

## Meaningful Reflection

Activities that engage students in reflection include journal writing and other activities limited only by the imagination. Meaningful reflection considers three questions:

1. What—what happened?
2. So what—what does it mean?
3. Now what—what is the next step?

The following are examples of questions the student addresses in answering these three questions:

### WHAT

- Why does the agency exist?
- What problems does the agency address?
- Who does the agency serve?
- What are/have you been doing as a part of your service?
- What did you do that seemed to be effective or ineffective in your service to others?
- What has been satisfying about your service?
- What has been difficult about your service?
- What about yourself did you share with others?
- What did others share with you?
- Did anything happen to make you feel uncomfortable? If so, what, and why do you think it made you feel his way?
- Did anything surprise you? If so, what?

### SO WHAT

- How does your service project relate to what you are learning in your course readings, lectures and discussions?
- Why is your service needed?
- Do you feel that service makes a difference? If so, how?
- Has your understanding of the community changed as a result of your service?
- What new things have you learned from your service experience? What does this mean to you?
- What have you learned about yourself? What have you learned about others?
- What have you done in your work to make you feel proud? Why?
- What have you done in your work that was enjoyable or satisfying?
- Have any of your feelings or impressions of others changed? If so, how are they different?
- Why do the problems that the agency deals with exist in our community?
- Do these problems exist in other communities?
- How are you a part of the problem?
- How are you a part of the solution?

## **NOW WHAT**

- How are you different because of any changes in your thoughts or feelings?
- What can you do to make your service project or your service site more effective?
- How can the community more effectively address the problem the agency addresses?
- How will this service experience be valuable to you in the future?
- What are you going to do about the issue?
- How would you get others involved in this service?

## **Keeping a Service-Learning Journal**

Writing a journal over the course of the service project is one of the most common forms of service-learning reflection. The journal is a place for the student to record his or her service activities and to meaningfully reflect on what he or she has learned. Well-written journals contain interesting, thought-provoking observations that show the journey of intellectual and personal growth students make during the semester.

### **Specifically, they:**

- Include entries after each service activity
- Include detailed entries written as soon as possible after service experiences
- Explain and analyze service activities
- Describe important events
- Analyze new things learned or observed
- Connect course readings and lectures to service experience
- Discuss interior changes the student sees within himself or herself as a result of service experiences
- Address What, So What and Now What questions

### **Consider the following questions as you write each journal entry.**

- What did you learn about yourself?
- What did you learn about others?
- What about yourself did you share with others?
- What did others share with you?
- Have any of your feelings or impressions of others changed? If so, how are they different?
- Did anything surprise you? If so, what?
- What did you do today to make you feel proud? Why?
- Did anything happen to make you feel uncomfortable? If so, what and why do you think it made you feel his way?
- What did you do that seemed to be effective or ineffective in your service to others?
- What did you do in your work that was enjoyable or satisfying?
- What is one new thing that you learned today?
- What does this mean to you?

- How do you make sense of it?
- What are you going to do with what you think or feel?
- What has this experience taught you about yourself?