

SUNY Cortland

Service-Learning Manual

A Short Guide to Best Practices

The Institute for Civic Engagement
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INTRODUCTION

Service-Learning = Jazz

“Why do we need to know this? We’ll never use it!”

Many instructors use service-learning to address this common sentiment because service-learning helps students realize for themselves the personal relevance of course content; it does so by encouraging students to apply real-world experience to course work and to their own lives.

For Richard Kendrick, a Sociology professor and Director of SUNY Cortland’s Institute for Civic Engagement, service-learning is a way for students to discover the importance of community engagement’s role in citizenship. He points to the National Survey of Student Engagement’s (NSSE) decision to call service-learning and certain other forms of experiential learning “high-impact practices” because those methodologies improve student engagement and retention rates, and they enhance students’ critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills.¹ Service-learning also strengthens students’ *intrapersonal* communication skills.

In the late 1990’s, Olle Kwarnmark, a mechanical engineer and a team leader for Scania Corporation, partnered with me on service-learning lessons that applied his philosophy of team work, which begins with introspection. His guidance led us to compare service-learning to jazz: Both can be unpredictable and unfamiliar, and both can cause dissonance. Yet as service-learning students reflect on their psychological dissonance (such as when their experiences contradict expectations about “the working poor”), they understand themselves and other people better, which helps them work more effectively with those other individuals.

This is especially important for students who recently graduated from high school because they are in a period of transition, moving from twelve years of often passive learning to a time of active thinking, from a period of reliance on parents to a life-time of responsibility for self, family, and community.

For instructors, service-learning’s jazz brings challenges and ironies: To help students become more self-reliant, instructors gain control of students’ learning by partially relinquishing control of that learning, by letting students “riff” their own lessons, their own music. This leads to the prominence of process over product because we value critical thinking and self-reflection. Yet this focus on process can help students generate more nuanced understandings of course content. My service-learning colleagues and I hope that you enjoy your students’ jazz – their improvising and syncopation, their collaboration, creativity, and insight.

My thanks to my service-learning colleagues for their insight and observations during the preparation of this manual: Richard Kendrick, Director of SUNY Cortland’s Institute for Civic Engagement (ICE), Cyndi Guy, ICEs Community Innovation Coordinator, and English Composition Instructors Geoff Bender and Jack Carr.

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SERVICE-LEARNING

DO GOOD; LEARN WELL

This section describes, justifies the use of, and gives guidelines for, the use of service-learning.

Definition

The SUNY Institutional Research and Information System defines service-learning as “a credit-bearing teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience and strengthen communities.”

Examples of community projects that can be blended with relevant course work include tutoring and mentoring through organizations such as a retirement home or the YWCA, providing sports training and support for people with disabilities, and assisting in food preparation, delivery, and clean-up at soup kitchens. Some specific SUNY Cortland examples include:

- The creation of *Cortland Students for A Valuable Environment* (C-SAVE). In 2008, a student in a service-learning English composition course volunteered on an environmental project with the New York Public Interest Research Group. His efforts led him and a peer to co-create this environmental sustainability student club. After six years, this Student-Government Association-approved club is still active. The student, who (at that time) had not declared his major, later earned his MSED in Secondary Education, Biology, 7 – 12.
- The creation of *League 56*. Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Studies students, with their professors' guidance, created, conducted, and assessed an anti-bullying program for local 5th- and 6th-graders, called League 56. Begun in spring 2009, the program has been so successful with elementary school administrators, teachers, and parents that college students and faculty have expanded the program to 4th- and 5th-graders. The programs, which are still part of service-learning courses, now operate in two elementary schools and at a youth bureau.
- The operation of the *Volunteer Income Tax Assistance* (VITA) Program. Economics majors in a 400-level economics course participated in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program. In spring 2014, these students prepared income tax returns for 608 low-income individuals and families.
- The launch of SUNY Cortland's new (spring 2015) *Social Innovation and Change* course. Students from a variety of majors will collaborate with community partners to identify the organizations' individual needs, such as program evaluation, fundraising and development, and publicity and marketing. Students will also help create ideas that address those needs.

Service-learning vs volunteering, internships, and traditional teaching

Service-learning, volunteering, and internships are related, but service-learning embodies important differences, as demonstrated in the table below.

Service-Learning vs. Volunteering and Internships

	Not paid	Academic course	Social Justice	Reflection
Service-learning	X	X	X	X
Volunteering	X			
Internships		X		

In contrast to some internships, people who volunteer or who participate in service-learning projects are not paid for their participation. (Some people might argue that service-learning students are paid with academic credit, but students in traditionally-taught courses also receive credit, of course.)

Two other differences distinguish service-learning from volunteering and internships: Service-learning explores social justice issues, and it uses reflection, through which students learn by drawing relationships between their course work and field experiences. (As the next section explains, reflection is the activity that most sharply distinguishes service-learning from many internships and from volunteering and traditional teaching.) Those relationships help students develop more complex, personalized, and applied understandings of course concepts. Students also use reflection to learn about their relationships with their social environment (e.g., ways in which they might be privileged), and in so doing, they learn about themselves – their values, perspectives, and prejudices. In these ways, service-learning is concerned more with the *process of learning* than with the products of teaching, such as an essay or the answers to a test.

Service-learning is a process-oriented holistic pedagogy

Traditional teaching focuses primarily on product; therefore, the knowledge to be learned is predictable. For example, a physics teacher might base a student's lab grade on the degree to which the student's experiment generated the "correct" data. However, if the experiment did not produce the expected results, student and teacher look at what the student did wrong, rather than examine the process itself. In addition, traditional teaching is teacher-focused and symbols-based: It relies largely on faculty as the senders of language-encoded information, and on students as the receivers of that secondary information.

Service-learning, though, values the learning process. Kolb (1984) distinguishes "learning" from traditional teaching by describing learning as a holistic process that involves both experience and symbols. Service-learning is holistic pedagogy in at least three ways.

Service-learning is a holistic pedagogy:

1. It uses experiential (primary) and symbols-based (secondary) information.
2. It facilitates multi-disciplinary investigations of events, situations, and conditions.
3. It nurtures links between cognition and emotion in two ways –
 - a. It taps into students' memories of emotionally-intense and relevant experiences.
 - b. It surfaces conflict between students' preconceptions and their experiences as they interact with unfamiliar surroundings and people.

First, it feeds the brain both experiential (primary) and symbols-based (secondary) information. Second, by virtue of its experiential nature, it is holistic also in that it facilitates multi-disciplinary investigations of events, situations, and conditions: Students can interpret experience through a variety of disciplinary lenses. For example, students who analyze the quality of a river's water must learn chemical and biological knowledge and skills. When they present their findings to the city council, they must apply writing skills in a political context.

Third, service-learning is holistic because it nurtures links between cognition and emotion. It does so in at least two ways: One, it can tap into a student's feelings about his own memories of intense and relevant life experiences. An excerpt from a SUNY Cortland student's reflection in Spring 2007 illustrates the role played by memory.² The student, enrolled in a first-year service-learning English composition course, grew up in a Hispanic family that did not value education. In a reflection, this student recognized similarities between her life and the life of the child she was mentoring.

I know that college is not greatly emphasized in Hispanic families, at least not in mine. I saw college as a necessity and something that I was going to accomplish no matter the cost. I wanted to show [her mentee] that college is important and that attending it should be a top priority, not just finishing high school. My hope is that, the influence I have had on her will encourage her to one day go to college and prove to everyone in her family, her community, and herself, that college is not only important to be successful, but also attainable.

In addition to using memories to create emotional reactions, service-learning can create emotional reactions by surfacing conflict between a student's preconceptions and his experiences as he interacts with unfamiliar surroundings and/or people. Hollis (2002), for example, found that – in contrast to the traditionally-taught section of her "Social Problems" sociology class – her service-learning section had "often-lively discussions [that] sometimes involved students confronting each other's ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and prejudices, and students generally talked openly about their frustrations, fears, and newfound understandings" (p. 206).

Reflections from students in Community Health classes provide specific examples of mismatches between students' preconceptions and their community service experiences. Reflections from students in Hodges' and Videto's 2007 *Community Health* course showed that some students originally believed that people from different walks of life prioritize concerns in the same way as they, the students, did. These students helped underserved groups in the poor rural county of Cortland, New York. As a result of their reflections on those experiences, many of the students learned that they need to value the perceptions of community members:

I realize putting together a community health program is no easy task because you have to understand the group you are working with... Other things you have to realize are that people in that society may not see the same problem you do. They may be more concerned with other issues, and you have to work around that to address what they think is the most important issue in their community.

