

Service Learning Reflection Toolkit¹



Reflection is a crucial part of community service, which allows volunteers to look back on, think critically about, and learn from their service experience. Reflection may include acknowledging and/or sharing of reactions, feelings, observations, and ideas about anything regarding the activity. Reflection can happen through writing, speaking, listening, reading, drawing, acting, and any other way you can imagine. Reflection is the key component of service learning. It is what distinguishes service learning from volunteering and community service.²

Reflection provides faculty the means to assess the experiential learning that occurs when students participate in service activities outside of the classroom. Reflection also allows students to synthesize the observed data gleaned from service activities and connect the new knowledge with the formal knowledge obtained from classroom activities and materials.

To reflect in service learning means to think critically about and analyze emotional responses to service activities in the context of course content and the learning objectives of a particular course or curriculum. Several activities encourage reflection to occur and are included within this toolkit.

Faculty and community partners play key roles in facilitating reflection by creating a safe environment for discussion, setting guidelines for the activities, and providing feedback and assessment of the students' newly gained knowledge. Through faculty guided reflection activities, students can expand their knowledge beyond concrete facts, reach a new understanding of social problems, interpret real-life situations, compare formal and informal knowledge, propose practical and meaningful solutions to societal problems, and take informed action.

Reflection activities vary and can be both formal and informal in nature. Designing effective reflection activities often depends on the nature of the course material and the stated learning objectives in the course. Effective reflection activities with well-defined criteria for evaluation may be included in the course syllabus.

Effective Reflection:

- Links service to course objectives and fosters civic responsibility
- occurs throughout the course and not just at the end
- is structured, guided, purposeful, with well-defined criteria for evaluation

¹ Info taken from "Service Reflection Toolkit" Northwest Service Academy, Portland, OR (www.northwestacademy.org)

² Adapted from the Reflection Toolkit compiled by Toni S. Hartsfield

- challenges current realities, perhaps creating cognitive dissonance and/or conflict; see “Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom” (Warren, <http://bokcenter.fas.harvard.edu/docs/hotmoments.html>) or “Facilitating Reflection” (Reed and Koliba, http://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/reflection_manual/)
- goes beyond the descriptive nature of the experience and asks students to interpret and
- evaluate the relevance of their experience in relation to classroom knowledge with real-life service experience
- asks students to apply new information to real-life problems and situations

Bringle and Hatcher (1999) posit that reflection activities should (a) clearly link the service experience to the course content and learning objectives; (b) be structured in terms of description, expectations, and the criteria for assessing the activity; (c) occur regularly during the semester so that students can develop the capacity to engage in deeper and broader examination of issues; (d) provide feedback from the instructor so that students learn how to improve their critical analysis and reflective practice; and (e) include the opportunity for students to explore, clarify, and alter their personal values.

Benefits of Reflection³

- Gives meaning to the experience (was goal accomplished, how did we do, how is community served by this, how is this part of a larger effort, etc.)
- Provides an opportunity to establish expectations (individually, team)
- Can help volunteers understand the limitations and opportunities of the service site or community organization
- Relieves tension and provides re-energizing and renewal (especially important when service is emotionally challenging)
- Can create a sense of accomplishment that is crucial, especially where there are limited external rewards
- Can create a habit of appreciating ourselves
- Integration of service into the rest of one’s life – developing a “spirit” of service and civic-mindedness
- Improved service – As volunteers examine the effects of their behavior, they discover ways to improve the quality and quantity of their service.
- Can create a sense of closure, especially important after a long service period, project, or emotional experience.
- Personal and Team Development:
 - Fosters life-long learning skills– develops an ability to learn from positive and negative experiences
 - “Reality Check” – guards against reinforcing inaccurate perceptions/biases
 - Gain a broader perspective of other’s experience
 - Builds community among the volunteers
 - Personal Problem solving increases personal empowerment, confidence

³ Info taken from “Learning Through Service,” Kate McPherson, Project Service Leadership, and “Possible Outcomes of Service Learning,” National Youth Leadership Council.

