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ABSTRACT

At its essence, service-learning is a pedagogical practice that links meaningful community service with course objectives. Service-learning is a credit-bearing, educational experience in which students participate in organized service activities that meet identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. Communication is both the product of and the component of effective service-learning. This Proceedings from the Service-Learning strand at the National Communication Association's 2001 Summer Conference contains the following sections: Essential Facts (Overview); FAQ (7 Questions); and Guiding Principles and Recommendations. It contains a summary of presentations of the Service Learning Strand--"Developing Service Learning Assignments and Activities" (Michael Smith), "Developing Mutually Beneficial Relationships with Community Partners" (Kimberly M. Cuny), "Providing Opportunities for Structured Student Reflection" (Shelly Hinck), and "Assessing Project Outcomes for Students and the Community" (Shirlee Levin). (NKA)

NCA 2001 Summer Conference

"Engaging 21st Century Communication Students"

Proceedings from the Service-Learning Strand

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Essential Facts

Service-Learning can be characterized as a philosophy, a pedagogy, and as preparation.

- As a philosophy, service-learning addresses the ongoing debate of the role of higher education in society, particularly an institution's connection with and commitment to its surroundings.
- As a pedagogy, it embraces the best practices of experiential education and cooperative learning.
- Service-learning can prepare students for lives of engaged citizenship.

At its essence, service-learning is a pedagogical practice that links meaningful community service with course objectives.

- The service students perform addresses community-defined needs. Service requires that students engage a community's people, problems, and prospects.
- Learning happens when students are given the opportunity to reflect on their service and how it relates to their lives and the subject matter of the course.

Communication is both the product of and component of effective service-learning.

- Service-learning increases student understanding of communication concepts, builds communication competence, and enhances the appreciation of communication's role in civic engagement.

- Conversely, communication among all parties is essential to a successful service-learning experience.

The following definitions characterize some of the essential features of service-learning:

Service-learning is a credit-bearing, educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activities that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.*

Service-learning is a credit-bearing, educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activities that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.*

I suggest that at least six key elements, taken together, help differentiate service-learning from voluntarism, community service, and other forms of experiential education...On the community side, the student provides some meaningful service (work), that meets a need or goal, that is defined by a community (or some of its members). On the campus side, the service provided by the student flows from and into course objectives, is integrated into the course by means of assignments that require some form of reflection on the service in light of course objectives, and the assignment is assessed and evaluated accordingly.**

*Bringle, R., & Hatcher, J. (1995, Fall). A service-learning curriculum for faculty. Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 2. pp. 112-122.

**Weigert, K.M. (1998). Academic service learning: Its meaning and relevance. In Rhoads, R.A., & Howard, J.P.F. (Eds.). Academic service learning: A pedagogy of action and reflection. (75) San Francisco: Jossey Bass, pp. 3-10.

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FAQ

In answering the following questions, the presenters drew from their experience and the resources available in the draft of the Service-Learning Tool Kit distributed to each participant during the Friday sessions. Some of the answers refer to pages in the Tool Kit. We asked participants to rank-order the questions; the list below represents the most popular questions and their answers.

1. **Question**: Is a service-learning project something that should be required of every student? Do we make it part of a required course that everyone takes? Or is a capstone experience best with flexibility in projects?

   Answer: Several years ago at the National Summit on Volunteerism in Philadelphia, while thousands joined four U.S. Presidents and Colin Powell in a call for greater service, many protested against service as a requirement for high school graduation.

   In the communication discipline, the answer is "all of the above." In the course abstracts (Tool Kit, pp. 23-34), most of the assignments are required. Students often have several service options, but some service is required to complete an assignment. Shirlee Levin points out that if S-L is one of several projects or assignments in a course, it may be offered as an alternative. She says, "If students really objects to doing S-L, then I'm not sure I want them doing it."

   Some departments have used a "service-learning across the curriculum" model, where at least one class in every track is a S-L course. Some colleges, such as Regis College, require every course in the university to have a S-L component. Other departments use a capstone experience (see Tool Kit, p. 25).

2. **Question:** How does service-learning differ from other experiential activities, especially internships and other activity-based assignments?

   Answer: Another ongoing discussion in service-learning. The Tool Kit editors, in offering a definition of S-L, root it in experiential learning and offer some useful distinctions (pp. 3-5).