This realization helped the student be a more effective practitioner by helping her to empathize with community partners. Service-learning projects, such as those in which these students participated, were grounded in best practices, and they exemplify the first of our Best Practices: Provide students with meaningful and course-relevant community projects.

Best Practices

1. Provide students with meaningful and course-relevant community projects. For example, a student in a Criminology course might want to volunteer at an animal shelter by filing paperwork and walking dogs. Obviously, neither of these activities is relevant to the course. However, if the student were to work with authorities on cases of animal abuse, he might learn how such cases can help identify individuals who also abuse people.
2. Build collaborative community relationships based on mutual respect.
 - a. Learn how your students can help address community needs by asking your community partners about those needs. If you identify other needs, share them with relevant community partners.
 - b. Share your course syllabus, goals, and requirements with your partners because they have the education, experience, and desire to help your students excel.
 - c. Explain to students that their community partners are educated, experienced, and dedicated, and that those individuals donate a good deal of their own time to help students succeed. To reinforce this idea, ask your Office of Service-Learning to help you arrange a start-of-semester meeting between your students and their agency partners.
 - d. Keep lines of communication open so that you can quickly resolve challenges (such as a student's ineffective participation at an agency), and so that you can promptly acknowledge a student's exceptional work.

3. Have faith in, and support, your students.
 - a. Plan for flexibility. Students' observations and reflections are valuable resources that you can use as "teachable moments."
 - b. Visit students at their sites, if appropriate. Doing so strengthens your working relationships with both the community and your students, and it helps you to identify connections between students' field experiences and your course.
4. Integrate service-learning and reflection into your syllabus. Include a definition, description, and rationale for the use of service-learning because, although many of your students will have volunteered before entering your class, they might not have intentionally used volunteer activities as opportunities for learning.
5. Determine if you will give students options for their service-learning projects, or if the entire class will participate in the same project.
6. Specify requirements
 - a. Students should volunteer for at least one hour/per week, excluding travel time.
 - b. Students should record their experiences promptly in, for example, a Service-Learning Journal. Refer to the *Reflections* section for guidelines regarding this idea.
7. Toward the semester's end, reflect, with students and community partners, on "what worked," "what didn't work," and what should be changed. Incorporate ideas from that discussion into your next service-learning course, and let your new students know which of the refinements came from their predecessors. In this way, you help to build mutual respect by demonstrating the importance of student input.

Benefits. Students in well-run service-learning classes can benefit in the following ways –

Academic. Students

1. Generate more complex understanding of issues.
2. Develop greater understanding of how course content relates to "the real world" (Kendrick & Suarez, 2003, p. 50).
3. Strengthen skills in areas such as communication, leadership (Astin et al., 2003, p. 141), teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving.
4. Develop increased motivation to learn course content (Shelton, 2003).

Well-Being (identity, perspective-taking, resilience, and persistence). Students

1. Are more accepting of diversity (Astin et al., 2000, p. 17; Eyler et al., 2003, p. 15).
2. More readily empathize with other people's perspectives (Astin et al., 2000, p. 96; Lundy, Rockquemore, & Schaffer, 2000, p. 19).
3. Are more aware of social justice issues, and they feel that they should work to resolve those issues (Kendrick & Suarez, 2003).
4. Tend to engage in more community service activities after graduation (Eyler et al., 2003, p. 16).
5. Develop a strengthened sense of personal efficacy (Astin et al., 2003, p. 141).
6. Reach higher retention rates (Hubbert, 2002; Mundy & Eyler, 2002).

REFLECTION



This section describes, justifies the use of, and gives guidelines for, the use of reflection.

- *I noticed a mom screaming at her child because he fell. She looked like she was about to hit him. I felt uncomfortable.*
- *A lady didn't know if she was pregnant or not and didn't have \$ to buy a pregnancy test.*
- *A guy violated his parole and is doing community service because of it. [The kitchen's supervisor] didn't seem surprised by it. Other workers knew the [city] judges from their own violations.*
- *One boy comes in a lot, misses school! Supposed to be in 6th grade. Comes in with a man who is not his dad. Uncle?*
- *Woman is pregnant, due beginning of November. No prenatal care. Smoking.*
- *A man at the soup kitchen is going to college in January.*

The Service-learning journal entries above were written by first-year college students who volunteered at a soup kitchen in Fall 2011. Students used these entries as they reflected on their accounts of unfamiliar and psychologically uncomfortable – dissonant – situations, and as they reflected on their reactions to those situations. In this way, they generated their own learning about course content, self, and society. Reflection is crucial to students' learning because, through it, students explain the importance of their academic course work to their own lives.

Definition – Reflection is a process through which a person develops a more nuanced understanding of an experience, event, or situation that he finds puzzling or troubling (adapted from Jay and Johnson, 2002, p. 76). Reflection is an important skill in many fields, including teaching, which is why it is a part of student-teachers' *Teacher Professional Assessments* (edTPA).

The words “reflection” and “journaling” are sometimes used synonymously. For our discussion, though, *journaling* refers to a re-telling of events that provides the *who, what, where, and when* of those events, as in the Service-Learning Journal (or “Log”) form that is provided in the Appendix. For our purposes, service-learning journal entries serve as clues that instructors

can use for reflection prompts because those entries describe situations that mystify or upset students. Students, in turn, use those entries to re-ignite memories as they reflect.

Reflection helps a student challenge his understanding of the world or of himself. It often requires the student to focus more on the *how* or the *why* relationships behind the observations; it requires students to identify and explain connections between details, and between details and pre-existing beliefs, especially when those details and beliefs conflict. For example, if you were the Sociology professor for the students who were quoted above, you could craft a reflection prompt that asks students to describe differences between their own *social capital* and that of the 16-year-old or of the pregnant woman.

Reflection and psycho-social well-being

Such a prompt can help a student develop an awareness of his own emotional state and of the emotional state of the person with whom he is talking. A follow-up prompt could ask the student to consider ways in which this new awareness can be used to communicate in a way that leads to a healthier, more productive working relationship with that other individual. This awareness is part of *psycho-social well-being*, or, simply, *well-being*.

SUNY Cortland, through its Bringing Theory to Practice research, has operationalized “well-being” to encompass concepts such as identity (self-awareness), perspective-taking (similar to empathy), resilience, and persistence. Well-being is similar to “emotional intelligence,” which also includes perspective-taking and the ability to nurture interpersonal relations (Goroshit & Hen, 2012, p. 31). A similar term is emotional *competence*. Wang et al. (2012) note that the word *competence*, in contrast to *intelligence*, suggests that people can learn skills that are useful in identifying and using emotions.³ We will use the term “well-being” as a synonym for both emotional intelligence and emotional competence because it embraces both of those terms.

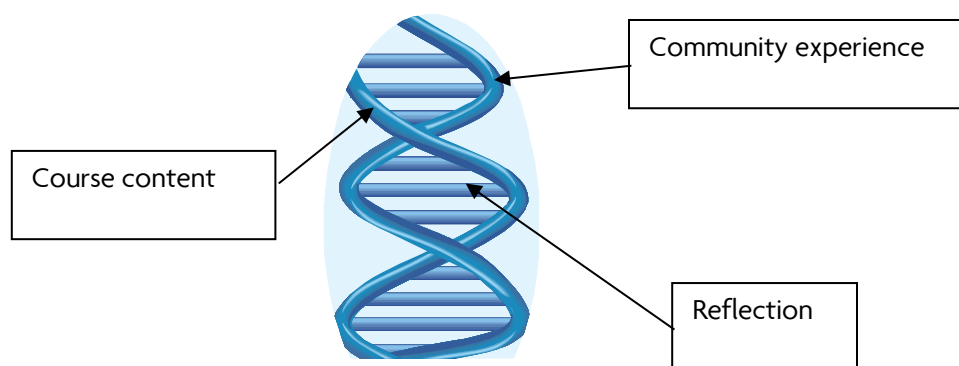
One way of learning specific well-being skills is through reflection (Correia and Bleicher, 2008, p. 43). Goroshit and Hen (2012) showed that people can strengthen their psycho-social well-being (p. 37), including empathy, through reflection and other social processes that are involved in experiential education. Their study focused on second-year healthcare and education majors who were enrolled in a well-being course entitled “Doing Psychotherapy.” This experiential course incorporated role-play and reflection as methods through which students explored their beliefs and emotions, as well as the beliefs and emotions of other people. Wang et al. (2012) report similar results from their quasi-experimental study, which found that a college-level emotion-learning curriculum can strengthen first-year students’ well-being (p. 8).⁴

Our well-being is important in our own professional and/or personal lives because children strengthen their well-being by mimicking the well-being behaviors that they observe in adults (McLaughlin, 2008, p. 363). This holds as well for education majors, of course; yet in spite of the importance of well-being in teacher-education, and in spite of reflection’s key role in developing well-being, Callens & Elen (2011, p. 496) and Ryan (2013, p. 144) note that many pre-service teachers

are not taught how to reflect. This manual is an attempt to help resolve this situation by offering a description of, and specific guidelines for implementing, reflection assignments.

