

ONGOING REFLECTION AND POST-PROJECT SHARING

This week's Teacher's Corner will begin with discussing how to use a reflection journal throughout the service-learning project. Writing a reflection journal will encourage students to be more thoughtful about what they are learning and experiencing, while also providing another opportunity to practice English. Finally, this week's installment will present strategies for students to share their experiences and reflections after the completion of the project.

USING A REFLECTION JOURNAL

Time:

- 15-30 minutes at various points over the course of the project (either in class or outside of class, or a combination of both)

Goals:

- To encourage students to reflect on experiences during the service-learning project.
- To write in English about experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

Materials: notebooks or paper, pencils, whiteboard or chalkboard with markers or chalk

Procedure:

1. At any point during the service-learning project, provide students with a journal prompt and have them reflect in their notebooks.
2. Tell students that it is more important that they get their thoughts on paper and not to worry about spelling or grammar for the journal entries.
3. Journal entries can be used in various ways throughout the project and after it is completed. Below are suggestions about when and how to have students use the journal.
 - a. After your students have chosen a focus area for their service learning project (after completing the vote from Week 1), ask them to write about what they know about the issue and how it affects the local community.

- b. Have students answer the reflection questions about the materials they read or watched to prepare for the Guided Seminar activity in Week 2.
 - c. During the service-learning project itself, have students write reflections regularly. If your students visit an agency or interact with others, they can write a reflection after each visit or interaction. If students are planning a fundraiser, participating in a letter writing campaign, or planning presentations, ask them to write about what they are learning, struggling with, or surprised about.
 - d. Provide students with specific questions to answer about what they are seeing and doing or about their interactions with other members of their community or school. Ask questions that prompt students to share feelings or to discuss how their ideas about the issue are evolving or changing.
4. Once the service component of the service-learning project is complete, students can look back at their journal entries to see how their thinking has changed or what they have learned about the issue.

Extensions:

1. In addition to using the journal to keep track of their experiences and thoughts throughout the service-learning project, students can also use it to participate in additional guided seminars. Students can read additional information about the area of focus (especially if it is one that is often in the news) and follow the same format of pre-reading, answering questions, and sharing ideas in seminars. A less formal approach can also be taken where students simply gather their thoughts in their service-learning notebooks and then use the seminar to share personal experiences and reflections.

SHARING THE SERVICE-LEARNING EXPERIENCE WITH OTHERS

Final Reflective Essay

As a final activity, students can examine all the journal entries they have written over the course of the service-learning project. The entries can be used to write a final reflective essay about the

whole experience. Ask students to explain what their ideas and assumptions about the issue were before the project. Using the journal, students can choose one or two key experiences to expand upon and discuss the type of impact they had. Then, students can write about whether the project changed their thinking or reinforced things that they knew. Essays and reflections can be shared among the class or with others invited to attend a sharing session.

Poster Session

Similar to the activity presented in Week 3, asking students to create a poster about their experience and to participate in a poster session is a great way to conclude the service-learning project. If students have photos or mementos from their experience, they can include them in the poster. If you plan to do this activity only with the students who participated in the project, it is best to have students take turns standing at their posters so that they have a chance to see others' work. The class can be split in half with one group presenting their posters for the first part of the class period and a second group presenting their posters during the second part. Or schedule several poster sessions over different class periods and divide your class so that only a portion of students present each day. School administrators, government officials, other teachers and students, and professionals who work in the area of focus for your project can be invited to attend the sessions. Attendees should walk around and have a chance to look at the posters and talk with students standing at their posters.

Additional Action

After completing a service-learning project, students often want to continue volunteering or doing work in the chosen area of focus. If some of your students are interested in doing this, you can create a final assignment that asks them to write about why they feel inspired by their experience, what they plan to do to stay involved, and how or why they believe their continued involvement in the issue will be beneficial. These reflections and action plans can be shared with their peers, school officials, or community organizations.

All students will have unique experiences and interpret the service-learning project differently. The ideas above are only a few options for final projects. Providing several choices for how students can share their experiences is encouraged. Allowing students to choose how they would like to express their thoughts and present what they have learned can be very motivating and even encourage them to take risks with English in the process.

A service-learning project should have an impact on both the community and the students who are participating. For students learning English, a service-learning project is an opportunity to use the target language to learn about the issue, take part in discussions, interact with others, and reflect upon the experience.