   Two interrelated distinctions are (1) the role service plays in the course and (2) who ultimately benefits from the experience. In an internship, the student is the ultimate beneficiary of the experience, with some benefit going to the organization using the student. In S-L, both the community and students benefit.

With traditional activities like public relations projects, one element that often is missing is reflection, especially reflection that goes beyond simply reporting activities or applying course concepts and into deeper consideration of community and social issues.

Many essential service-learning readings address these distinctions (see the annotated bibliography here and the Tool Kit, pp. 41-42).

3. **Question:** How do you handle liability issues and other legal concerns?

   Answer: This is, literally, the $64,000 question--the NCA Service Learning Survey (Whitfield and Smith, 2001) found that nearly one third of the respondents did not know how liability was handled at their institution. In some respects, there is no single answer, since liability laws vary widely, and institutions have adopted various means of addressing this. The survey found that about 38% of the respondents rely on university liability policies. The Tool Kit (p. 9) offers some suggestions for managing risk and learning more about liability.

   Shelly Hinck, former campus service-learning coordinator at Central Michigan University, recommends that instructors talk to their risk liability officer, the director of the state's Campus Compact organization, or the local volunteer center director in their college or community.

4. **Question:** Even volunteerism costs money, and developing a service-learning program may require financial resources for faculty incentives, course development, and project support. Where do you find the money for these activities?

   Answer: One by-product of the growing awareness and use of service-learning across the academy is the growing number of resources for financial support. Colleges face pressure from parents, politicians, and communities to be more engaged, and S-L offers an ideal way to do this. Thus, your classroom efforts have some positive publicity benefits to your institutions, and you might be able to secure some funding on that basis. Here are a few ways to receive help for S-L:

   - Look for faculty development funds from the institution, either through a campus wide faculty teaching improvement center or from the chief academic officer (provost).

- Look to the campus community service office for help in identifying contacts or sharing in financial resources.

- Seek help from campus organizations, especially those which reflect the community populations your students might be serving (e.g., the Black Student Union).

- Look for local organizational or corporate support, especially for projects (e.g., Target, Home Depot, Wal-Mart, etc.).

- Ask the community partner to pay for things produced for them, such as brochures, Web sites, newsletters, and the like.

- Look to the state Campus Compact organization. Many of them award grants for course development.

- Look to local service-learning or community development coalitions. For example, in Philadelphia, there is PHENND: the Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development, which is a consortium of colleges and other partners. Mike Smith has received or administered several grants from PHENND, which went toward course development and campus-wide faculty service-learning workshops.

- Work-study programs require a certain number of community service hours; you might be able to hire a work study student to assist with some of the administrative tasks your project entails.

- Kim Cuny suggests getting a student to work for independent study credit whose sole responsibility is promoting projects.

5. **Question:** Are S-L projects better for first and second year students, or for upper class students? What about graduate students?

   Answer: Service-learning is used at all levels with all kinds of students. The answer depends on the role service plays in the class. If students perform direct service and use it as a basis for applying communication concepts, then any student at any level can do it. If it is service where students produce something (e.g., print materials and videos), then they should have the skills to do it. Therefore, students might need an introductory course before they get into a service-learning course. For an account of how S-L is used at the graduate level, see Perkins, Kidd and Smith's chapter in Voices of Strong Democracy.

6. **Question:** What is the ideal class size for a class with a service-learning component?

   Answer: Again, the answer is "it depends." During Friday's sessions, we heard about classes that had as many as 40 students doing service-learning. However, there are some factors to consider. First, what is the "carrying capacity" of your community partners? You don't want to flood community partners with more people than they can use, since both students and the partner will be dissatisfied. Second, you should consider the kind of assignment you expect students to produce from their service. For example, shepherding 30 students through individual research papers is a different task than guiding 6 groups through projects. Finally, you should consider your own ability to handle a number of students and projects. One reason why Mike typically does only one service-learning course a semester is that the projects in one tend to be pretty time consuming, and he personally doesn't feel he could handle many more projects.

7. **Question:** How many hours per week should students spend in service versus in class work?

