
Reflection

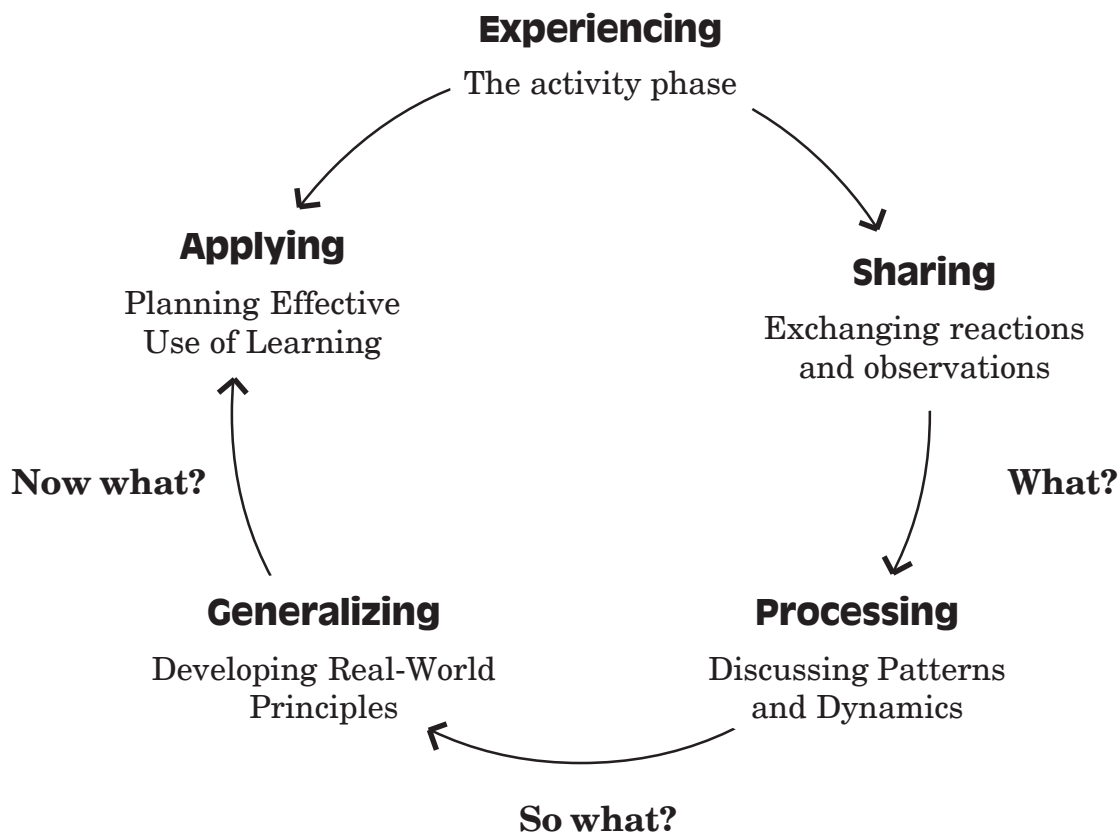
Reflection leads to understanding, which in turn leads to more informed action. Effective reflection leads to a better understanding of social problems and to the quest of better solutions.

Reflection is one of the most important tools to ensure a successful service-learning experience. It is the means through which someone can make sense of what they are seeing and doing. Reflection activities can include writing a journal, newsletter, poem, or report; using art such as painting a mural, making a sculpture, or putting together a scrapbook of photos. In the classroom more structured reflection activities such as directed reading, student narratives, ethical case studies, and experiential research papers are often used.

“If exposure is essential, still more so is the reflection. Insight doesn’t happen often on the click of the moment like a lucky snapshot, but comes in its own time and more slowly and from nowhere but within.” – Eudora Welty

The complete reflection process is essentially never-ending and consists of pre, during, and post community involvement reflection. It stays with students during every step of their journey and assists them in searching through the basic questions of: what, so what, and now what?

The Experiential Learning Cycle



Wysocki, Anne (the material on this page was originally adapted by Pamela J. Wilson from material published by J.E Jones and JW Pfeiffer, eds, the 1973 handbook for group facilitators-it has been further modified by Anne Wysocki for the Corporation for National Service

Tell me, and I forget, show me and I remember, involve me, and I understand. – Confucius

According to the “Practitioners Guide to Reflection in Service-Learning,” there are four important principles to keep in mind for effective critical reflection which they call the four C’s of reflection: **Continuous, Connected, Challenging, and Contextualized.**¹

Continuous reflection...ensures that reflection, as well as community involvement, are ongoing components in the learners education. Often short-term experiences can lead to more complex long-term involvement which gives the student extensive material for observation, reflection, and experimentation. (see Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle later in this section). Continuous Reflection also means that reflection should be utilized before, during, and after an experience. ²

Connected reflection...is a component that most often occurs in the classroom and specifically in service-learning courses. Many of the students involved in community involvement programs will be in a service-learning course. Connected reflection is essentially the component that links the “service” they are doing at their community organizations with the structured “learning” they are working through in the classroom. Without structured reflection, “students may fail to bridge the gap between the concrete service experience and the abstract issues discussed in class; students may become frustrated and wonder why they are involved in the community as part of their course work.” ³

Challenging reflection...“requires intervention on the part of a teacher or colleague who is prepared to pose questions and propose unfamiliar or even uncomfortable ideas for consideration by the learner.”⁴ It is important in this situation that the students feel they are in a safe and mutually respectful atmosphere where they can freely express their opinions, ideas and thoughts.