The Nature of Reflection

The DNA molecule model below illustrates reflection's role in an individual's academic and personal growth. One DNA strand, or tube, represents academic course content; the other is the course's experiential component. The "canals" that connect the tubes represent reflection, through which students actively blend their "established" knowledge with the "chaos and ambiguity of experience" (Felten et al., 2006, p. 39, paraphrasing John Dewey's characterization of reflection). When students reflect, they create personal relevance for their experiences; they perform "jazz."



Reflection is the key activity that distinguishes service-learning from traditional teaching and from internships and volunteering. It is a constructivist process (Felten et al., 2006, p. 39) in which an individual creates relationships between experience and knowledge. That knowledge could be part of a course's content or an item in a person's memory. A relationship can be one of similarity, contrast, space, time, co-ordination, subordination, example, pattern, progression, cause and effect, or problem/solution.

Reflection is also a holistic endeavor: It involves cognition and emotion (Felten et al., 2006, p. 39). Felten et al. highlight the importance of emotion in thinking, in general, and in reflection, in particular, by demonstrating that emotion is not divorced from thinking, nor is it simply a spark that leads to learning. Rather, emotion and cognition are inseparable (pp. 40-41).

Reflection's ability to take advantage of the emotion/cognition connection might explain, in part, its role in helping people to empathize. An example of reflection's role in developing empathy comes from a first-year Inclusive Special Education major who was upset about ideas that her elementary school teachers had given her regarding inner-city children. As part of a Spring 2014 learning community formed by two service-learning courses (*Introduction to Urban Education* and *Writing Studies in the Community II*, an English composition course), students volunteered as tutors in low-income urban elementary schools. For the writing course, this

student drew on her service-learning journal's observation notes and on her reflections as she composed a Rogerian argument essay, which requires the essay's author to demonstrate detailed empathy for the intended reader's point of view, before presenting her argument.

Her essay took the form of a letter addressed to the principal of the elementary school that she, herself, had attended. That school is in a middle-class suburb of the city in which she tutored. In her letter, the student drew on one of her reflections as she described her surprise at the children's good behavior, which contrasted with her elementary school teachers' descriptions of those children. She wrote that "I find that the students who do act up a lot are usually the children who have really tough home situations. Of the two students in my class that were 'really bad kids,' one is homeless and the other gets beaten with a belt, so not wanting to pay attention is more than understandable."

The student asked her elementary school's principal to help the school's teachers strengthen *their* perspective-taking by scheduling a State of Poverty Simulation for the teachers. She and her classmates had participated in this role-play event, which helps people understand, cognitively and emotionally, challenges faced by low-income citizens. This future teacher demonstrated perspective-taking in her reflection, in her approach to argument, and in her letter's "call to action."

Purposes and benefits:

As the example above demonstrates, reflection is a tool for academic and personal growth. It can help students learn course content, learn ways of thinking, and learn about themselves.

More specifically, it can help them

1. Develop more nuanced understandings of course material (Sherman and MacDonald, 2009, p. 241; The Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation, p. 11).⁵
2. Think critically (Hayden et al., 2012, p. 146; Jay & Johnson, 2002, p. 76).
3. Innovate (The Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation, p. 11).
4. Strengthen perspective-taking (Goroshit and Hen, 2012, p. 32; Wang et al., 2012, p. 14).
5. Develop a more complex understanding of, and a stronger ability to articulate, their own beliefs, values, behaviors, and emotions (Nilsson, 2009, p. 255).

Guidelines for designing reflection

1. Design “structured” reflection prompts. Structured prompts are questions or commands that focus students’ thinking. In contrast to “free-writing” designs, this type of prompt helps you to integrate reflection into course content, and it helps you to create prompts through which your students challenge their own thinking. Considerations in the design of structured prompts include the learning goal, the type of thinking (deductive or inductive), and phrasing (question or command).

One way of integrating learning goals into structured prompts is to first give students a theme on which students focus during the next one or more service-learning experiences. Students record their theme-based observations in their journals. An example of this approach comes from a Spring 2014 Inclusive Special Education major who was working with the theme of “educational challenges.” This student converted her Journal entry into a reflection as she contrasted content from a course in the previous semester with her current service-learning experience at a low-income school. Her reflection is creative in that she begins to establish a three-way causal relationship between physical activity, psycho-social well-being, and academic success. In the process of doing so, she begins to paint a portrait of herself as a future educator. She wrote,

This may not be academic related, but another thing I see as being an educational challenge is that there is no recess for the children. I took a class last semester called Health and the Child. The professor teaching the course told us to never punish a student by taking away his/her recess time. They need that time to cool off, relax, and take a break from learning. ...I was so shocked and disappointed to hear that [name of school] has not had recess for the past 3 or 4 years. ...I believe that the students’ academic performance would be much better in the afternoon if they had recess.

Reflection’s over-all goal is for each student to generate insight, a personally-new realization. That realization is the reflection’s “thesis statement,” which can arrive as an “A-Ha!” moment near the conclusion. In this way, reflection can be different from traditional essays in which the thesis statement arrives in, or shortly after, an introduction. When that realization arrives toward the reflection’s conclusion, the student is thinking inductively, moving from details to generalization. This behavior leads us to our second guideline regarding reflection prompt design.

2. Decide between deductive or inductive prompts. A deductive prompt begins with a question that asks for a generalization, such as, “How would you characterize the differences between the parents’ behavior and your expectations of their behavior? Support your answer with evidence from your SL Journal notes.” The request for evidence, for details, comes in the second half of the prompt. The reverse approach is, of course, an inductive one, which forces students to begin by recounting specific details from experience and knowledge. An example is,

List your expectations of parents' behavior at the PTO meeting, and list your journal observations regarding their behavior. After reviewing those lists, describe ways in which parents' behaviors met – or diverged from – your expectations. In what ways has your opinion of these parents changed (or not)?”

The Appendix provides three sample reflection assignments and a sample reflection.

3. Begin prompts, particularly deductive ones, with an open-ended question, especially *what*, *why*, or *how*. A specific open-ended prompt comes from Ash, Clayton, & Atkinson (2005, p. 51) and from Hatcher, Bringle, & Muthiah (2004, p. 42), who promote the use of “What did you learn?” prompts. Ash, Clayton, and Atkinson provide a sequence of four such prompts:
 - a) What did I learn? (b) How, specifically, did I learn it? (c) Why does this learning matter, or why is it significant? And (d) In what ways will I use this learning, or what goals shall I set in accordance with what I have learned in order to improve myself, the quality of my learning, or the quality of my future experiences or service? (p. 51).

You can also phrase prompts as commands, such as, “Reconcile your call for greater public-school funding with your observations that ‘the children at the XYZ school do not have enough books,’ yet ‘many of the school’s classrooms have new electronic ‘White Boards.’” Correia & Bleicher (2008) ask students to apply new learning by posing prompts such as, “When I have my own classroom I will...” (p. 44). These kinds of prompts can help students articulate their educational philosophies.

4. Schedule reflection regularly because it is a skill (Hatcher, Bringle, & Muthiah, 2004, p. 42), so, as such, it requires practice and feedback. The phrase “regularly-scheduled” reflection does not necessarily mean once/week, because students need more time to collect enough experiences with which to draw relationships to course content and other knowledge. Scheduling reflections to be written every three or four weeks gives students time to experience new situations.

A different scheduling consideration comes into play with regard to the recording of service-learning observations: Reflection designs vary in terms of the point at which students record their observations from their service-learning experiences. In some cases, students record their observations while reflecting; in others, students record observations first, then move immediately into their reflections. Hatcher, Bringle, & Muthiah (2004), for example, suggest a three-part journal that includes “a description of the service experience, an analysis of the experience” [in which the student draws relationships between the experience and course content], and application,” in which the student identifies relationships between the experience and his “values and attitudes” (p.42).

A third model requires students to first record observations in a Journal over the course of three or four service-learning experiences; students then use those observations as fodder for reflection. This approach operates on the principle that students need to experience a variety of situations and conditions before they can effectively reflect. Three- or four-week intervals

(assuming one- or two-hours per session) work well. Students can refer to their Journals, course readings, database research, and/or notes from class discussions so that they have a wealth of details from which they can compose insightful reflections.

