

What is Reflection?

Human beings have a natural need to reflect on past experiences to work through the feelings associated with those experiences. Without adequate time to do so, our thoughts tend to become distorted by frustration, emotional overload, and burnout. Reflection allows us to turn inward, to ask ourselves tough evaluative questions like, “Who am I? What do I stand for? What changes do I need to make in my life?”

Reflection...

- It is the key to developing a long-term commitment to service.
- Leads to thoughtful and thus more effective service.
- Helps participants to search for long-term solutions to the problems they witness on-site.
- Validates the feelings of each individual: participants who feel uncomfortable, frightened or discouraged during a service experience need to share those feelings and realize that they are not alone in their reactions.
- Helps students to internalize the lessons learned on break and connect those lessons to their own personal choices and behavior.

So what do I do about it?

Although reflection is a natural human reaction to any intensive experience, it is essential that you – as a Student Service Leader – intentionally encourage and foster the reflective process. Different people will respond differently to different situations, and it is important to help participants to find a balance between the two.

Group Reflection

Group reflection is the essence of the quality service experience: the participants learn from each other's experiences, challenge each other's assumptions and comfort zones, and affirm each other's value as members of the team. Group reflection often happens naturally over dinner or a game of cards, or on the van ride home from the work-site. But you as a Student Service Leader need to take an active role in initiating and facilitating such discussions.

A common misconception about reflection is that it only needs to occur once in a while. By having regular reflection sessions, however, members of the group can process their experiences as they are happening. Without that ongoing process, frustrations and emotions accumulate and can become overwhelming by the end of the semester. Your regular reflections session also helps you assess how the service activities are working out, and allows group members to let off steam if an activity is not going as expected. One approach is to have different members of the group facilitate the discussion each time. You can discuss articles from your pre-service education, in conjunction with a review of what happened during the day.

Reflection Leadership Moment

When you think about life, there are very few times when you're at a specific stopping point. You may have completed some tasks, but there are always more things going on. Sometimes people shy away from doing reflection because of this, but as leaders it is very important to take the time to assess where you are, both personally and as an organization.

Success is not measured by what one brings, but rather by what one leaves. - Unknown

Thus, although we've still got a major event coming up, since we're moving into a point of transition with new chairs and new execs being chosen soon, I wanted to go ahead and prompt some time for personal reflection.

Rather than group time, which we've done before in goal reviews and whatnot, this is meant to be individually done. Each of you has a sheet, and access to a pen and markers.

In whatever way works best for you, I want you to think about and display your answers to the following prompts. This can be written statements, drawn picture, one color, multi-colored...however you want to do it.

These are the topics I want you to consider when reflecting on your experience:

What went well for you (in your role, at an event...)?

What didn't go well?

What has been your proudest moment this year?

What are some personal goals you have achieved (name at least one)?

What is something you have learned about yourself?

Again, these are personal so you won't be sharing them. It's a time for you to focus on yourself and YOUR year in this organization.

Reflective Questions

Questions based on Marcia Baxter Magolda's self-authorship model and Kegan's constructive-developmental self-evolution theory.

First month: introducing reflection (pre-reflection and building rapport)

What skills do you bring to this experience?

What do you want to learn from this experience?

How will your classes help you in this position?

How do you approach leadership?

How do you resolve conflict with your peers?

How do you handle negative feedback?

How do you solve an ambiguous problem with no clear solution?

What do you look for in developing relationships with your peers?

Throughout: when assigning/discussing tasks: (situating reflection)

How are planning to accomplish the task?

What would happen if you did X?

What does your supervisor/advisor/leader need to know?

(After the action) Did it work? What might you do differently next time?

2-3 months: initiating reflection: (encouraging reflection)

What kinds of challenges have you had, and how did you approach them? How could you have handled that differently?

Have you had to make any difficult decisions? What was that like?

What new skills, if any, have you identified to develop?

What have you learned in your classes that has helped with this experience and vice versa?

How do you develop positive relationships with others?

6-8 months: building upon experiences (encouraging interpretation of reflection)

How is this experience affecting who you are and how you see yourself?

What have you learned from this experience?

How has this experience impacted you as a student?

How has this contributed to your educational/career goals?

How has this experience aligned or challenged your values and beliefs?

Reflecting at the end of an experience: (concluding reflection on the experience)

What was the greatest challenge you had? Why?

What was your greatest accomplishment? Why?

