

# Service Based Reflection

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## The Bonner Community Engagement Curriculum

**BWBR Description:** *Bonner Curriculum workshop introduces participants to the elements of effective reflection, why it is important, and how it can help them find meaning in what they are learning and doing through service work.*

**Overview:** This workshop participants with an opportunity to engage in thinking about and doing reflection related to community service. In doing so, the workshop is designed to expose participants to the elements of effective reflection and its function, approach, and philosophy. By providing a framework and model, it teaches participants a way to incorporate reflection into any kind of activity, be it service, activism, organizing, etc. It also gives participants some ideas about how to do reflection, introducing facilitation tips, tools, methods, and activities.

**Category:** Reflection; communication and facilitation; service; advocacy; the Common Commitments

**Level:** Suitable for all levels; is targeted at the introductory levels but can be complemented by more advance Reflection workshop



1st year

**Recommended**

**Bonner Sequence:** This training is recommended for Bonner students during the first year, in conjunction with their involvement in community service projects. This training helps build the students' skills in reflection and understanding its importance, even if they are not yet leading these activities. There is a higher level version for students leaders who are leading or facilitating reflection, perhaps as project coordinators.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

- Help participants understand the importance and potential impact of reflection.
- Provide participants with an opportunity to explore the principles of reflection.
- Provide participants with a chance to learn about models of reflection.

### **Materials:**

- Flip Chart
- Markers
- Attached handouts

### **How to Prepare:**

Familiarize yourself with the trainer guide. Determine whether you will want to use real-life experiences and examples of the group to guide the presentation of much of the content (as it is theoretical). Come up with your own examples for your presentation and/or interactive pieces. Identify which methods and tools you want to illustrate through modeling. Make handouts and flip charts.

### **Brief Outline:**

The outline has the following parts:

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1) Warm-up Activity                            | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 2) What is reflection and why is it important? | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 3) Reflection Theory: Kolb's Model             | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 4) Methods of Reflection                       | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 5) Principles of Reflection                    | suggested time 10 minutes |

### Part 1) Warm Up Activity

Suggested time 10 minutes

Divide the group into two smaller groups. Give each of the groups a paper (from attachments) with either the A or B description (not both).

Tell the participants to review the descriptions and write down responses to:

- 1) Was the day described an effective service day? Why or why not?
- 2) What things happened or didn't happen, in terms of orientation, education, and reflection, that contributed to how the day went?
- 3) How do you think volunteers felt about the day's experience? What will they likely take away?

## Group A Scenario

Your team is painting two classrooms at the local school. Your group arrives and the principal, who is acting as the site coordinator and project leader, cannot be found. A teacher has stepped in and she seems flustered and distracted. The student team leader seems more interested in her cell phone than letting volunteers know what to do. There are a few cans of paint and some tools – brushes, drop cloths, masking tape – but not enough to go around for the volunteers. People are eager to get to work and without an orientation they dive in. Since people are new, they don't know each other so they mainly stick to their cliques. There is one soft-spoken man that no one knows; he seems like a hard worker trying to clean up any messes that are being made, so people leave him alone. The preparation work is done shabbily. Volunteers fail to resolve how to use the drop cloths, and paint spatters on the classroom floors. They work around the few buckets in the room, which are catching rainwater from a leaky ceiling. Some of the teenage students show up and a few of the volunteers, lacking any direction, assume these students are not where they are supposed to be and don't make any introductions. They end of leaving in frustration. People keep working though, and somehow the rooms get finished. The clean up, however, is almost a disaster. Not only is there paint to clean off the floor, but the windows weren't taped and now working with some razors to remove the stuff is needed. Finally, the principal shows up towards the end of the day. He apologizes, explaining that he had been called away due to an accident and emergency involving some students. He asks how the day has gone, grimacing a bit at the volunteers scraping paint from the windows and floors. The student leader finally facilitates a group game with some introductions, the group learns that no one except the soft-spoken man lives in the neighborhood, who is actually a parent volunteering as part of the school's parental involvement initiative. The game mostly turns into a series of private jokes. Finally, the group breaks. On the way back to campus on the bus, people talk in pairs about how happy they are they didn't go to a school in such disrepair. "What was the point," one person asks, "of painting a room with a leaky ceiling?" This brings on a longer conversation about how service is such a band-aid effort, and so uninspiring.