5. Capitalize on the close link between cognition, emotion, and memory. Appealing to emotion can help students remember useful details. The remembered knowledge to which students link their experiences includes the beliefs that they carry with them into your classroom. By using students' memories to "spark" their emotions, you help students resurrect pre-service-learning experiences that have informed their beliefs. A mix of conflicting past and present experiences gives students an opportunity to think critically and to re-assess or strengthen their opinions. An example of a prompt that draws on emotion is, "What specific elements of this experience were frustrating or upsetting? Why were they upsetting?"

6. Be flexible (Correia & Bleicher, 2008, p. 43; Hatcher, Bringle, & Muthiah, 2004, p. 43). Students can surprise us with the observations that they make, and with the lessons that they draw from those observations. As a result, instructors must sometimes create almost "spontaneous" reflection prompts that coax students into exploring those observations and/or lessons. At such times, instructors perform an improvisational jazz-duet with students. An example comes from a re-creation-based reflection activity in one of my service-learning English composition classes.

Some of the students volunteered at a soup kitchen. In preparation for this reflection activity, students re-created sections of the soup kitchen. One of the props was a box of generic corn flakes. As the students and their classmates "toured" the "facility," one classmate picked up the box of generic cereal and said, "Oh, 'ghetto flakes!'" I interrupted the tour for an impromptu reflection session that explored the importance of connotative meanings. That discussion replaced the reflection prompt that I had planned on using.

7. That example also represents a seventh guideline: Use multi-modal approaches to reflection (Hatcher, Bringle, & Muthiah, 2004, p. 43). Reflection can be exercised in a variety of media, including the visual arts, the performing arts, speaking, or – of course – writing. Technology offers a variety of options for written reflection, including graphic representation, whether in photographic, cinematic, diagrammatic, chart, or graph form. These tools can generate additional perspectives and insight. A bar graph that depicts a trend in the appearance of a particular water pollutant could, for instance, show an increase of 11 parts per million (ppm) in one year to 13 ppm in the next. Visually, that difference seems minimal if the graph shows a spread of zero to 100 ppm. However, if the graph shows zero ppm to 20 ppm, that difference is magnified (or, from a different perspective, exaggerated).

Electronic delivery of students' reflections, whether through Blackboard or as attachments on e-mail, can facilitate an instructor's use of reflections in designing future reflection prompts.

These platforms also facilitate (with student approval) the use of exceptional reflections as examples for other students.

With Education majors in mind, Correia & Bleicher (2008) promote the use of Web-based platforms such as Blackboard for students' reflections because students will be able to access their reflections and, therefore, they will be able to use them as learning tools after the course is finished. (Correia & Bleicher found that, over three years, students neglected to collect their hard-copy reflections from their professors after the courses were completed) (p. 44). These same researchers also recommend not using notebooks because those items' bulkiness makes them inconvenient to carry around, especially for the instructor.

A low-tech multi-modal prompt that builds on the tactile and kinesthetic senses is the "tangible metaphor." For this kind of prompt, students bring to class an object that represents some troubling aspect of their service-learning experience, and a written reflection that explores connections between the experience and the object. In class, students reflect on their ideas with their classmates, using the object as their speaking notes. During discussion, any quality of the object can serve as a spark for additional ideas, whether that quality involves the object's weight, shape, colors, hardness, textures, age, or importance as a reminder of a personal event.

In Spring 2011, one of my English composition students brought bracelets with beads that were made of different materials and colors; each bead represented a child with a certain quality, such as perseverance or brittleness. Another brought an inflated balloon that represented the "fragile movements the [school] staff must make throughout the day but with a single pop, the success of the day could be destroyed." During discussion of the balloon, one student asked how a hot day is represented in the balloon. Another student pointed-out that, as air heats, it expands, so the balloon would be even closer to popping. A hot day could lead to a metaphorically "hot" – tense – school day. The conversation shifted to consideration of this follow-up question: "How could you help to minimize that tenseness in your classroom?"

"Priming" students for Reflection

The process of reflection is one of discovery, of creation; therefore, students can use techniques such as free-writing, discussion, "bubble-maps" (or "mind-maps"), re-creations, or role-play to facilitate thinking. Visual representations, such as mind-maps and Venn Diagrams, among other graphics, can be especially useful in identifying relationships between details, and in illustrating the complexity of issues. That complexity can lead to more insightful reflections.

Another way of priming students for reflection is by conducting in-class role-play events. Students' service-learning journal narratives can provide material for such events. The quotes listed at the beginning of this section (from a soup kitchen) were some of the ones that I used for this kind of class activity. In this case, every student had a role, and because only two or three students were "acting" at any one time, each student was also an observer.

Each student received instructions that explained his/her role. With most of the explanations, students were given general instructions regarding the actions and words of the

person whom they portrayed, and they were told to improvise their dialog. In a couple of cases, though, students were given specific words to say, because the actual quotes from the students' journals were dramatic. The student who had a food server's role was told to refuse a child's request for a second serving: "Nope, sorry, only one per person." This scene led to a good deal of discussion regarding fairness and regarding food pantry funding.

The comment that generated the most intense discussion came from an elderly man who was chatting with a student volunteer, one of my students. This young lady looked like a slightly-tanned white girl. The man asked her about her background. "My parents are Dominican," she said. "Ah," he replied, "you're a nigger."

Responding to Reflections

Reflection is often a "team effort": It can be conducted with a facilitator (an instructor or a trained student) who designs the reflection prompts and who responds promptly to students' reflections – within 24 hours, if in electronic form, or by the next class meeting, if on hard copy. Because reflection is a creative activity, instructors should help students identify relationships for themselves. One way of doing so is by applying active listening skills, which are described in greater detail in the next section.

The key idea, though, is using active listening's open-ended questions and paraphrasing, which promote independent thought. When the instructor paraphrases students' comments, he includes the intellectual and/or emotional components, as available. Paraphrasing gives the student the opportunity to correct the instructor's understanding, and/or to elaborate on his answer. A sample response could be, "You sound as though you were angry when the child said that he had never seen a waterfall. If so, why were you angry?"

Such responses also help students draw relationships between experience and course content. For example, one of my students complained in her reflection that physics was not an age-appropriate subject for third-graders. My response was, "What evidence do you have for that claim? What evidence/experience contradicts that claim? What would Bloom say?"

Occasionally, you might play "devil's advocate." Suppose, for the moment, that you secretly agreed with a student who wrote the sentences below, opposing standardized testing:

As I watched the children take the ELA exams, I was heartbroken. I saw two students cry. At that age, no child should be that stressed. They were upset if they didn't understand something. ...I know high expectations are good for students, but they are just children and don't deserve to be so upset over a test.

Instead of agreeing, however, you could pose responses such as, "How do you know why the children were crying? What might Maslow or Ravitch say? How do children deal with other pressures that they face, whether on the playground or at home? How have *you* dealt with such pressures? Explain why children should be denied the chance to grow and strengthen."

As you respond to reflections, you can draw attention to specific words, especially if those words reveal perceptions that are relevant to the lesson. A lesson that incorporates history,

political science, or sociology, for example, could benefit from a focus on students' use of words such as "activist," "extremist," or "terrorist" by examining the words' denotative and connotative meanings, and by putting them into social and historical contexts. Noting a student's phrasing can also be a way of assessing the student's learning, as the first item in the next section explains.

Grading Reflections

Instructors' grading options include the following:

1. The extent to which the student is connecting experiences to course content.
Correia & Bleicher (2008) state that reflections can serve as a way of determining the degree to which students are meeting course goals (p. 42). They recommend identifying "reflection markers" (p. 44) as evidence of connections that students make between their service-learning experiences and knowledge. These markers include students' phrases such as "I never thought," "how quickly," "shocked" (p. 45), and "assumed" (p. 46). These, and similar, phrases, help instructors identify kinds of relationships that students are making between their service-learning experiences and previous beliefs. The first three of the markers above, for example, show conflict between students' previous beliefs and current observations, and they point to selections in the reflection in which students are demonstrating their understanding of, and their application of, course content.
2. The extent to which the student addresses the assignment's requirements, such as suggestions for unique solutions to observed problems, reference to specific course concepts, reference to the student's own observations (e.g., statistical data generated through observation), reference to emotion, and the use of deductive or inductive format.
3. The strength of mechanical correctness (spelling, punctuation, usage, and grammar).

Guidelines for teaching reflection. The first five of these guidelines are from Correia & Bleicher, 2006, p. 46.

1. Define, describe, and provide models of reflection.
2. Encourage students to be aware of the kinds of connections that they can draw between service-learning experiences and knowledge.
3. Encourage students to be familiar with their own learning styles so that they can experiment with different modes of reflecting, of thinking.
4. Encourage students to be aware of their theories of learning. This guideline is especially important for education majors because service-learning pedagogy offers them an alternate way of working with their future students.
5. Instruct students in ways of identifying "reflection markers" as tools for deeper reflection.
6. Include a description of reflection expectations, and a sample assessment rubric in your syllabus (Hatcher, Bringle, & Muthiah, 2004, p. 43), so that students understand that reflections are an important part of the learning process.

