**REFLECTION**

**SUPPORT STUDENTS & PARTNERS: Monitor Progress**

 

Reflection, as defined for community-engaged courses, is the consideration of experiences in light of specific learning objectives (both content and community engagement focused). Providing structured and unstructured opportunities for yourself, students, and partners to reflect on what you are learning and the quality of the engagement is an important part of teaching a successful community-engaged course. Reflection can take many forms; it can be individual or one-on-one, written or oral, conducted through large group dialogues, with just students and/or students and community partners. Critical reflection should include reflecting on how the engagement is going in terms of the tenets of critical community engagement (approaching the work from a social change orientation, working to redistribute power, and building authentic relationships—see guide to Critical Community Engagement).

Be sure to schedule in at least a few in-person, one-on-one reflection-oriented meetings with students and the community partner throughout the semester.

**To incorporate reflection into your course:**

* Plan to ask students to reflect at least three structured times over the course of the semester (beginning, middle and end).
* Incorporate continuous reflection into project planning and assignments. For instance, you could ask that students complete a journal to take notes on meetings and engagements with partners that include their academic and personal take-aways from the interaction.
* Find at least one or two opportunities to encourage students to engage in dialogue together over more challenging reflections. These could include using course readings from sociology or history to examine power differentials or assumptions and interpretations grounded in the status quo and to reflect on how they can work effectively to dismantle unjust systems.
* Always ask the students to link the engagement experiences to the academic content of the class.
* Incorporate reflection activities that will engage different learning styles.
* In reflection discussions or assignments, model these practices.
* Question your assumptions and values.
* Pay attention to and unpack the implications of your work in communities.
* Share personal reflections about challenges you encountered during specific engagement and allow students and partners to respond and offer feedback on how it might have gone differently.

**Personal Growth Reflection Activities:**

* Directed writings
* Open-ended journaling
* Describing specific engagements or activities and personal responses to them
* Double-entry journal: ask students to write about the engagement and their experiences on one side of a page, take notes on readings on the other, and then highlight and mark the pages up, making connections between the two
* Structured class discussions
* Facilitated debates and dialogues around a specific key issue or challenge
* Participatory arts projects (e.g. a mural or another constructivist arts project; often a good way to structure reflections with partners as well)
* Student portfolios
* Class presentations

**Reflection Questions for a Project-based Engagement**

* What? So What? Now What?
* How do our actions match our goals and objectives?
* Do our actions match our expectations? If not, should we revise expectations? Or the project?
* How has this challenged prior learning?
* Are leaders emerging? Who?
* What is the most difficult part?
* The most rewarding?
* What is your main contribution?
* Did we miss something in our planning? What?
* What kind of skills and/or knowledge do we need to make this project a success?
* What have you learned?
* How have we helped solve the problem that is the basis of the engagement component of this project?
* Are there any other needs arising that might be a good second project?

**Additional Resources:**

For additional assessment activities, see:Duke University, *“*[*Responsible Engagement “Reflection Activities for all Classrooms”*](https://sites.duke.edu/responsibleengagement/files/2015/04/Reflection-Activities-for-All-Classrooms.pdf)*;*

For Georgia Tech community engagement assessment information and activities, see: SLS, “[Community Engagement Reflection](http://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/community-engagement-reflection)” tool.