## Group B Scenario

Your team is painting two classrooms at the local school. Your group arrives to learn that the principal, who is acting as the site coordinator and project leader, has been called away due to an accident and emergency with a few students. A teacher has stepped in and while she seems flustered and distracted by the news, she talks about the history of the school, which is a charter with a more holistic approach to education. Students are involved in service within the school, volunteers learn, and a few may stop by to help. In addition, parents are called on to be involved as well, through volunteerism and even policy making initiatives. It's a non-profit, under-funded, but the school has already shown some great promise in its first year, according to tests and assessment. The student team leader knows that she'll need to step up to assist in the principal's absence, especially with managing the project. She asks questions about the school's student body, the neighborhood, and the funding. From the teacher's answers, the group gets a sense that their work, while just a drop in the bucket, will make a big difference to sustaining the morale of the students and teachers. There are a few cans of paint and some tools – brushes, drop cloths, masking tape – but not enough to go around for the volunteers. People are eager to get to work and the student leader harnesses that energy by getting the team to talk first about their plan of attack, given the tool shortage. The team decides to divide up for half-an-hour while some find scrap newsprint to serve as drop cloths and others paint the windows. As people begin painting, the student leader notices that since people are new, they don't know each other so they mainly stick to their cliques. She interjects a fun game to mix things up. Through that, the group learns that the soft-spoken man following along is a parent and a hard worker volunteering with the school. While he doesn't speak English well, one of the volunteers actually speaks his language, Chinese, and they begin to bond. The preparation work is done well, tearing the drop cloths and supplementing them with newsprint and the windows are taped. Concerned about the few buckets in the room, which are catching rainwater from a leaky ceiling, the volunteers talk about connections they have to some hardware stores and getting some of their parents and others to come back and help with the ceilings. Some of the teenage students

show up and the volunteers, excited, make some introductions and talk more about the school and the students' lives as they work. Learning that one of the student is a mural artist, volunteers encourage him to do some extra touches in the detail. Finally, the principal shows up towards the end of the day. He apologizes and looks around at the brilliant rooms, smiling. He asks how the day has gone, and volunteers respond with excitement about what they have learned about the school and hope their contribution is meaningful. The principal inspires the volunteers with a story of how the residents of the area are working hard to keep the school open, going to board and county meetings, holding fundraisers, and trying to persuade officials about its importance. The student leader facilitates a reflection activity and when the group learns that no one except the soft-spoken man lives in the neighborhood, the Chinese-speaking volunteer helps translate the man's thoughts about why this school is so important to the neighborhood. Volunteers feel a sense of pride to be a part of it. Finally, the group breaks. On the way back to campus on the bus, people talk in pairs about how happy they are to have made a small difference and how much they want to figure out how to come back, fix the ceiling, and get more involved with the students and parents.

As a note to the facilitator: what happens in the scenario, in terms of service, is *exactly the same*! What is different between A and B is that B included **reflection**, which makes the experience much more oriented toward learning and deriving lessons and meaning from the experience.

After giving participants a chance to work, have each group share their responses to the questions above. You may want to start with Group B. Some of the responses should include:

Group A	Group B
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Absent project coordinator. Student leader doesn't step in. No orientation. Not enough supplies. No time doing prep work. No introductions. Team works hard. Didn't include teenage students. No one integrates quiet man. Little reflection. No debrief.	Teacher steps in for project coordinator. Provides orientation. Volunteers learn what the situation is. Student leader steps up; facilitates questions being answered. Not enough supplies, but team deals with this; generates resources. Student leader interjects introductions. Teen students are welcomed. Quiet man is integrated. Reflection and questions happen, through day. Principal talks at day's end. The information helps provide a context – the project is the same!
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If the observations above are not made, ask questions to get at specific differences. Basically, the project scenario was the same; the difference, which made a huge difference in the quality of the experience, was the learning that happened through providing information.