   Answer: A popular question with no single answer. The Tool Kit provides some guidance (pp. 10-11). Some of the courses described in the Tool Kit require a certain number of hours per week. This is especially true with direct service assignments. For other courses/assignments, the out of class commitment varies.

   In-class time may include not only time to complete assignments, but also time for orientation to the site or service, as well as time for reflection.

   The NCA Service Learning Survey found that about 30% of the respondents required 10-20 hours per semester, while another 20% required 20 to 30+ hours.

   Finally, remember that "traditional" assignments require out of class time to complete, such as reading, studying for tests, conducting research, etc. It seems to us that the expectation used to be 3 hours outside of class for every hour spent in class; so a 3 hour class requires 9 hours outside of class to complete assignments.

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Guiding Principles and Recommendations

The following Guiding Principles and Recommendations for service-learning were developed at the summer conference. They represent recommendations of the conferees and planners of this strand topic. They are provided to inform engagement in the praxis of service-learning. However, they have not been reviewed and endorsed by NCA.

Guiding Principles

1. Service-learning addresses the mission of higher education by preparing students to become engaged citizens working toward a better society.

2. Service-learning allows students to:

- Enhance communication skills,
- Make research-informed connections between course content and service experiences,
- Build relationships among community partners, and
- Become responsible stewards to the community.

3. Service-learning includes experience in the community connected to course objectives; on-going, guided reflection about the experience; and planned assessment of the experience.

4. Service-learning creates an opportunity for all participants to benefit by meeting community needs, institutional mission, instructor expectations, and student learning.

5. Service-learning may develop:

- Future leadership abilities;
- Social justice awareness;
- Responsible citizenship;
- Ethical communication skills; and

- Diverse perspectives.

Recommendations:

Based on the preceding principles, the participants in the service-learning strand offer the following recommendations:

1. An institution using service-learning should provide faculty development opportunities and support.

2. Service-learning programs require continuing advocacy of their benefits and outcomes to faculty, students, community partners, and institutions.

3. Communication departments should ensure that students have the opportunity to experience service-learning as a way to reflect on their communication knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

4. Institutions utilizing service-learning should reward participating faculty by including service-learning in promotion, tenure, and retention review decisions.

5. The NCA should continue to support programs and services related to service-learning.

6. The scholarship of service-learning should be a part of graduate education and research.

7. NCA should encourage additional publications related to service-learning.

8. NCA should continue to seek partnerships with other organizations encouraging service-learning.

9. NCA should encourage the presentation of programs and development of guidelines and resources about risk and liability issues.

10. NCA's Educational Policy Board should form a task force to encourage research assessing the outcomes of service-learning on students, community partners, faculty, and institutions.

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Summary of Presentations

Introduction

Community Service-Learning has moved from an idea to a movement to an accepted academic pedagogy over the past 15 years. With philosophical and theoretical

roots dating back to Francis Bacon, Benjamin Franklin, and John Dewey, service-learning seeks to link meaningful community service with academic course objectives.

That service-learning is experiencing increased use and study is evidenced by the number of research and study programs sponsored by national education associations, such as the American Association for Higher Education, pedagogical groups, such as the National Society for Experiential Education, and field-related academic societies, such as the National Communication Association. Indeed, NCA is recognized as one of the leading disciplines in the study and development of discipline-specific service-learning methods.

Although the term "symbiotic" is oft-used and abused, there truly exists a symbiotic relationship between service-learning and communication. Service-learning is an ideal way for students, faculty, and community partners to develop communication skills and gain a deeper understanding of communication concepts. Conversely, communication is seen as an essential element in developing successful service-learning experiences, regardless of the discipline. This symbiosis can produce better students, better citizens, more engaged departments and campuses, and—most significantly—tangible progress in meeting community needs.

Integrating service-learning into the curriculum is not without challenges, however. Creating meaningful and manageable experiences requires a significant amount of planning, coordination, and flexibility. Often, what some communication faculty label "service-learning" is missing one or more key elements. This strand explored some of the common challenges facing those who wish to embrace this pedagogy.

Friday's session featured four presenters with experience in service-learning, including involvement with NCA-supported programs such as Communicating Common Ground and the NCA Task Group on Service-Learning. The presenters addressed four challenges common to developing service-learning courses:

1. developing service-learning assignments: What kinds of activities can communication faculty use to link community service and course objectives?