- Group problem solving creates shared understandings, open communication, and better teamwork
- Clarifies values as volunteers confront new situations
- Provides practice clarifying goals and making choices to accomplish these goals
- Encourages volunteers to do higher level thinking, as they look for root causes of complex issues
- Acknowledges skills gained builds confidence

What? So What? Now What?

This is a well-used and successful model to assist you in designing the reflection activities. Although you can derive learning from each question, focusing on all three will provide broader insights and keep participants from getting stuck on only the facts or just the feelings. Whereas the “What? So What? Now What?” model focuses on group processing and discussion, ideal reflection activities allow the participants to reflect publicly and privately, utilizing a variety of forms of expression.

1. What? (Reporting what happened, objectively). Without judgment or interpretation, participants describe in detail the facts and event(s) of the service experience.

Questions include:

- *What happened?*
- *What did you observe?*
- *What issue is being addressed or population is being served?*
- *What were the results of the project?*
- *What events or “critical incidents” occurred?*
- *What was of particular notice?*
- *How did you feel about that?*

2. So What? (What did you learn? What difference did the event make?) Participants discuss their feelings, ideas, and analysis of the service experience.

Questions can also be focused on the meaning or importance of the activity to:

The Participant:

- *Did you learn a new skill or clarify an interest?*
- *Did you hear, smell, or feel anything that surprised you?*
- *What feelings or thoughts seem most strong today?*
- *How is your experience different from what you expected?*
 - *What struck you about that?*
 - *How was that significant?*
- *What impacts the way you view the situation/experience? (What lens are you viewing from?) What do the critical incidents mean to you?*
- *How did you respond to them?*
- *What did you like/dislike about the experience?*

The Recipient:

- *Did the “service” empower the recipient to become more self-sufficient?*
- *What did you learn about the people/community that we served?*
- *What might impact the recipient’s views or experience of the project?*

The Community:

- *What are some of the pressing needs/issues in the community?*

- *How does this project address those needs?*
- *How, specifically, has the community benefited?*
- *What is the least impact you can imagine for the project?*
- *With unlimited creativity, what is the most impact on the community that you can imagine?*

The Group (for group projects):

- *In what ways did the group work well together?*
- *What does that suggest to you about the group?*
- *How might the group have accomplished its task more effectively?*
- *In what ways did others help you today? (and vice versa)*
- *How were decisions made?*
- *Were everybody's ideas listened to?*

3. Now What? (How will they think or act in the future as a result of this experience?)

Participants consider broader implications of the service experience and apply learning. Be aware to strike a balance between realistic, reachable goals and openness to spontaneity and change.

Some questions include:

- *What seem to be the root causes of the issue/problem addressed?*
- *What kinds of activities are currently taking place in the community related to this project?*
- *What contributes to the success of projects like this? What hinders success?*
- *What learning occurred for you in this experience? How can you apply this learning?*
- *What would you like to learn more about, related to this project or issue?*
- *What follow-up is needed to address any challenges or difficulties?*
- *What information can you share with your peers or community volunteers?*
- *If you were in charge of the project, what would you do to improve it?*
- *If you could do the project again, what would you do differently?*
- *What would "complete" the service?*

Suggestions for Active Reflection in the classroom, at home, or for assessment purposes

Journaling: A Primer

Journaling is one of the best reflection tools. Ideally, the program or project would allow for a ten to fifteen minute period every day for the volunteers to journal; preferably at the end of the day or during/after a debriefing. It is helpful if staff or the project leader provides substantial structure to insure quality, conscientious journaling, and even more helpful if the person leading the reflection activity is journaling him or herself! Regardless of the time allotted, it is important to encourage participants to write whatever comes to mind, and to not worry about grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. This entails a commitment to confidentiality that nobody will ever share what they have written unless they want to. You also want to be definite and clear about the time allotted, (five to fifteen minutes) and let them know when it is almost finished.