## Part 2) What is Reflection?

Suggested time 10 minutes

Segue from the activity above into sharing a working definition for reflection:

*REFLECTION: The process by which participants mentally and emotionally synthesize direct service and the learning components (orientation, education and training) OR a chance to think clearly about what you are doing and about the experience you are having*

Ask, "Why is reflection an important part of service?"

Encourage participants explore the connection between reflection and high quality community service or service learning, drawing on the warm up and also their own experience. For example:

- Reflection helps people grapple with how their work is making an impact (or not).
- Reflection helps service and service learning to not merely be a "band aid"
- Reflection is not just a curriculum-based event.

- Reflection is not an add-on to your community service project; it is essential. It is the why that makes our work more meaningful and the who that makes us want to do better.
- Anyone can facilitate reflection, including participating students and/or volunteers.
- Reflection can be, and often is, informal. Peppering a few good questions or making an introduction for someone can lead to reflection. A skillful participant, even if s/he is not the project leader or coordinator, can help make reflection happen.

### **Part 3) Another Important Theory: Kolb's Model of Reflection**

Suggested time 10 minutes

The advanced training presented a more complex theory behind reflection, but here you'll introduce a simple framework for doing reflection, which builds on Kolb's Model of Reflection.

Basically, this is a "spiral" of doing and learning. This is one of the most practical and memorable frameworks a person engaged in reflection can use in an ongoing way. It consists of only three parts:

- "What?"  
The Descriptive phase
- "So What?"  
Interpretive and emotive phase
- "Now What?"  
The Active/Applying phase

#### **Interactive piece:**

When explaining these frameworks, try to draw out examples from your own experience or that of the group members. If the participants are all part of one type of program, try out the framework and model of reflection, using a relevant recent experience. If not, you may want to draw on an example experience, perhaps using a case study or scenario.

### **Part 4) Methods of Reflection**

Suggested time 10 minutes

Reflection can be creative and fun!



In this section, you want to get more in depth about methods of reflection. We suggest you *give out the handouts, but decide on 1-2 to try out here (and ask students to use them in coming weeks).*

First, present and discuss (get ideas and feedback) about the different types of methods, such as reading, writing, and talking.

Below are some typical forms for reflection to consider and present.

- **Reading**  
Using articles or books as a foundation for discussion or journaling  
Compare actual experience to written paper
- **Point/Counterpoint**  
Participants read articles with conflicting positions or perspectives on issues related to their service. They then contrast the underlying assumptions and discuss.

## Writing

- **Letters Home**  
Students draft two letters - one before the project and one after  
The first letter explains their expectations for the project as well as helps them reflect on their motivation to do service  
In the second letter participants reflect on their achievements and how their attitudes and understanding has changed
- **Group Journals and Personal Journals**  
*Structured*  
**Students are asked to respond to questions such as:**  
What happened today?  
What did you do?  
What were the effects of what you did?  
How do you feel about that?  
How does what you are observing relate to other parts of life/the world?

*Consider and apply ideas and theories:*

**Draw on other discourses, articles, readings, videos, or texts:**

Conflict and communication  
Gender, race, class  
Place and sense of community

*Varied Questions*

What are your first impressions?  
What is different than you expected?  
What have you accomplished?

*Free Form Journals*

*Reflection through Letters*

Letter to Self (What, So What, Now What)  
Letter to Congressman etc.

**Artistic and using technology**

Create a Community of Ideas Mural  
Artistic Journal  
Write Song Lyrics  
Write Poetry using Round Robin  
Use Photography and Video Taping  
Make collages (cut up magazines)  
Digital storytelling  
Oral Histories  
Theater of the Oppressed/Service-Learning Theater  
Use films and videos  
Create Pinterest boards

**Telling and Talking**

*Informal Discussion (see Learning Circles training)*

*Formal Discussion (craft a set of questions, open and closed ended)*

**Finally, distribute the *Sample Reflection Activities* handout and review/  
present some of these ideas.**

### **Arts & Crafts**

No matter how artistically inclined or gifted your participants may perceive themselves to be, everyone can benefit from and enjoy creating. Have them come up with some sort of artistic or creative expression of the feelings and experiences that have been most powerful to them.