2. finding and developing relationships with community partners: How do you locate suitable community partners and other supporters? How do you maintain relationships with partners?

3. integrating reflection into course assignments: How do you deepen students' experience and help them link their service and the course concepts?

4. assessing the outcomes of service-learning assignments: What effect did the experience have on our students, communities, and us?

After reviewing some "best practices" in each of these areas, the presenters encouraged audience discussion and questions and developed a set of Frequently Asked Questions.

During the first hour of the Saturday morning sessions, the stand leaders and facilitators offered an interactive workshop in developing service-learning courses. Here, participants and strand leaders worked in small groups to think of ways service-learning can be integrated into participants' courses. Approximately 12 conference participants left with specific ideas to bring home to their classrooms. During the second hour, we collaborated in developing guiding principles for service-learning.

Service Learning Strand Agenda

I. Sharing Best Practices (Friday)

A. Developing Service Learning Assignments and Activities—Michael Smith, La Salle University

B. Developing Mutually Beneficial Relationships with Community Partners (and others!)—Kimberly M. Cuny, Monmouth University

C. Providing Opportunities for Structured Student Reflection—Shelly Hinck, Central Michigan University

D. Assessing Project Outcomes for Students and the Community—Shirlee Levin, College of Southern Maryland

II. Course Construction Workshop, FAQ's and Guiding Principles (Saturday Morning)

III. Refining Guiding Principles and Recommending Action (Saturday Afternoon)

The following summaries highlight the important ideas each presenter shared. These ideas served to stimulate Saturday's discussions and help conferees develop Guiding Principles and Recommendations.

Developing Service-Learning Assignments in Communication Courses

Michael F. Smith

La Salle University

Service-learning, by definition, links meaningful community service with course goals. All instructors, whether they use service-learning or other pedagogical methods, face the challenge of developing assignments that help students achieve course, department, and institutional goals. However, developing service-learning assignments seems more daunting because of the necessity of working outside the comfortable classroom confines.

An additional challenge communication educators face is that some courses seem better suited to a service-learning experience than others. For example, public relations and organizational communication courses offer opportunities for students to develop "deliverables" to community organizations, thus helping them achieve the goal of addressing community needs. But what can students in communication theory contribute to the community? Moreover, what do they learn about communication theory by participating in service?

Happily, the evidence suggests that service-learning assignments can be developed in classes across the communication curriculum. A survey that Toni Whitfield, University of West Florida, and I conducted for NCA found that service-learning courses exist in nearly every facet of the communication discipline. The courses discussed in *Voices of Strong Democracy* (Droge and Murphy, 1999) and the recent special issue of the *Southern Communication Journal* (Conville, 2001) also run the curricular gamut. Finally, the Service-Learning Tool Kit distributed during the conference featured 43 course abstracts, representing everything from advertising to theatre studies.

In this summary, I will review the principles for developing effective service learning assignments. As part of the conference presentation, I distributed a draft of a typology of service-learning courses in communication. Anyone wishing a copy of the typology can e-mail me at msmith@lasalle.edu.

Some Principles for Developing

Service-Learning Assignments in Communication Courses

Based on experience, literature reviews, and samples of other courses, I propose the following seven principles for developing service-learning assignments:

1. **Effective service-learning assignments should meet course, student, and community partner goals.**--By definition, service-learning requires service in the context of course learning objectives. It is important to understand that students and community partners also have goals that must be addressed. For example, while service-learning advocates tout the development of civic responsibility as a student outcome, students themselves may be more concerned about developing professional skills. Additionally, much of the literature suggests that the best service-learning assignments address needs that the community itself identifies.
2. **The service performed be within the instructor, student, and community partner's "comfort level." (Important caveat: One purpose of service-learning, and education generally, is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.)**--A couple of years ago, my students thought that a good idea for promoting an Earth Day run would be to stage a mock race a week before the real event, in which they would run around a central square in the city wearing gas masks, thus illustrating the organization's goal (clean air) and promoting the run. Our partner organization was uncomfortable with this idea, because it did not fit its character. Students can be uncomfortable with certain kinds of service placements; community partners may be uncomfortable having students do certain kinds of things. However, an instructor should be prepared to challenge students and partners to reach beyond their comfort zones to the point where real discovery can begin.
3. **Ideal service-learning assignments should form the basis for mutually beneficial relationships among community partners, students, your institution, and you.** --As Kim Cuny illustrated in her discussion of forming partnerships, everyone should win in a service-learning experience. Students performing service is just the beginning of your relationship with the community and your institution. Service-learning courses can form the basis for helping your institutions and your communities co-exist.
4. **Implementing service-learning assignments requires structured flexibility.** --One of the scariest things about service-learning is that you are not entirely sure what will happen. A chance encounter, a missed deadline, a change in the partner organization can create opportunities and challenges unforeseen in traditional courses. An instructor's task is to build as much structure into the assignments as possible, then be flexible enough to guide students when things do not go as planned. At the very least, the goals of the assignment and requirements for its satisfactory completion should be spelled out.
5. **Students completing service-learning assignments require preparation (e.g., previous course work, in-class instruction).--** Students should possess the skills required to complete assignments and

provide meaningful service. For example, my students must complete the public relations writing course before they take the seminar in which they complete projects for community partners.

6. **Service-learning requires orientation for all parties. This includes orientation toward service, toward the partnership, and toward the assignment itself.** --Clear, realistic expectations are essential for satisfying experiences. This means that all parties (students, faculty, community partners) need some orientation meant to develop these expectations. Everyone should have an understanding of the service to be provided (e.g., what tasks will be performed? With whom? When?). There should be some discussion of the partnership between students and community organization (e.g., what is the organization's mission? What services does it provide? What challenges does it face? Who does it serve?). Finally, all parties should understand the assignment(s) that will be developed from the service experience.
7. **Instructors need to develop methods/procedures for monitoring and evaluating both product and process.** --The need for assessing and evaluating students' work is clear, and the Tool Kit contains many examples of assessment forms. Equally important is the monitoring of student progress throughout the term. For example, journals not only offer a way for students to reflect on their experience, but also a means to report on what they've actually done. Some service-learning programs have weekly or bi-weekly reporting sheets to account for student hours. Some instructors have used on-line discussion software to ensure that students are contributing to group projects.

Developing Mutually Beneficial Relationships with Community Partners (and others!)

Kimberly M Cuny

Monmouth University

The information presented is from personal experiences resulting from one year of planning followed by one year of team teaching The Power of Story with Claire B. Johnson at Monmouth University. The Power of Story is a Communicating Common Ground (CCG) partnership. Information about CCG can be obtained by visiting http://www.monmouth.edu/~story.

Like the hub to the spokes of a bicycle wheel, the faculty member serves as the point person who keeps the service and the learning working together towards a common goal.

Some Qualities of Good Partners

Trust - The faculty member needs to trust the community partner(s) and the partner(s) needs to trust the faculty member.

Flexibility – Starting with the faculty member, all parties must be flexible if the S-L partnership is to be a success.

Similar Interests – The faculty member needs to understand the goals and views of the community partner to ensure that all parties involved have similar interests.

Similar Expectations – Relating to the S-L project itself, faculty member must be sure that all parties have similar expectations.

Enthusiasm for the Project – The community partner needs to share the faculty member's enthusiasm for the project. If the partner's enthusiasm happens to lessen, the faculty member will need to work on regaining it (assessment helps here).

Follow-through – The partner needs to be committed to letting the faculty member work the project through to its completion.

Seven Partners of *The Power of Story*

National Partners

National Communication Association (NCA)

Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)

American Association of Higher Education (AAHE)

Campus Compact (CC)

Local Partners

Atlantic Highlands Elementary School (AHES)

Atlantic Highlands Leos Club, an affiliate of Lions Club International (Leos)

Monmouth University's Partners in Learning Program (PAL)

-plus-

Corporate Sponsors/Donors

GPU Energy

Atlantic Highlands Teachers Association

Pathmark, Inc.

Mutual Benefit

Faculty looking to design a new S-L course or add S-L to an existing course must ask:

"What do I need from a community partner?"

For the storytelling project at Monmouth University we needed kids to serve as audience members for our telling(s) and a commitment to the CCG national project.

Just as important, faculty must ask:

"What can I offer the community partner beyond the obvious benefits of the course work?"