What did you learn about problem solving?

What have you learned about developing relationships with others?

How do you resolve conflict with your peers?

What has this experience meant to you in terms of how you see yourself and how you see others?

What has this experience meant for you in terms of academic, career, or other opportunities?

How has this experience framed your values and beliefs?

How would you describe this experience to potential employers?

Reflection Activities

Note: Italicized reflections can also be used as pre-reflections.

1-5 Minute Activities

Question discussion: Randomly, or in a circle, each person responds to a posed question (such as “project highlight.”)

One to Three Words: Each person shares one to three words to describe the service activity or how you feel about the service activity or anything else regarding the project.

Journaling: Each person responds to a question in writing.

Poetry/Writing Slam: Take turns; each day somebody else will write a short poem or sentence about the project, then share it with the group.

Sculptor: One participant chooses a topic and asks for a set amount of the participants to be the clay. The clay people let the sculptor mold them into the sculptor’s vision of their topic, i.e., invasive plant removal or the plight of someone who is homeless or racist.

5-30 Minute Activities

What? So What? Now What?: To get to each step in the model, allow 5-30 minutes for group processing.

Written Reflection: Pose three or four questions using “what, so what, now what” model, and allow time for writing (i.e., what you did, why/how you did it, how you could do it better.)

The Image: Prior to the project, each person writes or draws about the people or objects they will be working with (such as a tree for a tree-planting project, or the community being served,) the subject matter, or their feelings about the project. Revisit (or re-write/draw) it after the service project and discuss.

Senses: Before activity, project, event, or even before the first day or service, ask participants to share what they expect to hear, smell, see, touch, and taste. The follow-up after the day with what the participant actually senses.

Pictionary: Have a Pictionary game about the experience and how you felt. Talk about it as a group.

Parables/Stories: Read a piece of pertinent literature and have participants respond and draw correlations to service experience.

Letter to Self: Prior to a project, have participants write a letter to themselves about their personal and career goals regarding the project, or feelings about the project or community. Place it in a sealed envelope, mail it to yourself, or hand out again to the team after six months and reflect.

Masks: Make a two-sided mask from a paper plate. Draw an image of how others might see you on one side and how you see yourself on the other. Discuss the contrast. Or, could be work self/free time self, actual work/dream work.

What do you want?: Make up a list of questions with "What do you want..." (i.e. from your service experience, from your fellow leaders, to happen in the world, etc.) Let the group take turns answering each question. Then ask how they are going to actively and intentionally achieve what they want.

Gingerbread Models: Draw a large gingerbread person at the beginning of the day with drawings/writings of what makes a good (mentor, urban forester, team member, etc.) At the end of the day share what you did well, how you thought you could improve.

Two Things: Have each person share two things they have learned from the experience, and how they can apply it to tomorrow, this week and the rest of their life, etc.

Yarn Web: Stand in a circle with a ball of yarn. Each person throws it to another and says one word that explains what they will bring to the next project, something they appreciated in the person they are tossing it to, what they learned etc. The yarn forms a web supported by the group. Use a thicker string, lower it, and have someone climb on and try to support a person! (Use caution with this one!)

Rope Activity: Stand in a circle, each person holding a length of rope. Each person tells what they have learned and what they will do with that learning (i.e. "so what, now what,") and then ties one end of their rope to the rope of the person next to them. Once all have shared and tied, have the group pull the rope taut and ask them about the significance of the symbol (a circle) they have formed. Ask one person to let go, and discuss how that affects the group.

Cartoon: Draw a cartoon that teaches something important regarding the service project.

Goals/Fears: Have the group put three goals and three fears on the card and share some of them. Discuss how to accomplish or overcome them. Then, after the service activity, re-visit them and discuss how you achieved, overcame, dealt with, or are still challenged by your goals and fears.

All on the Wall: Put a large piece of paper up on one wall or all the way around the room. Participants write or draw feelings, thoughts/learning on the paper. Facilitator leads discussion based on writings.

Recommendations: Compose a letter to your site supervisor offering suggestions for working with future volunteers.

Lifeline Biography: Draw a line representing and plot significant periods/events (with writings or drawings) influencing who you are. Share with a partner or small group. This can be adapted many ways: do the same except using a river as a metaphor (were their rapids, meandering, etc.) or do a Service Biography line (when was the first service experience, what influenced you, positive and negative impacts on your life.)

