

CLASS TIME TO REFLECT--ARE YOU KIDDING?

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Approximately 2000 JMU students are involved in Service-Learning each year. As they serve they impact others and hopefully learn and change themselves. But, learning does not happen automatically. Learning comes from reflection, the "intentional thinking about the service and connecting it to other parts of life" (Bradfield, *The Community Learner*). This intentional thinking can take many forms. The important part is that it happens. Because about 60% of JMU Service-Learners are involved in service as part of course work, it seems logical that at least some of this reflection--intentional thinking--take place as part of the class for which the service is being undertaken. The problem is that reflection takes time, and who has extra class time to spare? Adding one more obligation seems overwhelming. Leaving reflection to chance, however, makes the odds of it happening even less.

So, let me suggest some time-efficient ways to have students "reflect" during class time.

1. Have your students keep a journal on their experiences. Read these journals several times during the semester and give written feedback
2. Form "Base Groups", small groups (4-5 students to each group) which stay together for the duration of the semester. Set aside 10-15 minutes every week or so to have members of each base group share entries from their journal with their base group.

3. Randomly assign students to a small group (4-5 students at the most). Give them 10 minutes to share something significant from their service-learning experience. Occasionally, the group might record highlights of the sharing session to hand to the professor. This input could then be pulled into lectures and whole-class discussion.

4. Take 5 minutes at the beginning of the class. Have students turn to a person near them and share something from their service-learning experience. Once students know what is expected, the cue to share could be on an overhead or on the chalk board as they enter class. Talking could then begin right away.

5. Before class, put a question concerning the service-learning placement on an overhead or chalkboard. As students arrive, have them "quick write" (2-3 minutes) a response to the question. Responses could be turned in or shared with a neighbor or small group.

6. Break up the lecture with a question that could be applied to the Service-Learning placement. Have students write and share or simply turn to their neighbor and share their thoughts.

7. End the class with a question that has students summarize or recall important points made. Ask students doing Service-Learning to reflect on how a concept or idea might apply to their setting. Each student can write a quick response and hand in as they leave class or share with a neighbor before leaving.

Include an optional question on an exam or quiz for those involved in service-learning. Have them relate, analyze, or apply a concept, idea, or skill being addressed in their class to their service-learning setting. As students reflect on what is happening as they serve others, the chance of

learning and change increases. And, as students reflect and share, not only will they be changing, but you will change and gain new perspectives as you experience their service second hand.