The Storytelling Project has kept its commitment to the pursuit of local and national press coverage to ensure mutual benefit for all partners.

- In the past year the project has been featured in 8 newspaper, magazine, and new media articles and has appeared on UPN 9 News in the NY tri-state market.

- Articles are currently in the works for The Storyteller and Teaching Tolerance national magazines

- All partners are also featured on the story web page (http://www.monmouth.edu/~story)

Additional benefits to individual **national** partners include:

SPLC

- Increase their sphere of influence on a local level
- Taking small steps towards their goal of teaching tolerance
- Reinforce, at a local level, their national efforts to combat hate, hate speech, and hate crime

AAHE

- Serve as a model for activism and community service to other professionals in this interconnected world

- Practicing their goal of students learning and being assessed in non-traditional ways

CC

- Serve as a model for their goal of promoting college and university civic responsibility to the surrounding communities

NCA

- Promoting communication scholarship and education
- Raising the awareness level of communication as a field of study and a means of actively connecting people

Benefits to **local** partners include:

-

AH Elementary School

- SPLC resources - optional
- Teacher training – we have offered training
- An exciting learning activity for the kids
- Opportunity for kids to interact with college students – in the comfort of their own classroom
- Newsletter article – written by Monmouth Professors - for their publication
- Television crews in the classroom – the kids loved seeing the crew doing their job
- General Mills Box Tops – from time to time we make small contributions to their collection for school computers effort
- Substitute Teacher – Some tellers are now certified to substitute at AHES
- Mouse pads & pens – to thank the teachers at the school for working with us (the pens and pads say MU Department of Communication on them)

- Library Books – recognizing the need for the tolerance themes we teach to be present in the school all year long, we have solicited donations to purchase books for AHES's library. To date we have collected $1100, which has made possible the purchase of over 80 books.

- Community outlet – at the request of AHES we are currently working on finding a new home for their unwanted social studies textbooks.

Leos

- Interaction with college students who are doing community work (role models)

- Visit to a college campus – we hosted them during our regular class time in the fall

- Storytelling training – while on campus, we taught them how to tell stories. Now, when the Leos make their regular Thursday evening visit to their local senior citizen center, they use the skills we taught them to tell stories. Also the Leos can better appreciate the real life stories the seniors tell them.

- Support the overall goal of individual community involvement of Lions Club International

- When the Leos help our storyteller in the classrooms at AHES, it increases their visibility and boosts their recruitment efforts.

PAL

- Interaction with college students

- Entertainment

- Tolerance education

Mutual benefit does not have to be as multi-layered as CCG.

When working on an S-L component for my nonverbal communication course, I found local ESL students simply asked for a tour of our historic campus in exchange for my students interviewing them about the nonverbal behaviors of their country of origin. The ESL students will come to campus, get a tour, visit

my class during our regularly scheduled meeting time and I will send each ESL student a personal thank you = mutual benefit!

Issues we have faced (related to community partnerships)

- Scheduling elementary school visit – we are all on different academic calendars
- Miscommunication!
- Last minute elementary school changes – turns out the kindergartners will have gone home when we arrive
- Leos adult advisor is hard to reach – after many attempts, we found fax and email were the best channels
- Good news, the press is coming. Bad news, we need permission from the parents of the elementary school kids who might be seen on the news - in two days' time!
- Assumptions made – turns out college students don't necessarily know how to communicate with kids
- PAL – very flexible and understandable
- Donations – create an unimaginable bureaucracy

Tools and techniques

- Thank your partners – and do it often
- Communicate – let everyone know what is going on
- Get flexible – no matter how flexible you think you are, you will need to get more so
- Involve your campus public affairs office – contact them early, as they will need time to properly support your efforts… they thrive on new story ideas for the media
- Alumni Affairs – most have an electronic or print outlet for a feature article
- Become a cheerleader – talk your project up to everyone!

- Solicit help - Find a mature, responsible, student with strong interpersonal and written communication skills. Sign the student up for independent study credit and appoint him/her your coordinator of promotions and special events. You will appreciate the help if you are careful to recruit the right student.