ACTIVE LISTENING

DO GOOD; BE WELL

Definition/description:

Active listening is a skill through which the listener can better understand the speaker's message and through which he can understand – empathize with – someone else's thinking and feelings. It is especially useful in emotionally-charged situations.

Active listening is different from, but can work with, reflection. Reflection is a process through which a person develops a coherent understanding of *his own* thinking and feelings, often as the result of considering new knowledge that conflicts with his world-view. These two processes can work in concert for the mutual benefit of speaker and listener: Service-learning students often wrestle with the dissonance of clashing experiences. The instructor can engage active listening as a way of understanding students' perspectives, while also helping students reflect on those contradictions. Reflection and active listening are crucial elements in service-learning's constructivist nature.

The process

Active listening uses two basic skills: Prompt the speaker with

1. An open-ended question or with a command. Open-ended questions usually begin with words such as *who, what, where, when, why, and how*. Notice that open-ended questions prompt more informative answers than closed questions, such as, "Did Kozol's essay match your experience?" This kind of question asks for only one of two possible responses, such as yes or no. An example of a prompt that is phrased as a command is, "Tell me about ways in which Diane Ravitch's article matches your view of accountability in education."
2. A paraphrase (Rautalinko & Lisper, 2004, p. 282) or a summary (Heim, 2012, p. 294).

After the speaker replies to an open-ended question, a command, or a paraphrase, the listener could ask a follow-up question, or he could paraphrase that reply. In paraphrasing, the listener acts as a kind of mirror, reflecting the speaker's comments back to him. Although the listener paraphrases as accurately and objectively as possible, the paraphrase (like a mirror) has a good chance of being "distorted." This situation can be useful because, as the speaker corrects the editor's paraphrase, he explains his thinking to the listener and to himself. These two steps sound deceptively easy.

They are not.

Many of us seem to have been enculturated to quickly reject alternate points of view and to give advice, rather than to understand other people's perspectives. My experience in conducting reflective listening workshops for college students and for in-service K-12 teachers demonstrates the difficulty that many of us have in communicating in a listener-focused way. Repeated and conscientious practice, in- and out-of the classroom, is important in developing active-listening habits.

Characteristics of an active listener.

1. An active listener is speaker-focused; he aims at developing empathy for that speaker's perspective (Heim, 2012, p. 290) by valuing the speaker's knowledge and experiences. (This does not mean that the speaker necessarily agrees with the listener, only that he understands the listener's reasons for believing or behaving as he does.) In this way, active listening and service-learning share the principle of mutual respect, which leads the next characteristic.
2. An active listener is non-judgmental (Heim, 2012, p. 292). He avoids using his beliefs as "filters" through which he evaluates the speaker's claims, evidence, and feelings; he also avoids giving advice because doing so corrupts the speaker-focused nature of active listening. In the case of active listening, then, a kind of "avoidance behavior" is advisable because it helps the listener learn about, and empathize with, the speaker, and it helps the speaker clarify and articulate his ideas and emotions.
3. An active listener is patient because active listening can be time-consuming. It is the equivalent of two musicians' "riffs," through which the musicians work toward harmony.

Purposes. Use active listening to

1. Develop an understanding of the speaker's beliefs and feelings.
2. Demonstrate your understanding of the speaker's beliefs and feelings; in this way, you, as listener, help to develop a trusting relationship with the speaker.
3. Help the speaker learn how to think critically, or – as Heim (2012) states – to help students "learn to think for themselves" (p. 292).
4. Help the speaker develop and refine his own ideas. This is useful in purely reflective settings and in settings such as instructor- and peer-review of creative work (essays and the visual and performing arts, for example). Refer to the comments toward the end of this section for additional explanation and an example.
5. Help the speaker strengthen his well-being. Heim (2012) draws on the work of American clinical psychologist Carl Rogers in stating that
 the goal of education is the same as the goal of psychotherapy: the fully functioning person. The fully functioning person is characterized by their ability to self-direct and self-actualize. The fully functioning student learns to self-actualize through thinking for themselves and through learning how to learn through self-direction (p. 291).

This purpose is especially relevant, considering the emotions that students are likely to feel during the course of their service-learning experiences. In these experiences, students can find themselves confronting situations that clash with their beliefs about themselves (remember that well-being includes identity) and about their place in society. Through active listening, you can help your students better understand their identity, and you can help them strengthen their ability to self-actualize.

Active listening and reflection

In reflection discussions, the instructor can use active listening to help instill and continually nurture a “psychologically safe” (Heim, 2012, p. 292) classroom environment of mutual respect. In such an environment, students feel comfortable raising questions about connections between course content and experience, and they feel empowered to suggest answers to these questions – for which there might not be readily-available “right answers.”

To this end, they and the instructor understand that their relationship in this situation is *not* one in which the instructor is the expert; rather, students are colleagues who, from their service-learning experiences, bring expertise to the discussion. By using active listening, the instructor demonstrates respect for students, and he positions himself as a facilitator, not as the individual with The Answers.

The nature of the speaker/listener relationship is crucial in a variety of reflection settings, including peer review of creative work, such as art work and essays. As an editor (listener), the instructor might disagree with a student’s claim in an essay. Rather than telling the student what to write (and thereby weakening the classroom as a “safe zone” for free expression of ideas), the instructor could use active listening skills to help the student clarify and check his thinking.

The author (student), not the editor, does most of the talking in such a situation, and he keeps control of his work. To help the author do so, an effective editor uses active listening skills to help the author refine the message for himself. This approach applies to statements with which the instructor disagrees *or agrees* because the goal is not the “product” of a correct belief, but rather the process of rigorous critical thinking.

Examples come from my Spring 2014 service-learning English composition class. In one case, a student was composing a letter to the governor of New York State in which she argued against the governor’s proposed funding of college educations for prisoners. Rather than argue with the student, I paraphrased the student’s reasoning, and (after some clarification from the student), asked her why the governor was proposing the program. She gave a researched reason (reduce recidivism and, therefore, public expense), but after she explored the governor’s reasoning and her own reasoning, she decided to acknowledge, in her letter, the wisdom of the governor’s approach, but to also use some of the governor’s ethics-based comments to frame her argument on moral grounds.

In situations such as this one, we could try to accelerate the teaching process by suggesting what to write and how to write it. Ironically, though, we would be slowing-down – if not, weakening – the learning process, especially as it relates to critical thinking, writing, and well-being. We, as instructors, can model reflective listening habits for our students so that they, in turn, can model these habits, and the benefits of these habits, for their peers and for their children.

OBSERVING

Students' observations are important elements of service-learning classes because they are students' initial steps in representing their experiences. Even when we require students to record certain themes and/or certain kinds of information, students are the individuals who choose which observations to record, and what words to use in representing those observations. In addition, students can sharpen their critical thinking skills as they realize that they are acting in ways similar to news reporters, and that observations and other information in news reports (among other documents) are subject to varying degrees of accuracy.

Guidelines for Observing: The following guidelines are adapted from Reid, S. (2000, p. 49). Students should

1. Use a multi-sensory approach so that they take advantage of a variety of kinds of information. In addition, instructors can refer to students' observations (and the language that they use to represent those observations) to reinforce a critical thinking idea – people create information.
2. Be Specific. This includes considerations such as
 - a. Quantifying amounts, sizes, length of time.
 - b. Using precise language. For example, "The child *walked* [or *ran, ambled, jogged, crawled, meandered, stumbled, or skipped*] to the sidewalk."
3. Compare; create images using metaphors &/or similes.
4. "Describ[e] what is *not* there." For example, a classroom might not have *current* textbooks.
5. Note changes in the subject's form or condition.
6. "[Focus] on a dominant idea" (a meeting's theme, purpose, or mood, for example).

The sample below is a selection from a student's extended service-learning journal.

Today (September 20), the walk to pick up my new little brother, who I am mentoring through the Bridges for kids program at the YWCA, was exciting and scary. I was excited to finally meet my little friend but was concerned about how his life at home was. As I followed the directions to my little buddy's house, I thought about what I should ask. I walked toward his apartment complex and saw a cement and brick building with graffiti close to the ground. On the wall facing me, only three of the sixteen windows had curtains. The lawn was a jumble of green and faded yellow weeds. The building reminded me of a homeless person who had been living on city streets and in subway tunnels: greenish skin, messy greasy hair, and mismatched clothes.

