



# Indiana Campus Compact

in conjunction with the  
**Midwest Collaboration**

## Service Learning Workshop Curriculum Guide

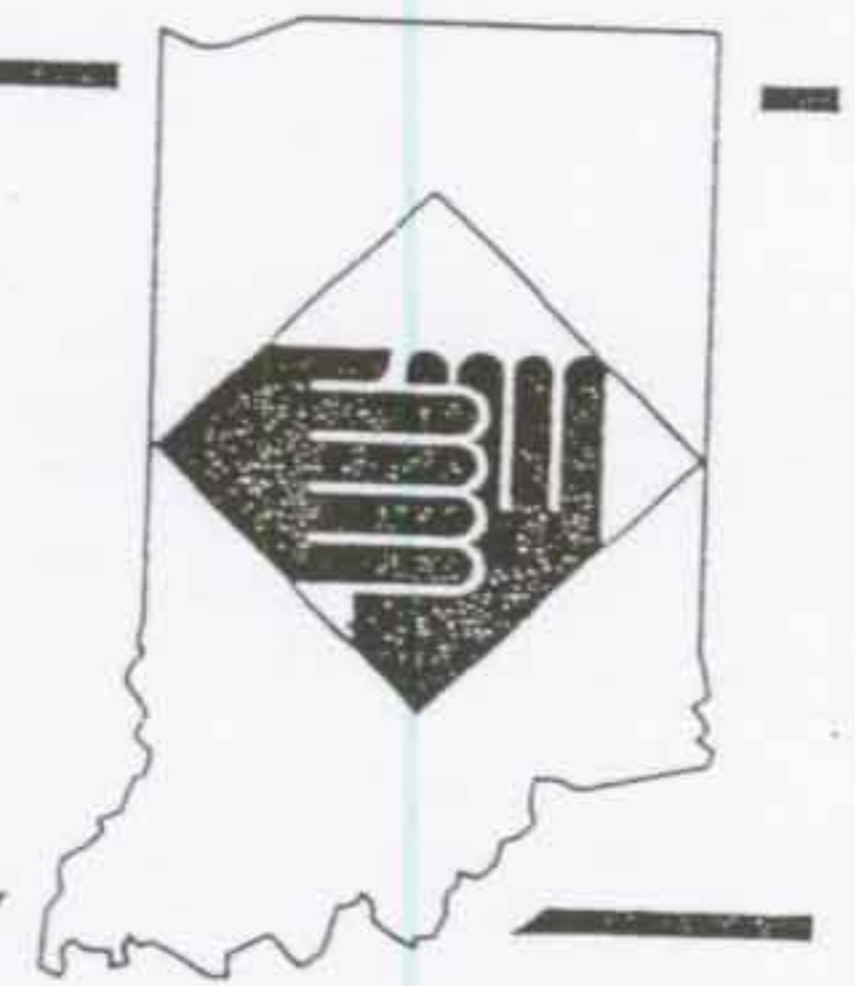
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# Reflection

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## Linking service and learning

Two key components of service learning are reciprocity and reflection (*Define 4*). Reciprocity ensures that service learning partnerships are beneficial for all constituents involved. Reflection intentionally connects the service experience to the learning objectives of the course. Reciprocity and reflection can improve the service contribution of students and increase the learning they derive from the service experience. Reflection is a cognitive activity that occurs after a concrete experience. David Kolb identifies reflection as a critical component of the experiential learning cycle (*Intro 1*). Reflection builds a bridge between the concrete and the abstract; and helps to solidify a connection between theory and practice.

Instructors note that students may put forth minimal effort in reflection activities, and thereby fail to demonstrate the learning that has occurred (*Reflection 1*). Viewing the service experience as “text” for learning is relatively easy for professionals who are steeped in a discipline and who have had years of experience interpreting events from their disciplinary perspective. However, students might find it more difficult to draw the same message from the service experience. Thus, an important educational lesson can be “right in front of the students’ noses,” like the object in the ambiguous figure (*Reflection 2*), but they may fail to see it and understand its significance to the academic content of the course. (By the way, the ambiguous figure is a dalmatian). Structured reflection exercises provide a means through which instructors can facilitate the recognition of these lessons by students. Otherwise, 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 a part of their course work.

Reflection is the careful consideration of an experience in light of the learning objectives of a course (*Reflection 3*). Structured reflection can create a larger framework in which to place the experience and bring to the surface critical questions that foster further learning. John Dewey (1933), American pragmatist and educational philosopher, notes that reflection begins in perplexity and leads to future action that is well-informed (*Reflection 4, 5*). “Perplexity”, which is often a fundamental aspect of a service learning experience, should be valued by service learning instructors and students alike as an opportunity for learning. Structuring ways for students to process and discuss their reactions to the service experience is a critical component to both learning and improved service delivery.