- Find out if your campus has a "Public Relations Student Society of America" if so, get them involved

- Seek web assistance (your projects should have a web page) from your campus instructional support department

- Approach the best journalism student your department has and ask him/her to write for you (the serious student knows how important it is to develop a portfolio)

- Believe – in yourself and in your students

The Role of Reflection in Service-Learning

Shelly S. Hinck

Central Michigan University

The process of reflection is the element essentially separates service-learning from other forms of pedagogy. While students often report on their experiences in experiential learning, reflection in service-learning courses asks students to make explicit connections between course concepts and their service experience, to address their own reactions and development in the context of the service experience, and to ponder larger questions about social issues and their causes.

More specifically, "Reflection is a process of self-analysis directed to the development of awareness and attitudes. It has been used to describe a cognitive process and a structured learning activity" (Driscoll, et al, 1996). According to Cooper (1996), reflection promotes academic learning, personal development, and program development.

Best Practices in Reflection

The best reflection is continuous in time frame, connected to the big picture information provided by academic pursuits, challenging to assumptions and complacency, and contextualized in terms of design and setting.

A number of reflection activities exist. These include:

1. Written Exercises

- Journals, letters
- Reflection essays
- Self-evaluation essays
- Service-learning portfolios
- Research papers

2. Creative response

- Performance piece (short skit, play, etc.)
- Art journals
- Video productions (documentary, slide show)
- Photo portfolio

3. Oral exercises

- Focus groups
- Informal discussions
- Formal class discussions
- Presentations
- E-mail discussion group

When choosing methods for reflection, be certain to keep the following points in mind:

- Reflection should be appropriate for different learning styles. An instructor may want to utilize multiple methods of reflection.
- Choose reflection activities so that participants will be comfortable expressing themselves and will feel safe in doing so.
- Emphasize the value of reflection by including it as a regularly scheduled part of the class and service experience.
- The reflection process should be evaluated by participants periodically and at its conclusion. By evaluating the reflection sessions, students consider what they have learned through reflection, thereby enhancing the value of reflection.
- Select a reflection method that will help you accomplish your goals for the class.

[Editor's note: Shelly discussed two popular forms of reflection, journals and group discussion. For a copy of the handouts she developed for this session, contact her at Shelly.S.Hinck@cmich.edu.]

Works Cited

Cooper, M. (1996). A faculty guide to reflection: The five W's and the H. Miami: Florida International University.

Driscoll, A., Messer, B., Svoboda, M., & Boucher, C. (1996). Insights about reflection: Lessons from faculty and students. Expanding Boundaries: Serving and Learning, 42-43.

[See other sources on reflection in the Annotated Bibliography.]

Assessment of Service-Learning:

What We've Got and What We Have Not

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Since nearly all service learning articles are written by service learning practitioners, it makes sense that they all tout the glories of doing service learning. Frequently, they will state how everyone benefits from doing service learning: the students, the faculty, the institution, and the community. However, after studying service learning assessment for more than two years for the National Communication Association grant from the American Association for Higher Education, it has become painfully obvious to me that many of the broad statements being made are merely assertions, not backed by serious methods of assessment. In fact, while there is some qualitative assessment and even more anecdotal information, there is very little quantitative assessment. However, as colleges and universities begin to institutionalize service learning, they want more evidence that this is a pedagogy that works. Outcomes assessment is the name of the game at most institutions.

In the NCA Service Learning Toolkit, you will find copies of most of the types of assessments that I have discovered during the past two years. You will find there are many types of assessments for students, but only a few that assess the impact on the faculty, the institution or the community.

The following is a list of some of the types of assessment you will find:

Assessment of Students, Including Self-Assessment

1. Student self-assessment of their experience

2. Faculty assessment of the student project, including written work (journals, reflection, time logs, etc.) and performance (presentations, papers, etc.)

3. Community organization assessment of student work

4. Student assessment of the service learning program and placement

5. Standardized assessments of changes in students with a pre-test and post-test

6. Student self-assessment of changes in self-concept, attitude toward volunteering, diversity and multi-culturalism, and attitude toward civic engagement

7. Student assessment about their majors

8. Student assessment of the nonprofit organization and helpfulness of the staff at the organization

Assessment of Faculty

1. Student assessment of faculty helpfulness

2. Nonprofit organization assessment of faculty placement of students

3. Faculty assessment of the college service learning program

Assessment of Institution

1. Nonprofit organization assessment of institution's service learning program

On page 6 of the Toolkit, there is a list of benefits from doing service learning that echoes what many articles say. Those of us who practice service learning believe that this is true. However, current assessment does not **prove** that these statements are true. Our task in the future should be to find ways to prove, through assessment, that what we say is true, **IS** true.