Journaling Methods

Clusters: Have people shout out words or phrases that describe the day. Ask each person to take two minutes to write five or six words in random spaces on their journaling page. Give a short speech about the interconnectedness of everything, the web of life, Quantum Physics, or whatever and ask them to do a free write focusing on those five or six items and how they are related.

The Critical Incident: Choose an incident that involved the entire team and give them a couple of minutes to think about the incident. Then ask them to write a detailed, factual report of what happened, making sure to answer the four “W” questions, “who, what, where, when.” You can then have participants share their stories to see how they differ from another.

In this journal, students analyze a particular event that occurred during the week. By answering one of the following sets of prompts, students are asked to consider their thoughts and reactions and articulate the action they plan to take in the future: Describe a significant event that occurred as a part of the service learning experience. Why was this significant to you? What underlying issues (societal, interpersonal) surfaced as a result of this experience? How will this incident influence your future behavior? Another set of questions for a critical incident journal includes the following prompts: Describe an incident or situation that created a dilemma for you in terms of what to say or do. What is the first thing you thought of to say or do? List three other actions you might have taken. Which of the above seems best to you now and why do you think this is the best response? (Julie Hatcher, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis)

Dialogue: This is a good journal choice for developing observation and communication skills. Ask participants in the morning to pay special attention to conversations they hear throughout the day, including light conversations between staff and volunteers, volunteers and sponsors or stakeholders, etc. Ask them to pay special attention to mannerisms, accents, and the tone of the conversation. Later, have the participants pick a dialogue and duplicate as closely as possible how it went. This should be done in a light-hearted manner on a light-hearted day to avoid a “bashing” session. This is an exercise that gets better with time, as their observation and retention skills improve.

Students submit loose-leaf pages from a dialogue journal bi-weekly (or otherwise at appropriate intervals) for the faculty to read and comment on. While labor intensive for the instructor, this can provide continual feedback to students and prompt new questions for students to consider throughout the course. (Suzanne Goldsmith, 1995)

Different Perspectives: A great one for developing empathy skills. Ask participants to recall a specific occurrence from the day that involved some degree of conflict. Ask them to assume the viewpoint opposite that which they actually held during this conflict (or the viewpoint they were the least empathetic with) and write a description of the conflict from this perspective. This can include what happened, their role in it, what they want, what they envision as the ideal solution. Good debrief questions are, “How did it feel to do this writing, how were you able to get in their shoes or how was it difficult, what is one thing you realized through this writing.”

Double-entry Journal: When using a double-entry journal, students write one-page entries each week: Students describe their personal thoughts and reactions to the service experience on the left page of the journal, and write about key issues from class discussions or readings on the right

page of the journal. Students then draw arrows indicating relationships between their personal experiences and course content. This type of journal is a compilation of personal data and a summary of course content in preparation for a more formal reflection paper at the end of the semester. (Cross and Angelo, 1993)

Exit cards: Brief note card reflections turned in at the end of each class period. Students are asked to reflect on disciplinary content from class discussion and explain how this information relates to their service involvement. Exit cards can be read by instructors in order to gain a better understanding of student experiences. Instructors may want to summarize key points and communicate these back to students during the next class.

The Fly on the Wall: Ask participants to take a couple moments to reflect on the day (where they've been, what they've done, whom they've worked with, tools they've used). Then ask them to pretend they were a "fly on the wall" observing but not participating in the scene, and write a short descriptive passage based on their observations. You can also use any animal or plant or person that was near the project site.

Guided Imagery: Encourage participants to relax, close their eyes, get comfortable, notice their breathing, etc. and read a guided imagery. Then, ask the participants to free-write about what they experienced.