Object share: Each person brings in and passes around an object and shares how the object is like them or the project they just did (pick a specific one.) Examples include: 'what I contributed to the team, how I felt about this project, what I learned, etc.'" The object can be something found in nature, a type of food, a book, etc. (pick one!)

How Did it Taste: Bring a mixture of fruits and nuts, have them use these items as metaphors to describe their day, week project, group interact, etc, and answer the questions "How did it taste?" Then, "What would you like it to taste like?"

Plan for the Future: Pretend the year is 2023. How has this service experience affected your life? What have you done since this service experience? How have you changed your life? How have your actions impacted your community? Vision the future...

30-120 Minute Activities

Song, Poem, Collage, Sculpture, Written Story, or Skit: Create something artistic as a large group or individually. Then mesh it together to express what happened, how it felt, or what the service experience meant to you. It can incorporate what was learned, accomplished, and challenges overcome along the way. Could be presented to people from organizations that helped, parents, community volunteers, etc.

Interview Each other: Break the group into pairs or triplets and have them interview each other about their service experience, take notes, and summarize a couple of things to the group.

Teach: Teach others what you learned through this service experience. Put together instructions or references for learning more about it.

Imitations: Each team member picks the name of another team member out of a hat, and imitates that person relating two or three positive traits/contributions to the team, and one quirky habit (something light –good judgment is essential.)

Inventory: Develop an inventory for the community being served or your own community regarding the problem you are addressing or work you are doing. What are the resources, who are the local leaders, what roles do certain organizations play, what relationships exist, what other work has been done, what are the various attitudes about the project, what are the challenges, where are they, etc. (see CNS document “By the People” for more information.)

Think About It: Present the group with a social injustice (perhaps one faced during the service project) and have them answer the 4 questions below.

Social Injustice: _____ (e.g. people who work full time are still homeless.)

1. Does this social issue move or bother you? Why or why not?
2. How can this problem be solved? Can it be solved?
3. What stereotypes will have to change for this injustice to be righted?
4. How can I, individually, change my behavior patterns to create a positive change?
 - List 5 things you can actively do to help create a positive change?
 - List 3-5 things you can do to modify your attitudes/beliefs/ideas to support this change.
 - List 3-5 ways that you currently support the solution to this problem.

Media: Build a skill as well as reflect by writing press releases, taking pictures, contacting media, and obtaining some media coverage of the project.

Poetry: Each participant comes up with a metaphor to represent where they are in life (or in service) right now. The metaphors are shared in the whole group, writing them on the flip charts. Break into groups of six, each group chooses a metaphor to write about, each person writes (stream of consciousness) for five minutes. Each person chooses two favorite phrases from their writing and weaves them together with the phrases from other participants of their group to compose a 12-line poem.

Appreciation/Acknowledgement

Yarn Ball: (see above for more information.) Each person states what he or she appreciated about the person they are throwing the ball to.

Appreciation Cards: Each person writes their name on a card or slip of paper. Then the cards are passed around the circle and each person on the team writes (and draws, if desired) something they appreciate about that person. When they come back to the person of origin, have each person take time to read the cards and make comments.

Whisper-walk: The group forms two lines facing each other. One blindfolded or eye-closed person at a time walks down the middle of the two lines. People on either side of the line step into the middle (if and when moved to,) tap the walker, on the shoulder and whispers in their ear something they appreciate about them. People at the end of the line help guide the person back in line, and then they take their blindfold off.

Inside Circle: Each person takes turns sitting in the middle of the circle with their eyes closed (or opposite the group with their back to the group) and remains silent while the rest of the team randomly shares things they appreciate about that person. You might even have somebody writing down what was said.

Imitate-Exaggerate: Each person in the team picks from a hat the name of one other person on the team and imitates their positive qualities with exaggeration until the other team members' guess that that is. This can be done with the entire group at once around some task or decision, and then discussed afterwards.

Happy Bags: Each person decorates a brown paper bag with their name. During break times, group members write positive and encouraging notes to each other on index card and leave them in each others' bags.

Longer-Term Project or Team Experience Activities

Scrapbook or Memory Box: Create a scrapbook over your memories with the team or project, including pictures, quotes said, skills learned, challenges overcome, etc.

Letter to Yourself: At the beginning of the year, write a letter to another person or yourself on something like what your expectations or goals are for the year or why you choose to do service. Collect, save, and redistribute at the end of the year. Share and discuss.

