

Learning inventories and action plans

Goals for this reflection

1. Students will articulate what they have learned from their service learning experience.
2. Students will explore possibilities for ongoing involvement and/or responsibility for identified issues.

Length

20 minutes

Best time to use this reflection

Near the end of the service project or placement.

Materials needed

1. Blackboard, white board, or chart paper.
2. Enough copies of Service Learning Summary Interview template for each student in the class.
3. If using, enough copies of Action Plan Journal Prompt for each student in the class.
4. Clock, watch, or timer.

Preparation

1. Make copies.
2. Review in-class procedure below.
3. Review template for group discussion on course connections. Identify at least two themes, topics, skills, or subject areas from the course which you wish to list on the template. These should be themes or topics you consider particularly relevant to students' service learning activities.

IN-CLASS PROCEDURE

1. Service learning summary interviews (6 minutes)

Group students into pairs. Distribute Service Learning Summary Interview templates. Ask one student in each pair to raise his/her hand. Students with raised hands will be the first interviewer. Instruct students that they will have 3 minutes to interview their partners using the template and record their partners' responses. Call time after three minutes and instruct the partners to switch. The interviewee is now the interviewer. Allow another 3 minute interview period and call time.

2. Report back (3-4 minutes)

Ask students to share some results of their interviews. Make note of common or unique learning outcomes on the board.

3. Group discussion on course connections (7-10 minutes)

Draw three columns on the board. Label the left column "Course." Label the right column "Service." Do not label the middle column. In the left column, write in at least two themes, topics, skills, or subject areas that you as the instructor have identified beforehand.

Prompt students to fill in the right hand column by describing things they did or observed in their service learning. Use questions such as:

- With [this topic, skill, or subject] in mind, tell me about something that happened at your service learning.
- What sort of things did you do during your service learning?
- What sort of activities did you engage in?
- What tasks did you perform?
- What memorable things did you observe?

In the right hand column, write down activities, events, or observances mentioned by students, leaving the middle column blank. Allow about 2 minutes for this.

Next, prompt students to fill in the middle column by describing how the service learning activities they listed in the right hand column connect to the first topic, skill or subject you listed in the left hand column. Focus on just the first one. Ask questions such as:

- What did [the activity, task, or observance] tell you about [topic, skill or subject area]?
- Did [the activity, task or observance] make you think differently about [topic, skill or subject area]?
- Did you realize anything new about [topic, skill or subject area] by doing [activity/task]?

In the middle column, write down connections students suggest. Instructors should be prepared to participate actively in helping students formulate these connections. Allow about 3-4 minutes for this.

Ask students if they'd like to suggest additional topics, skills or subject areas for the left-hand column. Repeat the process for the right column and the center column in response to these.

Post-reflection

A. Letter to self

Invite students to write a letter to themselves to be read in five years. The letter should describe what they hope to remember from their service learning experience and identify at least a few "takeaways."

Or

B. Action plan journal

Invite students to write 1-2 pages in response to the Action Plan Journal Prompt.

Service Learning Summary Interview

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

1. One strength you discovered about yourself during the course of your service learning
2. One challenge you faced in dealing with other people during the course of your service learning
3. One quality about yourself that you learned you'd like to work on
4. One empirical fact you learned during your service learning experience
5. One memorable thing you learned about your agency (what it does, its purpose, its function, its history)
6. One thing you learned about the clients served by the agency (either an individual person or in general) which was surprising to you
7. One thing you learned during the course of your service learning experience that you wish more people knew about

Suggested template for group discussion on course connections

A topic, skill, subject or idea you learned about in your class	POINT OF CONNECTION	Something you did in your service learning, or something that happened during the course of your service learning
Example: Gender identity, and how it is formed from a very young age	The kinds of games and activities young boys and girls are encouraged to participate in has a lot to do with how their gender identities are formed	Example: Helped facilitate recess and art time at a local preschool
Example: How to speak, read, write and understand Spanish	Understanding a language requires understanding tone and context as well as vocabulary and grammar.	Example: Overheard ESL students conversing with one another in Spanish
Example: How viral infections can be suppressed through drug therapies	Healthy eating can help people deal with the side effects of antiviral drugs.	Example: Helped residents at an HIV/AIDS home prepare to live independently by buying and preparing their own food
Example: Characteristics of effective press releases	Many of the principles of effective press releases can also be adapted to make event flyers and announcements more effective	Example: Helped a nonprofit organization publicize its upcoming fundraising event
Example: How social institutions reflect socioeconomic class structures but also reinforce them	American public schools reflect but also reinforce socioeconomic distinctions between poor and wealthy schoolchildren	Example: Helped tutor kids at a public school
[Instructor lists theme, topic, skill or subject area from the class]	[Group discussion about this]	Students provide
[Instructor lists them, topic, skill or subject area from the class]	[Group discussion about this]	Students provide
[Students suggest additional topics, skills or subject areas from the class]	[Group discussion about this]	Students provide

Action Plan Journal Prompt

Name one issue or situation you observed in your service learning experience which you feel could be improved or which needs to change.

Write 1-2 pages addressing the following questions:

- What will be required to make these changes?
- Who has the power to contribute to change in this area?
- How can you as an individual contribute to changing this situation? What decisions can you make in light of your experience of this situation and your analysis of it? What actions could you take? What values could you change? What behaviors could you change? What awareness could you try to gain or spread?
- Besides individual changes, what else will be required to bring about these changes?
- It has been said that “The journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step.” What is one simple step that could be taken to start the process of change, even if the end goal is a long way off?
- How can ordinary, everyday people contribute to taking that simple step?