As I got close to the building, I heard the screeching of metal swing cables and I heard the scuffing of small feet running through gravel. I smelled fresh air, as the complex lies on a more rural side of town. I walked up to the front door. It was covered in fake cobwebs. The doorway was all decorated for Halloween.

(Already?) I knocked on the door and the mother of my little buddy, MK, came to the door. She called him over from the playground. From one corner of the building, I saw his small sweaty, dirty face smiling at us. We shook hands, and I felt the callouses on his palm. He seemed too young to have callouses.



A service-learning student tutoring in a Syracuse elementary school. Spring 2014.

ANNOTATION

Annotation is important because it helps students practice thinking skills, such as asking questions and drawing relationships. When students annotate, they engage the reading by writing comments or questions, or by drawing diagrams as ways of representing relationships between information, ideas, and claims. For our purposes, underlining and highlighting, while useful, are *not* examples of annotation.

Purposes: Annotation helps students

1. *Identify* and *remember* important information.
2. *Understand* the material because they identify relationships between data, ideas, and claims.
3. *Save time* when studying, because they can note key ideas for future reference.
4. *Read critically*, by helping them test the credibility of an author's claims.
5. *Create* new ideas as they identify unique relationships between ideas.
6. *Reflect*, especially through your questions and comments that prompt thinking about
 - a. Inconsistencies between students' data and claims and from published work
 - b. Unexpected or unusual experiences and situations.

Methods

1. Paraphrase
2. Summarize
3. Analyze &/or evaluate the author's logic
4. Link information in the reading to information from another source and to your experience
5. Comment on a claim, detail, or opinion: "put your two cents in"
6. Ask questions

Example, based on Barbara Ehrenreich's (2001) Nickle-and-Dimed, (Ferguson, 2010, p. 283).

Annotations are italicized along the side and bottom of the selection.

But is it really possible to make a living on the kinds of jobs currently available to unskilled people? Mathematically, the answer is no, as can be shown by taking \$6 to \$7 an hour, perhaps subtracting a dollar or two an hour for child care, multiplying by 160 hours a month, and comparing the result to the prevailing rents. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, for example, in 1998 it took, on average nationwide, an hourly wage of \$8.89 to afford a one-bedroom apartment, and the Preamble Center for Public Policy estimates that the odds against a typical welfare recipient's landing a job at such a "living wage" are about 97 to 1. If these numbers are right, low-wage work is not a solution to poverty and possibly not even to homelessness.

The poor get poorer.

Minimum wage = \$5.15? It's now higher.

These statistics are now 15 years old.

Another employee stole Lauren's [a friend's] tips at the hotel.

Who are the members of the National Coalition for the Homeless? What are their goals?

This means that just having a job is not always enough to get out of poverty.

A "living wage" isn't really a living wage, and a lot of people can't even earn that.

What is the definition of "living wage"?

SERVICE-LEARNING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Definitions of the term “learning community” (LC) vary, but they generally refer to a group of at least two courses that explore a common theme through a collaborative learning approach. Collaboration can lead to greater learning than if students took the same courses separately. As high-impact practices,¹ learning communities help in many ways, including higher student retention. Because of this, they are often thought of as appropriate for first-year students; they are, however, also useful for upper-level students.

Kuh (2008) identifies the goal of learning communities as fostering cross-disciplinary learning by addressing “‘big questions’ that matter beyond the classroom” (p. 20). Learning communities and service-learning share this goal, so, ideally, we can intensify their effectiveness by using these practices together.

Best Practices:

1. Class size. Class size should allow for a favorable faculty/student ratio. A 1:25 ratio is usually a comfortable maximum.
2. Class scheduling.
 - a. Courses could meet on different days.
 - b. Two of the learning community’s courses could be scheduled back-to-back on the same day, and in the same room. Doing so affords flexibility in at least two ways – On occasion, one of the courses could take both meeting sessions so that students can delve more deeply into a particular issue. Secondly, both courses could meet simultaneously, which allows for multi-disciplinary discussion of a topic.
3. Courses.
 - a. The courses that you include could be in the same discipline, in related disciplines, or in seemingly divergent fields, such as biology, philosophy, and computer applications.
 - b. Choose the number of courses for the LC; that number is usually no more than four because, by adding a fifth course, we restrict students’ ability to meet peers outside of their LC. A fifth course also makes faculty collaboration much more difficult.
4. Course Content. Determine ways in which you will integrate LC courses’ content.
 - a. Determine the LC’s theme. In the biology/philosophy/computer applications LC mentioned above, the theme could be “Ethical concerns in advances in the Biological Sciences.”
 - b. Determine the “‘big question’” or topic that students will explore in their LC. Questions for the LC mentioned above could be, “Should we fund stem cell research with federal dollars? Why or why not?” or “Should the federal government require labelling of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) ? Why or why not?”
 - c. Identify the source material that the courses will share.

5. Assignments, Exams, and Evaluation.
Determine the extent to which students will integrate courses' content (and, in service-learning LCs, field experiences) into their assignments. Options include
 - a. Assignments and exams that are not shared with other LC courses' assignments, but that include sources and information from one or more of those courses.
 - b. Assignments that are shared by LC faculty could be graded independently (with disciplinary focus), or they could be given a single grade that applies to all of the courses represented in that assignment.
6. Methodology: Constructivist.
 - a. Zhao & Kuh (2004) assert that LC faculty should adopt a constructivist methodology (p. 117).
 - b. Service-learning LCs are, by definition, already constructivist.
7. Plan.
 - a. Schedule meetings for regular intervals; discuss progress, challenges, and suggestions for changes.
 - b. Schedule visits with students at their service-learning sites.

Refer to the Learning Community Intent form (Appendix, pp. 34-36) for an easy-to-use guide that includes additional important considerations. My thanks to Lori Schlicht, Associate Director, Advisement and Transition, SUNY Cortland, for sharing this form.

Benefits

1. Academic
 - a. LCs help students identify relationships between supposedly unrelated disciplines.
 - b. Students apply knowledge and skill in "the real world." In this way, they "test what they are learning in unfamiliar situations (Kuh, 2008, p. 17).
 - c. Students enjoy improved retention rates (Tinto, n.d., p. 11).
2. Social
 - a. Enhanced "openness for diversity" (Zhao & Kuh, 2004, p. 116).
 - b. Enhanced "social tolerance" (Zhao & Kuh, 2004, p. 116).
 - c. Strengthened "interpersonal development" (Zhao and Kuh, 2004, p. 116).
 - d. Clearer identification of personal values (Kuh, 2008, p. 17).

Listed below are examples of learning communities, almost all of which are for pre-majors, and almost all of which include a first-year experience course (COR 101, at SUNY Cortland). Faculty who teach COR 101 bring value-added expertise; for example, a learning community that does not include a writing course could have, as the COR 101 instructor, an English composition faculty member. SUNY Cortland offers thirteen learning communities; here is a sampling –

- Earth and Sky: Physical Geology, Astronomy, Introduction to Environmental Studies.
- Molecular World: General Chemistry, General Problem-Solving in Chemistry.
- Tech First! Planet Earth: Human Geography and Global Development, Introduction to Computer Applications, Culture Through Film, Will the World Provide (a research experience).
- World First (The World Since 1500, Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, and Culture Through Film).
- Happiness and Society (Introduction to Philosophy, Introduction to Ethics, and Ancient Social Philosophy).
- Learning (In) Deed (Introduction to Computer Applications, Introduction to Sociology, and Writing Studies in the Community I [a service-learning course]).
- Flourishing Teachers; Flourishing Students (for Childhood/Early Childhood Education majors)
 - Fall – Concepts of Elementary Mathematics I, and Writing Studies in the Community I [a service-learning course]).
 - Spring – Concepts of Elementary Mathematics II, Gender, Race, and Class Issues in Education, and Writing Studies in the Community II [a service-learning course]). The Spring semester version does not include a first-year experience course.



A service-learning student tutoring a child at an after-school program in Cortland, NY. Spring 2013.

APPENDIX



The Institute for Civic Engagement, The Office of Service-Learning

Service-Learning Journal

Name _____ Semester _____ Course-Section _____

Supervisor _____ Agency _____

This Log must be kept up-to-date and complete; it is a required part of this course.

Month /Day	Times (from – to)	# hours today	# hours: Subtotal	Your Initials	Supervisor's Initials
Your observations and comments Visual <input type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Touch <input type="checkbox"/> Smell <input type="checkbox"/> Statistics <input type="checkbox"/> What's Missing <input type="checkbox"/> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____				Supervisor's comments 	

Month /Day	Times (from – to)	# hours today	# hours: Subtotal	Your Initials	Supervisor's Initials
Your observations and comments Visual <input type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Touch <input type="checkbox"/> Smell <input type="checkbox"/> Statistics <input type="checkbox"/> What's Missing <input type="checkbox"/> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____				Supervisor's comments 	

January 2013

SAMPLE Service-Learning Reflection Assignment

CPN 103

Service-Learning Reflection (SLR) #1

Spring 2012

Do Good; Write Well

Due Wednesday, February 08, 2012

GOAL: Generate a nuanced view of the concept *poverty*.