The Free Write: The easiest and perhaps most effective journaling method, wherein people that think they "can't write" or "have nothing to say" realize how much and how well they can write. For a predetermined amount of time participants engage in continuous writing by keeping their pens moving . . . even if only to write, "I don't know what to write." It is helpful to trigger the free-write with an open-ended sentence such as "I don't think I'll ever forget . . ." or "If I could do one thing differently, I would . . ." or make up your own! Let participants know when they are nearing the end of the writing time, and then ask them how it went.

Highlighted Journal: Before students submit the reflective journal, they reread personal entries and, using a highlighter, mark sections of the journal that directly relate to concepts discussed in the text or in class. This makes it easier for the instructor to identify how the student is reflecting on his or her experience in light of course content. (Gary Hesser, Augsburg College)

Key Phrase Journal: In this type of journal, students must integrate terms and key phrases within their journal entries. The instructor can provide a list of terms at the beginning of the semester or for a certain portion of the text. Students could also create their own list of key phrases to include. Journal entries are written within the framework of the course content and become an observation of how course content is evident in the service experience. (Julie Hatcher, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis)

The Letter: Have participants write a letter to themselves, a relative, a historical figure, a political figure, etc. describing the project and what it means to them, or ask for some piece of advice, etc.

Personal Journal: Students write freely about their experience, usually done weekly. Students submit personal journals periodically to faculty, or keep as a reference to use at the end of the

experience when putting together an academic essay reflecting their experience. (Julie Hatcher, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis)

Three-part Journal: Students are asked to divide each page of their journal into thirds, and write weekly entries throughout the course. In the top section, students describe some aspect of the service experience. In the middle of the page, they analyze how course content relates to the service experience. And finally, an application section prompts students to comment on how the experience and course content can be applied to their personal or professional life. (Robert Bringle, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis)

Good Reflection Writing/Sharing Questions:

- What is service? What is the difference between service and volunteering?
- Has your definition of service changed? Why? How? Should everyone do service?
- Describe a problem the team has been having. List possible solutions.
- Make a list of the skills used and learned on this project.
- What have been the best and worst parts of this project?
- Describe a person you met on your project. What are their attitudes about the project, where might those attitudes have come from?
- What communities/identity groups are you a member of? How might this be related with your commitment to service?
- Have you ever felt hopelessness, despair, discouragement or burnout related to your service? How have you dealt with this? How can reflection help?
- What are some of the problems facing the world today? (mind map) How does your service connect or address these issues?
- Identify a person, group, or community that you got to know this year, who is significantly “other” for you. What are the needs or challenges facing them that particularly got to you? What is one way in which you’ve allowed yourself to be changed as a result of knowing these folks?
- What community need, work challenge, or public issue have you given the most deliberate, critical, analytical thought to this year? What are some factors and facts you looked at, data you considered? Who or what resources did you consult?
- Over the next two years, what’s one issue or challenge you would like to be a more respected authority on? How will this be a challenge for you?
- Dedicating ourselves to service rather than selfishness or our own comfort can be scary. We risk honestly getting to know others who are different, and come face to face, day after day, with pain, abuse, hatred, violence. What are two fears or inner worries you have, that somehow keep you from being the person of service you hope to become? What is something in your life that brings your courage, that gives you hope?
- What is one way in which you expect the community you are serving to nourish, nurture, or satisfy you? What are two ways you will take responsibility for that community?
- Summarize the most important things you will take with you from the experience.
- Your commitment to service can involve many things, including keeping your word (also being realistic when we say “yes”) and resisting the temptation, at least some of the time, to move on to new causes and needs. Think of something this year that you really didn’t want to continue doing, but you kept doing it the best you could. Was there something you got out of that?