## Structuring reflection activities

Faculty often seek assistance in identifying and integrating reflection activities, for typically this is a new aspect of curricular design. Guidelines provide a framework for developing this aspect of the course (*Reflection 6*). Guidelines can also be useful in setting campus standards for service learning courses. Research indicates that students report greater gains in learning and greater satisfaction in the course when reflection is an ongoing aspect of the course, is clearly linked to course content, and is modeled by the instructor (*Reflection 7, 8*).

The selection and design of reflection activities is dependent upon a number of variables, most important of which is the learning objectives of the course (*Reflection 9*). Reflection activities should be designed and selected based on the learning objectives identified, for not all reflection activities are equally effective. Another variable is whether the service is a required aspect of the course or an option for students to select. If all students are involved in service, the reflection activities can be integrated into class discussions, group projects, and exams. If only some students select the service learning option, the reflection activities must be structured for students to complete independently. Reflection on the service experience may often be private, but it is recommended that in a service learning course at least some reflection activities are public and are evaluated by the instructor.

Faculty appreciate seeing examples of reflection activities that have been used by others. There are many examples of reflection activities (*Reflection 10, 11, 12*) that are appropriate to use in a college classroom (see Eyler, Giles, & Schmiede, 1996; Hatcher & Bringle, 1997). Personal journals are frequently assigned, but faculty often find them difficult to evaluate. Clear structure increases the likelihood that student learning is documented. If class format allows, creative and oral expression is also an effective way to foster reflection (*Reflection 13*). Assessment of reflection activities is facilitated by providing students with clear expectations and guidelines for their written work (*Reflection 14*). Faculty, as well as students, will benefit from including reflection as an ongoing aspect of teaching a service learning course (*Reflection 15*).

## Suggested Pre-Workshop Readings

Eyler, J., Giles, Jr., D.E., & Schmiede, A. (1996). *A practitioner's guide to reflection in service learning: Student voices and reflections*, 47-65. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University.

Hatcher, J.A., & Bringle, R.G. (1997). Reflection: Bridging the gap between service and learning. *College Teaching*, 45 (4), 153-158.

Troppe, M.L. (Ed.) (1995). *Connecting cognition and action: Evaluation of student performance in service learning courses*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States/Campus Compact.



## Sample Workshop Activities for Reflection

### Activity 10: "What is reflection?"

*Purpose of the activity:* To prompt reflection on the topic of reflection; to encourage people who might be predisposed to a predominantly cognitive interpretation of reflection to consider the intimate dimension that reflection will bring to a course.

*Audience:* This activity targets participants in the process of developing a service learning course or program; it would also be valuable as part of a follow-up workshop for instructors who have taught their first service learning course.

*Materials and/or preparation required:*

- A board or flip chart and two different colored markers.
- 6-8 inexpensive hand mirrors.

*Time needed to complete the activity:* 15-20 minutes

#### **The activity:**

- Ask participants to define reflection; write their comments/phrases on a flip chart.
- Then distribute hand-mirrors to the group and ask each person to look at her or his own reflection in the mirror.
- Using a different color marker, add any additional comments/phrases to the flip chart.
- From this brief exercise, discuss as a group some of the personal dynamics students and instructors may encounter when reflection activities are integrated into a course.

### Activity 11: "Selecting reflection activities"

*Purpose of the activity:* To convey to participants the importance of tailoring reflection activities to the particular situation.

*Audience:* This activity targets participants in the process of developing a service learning course or program; it would also be valuable as part of a follow-up workshop for instructors who have taught their first service learning course.

*Materials and/or preparation required:*

- Create short paragraph descriptions of five service-learning courses, each with different characteristics (e.g., service component is optional/required, 1-3 credit course, introductory course for freshmen/senior capstone seminar). See course syllabi in the Appendix for examples. This is also a chance to highlight service learning courses that have been developed on your campus.
- Create a handout of reflection activities that can be used in the college classroom for each participant (see Eyler, Giles, & Schmeide, 1996; Hatcher & Bringle, 1997).
- Flip charts/paper and markers for each group of 3-4 to use in reporting to the whole group.



*Time needed to complete the activity: 45-60 minutes*

## **The activity:**

- Provide each participant with a copy of the brief descriptions of five service learning courses and a copy of the handout created to describe reflection activities.
- Break up into groups of 3-4. Each group selects one service learning course to focus on for this activity. Assigning a certain course to each group reduces the time required for this activity.
- The group identifies three reflection activities that are suitable for the selected course. Participants can share ideas from their own teaching experience or refer to the handout of reflection activities.
- The group must identify a clear rationale for why each reflection activity was selected.
- Compile reflection activities and rationale on a flip chart.
- Select three groups to provide a summary of their discussion and their rationale for selecting the reflection activities. Facilitate a wrap-up discussion on what was learned.

## **Activity 12: "Journals: Easy to assign, tough to grade"**

*Purpose of the activity:* To increase participants' competence and confidence in evaluating student reflective journals.

*Audience:* This activity is appropriate for instructors in the process of developing a service learning course, and for instructors who have offered a service learning course at least one time.

