

August 2011

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Recommended Citation

Jenkins, Amelia and Sheehey, Patricia (2011) "A Checklist for Implementing Service-Learning in Higher Education," *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 2 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/jces/vol4/iss2/6>

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A Checklist for Implementing Service-Learning in Higher Education

Amelia Jenkins and Patricia Sheehy

Abstract

Service-learning has been implemented successfully as an instructional method in K-12 schools, colleges, and universities. Research indicates that service-learning helps students gain knowledge and skills and increase self-confidence and sense of caring. Service-learning projects in colleges and universities are beneficial to those in many disciplines, including education. This article provides a framework for including service-learning in education courses and introduces an innovative checklist to guide and evaluate service-learning as an instructional strategy. The checklist delineates the four-stage service-learning process: (a) preparation, (b) implementation, (c) assessment/reflection, and (d) demonstration/celebration.

Instructors in teacher education courses use an array of instructional strategies to facilitate preservice teachers' acquisition of the theoretical knowledge of teaching and the application of the process of teaching children and young adults. Instructional strategies are implemented in the college or university classroom, online, or in school classrooms. Diverse instructional strategies to actively engage the university students in their own learning include role-playing activities, cooperative group projects, and service-learning (Sileo, Prater, Luckner, Rhine, & Rude, 1998). This article provides teacher educators with a foundation for using service-learning in their courses and a structure to guide and evaluate service-learning as an instructional strategy.

Service-learning has been implemented successfully as an instructional method in elementary and secondary schools, as well as community colleges and universities (Griffith, 2005; Yoder, Retish, & Wade, 1996). Service-learning allows students the opportunity to practice critical thinking skills and apply learning in real-world settings, while meeting authentic needs in communities. Service-learning presents students with real-world problems to confront, alternatives to consider, and solutions to find. Service-learning challenges students to work collegially, communicate successfully, and acquire and exercise new skills. Research indicates that service-learning, when well designed and managed, can contribute to student learning and growth (Astin & Sax, 1998; Billig, Root, & Jesse, 2005; Chang, 2002; Hamm & Houck, 1998). Grounded in John Dewey's theory of learning through experience, service-learning increases self-esteem, knowledge and skills acquisition, personal and interpersonal skills development, and a sense of accomplishment (Chen, 2004; Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Dudderar & Tover, 2003; Ehrlich, 1996).

Service-Learning in Higher Education

Research has indicated that service-learning is effective pedagogy on college and university campuses. Research has further indicated that service-learning has had a positive impact on academic, social, and cultural variables (Butin, 2006). It increases understanding and depth of course content, promotes knowledge and understanding of civic and social issues, and increases awareness and acceptance of diversity (Astin & Sax, 1998; Billig et al., 2005; Chang, 2002; Cress, Collier, Reitenauer, & Associates, 2005; Hamm & Houck, 1998). Service-learning may be included in college and university courses as a separate course with a focus on service-learning (Anderson, Swick, & Yff, 2001) or as strategy for teaching academic concepts in disciplines such as engineering (George & Shams, 2007; Mehta & Sukumaran, 2007; Zhang, Gartner, Gunes, & Ting, 2007), education (Chen, 2004; Swick & Rowls, 2000), and nursing (Romack, 2004).

Faculty resources and research on service-learning present a four-stage schema for service-learning planning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). The stages are (1) preparation, (2) implementation, (3) assessment/reflection, and (4) demonstration with celebration (Fertman, 1994; Kaye, 2004).

Preparation

Preparation involves a variety of activities, including identifying a community need, establishing a goal/objective for the service-learning project, establishing the knowledge and/or skills necessary for the project, and determining resources and activities necessary for the project (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Kaye, 2004). Course objectives should include and connect academic and civic/social learning (Berle, 2006; Zlotkowski, 1995). Service-learning should be carefully and thoroughly planned (Berle, 2006).

