

Reflection and Assessment

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Reflection is one of the most important components in any service-learning class. It is often considered the key ingredient that transforms community service into service-learning. Reflection is simply a means for allowing students the opportunity to use critical thinking skills to review and analyze their learning, personal growth, and understanding of the community. It is a process or mechanism that allows students a chance to: reflect on what they have done, confront issues, including their subjective perspectives and biases, and relate their experience to personal development and/or academic content learning.

Reflection activities can and often does take several forms. There is no best form, only the one that works best for the instructor and the students involved. Often, instructors will allow students a variety of opportunities to reflect. These options may include: journal writings; guided small and/or large group discussions; post-service essays; and painting, drama, music or other artistic expressions.

Each course and instructor will have their own unique method for student reflection and assessment. Often, these assessment methods are tied to the reflection activities of the course. Don't be surprised if your instructor requires multiple types of reflection, or if you are regularly involved in reflection activities throughout the semester. In fact, continuous reflection is the best way to insure increased levels of learning from your service experience.

Some instructors ask the community benefit organization staff to fill out an evaluation for each student participating in the service activities. Generally, your instructor will tell you ahead of time what they expect and how your service will be evaluated. This information can often be found in your course syllabus. If your instructor does not inform you how your service-learning activities will be evaluated, and how service-learning will impact your course grade, just ask them.

If you have any problems during a service activity it should be reported to your site supervisor and/or instructor immediately. If you are uncomfortable reporting any problems in this manner you should contact your instructor or the Richter Center as soon as possible at <http://www.fresnostate.edu/cesl/>.