- How is the concept you are currently learning about in class reflected in a recent situation at your service site? What are the similarities and differences between the concept and reality?
- If the situation is different in practice (at your site) than in theory (in class), why do you think this is? Why might agencies and people do things differently than theory? What explains the difference?
- If the situation is the same or similar in practice and theory, what can you predict about the outcomes for the clients the agency serves? Will efforts be successful? Why or why not?
- How is the agency or school meeting the needs of its community, and are these efforts effective? Using information you are learning in class and at the site, critique the agency's efforts using a SWOT analysis (Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (internal and external)).
- List some alternative methods for meeting the needs of the population you are serving. Based on what you are learning in class, why would these methods be good responses to the issues or problems you have observed?
- Before you interact with the agency's clients or school's students, what expectations, assumptions, and "prejudgments" do you have? Where did these come from, and why do you think you have them?
- After doing service learning for a few weeks, how have your previous expectations assumptions and prejudgments about the nature of the agency or its clients changed or strengthened? Why?
- At your service site, what are you learning about the people or agency you are serving?
- How does this learning compare to what you have learned in class?
- Point out any information you are learning in class that reinforces or challenges what you know from your service experience.
- How is this agency or school valuable to its community and our society? What role does it play in the community?
- What useful skills did you discover while serving? How might you apply these newly discovered skills in other situations?
- How did you refine existing skills and develop new ones?
- Did you use a skill at your service site that you didn't think you would need or use? Why?
- Describe something you learned as a result of a disappointment or a "failure" during your service experience. How does this new learning translate into your life beyond this class, i.e., how will you apply this learning after this course ends?
- What is happening that is positive about your experience? What does this tell you about yourself or about the site?
- How did you feel today at your service site? What motivated you to continue serving at this site? What does this tell you about yourself and what you are learning in class?
- How does this experience connect to your long-term goals, and what knowledge from your service activity will you utilize to reach these goals?
- How have you changed as a result of this service experience? How will these changes influence your future behaviors?

- Describe ideal citizens and what qualities they possess, what values they hold, and what actions they take within their communities. How has your service experience informed your image of an ideal citizen?

Other Reflection Activities⁴

The following strategies are based on Robert Bringle and Julie Hatcher's "Reflection in Service Learning: Making Meaning of Experience" (1999) as well as examples from community college faculty around the country. The activities presented here have been adapted by Diane Sloan, Miami-Dade College, and Toni S. Hartsfield, formerly of Bellevue Community College.

Class Discussions (Structured)

This is a technique where faculty creates questions to guide group discussion in the classroom. Use structured reflection sessions during regular class time and throughout the course, if all students are involved in service, or modify class discussions if some students are not in service. Students can learn about the diversity of services and populations, see connections between different populations and agencies, collectively share successes and problem-solve challenges at their sites, and learn about societal patterns.

For sample reflection questions, see above.

Class Presentations

Class presentations are an effective technique to use during the middle and at the end of a course, and can be designed for individuals or groups. Faculty should have clear and well-defined expectations and criteria for these projects, so students will understand how faculty will evaluate their learning and the quality of the presentations, with emphasis on the former.

Students share their learning with peers through a video, slide show, bulletin board, PowerPoint, Web page, panel discussion, or a persuasive speech. This is an opportunity for students to synthesize and summarize their learning over the entire course and connect the classroom knowledge and out-of-classroom learning. It gives students a chance to practice their presentation skills and to display their work in a public format. A similar presentation can be offered to the community agency as a final recognition of the students' involvement.

Community Mural

Creating a mural is a more nontraditional approach to student reflection. This technique enables students to express feelings and learning from the service experience and also allows for a creative collective statement about aspects of an issue facing a community. Murals are excellent final projects for the end of a course, and can be developed in concept and final product over the entire length of the course. Students can use various sources (magazines, newspapers, other art materials) to build their mural.

Faculty can use class time or out-of-class time for this work. Faculty need to define well the criteria for evaluation of content, yet allow freedom for means of expression. Display final projects at a community site or on campus. In addition, students may want to create a community mural that can be permanently displayed at an agency or community site.

⁴ Adapted from the Reflection Toolkit compiled by Toni S. Hartsfield.