INTENDED READERS: Our learning community, including Professors Kelly and Barrett.

DISCUSSION:

Some of our readings provide evidence in support of conflicting conceptions of *poverty*. The most obvious example of this is the contrast in information and claims presented by Rector and Sheffield (2011) vs. the information and claims in our reading packet's other articles, including the Dillon (2011) piece.

We can combine the material in our CPN and FSA readings with our Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., School (MLK) experiences to develop nuanced understandings of poverty.

INSTRUCTIONS: For this two- to three-page SLR,

1. List at least three claims and three details from two of our readings. For one of those readings, you may use an FSA article or chapter. (Although you should cite your sources, for this assignment, you need not compose a References page because I know your sources.)
2. In complete sentence form, write-out at least five details from your MLK experiences that relate to poverty.
3. Compose a reflection in which you draw connections – relationships – between some of the claims and some of the evidence.
 - a. Your reflection can focus on a particular aspect of poverty
 - b. Feel free to ask (and suggest answers to) questions about claims and evidence, and about relationships between them.
 - c. Your reflection may take the form of a “yes, but...” discussion.
 - d. By the end of your reflection, be sure to reach a conclusion regarding “poverty,” even if it is a tentative conclusion.

SAMPLE Response to the Service-Learning Reflection Assignment above

[Name]
CPN 103

February 8, 2012
SLR 1: Conceptions of Poverty

List of claims

1. “One of the most disheartening experiences for those who grew up in the years when Martin Luther King Jr. and Thurgood Marshall were alive is to visit public schools today that bear their names, or names of other honored leaders of the integration struggles that produced the temporary progress that took place in the three decades after *Brown v. Board of Education*, and to find out how many of these schools are bastions of contemporary segregation” (Kozol, p. 568).
2. “There is, indeed, a seemingly agreed-upon convention in much of the media today not even to use an accurate descriptor like ‘racial segregation’ in a narrative description of a segregated school. Linguistic sweeteners, semantic somersaults, and surrogate vocabularies are repeatedly employed” (Kozol, 2010, p. 570).
3. The U.S. Census Bureau collects – but does not publicize – information regarding poor people’s living conditions (Rector and Sheffield, 2011, p. 3).
4. As the unemployment rate has gone up, the number of children eligible for school lunches has also gone up (Dillon, 2011).

List of details

1. “The present per-pupil spending level in the New York City schools is \$11,700, which may be compared with a per-pupil spending in excel of \$22,000 in the well-to-do suburban district of Manhasset, Long Island” (Kozol, 2010, p.573).
2. “78 percent of poor households had air conditioning,” according to a 2005 U.S. Department of Energy survey (Rector and Sheffield, 2011, p. 5).
3. A student in the bottom quarter of the U.S.’s economic quarter has only a 4% chance of going to college, as opposed to a child in the top quarter – whose chances are 76% (Haberman, 2010).

Observations from my experience at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., School

1. The neighborhood is run-down; it has many empty store fronts.
2. From one hallway window, I can see the Syracuse University “Dome.”
3. Basically, every child in this school is non-white.
4. Many children are from other countries; at least one barely escaped from a civil war.
5. Some children do not speak English well.
6. Some children have witnessed violence in their neighborhoods or even in their apartments. Some children have been suspended because they were violent in school.

Kozol's (2010) term, "linguistic sweeteners," sounds like a synonym for "euphemism." Kozol applies his term to words that make segregation sound acceptable, even desirable – not unpleasant. Segregation is not only unpleasant, but also illegal, of course, yet – as Kozol points out, segregation persists. The situation at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., School seems to be an example: virtually all of the children are non-white.

In addition, the children and the neighborhood seem to be poor, so MLK and its surrounding area could represent a case of racial and economic segregation. For example, on our bus rides to and from the school, I've noticed that many of the area's store fronts are empty. The situation here probably deteriorated as the economy worsened; if that's the case, then the children in the south side of Syracuse are probably in the same situation as the one that Dillon (2011) describes for children across the country. Dillon wrote that the number of children across the county who qualify for school lunches has increased (Dillon, 2011).

As children sink deeper into poverty, they probably face less of a chance of going to college. According to Haberman (2010), poor children's chances of going to college are already low: 4%, as opposed to a wealthy child's 76% chance. My high school guidance counselor told me that a person's income rises dramatically if he or she has a college degree (vs. only a high school degree). These children will probably be lucky to get their high school degrees, even though – ironically – at least one of MLK's hallway windows shows a nicely-framed view of Syracuse University's "Dome."

Although a college education might be a luxury that most of these children will not enjoy (*Is college a luxury in today's competitive global market?*), many poor families do have conveniences that might be considered luxuries: Rector and Sheffield (2011), for example, refer to a 2005 U.S. Department of Energy survey that found that "78 percent of poor households had air conditioning" (p. 5), although the authors do not tell the percentage of those families that are living in hot areas, such as the deep south and the south west. When temperatures get into the 90s and higher, air conditioning may be a matter of life and death.

Speaking of life and death, some of MLK's children barely escaped from countries experiencing civil wars. Ironically, they moved into another violent area: the south end of Syracuse, NY. Some of the children tell about violence in the streets or in their neighbors' apartments. Children fleeing war have moved into a different kind of war zone, one in which some of the other children mock other children's problems, including violent and incarcerated family members. During my visit on January 26, I learned that one of the students had been suspended for fighting.

Segregation in place and in time – even in a school named after a man who died while trying to end segregation (as Kozol pointed out) – seems to be continuing. Racial and economic segregation, at least in an urban area, seem difficult to distinguish. Regarding economic segregation, people living below the poverty line seem to face financial and social expenses that other people do not. Poverty can be very expensive, both for those living below – and above – the poverty line.

SAMPLE Service-Learning Reflection Assignment

CPN 103-601

[SAMPLE] Service-Learning Reflection #2

Spring 2014

Do Good; Write Well

Due Wednesday, March 05, 2014

Goal: Develop ideas for your Rogerian Argument essay by exploring your thoughts regarding pedagogy, persuasion, and public education.

Intended Audience: The members of our class.

Discussion: Over the past two weeks, you have gathered information

- In your Service-Learning Logs, for which you have focused on
 - Ways in which science and/or mathematics are taught at your service-learning site
 - Hands-on learning activities at your site
- From Jeb Phillips' article, "Oil drillers pay for fracking workshops for teachers"
- During our class reflection on Monday, March 03rd, which considered the information above

These sources of information cover a variety of topics, such as (but not limited to)

- Learning styles
- Teaching methodology
- Education as a persuasive activity
- Public education funding sources
- Critical thinking
- Ethics

Instructions: With that in mind,

1. List and reflect on details from one or some combination of these topics. You may, of course, consider a different relevant topic, even if it is not listed above.
2. Focus on a complex issue that troubles you. For example, you might consider
 - a. The value of a business paying for certain classroom lessons because such a situation
 - 1) Helps pay for lessons regarding important topics
 - 2) Provides teachers with information on relevant issues
 - 3) Provides teachers with examples of engaging methods of teaching
 - b. The problem of a possibly biased source (The Ohio Oil & Gas Energy Education Program)
 - c. The problem of a possibly biased source (the teacher).
3. Avoid an either/or approach: Explore "grey" areas that acknowledge alternate points of view because complexity, "depth of thought," is important. Move beyond the simple and the obvious
4. Refer to details from your service-learning experiences.
5. Remember – Your thesis statement (your *revelation*) might not appear until the conclusion.
6. Submit a polished composition.
7. Write at least 400 words.

SAMPLE Service-Learning Reflection Assignment

CPN 103-601

[SAMPLE] Service-Learning Reflection #3

Spring 2014

Do Good; Write Well

Due Wednesday, April 02, 2014

Goal: Develop ideas for your Rogerian Argument essay by exploring your thoughts regarding pedagogy, persuasion, and public education.