### **Coat of Arms**

Everyone receives a piece of paper with an outline of a traditional Coat-of-Arms (like medieval times) - with five or six spaces to be filled. The participants then complete their Coats-of-Arms with symbols of who they are, where they come from, what priorities and people they consider important, etc. Then have individuals share their Coat-of-Arms with the group.

### **Group Story**

The Group Story challenges participants to construct a story one line at a time to describe the day's events.

### **Letters**

Have participants write letters to themselves after the service project. Mail the letters to them three to four weeks later. This will give participants a chance to process what happened as well as remind them of the event and the thoughts and feelings that they had later.

### **Nature Walk**

Ask the group to spend a few minutes searching the nearby environment for something that symbolizes one thing they will remember about the service project. (You can also ask for something that symbolizes a strength they bring to the group, a meaningful experience they had, a person that they met . . .). Bring the group back together to discuss what their treasure means.

### **One Word**

Have participants come up with one word that symbolizes the day for them. Then discuss why that word is important.

### **Personal Map**

Give everyone a large sheet of newsprint or drawing paper and some markers and a corner to be alone for about 20-30 minutes. Everyone writes or draws some sort of representation of how he/she got to this place, i.e. what people, events, decisions and other influences made you end up here. Allow plenty of time for sharing and post the maps on the walls afterwards. This is a wonderful

way to explore your own past and future and to how that relates to the present.

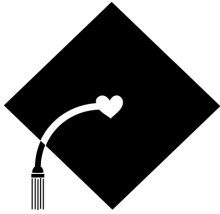
### **Quote-ables**

Write quotes on flip chart paper. First, read the quotes out loud and ask for immediate responses from the group, in the form of words or phrases blurted out. Then, post the flip chart sheets on the wall so that everyone can now see the quotes. Ask them to think about and share the ways in which these quotes apply to the day's activities and experiences and to their own personal commitment to community involvement.

### **Revolution**

The basic question around which this discussion is focused is the following: What kind of revolution does this community/nation/globe need?

Start with this question: Define the term "revolution" - what does it mean to you? You might also want people to talk about their feelings about power. Allow each member of the group to speak at least twice on each question before allowing the discussion to flow a bit more loosely.



# Methods of Reflection

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## The Bonner Community Engagement Curriculum

Here are some methods of reflection to consider:

- **Reading**  
Using articles or books as a foundation for discussion or journaling  
Compare actual experience to written paper
- **Dialogue and discussion (Point/Counterpoint)**  
Participants read articles with conflicting positions or perspectives on issues related to their service. They then contrast the underlying assumptions and discuss.

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Students draft two letters - one before the project and one after
  - The first letter explains their expectations for the project as well as helps them reflect on their motivation to do service
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*Structured:*

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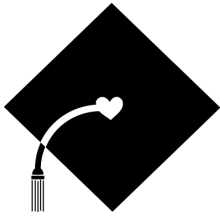
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# Sample Reflection Activities

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## The Bonner Community Engagement Curriculum

### Running Index Cards

One of the simplest tools of reflection is just to make it a habit for the group to process the experience using index cards. You can pose the same basic questions (e.g., what worked, what didn't work, what I learned, what I want to learn next) or alternate and pose creative questions and use them to launch into deeper discussion. Or you can collect issues and questions and use a facilitation technique (like fishbowl conversation or dialogue) to address some of the key issues and probe for deeper reflection. Push beyond analyzing what happened and why to the NOW WHAT phase.

### Paper Bag Lunch

Lunch times can be a super setting for reflection and broader discussion. You can suggest a "brown bag lunch" format to invite a member of the community or agency to speak (prepared or impromptu) and share some additional context or information. You can also interject a creative activity using a paper bag (e.g., have each person submit a question about the issue they would like addressed before the day's end, have each person submit a praise of someone else who's doing a great job and have a 'praise feast', and so on).

### News of the Day

One great practice is to get people to draw connections between what they are doing and what is happening in current events. Bring in a newspaper and have the group pass around a page of it. Ask them (as a group or in sub-groups) to identify one article that they believe relates to the project, issue, agency, or neighborhood at hand (there will likely be more than one). Use the articles to spur discussion about those connections (why?, what do we know and not know?) and the broader issues (policy, social justice, interdependence, and so on).

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