Contracts and Logs

Service learning contracts and logs formalize the learning and service objectives for the course and may be used from the beginning to the end of the coursework. In concert with the faculty and agency supervisor, the student creates a contract that outlines learning and service objectives and identifies the range of tasks to be completed during the service experience, as well as the goals to be achieved and skills to be learned and/or refined.

A service log is a continuous summary of specific activities completed and progress towards accomplishing the service learning goals. Students can use the contract and the log to assess their progress toward meeting the identified objectives and reflect on how the experience affected their ability to complete tasks and achieve their goals and objectives. Students could also submit these items as part of a service learning portfolio.

Directed Readings

Directed readings are additional readings outside of the traditional course textbooks that provide a broader or local context of social responsibility and civic literacy that can be used throughout the course. These readings are a means of enhancing a systemic understanding of societal concerns of students engaged in service. Faculty can use directed readings to challenge students to apply their current knowledge within a discipline to current social needs and current events.

Directed readings take all literary forms (newspaper articles, short stories, novels, poetry, essay, etc.) and can become the basis for class discussions or directed writings. Faculty can also allow students to create their own list of directed readings through web searches for key words, such as citizenship, service learning, civic responsibility, individual rights and responsibilities, etc.

Directed Writings

Faculty can use directed writings throughout a course to prompt students to reflect on their service experiences within the framework of course content. The instructor identifies a section from the textbook or class readings (i.e., quotes, statistics, concepts) and structures a question for students to answer (see Sample Reflection Questions in Section 2). Faculty can provide a list of directed writings at the beginning of the course, or distribute it to students as the course progresses.

Faculty can also ask students to create their own lists of directed readings/questions based on the course textbooks or materials. Directed writings allow students to analyze course content critically and apply it to current problems and issues.

E-mail Discussion Groups/Blackboard Discussion Groups

Through e-mail or blackboard, students can create a dialogue with the instructor and peers involved in service projects. This dialogue can be ongoing (weekly) or directed at certain times throughout the course. Students write summaries and identify critical incidents that occurred at the service site. Students can rotate as a moderator of the discussion every two weeks. Instructors can post questions for consideration and topics for directed writings. A log can be printed to provide data about group learning that occurred from the service experience.

Students are able to connect with other students about issues at their sites, help each other solve problems, identify patterns in their service learning, and have open discussions about societal issues. Faculty may not want to grade content from these discussion groups, but provide incentives for all students to participate.

Essays

Reflective essays are a more formal example of journal entries, and are created via essay questions provided at the beginning of the course. Students are expected to submit a specific number of essays (usually two to three) during the term. Reflective essays can focus on personal development, academic connections to course content, or ideas and recommendations for future action. As with any essay, faculty should clearly state the criteria for development and evaluation of these essays. (Chris Koliba, Georgetown University)

Ethical Case Studies

Faculty can require students to create a case study based on their experiences at their service site, and use these case studies in the middle or at the end of a course. The case study should include a description of the context, the individuals involved (respecting confidentiality), and the controversy or event that created an ethical dilemma. Students present their case study to the class, and the class then discusses the situation, identifies the issues, discusses how they would respond to the situation, and gives reasons for their responses. Ethical case studies allow students to analyze a situation, practice ethical decision making as they choose a course of action, and explore and clarify values. (David Lisman, Community College of Aurora)

Experiential Research Paper

An experiential research paper, based on Kolb's experiential learning cycle, is a formal paper that asks students to identify a particular experience at the service site and analyzes that experience within the broader context in order to make recommendations for change.