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Bibliography

The following were selected as essential reading and resources for anyone interested in engaging in the praxis of service-learning.

General Resources

Conville, R.L. (Ed.). (2001). Service-learning in communication studies. [Special issue]. Southern Communication Journal, 66 (3)

A great collection of theoretically grounded, research-supported articles about using service-learning in communication courses. Includes practical examples of syllabi and assignments for courses ranging from organizational communication to research methods.

Droge, D., & Murphy, B.O. (Eds.). (1999). Voices of strong democracy: Concepts and models for service-learning in communication studies. Washington: American Association for Higher Education.

A volume produced in cooperation with NCA, this volume is the definitive book on S-L in communication. Chapters provide an overview and rationale for service-learning in the discipline, models for S-L in various programs, and several articles that give examples of service-learning in courses across the communication curriculum.

Michigan journal of community service-learning, 7 (2000, Fall).

This journal is one of the oldest and most respected devoted specifically to service-learning pedagogy. Each issue features sections on research and theory as well as pedagogy. Information about the journal is available on-line at http://www.umich.edu/~mjcsl/

Rhoads, R. A., & Howard, J.P.F. (Eds.). (1998, Spring). Academic service-learning: A pedagogy of action and reflection. New directions for teaching and learning. (73). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

An excellent starting point for those seeking a "big picture" view of service-learning. The eleven articles in this volume cover everything from the theoretical underpinnings of service-learning pedagogy to issues such as reflection and research.

Course Construction and Community Partnerships

Campus Compact (2000). Benchmarks for campus/community partnerships. Providence: Campus Compact. The key to successful service-learning is establishing mutually beneficial relationships with community partners. This guide discusses some of the characteristics of successful partnerships.

Heffernan, K. (2001). Fundamentals of service-learning course construction. Providence: Campus Compact. A newly-published guide based on a review of over 900 service-learning syllabi. The book provides 6 models for course construction, and sample syllabi and assignments. While not communication-specific, syllabi from a range of disciplines are included. Order from www.compact.org/publications

Hornet, E. P., & Poulsen, S. J. (1989, October). Wingspread principles of good practice for combining service and learning. Racine: Johnson Foundation. While intended to guide service-learning programs, this these "best practices" are essential guidelines for designing service-learning assignments.

Reflection

Eyler, J., Giles, D.E., & Schmeide, A. (1996). A practitioner's guide to reflection in service-learning: Student voices and reflections. Nashville: Vanderbilt. An essential introduction to reflection. This book offers a variety of reflective activities.

Reed, J., & Koliba, C. (1995). Facilitating reflection: A manual for leaders and educators. http://www.uvm.edu/%7edewey/reflection_manual/. A helpful on-line guide to the reflection process. Provides a rationale for reflection plus a number of different reflective activities. While focusing on group discussion, the document also covers journals, reflective essays, and other group activities.

Assessment

Astin, A. W., Vogelgesang, L. J., Ikeda, E.K., & Yee, J.A. (2000, January). How service-learning affects students. Los Angeles: USC Higher Education Research Institute. The Executive Summary of this longitudinal study of service-learning's outcomes was distributed at the Summer Conference and is available online at http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/slc/rhowas.html This site also offers an extensive collection of assessment resources.

Eyler, J., & Giles, D.E. (1999). Where's the learning in service-learning? San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. This volume presents the results of two national studies on the outcomes of service-learning. In addition to answering questions about what we assess and how, this volume provides an extensive justification for service-learning and links program characteristics with particular outcomes.

Gray, M. J., Ondaatje, E. H., Fricker, R.D., & Geschwind, S. A. (2000, March/April). Assessing service-learning: Results from a survey of Learn and Serve America, Higher Education. Change, pp. 30-39. A nice round-up article that summarizes the impact of service-learning on students. While focusing on programs participating in Learn and Serve America programs, the article offers important lessons for anyone developing service-learning experiences.

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