Planning includes developing connections with community resources for the project (Kaye, 2004), determining the number of participants, establishing the type of project and whether students will have a choice in their type of project, the number of hours required for the project, and the expected outcomes or forms of assessment for evaluating project outcomes and student learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Werner and McVaugh (2000) recommended several strategies for increasing the quality and interest of service-learning, including giving students a choice and control of their project. Choices and control over project assignment and project activities have resulted in a goodness-of-fit between tasks and students' interests resulting in an increase in learning and competence and may result in the internalization of the value of service. Mabry (1998) found that service-learning seems to be more effective when students provide at least 15 to 20 hours of service per semester and are in frequent contact with the beneficiaries of their service project. Assessment for evaluating academic learning and the outcomes of service-learning include formative and summative reflections (George & Shams, 2007; Mabry, 1998); focus groups (Cooks & Scharrer, 2006); group discussions (George & Shams, 2007); journal writing (Cooks & Scharrer, 2006; George & Shams, 2007); observations including videotapes (Cooks & Scharrer, 2006); narrative assessments in the form of a midterm and take-home final (Strage, 2000) or essays (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996); and presentations (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996).

Implementation

Implementation of service-learning should include frequent connections of the project to academic content (Cress et al., 2005). Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, and Yee (2000) found that instructors who frequently connected the service-learning project to academic learning facilitated a learning relationship whereby the service experience enhanced academic understanding that in turn enhanced the service experience. Throughout the implementation of the service project, students should reflect on the project and academic learning to assess their learning. This ensures that participation in the service-learning project is impacting academic learning and enhancing social learning (Astin et al.) or understanding of diversity (Rhoads, 1997).

Assessment/Reflection

Much has been written regarding the assessment of service-learning and service-learning outcomes.

Assessments often focus on evaluating the course and/or evaluating student academic and social or civic learning. Cooks and Scharrer (2006) presented several methods for assessing students' social learning that included interviews, focus groups, journal assignment analysis, and analysis of videotaped interactions. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) suggested using purposeful reflections linked to course objectives that are analyzed using a rubric or a separate activity such as a poster presentation or essays. Student reflections as a data source seem to be the most frequently used form of assessment. Bringle and Hatcher suggested the use of purposeful reflection activities, analyzed using a rubric to rate learning, or a separate activity such as a poster presentation or essay. Ash, Clayton, and Atkinson (2005) used rubrics to evaluate students' thinking as demonstrated in their written reflection. Strage (2000) used an analysis of students' journals to determine that students had reflected thoughtfully on the connections between lecture information, readings, and hands-on experiences. Questionnaire surveys and Likert scales have been developed and used to evaluate course objectives and program outcomes that included service-learning projects (George & Shams, 2007; Zhang et al., 2007). However, George and Shams (2007) issued a caution regarding the use of Likert scales and surveys because assessment of learning based on self-report may be biased due to students providing desirable responses. Student surveys and semi-structured discussions at the end of the semester can also provide information regarding suggestions for program improvements (George & Shams, 2007). In addition to assessing the impact of the service-learning project on student learning, George and Shams contended that it is equally important to determine the success of the project from the perspective of the community partner. Although traditionally outside the realm of learning in higher education, obtaining community members' perspective provides a more holistic assessment (George & Shams, 2007), which promotes service-learning as a mutual activity in which both parties benefit (Rhoads, 1997).

Demonstration/Celebration

Kaye (2004) defines the final stage of demonstration as allowing students the opportunity to discuss and openly exhibit their work through different formats such as displays, performances, and presentations. Demonstration provides students an opportunity to validate what they have learned and how they learned it, as well as to share that learning with others. While celebration is sometimes included as the final stage of service-

learning projects (Fertman, 1994), Kaye suggests that celebration be included in the demonstration stage, such as planning a festive occasion paired with the student demonstrations. Students, too, have reported the importance of being given the opportunity to share the results of their service-learning projects with others (Swick & Rowls, 2000).

Existing literature on service-learning provides a wealth of information for developing and implementing service-learning projects in higher education. The literature provides descriptions of instructors' experiences in implementing service-learning, including details such as methods used and evaluation procedures (Allison, 2008; Curtis & Mahon, 2010; Larios-Sanz, Simmons, Bagnall, & Rosell, 2011; Ming, Lee, & Ka, 2009). Many colleges and universities have developed faculty resources including pamphlets, brochures, and practical guides to support faculty in developing a service-learning course or project (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Gilchrist, Mundy, Felton, & Shields, 2003). There is information on worksheets for planning, suggestions on how to assess, types of reflection activities/questions, pre and post assessments for students, and numerous checklists. However, for an instructor inexperienced in service-learning and undertaking the development of a service-learning project in a course for the first time, accessing the depth and breadth of the literature could be overwhelming.