Mid-semester, faculty ask students to identify an underlying social issue they have encountered at the service site. Students then research the social issue and read three to five articles on the topic. Based on their experience and library research, students make recommendations for future action. This reflection activity is useful in interdisciplinary courses and provides students flexibility within their disciplinary interests and expertise to pursue issue s experienced at the service site. Class presentations of the experiential research paper can culminate semester work. (Julie Hatcher, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis)

Free Association Brainstorming

This reflection session takes place right after the end of the first third of the service experience. Students have 10-20 "post- it" notes or cards and write down all of the feelings they had when they first heard about their service learning requirement. Third, they write down all of the feelings they had when they experienced their first "field encounter." Finally, they write down all of the feelings they are having "right now".

Encourage them to write down as many different brainstormed thoughts as possible (one thought/word for each card). Students then distribute their post- it cards across three different sheets of newsprint paper posted around the classroom: one sheet with a large happy face, one with a sad face, and one with a bewildered face. Students should place their cards on the newsprint sheet that matches most closely with their feelings. Then have them stand next to the newsprint in which they posted most of their feelings. Faculty may ask students the reasons why they are standing where they are and what they expect for the remainder of their service experience. This exercise is non-threatening, involves both writing and speaking, and allows for both public and private reflection. (Diane Sloan, Miami-Dade College)

Group Exercises

Faculty can use the following group exercises throughout their courses, and can create their own variations in order to draw out from students the cognitive and emotional reactions to course content and the service experience.

Fish Bowl: Faculty asks for volunteers (5-7) to be in a circle in the middle of the room. The remaining students form a large circle outside of the inner circle. In essence, students form a set of concentric circles. Faculty provides the inner circle with open-ended questions about content in the class and their service experiences, and encourages students to maintain a discussion. If a student from the outer circle has something to add to the discussion, that student joins the circle and replaces an inner circle student. Important to this reflection technique is a clear set of ground rules (all ideas are respected, replacing a student happens after he or she is done speaking, and there is no talking from the outer circle).

This activity allows for students to speak freely about sensitive topics and allows for both internal and external processing, public and private reflection. Faculty may also enlist help from all students in the class for questions to ask the inner circle.

It's My Bag: Students find a bag at home (any bag) and fill it with one (or two, depending on time) item(s) that remind them of how they feel about their service learning project. Students bring the filled bag to the reflection session, and explain their item(s) to the rest of the class. The item(s) that they bring usually turn out to be inspiring visual aids that bring out excellent comments.

Students are given a chance to think metaphorically about their experience and connect the abstract with the concrete. (James Wolf, Miami-Dade College)

It's Your Thing/Express Yourself: This reflection exercise is a variation on a class presentation and might take a significant time (several weeks) for students to prepare. Thus, this is a good technique to use as a final project, with checkpoints throughout the course. Students can create the final project as an individual or with a group. If the faculty is limited on class time, this works best as small group projects. By using poetry, visual art (paintings, drawings, sculptures), music, individually created games or puzzles, or any other creative outlet, students reflect on their reactions and learning from their service experience. At the end of the course, students "perform" their final work. This exercise allows for the development of creativity, group skills, and challenges students to communicate in nontraditional ways. (Michael and Donna Lenaghan, Miami-Dade College)

Small Group Week: This is a simple alternative to full-class reflection sessions when the faculty wants students to have a maximum amount of time to talk individually. Divide the class into groups of no more than 10-12 students, and then assign each group to a different day for group reflection. Groups not attending a reflection section can work on out-of-class assignments. Students will feel more comfortable sharing more significant material in smaller groups in a circle, and faculty will glean more substantive content during each session. Students will need a significant amount of time for self-expression as a reaction to faculty-guided questions, and will experience a greater connection between course content and their service experience. (Dave Johnson, Miami-Dade College)

Truth Is Stranger than Fiction: Best used toward the middle and end of a course, this exercise has students divided into groups of no more than three. Faculty ask students to write the most unusual story that happened to them during their service learning experience and to be prepared to share it with their small group at the next class session. At the next class session, have students share their stories in small groups and then come together as a class. Ask representative group members to share some of the stories and what it meant to group members. Open up the discussion to the rest of the class.