Team Photo Trading Cards: You can add history, quotes, and service "stats."

Video: Shoot a video about the project or about the topic related to the project.

Display/Mural: Create a group or project display/mural, which chronicles the project.

Newsletter: Pool your service reflections, stories, and pictures together to make a newsletter. This can be sent out to members, sponsors, staff, and community volunteers involved in the project.

Journal: A little writing every day goes a long, long way.

Report: Write a report on the project. Use photos!

ABC Book: illustrated with one sentence, though and/or pictures of each alphabet letter. For grown-ups use the project or organization name instead of the alphabet.

Journaling: A Primer

Journaling is one of the best reflection tools. Ideally the program or project would allow for a 10-15 minute period every day for the volunteers to journal; preferably at the end of the day or during/after a debrief. 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 himself 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 he or she has written unless they want to. You also want to be definite and clear about the time allotted, (5-150 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 2 min. to write five or six words in random spaces on their journaling page. Give a short talk about the interconnectedness of everything, the web of life, Quantum Physics, etc. 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 and see how their perspectives differ.

Dialogue: A good one for developing observations 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 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 lighthearted day to avoid a "bashing" session. This is an exercise that gets better with time, as their observation and retention skills improve.

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 the 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."

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 an animal, plant or person that was near the project site.

Reflective Writing Types

Bloom's Taxonomy	Guiding Questions	Use for	Assignment verbs	Example genres
Express (not in Bloom)	What do I believe or value? Why? How do I feel about that? What insight can I share?	Reporting feelings or affirming identity, values, or beliefs; developing voice or fluency	Share Connect Observe Explore Question Speculate Imagine	Personal or travel journals; blogs; diaries; personal essays
Know or Comprehend	What happened? So what? What next?	Reporting an event or experience; keeping track of data	Define Report Summarize Describe Explain Discuss Document	Internship reports; reports on speakers, performances, or field trips; field notes
Apply	What is the problem or process? How do I solve it? How did the process work? Why that way?	Describing a process or problem; improving problem identification and solution	Solve Demonstrate Simulate Operate	Portfolio reflection; lab report; teaching methods report; journal; field notes; self-assessment
Analyze	What are the parts and how do they work together? Why were they made like this? What if I changed them?	Reviewing texts or artifacts to understand and critique; understanding others' perspectives	Interpret Differentiate Distinguish	Reading log or journal; personal blog or essay; opinion column; field notes
Synthesize	What do I think will happen? Why? What else could happen? Can I make something new happen?	Comparing to gain perspective; coming up with new ideas; projecting into the future	Hypothesize Predict Invent Propose Formulate	Discussion section of reports or articles; personal blog or essay
Evaluate	What are the criteria for judging? Who picked those criteria and why? How does it measure up?	Revealing or examining values or beliefs; making decisions; exercising critical judgment	Judge Assess Recommend Criticize Evaluate Determine	Reading log or journal; annotated bibliography; critique or review; learning journal

Writing Reflections Statements

*We do not learn from experience.
We learn from reflecting on experience.
- John Dewey*

NOTE: Students using the *Chalk & Wire ePortfolio™* should refer to the ePortfolio resource *Creating ePortfolio Artifacts* for guidelines on writing reflection statements.

Reflection: Ideas or conclusions that are a result of your thinking about your work. These ideas are connected to specific criteria and will help you determine future goals and actions. Another term for reflection is self-assessment.

Research tells us that learners produce work to show how they have grown or progressed from being involved in learning experiences. Merely collecting and storing that work in a folder or computer disc, however, cuts short the potential of that collection as an effective tool for assessment and instruction. Adding an element of reflection or self-assessment fosters the critical thinking and decision-making necessary for continuous learning and improvement.

Self-assessment is what allows you to learn from your experiences. It involves thinking about where you are currently and where you want to go next. It requires analysis and planning. If you are to take control of your own learning, you need to develop the capacity to self-monitor and evaluate the progress you are making to achieve your goals. To reap the benefits of reflection, it works best if you do the self-assessment soon after you complete a project or work assignment.

The steps in the process of reflection are simple:

1. **Observe** your accomplishments.
2. **Analyze** the strengths and areas that could be improved in your work.
3. **Determine** what, if any, **modifications** need to be made.
4. **Create an action plan** for improvement.