Contextualized reflection...ensures that the reflection activities or topics are appropriate and meaningful in relation to the experiences of the students. For example, should the reflection be more formal or informal? Or should it occur in proximity to the community the students will be working with? Does the reflection topic coincide with the considerations and issues that the students have been expressing ? Contextualized reflection takes into consideration all these components, which makes for a more meaningful and educational reflection session.

1 Eyler, Janet & Giles, Dwight (1996) *A Practitioners Guide to Reflection in Service Learning* Nashville: Vanderbilt University, p.17

2 Ibid, p.18

3 Eyler, Janet & Giles, Dwight (1996) *A Practitioners Guide to Reflection in Service Learning* Nashville: Vanderbilt University, p.19

4 ibid, p.19

“Get Up, Get Into It, Get Involved”

Student Training at the Career and Community Learning Center

What is GUGIIGI?

The “Get Up, Get Into It, Get Involved” training is a three-hour interactive session hosted by CCLC that examines important issues relevant to students who participate in the community. The training is divided into three sections entitled *Tools, Diversity, and Big Picture*.

The Tools Section touches on skills that enable students to get the most out of their community involvement and have a successful service-learning experience. Such skills include recognizing and respecting boundaries, active listening, clear communication, personal responsibility, confidentiality, and problem solving.

The Diversity Section of the training explores understanding one’s own cultural frame and awareness of the assumptions and biases one unknowingly views the world through. This section also discusses racism in our community and what it means to live in a society with institutionalized systems of privilege and oppression.

The Big Picture Section specifically looks at the issue of unequal distribution of wealth and power in our society and how it connects to systems of oppression. The section also challenges students to analyze the notion of “service” and the paternalistic relationship that can be implicit in service.

How Can Community Partners be Involved in GUGIIGI?

CCLC staff encourages Community Partners to co-facilitate or lead GUGIIGI trainings at the beginning of each semester. Facilitating not only provides a connection to students and an opportunity to understand their perspectives on entering into community work, it also helps develop leadership and facilitation skills that can be used in your own professional work. Training for Facilitators is provided on a one-to-one basis. Please contact the CCLC staff if you are interested in participating.

Who Participates in GUGIIGI Trainings?

The students who participate in this training series are starting work at a community organization either through a service-learning course or of their own initiative. The training and reflection sessions provide a vehicle through which students can further explore the issues they encounter in their community involvement experience and empower them to critically examine those issues, to connect the theory they are learning in their classes to their experience, and give them the tools to take action for social change.

Doing Reflection On-Site at Your Organization

Your Role as a Co-Educator

One of the best places for reflection to take place is at the community organization site. This is highly effective because it brings together students who are engaged in similar work and allows them as a group to reflect on how that work relates to their lives and the world around them. As experts in the field, reflection activities also give site coordinators a chance to be a co-educator in service-learning and provide insight and guidance to students.

Ideas for On-Site Service-Learning Reflection

- Discuss and/or have a speaker on a certain issue that relates to the work being done.
- Have guided discussion questions in large or small groups that challenge students to critically think about their experience.
- Find events in the community that students can attend together and organize a reflection session around that.
- Find articles, poems, stories or songs that relate to the work students are doing and create and discuss questions around relevant social issues.
- Use Case Studies or Role Plays for students to act out and discuss something they did not know how to handle. Have the students role play appropriate and inappropriate responses to the situation.
- Ask students to create a map that shows how their service-learning experience connects to larger issues at the state/national/global level and where community involvement and citizenship fit in.
- Use a video or documentary to elicit discussion
- Write letters-to-the-editor or to government officials that address issues important to students and the community organization or that help inform the general public.
- Make a collage where students express how they view their work site and their work.
- Ask students to bring in a song that reflects their service-learning experience.
- Have students write a poem that reflects their service-learning experience.

Resources For Reflection

Many of these items listed below can be found in the Career and Community Learning Center library please feel free to stop by and check them out.

Websites

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse:
www.servicelearning.org

Reflection Ideas: Center for Service Learning at Denison University
<http://www.denison.edu/service-learning/refideas.html>

Books and Manuals

The *Student Training Manual* at the Career and Community Learning Center has a compilation of over 35 different reflection activities and icebreakers.

The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action. Basic Books. 1983.

Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (1996). *Reflection activities for the college classroom.* Paper Presented at the National Gathering, June 21, 1996.

Hatcher, J.A., & Bringle, R.G. (1997). *Reflections: Bridging the gap between service and learning.* *Journal of College Teaching*, 45, 153-158. [Reprinted in *NSEE Quarterly*, 1999, 24(3), 12-16.]

Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (1999). *Reflection in service-learning: Making meaning of experience.* *Educational Horizons*, 77(4), 179-185.

Eyler J., Giles D., and A. Schmiede. 1996. *A Practitioner's Guide to Reflection in Service-Learning: Student Voices and Reflection.* Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University.

Reed, J., Koliba C., *Facilitating Reflection: A Manual for Leaders and Educators.* http://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/reflection_manual/

Mezinow, Jack. (Ed.). (1990) *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning.*

National Helpers Network, Inc. (1991). *Reflection: The Key to Service Learning.* New York: National Helpers Network.

Silcox, Harry C. (1995). *A How to Guide to Reflection: Adding Cognitive Learning to Community Service Programs.* Holland, PA: Brighton Press, Inc.