Faculty should be prepared to prompt students if needed. Students learn valuable writing skills, group communications skills, and have the chance to explore what situations/knowledge affects them. With student permission, faculty can collect stories and "publish" copies for all class members and/or share stories with campus service learning programs to use for community publications and other future needs. (Diane Sloan, Miami-Dade College)

Values Continuum: Faculty can use this exercise to assist students in clarifying their values and exploring the knowledge base for student opinions. This exercise can be used anytime during the course. Name each corner of the classroom as follows: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. Name the middle of the room as Neutral. Instruct students to go to the place in the room for which they most identify after you read certain statements. Faculty can create questions based on classroom content and/or the service experience. For example, faculty may say, "I believe that individual rights are more important than the rights of the larger community," or "I believe that service to a community is the responsibility of all citizens," or "I believe our government has the responsibility to solve world problems."

Once students have gone to their respective places, allow time for students to discuss with other group members their reasons for standing where they are. Have each group report back their reasons for why they believe what they do, and then allow others to "switch" to a different group if they have changed their minds.

Continue discussion, and then repeat the process for as long as time allows.

Personal Narrative

Students can construct a personal account of their experience by writing in a narrative form. This allows for students to be creative in telling a story and finding their voice. Faculty could experiment with allowing students to use first or third person and assign a particular audience to whom the students address their comments. Faculty can assign this as an ongoing, midterm, or final project for the course.

Photo Essay

This is an alternative approach to reflection, which allows students to use their figurative and literal "lenses" to view their service experience and how it relates to the classroom. This is a good final project/presentation technique. Students use photographs to reflect on their service experience and can weave a main theme or concept learned in class to actual photo documents. These projects are also excellent ones to share with the campus community, the service sites, for year-end celebrations, or college and other local publications.

Portfolios

This type of documentation has become a vital way for students to keep records and learn organizational skills throughout the course, with the submission of the portfolio as a final product at the end of the course. Student portfolios could contain any of the following: service learning contract, weekly log, personal journal, directed writings, and photo essay. Also, any products completed during the service experience (i.e., agency brochures, lesson plans, advocacy letters) should be submitted for review.

Finally, students can include a written evaluation essay providing a self-assessment of how effectively they met their learning objectives. Faculty should instruct students to keep content and format professional, as their portfolios are something they can use in job applications and interviews. Students gain organizational skills, a broad list of their skills and abilities, and a final product to use in their life planning and career search.

Publications

Faculty or community partners can assign students to create publications for their service sites, in order to market the agency's services and express the value of service to a community. This technique may be used mid-course or for a final project. Publications can include Websites, brochures, newsletters, press releases, newspaper articles, etc.

Quotes in Print

Faculty can use quotes throughout the course as a means to initiate student reflection. Assign students a page of quotes and ask them to pick one that represents their experience with service learning. Students can then explain why they chose a particular quote. Faculty can assign this as a one-minute paper in class (for reading aloud to the rest of the class upon completion) or as an out-of-class assignment.

For examples of relevant quotes see *A Practical Guide for Integrating Civic Responsibility into the Curriculum* (Gottlieb and Robinson, 2002; www.aacc.nche.edu/servicelearning). Additional quotes may be found at <http://kirtland.cc.mi.us/~service/quotes/quotes.html> and <http://www.anselm.edu/volunteer>

Quotes in Song

Faculty can use this variation on quotes throughout the course. Students find a song in which the singer uses lyrics that describe their thoughts about the service experience. Students may find a whole song or only partial lyrics. If students have access to the song, have them play it at the end of a reflection session, after students have explained why these lyrics relate to their service experience. If students prefer to write their own lyrics for a song, allow this as an option. The class session in which these songs are "performed" usually has a festive atmosphere.

Faculty may want to provide "concert souvenirs" or don concert wear to contribute to the spirit of the sessions. (Gwen Stewart, Miami-Dade College)