THE FOUR C'S OF REFLECTION

REFLECTION AND CRITICAL THINKING IN SERVICE-LEARNING

Service-learning reflection provides intentional opportunities to link different ideas and experiences that may initially seem disparate. It brings attention to issues such as government, service, policy, globalism, and personal agency in a context that students recognize and have experienced. As an individual or group activity, reflection fosters critical thinking and discussion.

The four Cs of reflection can guide your course planning and implementation. Reflection must be continuous, connected, challenging, and contextualized (Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede, 1996).

CONTINUOUS

Critical reflection should ideally be an ongoing component of a student's entire education and service involvement. As the term connotes, it occurs before, during, and after the service-learning experience. Pre-reflection assists in preparing students for the agency, neighborhood, tasks, and relevant issues. Reflection during service takes place through problem solving and direct experience on site. Post-service reflection invites an evaluation of the experience, integrating newly gained experiential knowledge into existing knowledge.

CONNECTED

Service-learning reflection connects experience to intellectual and academic pursuits. Service puts theories in a real-life context, transforms statistics into people and situations, and sparks critical questions. Connected reflection creates bridges between classroom learning and firsthand experience.

CHALLENGING

Critical reflective thinking addresses local needs and civic responsibility by fostering meaningful dialogue and discussion around community-based issues.
Reflection is the link between learning and doing, and preparing for doing again. The course helps to shape the process, content, and location of reflection. Reflection can be designed as informal conversation, structured journal, small-group interaction, etc., and may occur in the classroom, at community partner sites, or individually.