*Materials and/or preparation required:*

- With student permission, copy sample journal entries from three students who were enrolled in the same service learning course. Make enough copies so each working group has one set of journal entries to review.
- Make copies of the criteria for assessing reflection activities (*Reflection 14*) for each participant.

*Time needed to complete the activity: 45 minutes, including discussion*

## **The activity:**

- Ask participants to form pairs or working groups of three.
- Each person in the group reads the set of student journal entries provided. The group must then come to consensus on a grade for each student journal based on the criteria provided for assessing reflection.
- Reconvene the larger group to discuss dynamics and tensions in evaluating journals. (e.g., Should student journals be graded? Is reflection a public or private activity?)
- If time allows, the group can suggest guidelines for instructors when assigning and evaluating reflective journals.

Reflection activities engage students in the intentional consideration of their experiences in light of particular learning objectives, and provide an opportunity for students to:

- gain further understanding of the course content and discipline
- gain further understanding of the service experience
- develop self-assessment skills as a life-long learner
- explore and clarify values that can lead to civic responsibility

reflection 3

(Hatcher & Bringle, 1997)

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## Reflection as a Cognitive Activity

- Begins in perplexity and “forked-road” situations
- Is active, persistent, careful consideration of any belief or knowledge
- includes a responsibility for future consequences
- is both retrospective and progressive

reflection 4

(Dewey, 1933)

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## Five Stages of Reflective Thought

- Perplexity, confusion, doubt
- Attentive interpretation of the given elements
- Examination, exploration, and analysis to define and clarify the problem
- Elaboration of the tentative hypothesis
- Testing the hypothesis by doing something overtly to bring about anticipated results

reflection 5

(Dewey, 1933)

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## Guidelines for Effective Reflection Activities

Effective reflection activities....

- link experience to learning
- are guided
- occur regularly
- allow feedback and assessment
- foster the exploration and clarification of values

reflection 6

(Hatcher & Bringle, 1997)

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## Guidelines for Facilitating Student Reflection

- Structured as ongoing aspect of course
- Offered in multiple forms
- Included in assessment
- Modeled by instructor
- Connected to course content
- Supported by class context

(Williams & Driscoll)

reflection 7

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## 4 C's of Reflection

- Continuous reflection
- Connected reflection
- Challenging reflection
- Contextualized reflection

(Eyler, Giles & Schmiede, 1996)

reflection 8

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## Variables Shaping Selection and Design of Reflection Activities

- Course Based or Co-curricular
- Learning Objectives
  - cognitive objectives
  - affective objectives
  - civic responsibility objectives
- Course Design
  - service component is required or optional
  - % of grade
  - assessment design
- Student Development
  - student directed learning
  - freshman or senior
  - learning styles

reflection 9

(Hatcher & Bringle, 1997)

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## Examples of Reflection Activities

- Personal Journals
- Directed Writings
- Directed Readings
- Classroom Assessment Techniques
- Ethical Case Studies
- Student Portfolios
- Personal Narratives
- Experiential Research Paper

reflection 10

(Hatcher & Bringle, 1997)

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## Types of Personal Journals

- Three-part journal
- Double-entry journal
- Highlighted journal
- Critical incident journal
- Free write journal
- Key word journal
- Activity log journal
- Dialogue journal

reflection 11

(Hatcher & Bringle, 1997)

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## Three-Part Journal

### Description:

A narrative of events, interactions, decisions, successes, problems, and plans. Also, it can include your thoughts and feelings.

### Analysis:

The analysis section should establish connections between the service experience and material from textbook and lectures. You should identify material that you find useful in analyzing and understanding the events in your service experience.

### Application:

This section relates the course material and the service experience to your personal life (e.g. goals, values, attitudes, philosophy).

reflection 12

(Bringle)

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## Telling: Oral Exercises

'Activists' tend to reflect and learn through speaking and oral presentations in order to effect change and impact a particular group of people

- focus groups
- informal discussions
- formal class discussions
- presentations
- talking to other students
- recruiting other volunteers
- teaching a class
- cooperative learning
- story telling
- individual conferences with faculty or project sponsor
- legislative testimony

reflection 13

(Eyer, Giles & Schmiede, 1996)

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## Criteria for Assessing Levels of Reflection

- **Level One**
  - observations of behaviors or setting is one dimensional
  - relies on unsupported personal beliefs as evidence
  - focuses on one aspect of situation
- **Level Two**
  - observations are thorough
  - provides insight into observations
  - perceives legitimate differences of viewpoint
- **Level Three**
  - views things from multiple perspectives and can evaluate conflicting goals of individuals involved in a situation
  - recognizes that actions must be situationally dependent within a broader context
  - has reasonable assessment of responsibility as a part of the client's life

reflection 14

(Bradley, 1995)

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**When service learning instructors design and select effective reflection activities, they are likely to:**

- **Move from an “instructor” to a “facilitator” of learning**
- **Better access student learning from the service experience**
- **Create more satisfying learning experiences**
- **Discover additional ways that their discipline can relate to community needs**

(Hatcher & Bringle, 1997)