

Reflection Activities

30-60 Minutes

Gallery Experience

Post a series of questions/statements around the room, all related to a topic of interest. The questions/statements should deal with theory, practice, current events etc. Participants move around the room (can be structured or unstructured movement) and respond to the question. Facilitator then facilitates discussion about each question/statement using the written comments and group input.

Example: Students exploring issues related to homelessness. Questions might include: Homeless people are _____; Why does homelessness exist?; Define homeless; Do you believe in the American Dream?; Describe your feelings about working in social service agencies.

Three Minute Speeches

Select a common question for the group. Examples include “Why are you involved in service?” or “How can the world end poverty?” Give students 30 minutes to prepare a 3 minute speech. The speeches are given consecutively. One student serves as a timer, giving one minute and thirty second warnings. As each speaker begins, he or she must relate their topic to the previous speech to create a threaded narrative. After the speeches, discuss.

Object Reflection

Uses an object as the focus of the reflection. Choose an object with meaning such as a mascot, historical artifact (real or a model), work of art, or another object of value. Pass the object around and ask students to touch it, hold it, and decide what it is. The group tells the object’s “story.” One by one, each student tells the story of the object, the next student builds on the story or starts a new story. Each story introduces a new aspect about the object until many different facets of religion, culture, politics, society, relationships etc. have been explored.

Above 3 activities compiled from Looking In, Reaching Out (Jacoby 2010)

Invite a **guest speaker** to discuss with the students about an issue of interest.

Role play scenarios encountered during service experience. Brainstorm how students dealt with issues and what they can learn from that experience.

Have students create a **commercial** “selling” the service activity. Split group up into teams of 2-4 people and spend 15-30 minutes developing the commercial. Bring students back together to present their commercial. Consider creating a video of the best commercial and using it as recruitment materials for the next project.

Leader of the World

Select a big picture issue the group has been exposed to: poverty, homelessness, AIDS etc. and split into groups of 4-8. Give the students 15 minutes to “solve” the problem.

How would they end homelessness or world poverty? Would they start locally or globally? Have them present their solution to the group. Compare ideas.

Deconstructing Stereotypes

Select a stereotype or prejudice about a specific population (race, disability, class status, education etc.). Explore how the population is represented in popular media – TV shows, news broadcasts, newspapers, magazines, web forums, blogs, You Tube. After you have spent time intentionally engaging with the images in popular media that connect with the population, respond to the following questions. How do these images represent stereotypes? Are they positive or negative stereotypes? How are these stereotypes challenged in the media? How do these images connect with your personal experiences with this population? *(Adapted from Learning Through Serving)*

Connecting Academic Knowledge and Service Experience

Use Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning to reflect on the following. *Concrete Experience:* Think about a situation from your current service project or service-learning involving other people from your community partnership. Describe an interaction between yourself and that person. Include what you observed, what was said, and any nonverbal behaviors you witnessed. Try to be as unbiased as possible. *Reflective Observation:* How did you feel about the interaction with that person? Was it how you expected it to go? What do you think the other person expected? Reflect upon the assumptions you brought with you about that person. What assumptions did that person have about you? *Abstract Conceptualization:* Using knowledge from your college courses, how would you explain the nature of this community's partnership? What concepts or theoretical models might explain the outcomes of this interaction as well as underlying processes? What influences do culture and power have on this interaction? *Active Experimentation:* How have your plans for relating to future community partners changed as the result of your service experience? Has the experience changed your understanding of service? What would you do differently next time? *(Adapted from Learning Through Serving)*

Who's to Blame?

Brainstorm a written list of everyone and everything to blame for the issues addressed by your community partner. Consider local, county, city, state, national, global sources. Find categories or patterns in the list – how can you create categories based on economics, politics, or geography? Ask some critical inquiry questions (see Critical Thinking). What can you identify as strategic or key areas for creating change? If you had to create a plan to create change, what would it be?
(Adapted from Learning Through Serving)

Being the Change

1. Describe one change you would like to see in the world?
2. How would this change benefit you? Others? The world? What would it cost you?

3. How has this service learning experience prepared you to work for this change? What skills have you developed that will help you be a change agent? What skills do you want to develop?
4. What could you be doing right now to work for this change?
5. *(Adapted from Learning Through Serving)*

Active Reflection Activities

Did you know?

Stand in a circle. One student is in the middle. He/she relates one thing she knows that is related to community service. For example, did you know that elderly people love to talk? Students who have completed the item named run across the circle and trade places. The person who doesn't find a new spot is in the middle.

Spelling

Group students into 3-4 people/group. Say a word out loud. Each group must then make the word using every person and only their body parts. Discuss how each group worked together. Or use words related to service and discuss what the words mean to the groups.

Disabilities Hike (note: use caution and common sense in this activity for safety)

Find an area where students can take a walk or hike (urban or rural area), make sure it is safe. Assign students randomly to start the hike with disabilities – blindness, deaf, sprained ankle etc. The group must work together to ensure that every member makes it to the end of the walk/hike. Can add more disabilities throughout the hike. Be creative with disabilities, e.g. dyslexia. Discuss how students with disabilities felt, how they were treated and how non-disabilities people felt working with them.

Labels

Place a label on each person's back designating them with a condition or experience. Students do not know what label they have been given. Students mingle for 5 minutes and treat each other according to their label. Discuss how students felt. Labels might include disabilities; experiences: death in the family, just fired, homeless, etc.

Sound and Movement

Go around the circle and each person has to make a sound and movement related to the question posed. For example, the question could be simple: what's your name? Related to service: how do you feel today? Or issues: How do you see poverty?

Would you rather?

All students stand. The facilitator creates 10 questions, each with a choice. For example, would you rather be a hammer or a nail? He/she points to one side as hammer and the other side as nail. Students must walk to the side they identify with. Other questions: homeless or paralyzed? sun or moon? student or faculty?

Name a Song

Split into groups of 3-4 people. Facilitator says a word (respect, dignity, life, love etc.) and the team must come up with a song that has that word and sing at least 5 words of the song. Each team takes a turn until no more songs can be remembered. Discuss how popular culture treats these topics.

Reflection or Journal Questions

- What is a global citizen?
- What specific knowledge or skills have you learned in your courses that you can apply to this community site?
- How might you be able to use your academic major and its associated knowledge base to address community issues?
- What community issues concern you the most?
- Choose a situation, describe the situation; connect course materials to the situation; how does the combination of class materials and service experience relate to your personal life?
- What is service? What is the difference between service and volunteering?
- Has your definition of service changed? Why? Should everyone do service?
- 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? 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 you 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 learned?

Adapted from Learning through Serving (Cress et al 2005), Northwest Service Academy Toolkit