Reflection Tools for Service-Learning

Throughout the service-learning process, reflection is a key to growth and understanding. Young people use critical and creative thinking to ensure that the learning makes sense and has meaning for them. Reflection activities should be used before, during, and after the service experience to assess where students are in the learning process, help them internalize the learning, provide opportunities for them to voice concerns and share feelings, and evaluate the project. Below are a few ideas, you may have many more.

What?/So What?/Now What?

This structure for reflection questions is perhaps the most widely known and used. It is a basic way to promote discussion that begins with reviewing the details of the experience and moves toward critical thinking, problem solving, and creating and action plan.

**What**?

* + descriptive
  + facts, what happened, with whom
  + substance of group interaction

**So what?**

* + shift from descriptive to interpretive
  + meaning of experience for each participant
  + what feelings are involved, lessons learned
  + why?

**Now what?**

* + contextual-- seeing this situation's place in the big picture
  + applying lessons learned/insights gained to new situations
  + setting future goals, creating an action plan

**The Exit Ticket**

The Exit Ticket is another tried and true reflection strategy. You can make it work with your service-learning project by adding targeted questions and duration. Ask a question, provide a ticket and have them write down an answer.

**Make Predictions**

* Get students to engage in higher level thinking by asking them to make a prediction as to how this part of their project is going to turn out
* Ask them to consider what are the next steps in the project?
* Predict how long the project is going to take

**Assess Progress**

* Another higher-level thinking skill is making an assessment. Have students write about the quality of the work done on that day, what was good, what needs improvement?
* Based on what has been done to date, what might you have to change or alter in the next steps

**Make Connections**

* Ask what skills they have used in the project that they also use in their classrooms?
* What they learned in the project that they can also use at home?
* Which community partners might be interested in their project?

**Duration:** a good service-learning project takes time; it isn’t usually done in a day. To use the Exit Ticket to ensure high student interest throughout the project, have students fill out an exit ticket often. Students can put their name on each ticket that they earn and put it in a visible jar. At the end of the project, maybe as part of the celebration, draw out name(s) to win raffle items. Local businesses or the school will often donate prizes.

**Other Mediums**

**Graphic Expression**

* Have students draw a map of the area where their project is located
* Draw a picture of the anticipated finished project

**Pantomime**

* Students can “act out” an expression of their project or how they feel about it
* Think of a word related to your project and get others to guess it using pantomime rules

**Simple Conversation**

* Ask open ended questions:
  + Is the project turning out like you expected?
  + How did you feel about the things that our partners said?
  + Who do you think will benefit most from this project?