other student comments on the question itself: what *more* questions does it raise? Students can then discuss their responses.

2. *Role playing*: gives the student a chance to think about how it feels to be in the shoes of someone else whose circumstances may be very different from his/her own.

Example: Two students take two roles: one is the student, the other is one of the people at the service site. The facilitator can offer a general idea of the "script" or it can be completely ad hoc. The other students listen and comment.

3. *Photos and Artifacts*: Visual representation of the students' experiences can be powerful, and addresses the learning style of students who are more visual and less verbal.

Example: A student presents something that symbolizes the service experience for them. Other students guess what the artifact means; the presenter responds.

4. *Art and Music*: Art can be a powerful statement about experience. Paintings, songs, films can all be commentaries on social issues. Students can relate these to their own experience.

Example: Students watch a video or listen to a particular piece of music, and discuss how it relates to their service work and the issues raised: it could be an ethnic expression, for example; or a political commentary.



Reflection Questions:

Questions **before** service-learning experience

- What do you expect to see today?
- What do you expect to learn today?

Questions **during** service-learning experience

- How does your service benefit the community?
- How does this experience benefit you?
- How does this relate with your coursework? Your career? Your Vocation?
- What about your presence is benefiting the organization/people you are working with?
- What about your presence is challenging for the organization/people that you are working with?

Questions **after** service-learning experience

- What have been the best and worst parts of this experience?
- What communities/identity groups are you a member of? How might this be related with your commitment to service?
- How did you perceive others in this experience (classmates, organizational leaders, members of the community)? How do you think they perceived you?
- What will you remember about this experience in one week? One month? One year? What do you want community members/organizations to remember about you/PLU in one week? One month? One year?
- How do you imagine your life may be different in one year? How do you imagine community members and organizations lives will be different in one year?
- How does what you are learning in your classes intersect with this experience? How does your role as a student leader intersect with this experience?

General Questions:

- What is service? What is the difference between service and volunteering?
- Has your definition of service changed? Why? How? Should everyone do service?

“I was taught that the world had a lot of problems; that I could struggle and change them; that intellectual and material gifts brought the privilege and responsibility of sharing with others less fortunate; and that service is the rent each of us pay for a living . . . the very purpose of life, and not something you do in your spare time or after you have reached your personal goals.”

- Marian Wright Edelman

Resources:

Service Reflection Toolkit, Northwest Service Academy, Metro Center, Portland, OR, www.northwestserviceacademy.org
Campus Compact; www.campuscompact.org