In reflecting on completed assignments, you will first decide which Learning Outcome your work demonstrates, then you will write three paragraphs, one with the heading **Retell**, one with the heading **Reflect**, and one with the heading **Relate**. Each paragraph should consist of three or more sentences and include at least one Core Ability that you demonstrated. The following information contains ideas or prompts to help you write your reflection statement:

Retell: What was supposed to be accomplished and how?

- Tell how the work sample was developed
- Summarize the information
- State the main idea
- List the sequence of ideas
- Point out details
- Describe significant parts
- Answer specific questions
- Clarify information
- Describe how work was revised
- List resources used to complete project
- Tell how core abilities were incorporated

Ways to start writing about your work could be:

- This work demonstrates my understanding of ...
- This was about ...
- I noticed that ...
- The most significant part was ...
- A thought I especially liked was ...
- I particularly liked, valued, or enjoyed ...
- An idea that captured my interest was ...
- Key words for me were ...
- I was supposed to ...

Reflect: What did I learn? Think about growth and progress.

- Share insights and new understandings
- Identify strengths and areas for improvement
- Describe skill improvement since beginning of your program
- How work could be made better
- Apply judgment
- State opinions
- Ask relevant questions
- Give reasons for what you did
- Draw conclusions beyond the text or classroom experience
- Describe what was easy about completing the project; what was hard
- Identify improvement in core ability skills

Ways to start writing about your work could be:

- This work was meaningful to me because ...
- I am proud of this work because ...
- I am not satisfied with this work because ...
- Now I understand that ...
- I think that ...
- I wonder why or if ...
- I realize now that ...
- This work demonstrates a challenge because ...
- A question raised in my mind is ...
- Maybe ...
- I learned that I ...
- To make this turn out better, I ...
- I have gained insight into this because ...

Relate: How is this work important in my targeted career?

- Make connections to the occupation
- Plan for doing skills differently
- Refer to personal and/or work experiences, issues, events, etc.
- Compare
- Contrast
- Give examples
- Describe how core ability skills are applied in the occupation

Ways to start writing about your work could be:

- This is important to my targeted career because...
- This work shows evidence of my growth toward my goal because ...
- An employer would be interested in this because ...
- This reminds me of ...
- This makes me think of ...
- Something I identify with is ...
- It makes me feel ...
- What I found especially meaningful or significant for me was ...
- This work shows improvement in ...
- Additional resources I need are ...
- I would like to pursue additional learning in this area because ...
- I plan to ...

3/2006

Reflection Rubric

Based on the work of J.K. Jay and K.L. Johnson. "Capturing complexity: A typology of reflective practice for teacher education" *Teaching and Teacher Education* 18 (2002): 73-85.

	Developing	Sufficient	Proficient	Exemplary
Description: The matter for reflection is described and presented	Absent, or minimal--bare facts are presented, with some possible inaccuracies or omissions; some facts may be irrelevant or distracting	Salient facts are presented accurately; narrative is broad and may omit detail	Salient facts are presented accurately; details included when necessary	Salient facts are presented accurately; details included when necessary; awareness of writer's position in relation to the matter for reflection is displayed
Comparison: The matter for reflection is reframed in light of alternative views; own perspective is explored in light of others	Absent, or minimal--only one alternative is presented and perhaps not particularly objectively; does not explore alternatives	Objectively presents at least one alternative; considers its potential in relation to matter for reflection	Objectively presents at least two alternatives; considers their potential in relation to matter for reflection	Objectively presents at least two alternative perspectives; considers their potential in relation to matter for reflection; questions own perspective
Criticism: The matter for reflection is carefully considered in light of multiple frames, and a resolution is reached or suggested	Absent, or minimal--the perspective of the writer is unclear or unsatisfying in relation to the problem	Makes a judgment or choice among possible actions or integrates new insight into existing perspective; explains it but does not elaborate on reasoning	Makes a judgment or choice among possible actions or integrates new insight into existing perspective; explains it and elaborates on reasoning	Makes a judgment or choice among possible actions or integrates new insight into existing perspective; explains it and elaborates on reasoning ; considers other possibilities or impact on the future
Expression: The reader can follow the writer's thoughts	Errors and/or lack of organization make it hard to follow the text	Some errors but generally readable; the organization may be scattered but the thought process is clear	Some errors but they do not interfere with reading; content is interesting clear, well ordered	Some errors but they do not interfere with reading; the content is clear, well ordered, and compelling