Intended Audience: The members of our class

Discussion: This semester, you have been gathering information on socio-economic challenges in education from sources such as

- *Introduction to Urban Education* (FSA 101) and possibly from other courses
- LeAlan Jones' February 05th speech, and/or the book that he co-authored
- Our March 05th *Cross-cultural miscommunication panel discussion*
- Your service-learning site, as noted in your Service-Learning Log entries
- Our Monday, March 31st class reflection

Instructions:

1. List details, including statistics and descriptions, from the sources named above, that relate to a socio-economic challenge that troubles you.
2. Your reflection could consider causes or consequences of a particular challenge.
3. Avoid an either/or approach: Explore “grey” areas that acknowledge alternate points of view because “depth of thought” is important. Move beyond the simple and the obvious.
4. Use details from your Service-Learning Log entries.
5. Remember – Your thesis statement (your *revelation*) might not appear until the conclusion
6. Submit a polished composition.
7. Write at least 400 words.

Please – Do NOT tell me what you think I want to read, unless you think that I want to read your actual thoughts on this topic.

Feel free
to disagree
with me.

Learning Community Intent Form

The intent form is used for the continuing development of existing learning communities, and the creation of new cohorts. Information provided will help ensure successful implementation and support and will be used in conjunction when course building with the Registrar.

General Information

1. Learning Community Name/Title:

To be implemented: Fall Spring 20_____

2. Has this learning community been previously offered at SUNY Cortland? (circle) Yes.
 No, this is a new offering.

If yes, list the most recent semester offered:

3. Individual courses and instructor of record for all classes in the learning community:

Course Information (Prefix, Number and section)	Department offering course	Faculty member teaching course	Is this course a co- requisite with another course(s)? If so, which one(s)?	Department Approval - Chair Signature

4. Primary Learning Community contact: (Primary contact should secure all signatures above and provide photocopies for all chairs)

(Please print full name)

(Address and phone)

Intended Population and Promotion

1. What student population(s) should enroll? (please circle):

New Returning Both populations

If new students, what student type(s) should enroll? (please circle):

First-year Transfer Both student types

If returning students, what class year? (please circle)

Sophomore Junior Senior

2. This learning community is intended for the following major(s):

3. Enrollment cap for learning community: _____

4. Describe the process of recruiting/promoting the learning community, and state who should be involved in that process. Please explain. (i.e.: New student pre-registration process, student's choice to register, department registers, combination).

Learning Community Components and Assessment

Learning communities should have defined goals and objectives, as well as expectations and organized schedules/syllabi between all classes. Include what interdisciplinary questions, issues, ideas or problems you plan to explore. Consider these criteria when creating the syllabi.

Goals and Purpose (Philosophy):

Student Learning Objectives:

Include how the student learning outcomes connect with your department outcomes. How will you measure outcomes?

If this is a service-learning community, please explain the nature and extent of your community partners' involvement in the design and conduct of the learning community. This information should be shared with the Service Learning Coordinator. Please contact John Suarez for assistance.

Funding/Budget

If the learning community has need for funding of initiatives outside the normal classroom activities, how much will be needed, what is the budget and plan for raising funds?

Expense:	Amount:	Funding Source:

Funds could be used for: Guest Speaker(s), Lime Hollow Visit, Ropes/Leadership Course, Center for Environmental and Outdoor Education (including Hoxie Gorge, Robert C. Brauer Memorial Education Center) or Raquette Lake (including: Antlers/Huntington/Kirby Camp).

Use form when working with Registrar's office on course building.

Notes:

ENDNOTES

¹ NSEE classifies the following learning approaches to education as high-impact practices:

- Learning Communities
- Courses that include a community-based project (service-learning)
- Work with a faculty member on a research project
- Internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement
- Study abroad
- Culminating senior experience [such as a capstone course]

(http://nsse.iub.edu/NSSE_2007_Annual_Report/index.cfm; Kuh, 2008, p. 9).

These strategies share an emphasis on personal engagement through qualities such as

- Collaboration with faculty, students, and people in the community. Interpersonal relationships are important, including relationships with people from diverse backgrounds.
- Learning occurs both in- and out-of the classroom.
- “Frequent and substantive feedback.”
- “Considerable time and effort” (http://nsse.iub.edu/html/high_impact_practices.cfm).

NSEE identifies four themes as indicators of engagement; service-learning embodies each theme:

- Academic Challenge
 - Higher-Order Learning – Applying details and concepts to real-world situations, as well as assessing, evaluating, and creating ideas. *Service-learning students apply course concepts and skills at their service-learning sites, often to assess, evaluate, problem-solve, and/or create.*
 - Reflective and Integrative Learning – Identifying relationships between course material and current issues and one’s own beliefs and actions. This kind of learning includes perspective-taking. *These actions are central to service-learning, and are, therefore, covered throughout this manual.*
 - Learning Strategies that require the student’s use of information through steps such as summarizing the material. *Service-learning students summarize and paraphrase information learned in the classroom and in the field.*
 - Quantitative Reasoning – includes the application of statistical data in analysis, assessment, and evaluation. *In their observations, reflections, and other assignments, students note and integrate statistical information gathered through their empirical (field-based) research and in other course work.*

- Learning with Peers
 - Collaborative Learning – in which students cooperate and collaborate on projects such as test preparation and on real-world problem-solving. *Service-learning students often collaborate on solving real-life problems.*
 - Discussions with Diverse Others – in which students interact with people of different backgrounds so as to understand those people’s perspectives. *Service-Learning students frequently interact with individuals from a range of backgrounds.*
- Experiences with Faculty
 - Student-Faculty Interaction – in which faculty serve a variety of roles ranging from mentor to role-model to colleague. *Service-learning students and faculty interact regularly.*
 - Effective Teaching Practices – in which faculty provide students with clear messages and examples, as well as frequent and prompt feedback. *This is important in any approach to learning; it is especially so with service-learning.*
- Campus Environment – that fosters student interaction as well as services that nurture academic, physical, and psycho-social well-being through
 - Quality of Interactions
 - Supportive Environment. *The quality and nature of the campus environment is crucial to service-learning, especially because of the role of this pedagogy in strengthening students’ psycho-social well-being. Frequent faculty/student interaction provides such support.*

² Emotion plays a major role in memory. LeDoux (2002) defines *emotion* as “the process by which the brain determines or computes [the importance] of a stimulus” (p. 206). Emotions, then, help us pay attention to important objects or events (Dolan, 2002; Phelps, 2004, p. 199). At moderate levels, emotions can strengthen memory (LeDoux, 2002, p. 222; Phelps, 2004, p. 199), and Phelps notes that “there is abundant evidence that memories for emotional events have a persistence and vividness that other memories seem to lack” (p. 198).

Adding to emotion’s importance is the recent realization that emotion and cognition work in concert, beginning with the way in which our brains process experience and create memories: Information – experience – enters the body through one or more of our senses, and is then ushered into various brain structures, undergoing virtually simultaneous cognitive and emotional processing (Phelps, 2004, p. 196). The four key structures are

- The thalamus, a brain structure that helps process sensory input (LeDoux, 2002, p. 77)
- The hippocampus, which is partly responsible for memory of events (Phelps, 2004, p. 196), and
- The prefrontal cortex, which helps with certain kinds of memory, such as “working [short-term] memory” (LaBar & Cabeza, 2006, p. 56), with thinking (LaBar & Cabeza, 2006, p. 55), and with decision-making (Dolan, 2002). Interestingly, the pre-frontal cortex may also be involved in the development of empathy (Dolan, 2002).

- The amygdala, a complex brain structure that helps people recognize and defend against danger (LeDoux, 2002, p. 7, 8). Most importantly, the amygdala is also intimately involved in the processing of memory and emotions (LaBar & Cabeza, 2006, p. 54).

As students reflect, they resurrect memories and the associated emotions. In doing so, they set the stage for using emotions as a pathway to learning and insight. Neuroscience is beginning to provide evidence for insight's physiological basis and, by extension, the importance of reflection, emotion, and therefore, the constructivist learning pedagogy of service-learning. Rock and Schwartz (2006), for example, report on research by (among others) Mark Jung-Beeman at Northwestern University's Institute for Neuroscience, whose "findings suggest that at a moment of insight, a complex set of new [neural] connections is being created." In other words, meaningful change in belief (learning) comes "from within" the individual; it is self-realized.

³ Evidence suggests that strong emotional intelligence may also improve academic performance. See Goroshit and Hen (2012), Stacks et al. (2013), and Wang et al. (2012).

⁴ McLaughlin (2008) describes the complexity of a similar concept, "emotional well-being," explaining that it is surrounded by a variety of related terms, with each term reflecting the discipline of its user (pp. 353-354). For additional discussion, refer to Goroshit and Hen (2012), McLaughlin (2008), and Stacks et al. (2013).

⁵ CAEP is an organization formalized on July 1, 2013, by the merging of The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) with the Teacher Education Accreditation Council. CAEP is "the sole specialized accreditor of teacher preparation" (<http://caepnet.org/about/history/>).

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