We attempted to streamline the existing literature into a manageable checklist to provide a simple method of planning and assessing an instructor's experience with service-learning. The simple checklist provides a framework that reflects our experiences and the service-learning literature. Further, the checklist breaks down the four stages of service-learning into components somewhat finer than that which the literature recommends.

This article provides a description of our service-learning experiences and the resulting checklist we developed. The purpose of the checklist is to assist an instructor—in particular those new to service-learning—in developing, implementing, and evaluating the results of a service-learning project. This checklist provides instructors the opportunity to fine-tune their experience and continue to grow in their use of service-learning.

Service-Learning Project Description

Our experiences in service-learning include planning, implementing, and assessing service-learning projects as required assignments in two graduate courses and one undergraduate course over an eight-year span. During that time we assessed and

reflected on the assigned projects, making revisions to provide more detail in the planning, providing more feedback and linkages to academic and social learning, and refining the evaluation of student learning. We reviewed (a) the course syllabi; (b) the service-learning projects completed by students; (c) student course evaluation ratings and comments; (d) instructor notes; and (e) evaluation instruments completed by the instructors to revise and improve our service-learning projects.

In an attempt to design a workable schema to assess service-learning projects, we developed a guide for instructors to complete in reviewing the service-learning experiences. After the initial guide was developed, the instructors met and reviewed data collected from the courses. Discussion ensued on how to respond to each item on the guide, and revisions were made to provide greater clarity. Each instructor then individually completed the guide for an additional course each taught, and comparisons were made. Differences in perspectives were discussed until complete agreement was reached on elements to include on the guide. A study of our service-learning experiences was then completed (Jenkins & Sheehy, 2009).

The Checklist

Our experience in developing a guide for evaluating service-learning in higher education courses, and a review of the literature on service-learning, led to our development of a simple checklist for planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning. Elements on the checklist were grouped into the four stages widely accepted in the service-learning literature (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Fertman, 1994; Kaye, 2004), resulting in a 10-item checklist.

The checklist is presented with brief descriptions of suggestions for instructors to consider; individual items should be weighed for appropriateness against instructor's prior knowledge and background, and the course into which a service-learning project (SLP) assignment is to be integrated. We included the data collection source, criteria utilized, and a brief discussion on each of the elements. The checklist can be found in Table 1.

Stage 1: Preparation

1. **Course description.** **Data Collection Source:** Course syllabus. **Criteria:** Consider whether the goals and objectives of the course are aligned with the goals and objectives of service-learning. The course syllabus should include the course goals and objectives specific to service-learning and the nature or benefits of service-learning as related to

the course content (Berle, 2006; Zlotkowski, 1995).

2. **Integration of SLP into course content.** Data collection source: Course syllabus, course agenda, individual class agendas, and supporting materials. Criteria: Prepare the course session agendas to integrate the SLP into the course. Schedule class sessions to devote to the teaching of service-learning, the monitoring of project implementation, and final presentations of projects (Kaye, 2004).

3. **SLP description and requirements.** Data Collection Source: Course syllabus and/or supporting course materials (e.g., service-learning guide, separate handouts with project description and directions). Criteria: The SLP assignment should be described in detail. Include a description of the components of the project and detailed written directions for submitting. Specify if the students are to submit a final written report of the SLP, the elements to include in the paper, and how it will be scored. Consider breaking the project assignment into parts to be submitted to the instructor on specific dates. The instructor can then provide written and/or verbal feedback to individual students to direct their completion of the SLP. The SLP directions should include specific details for the evaluation/reflection section (George & Shams, 2007; Mabry, 1998). Consider including specific questions to guide the students' reflection regarding what they learned from the project and the impact of the project (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). The evaluation component should require students to reflect upon the learning in three aspects: (a) learning of course content, (b) their thoughts and feelings about the service-learning experience, and (c) the impact of and feedback from the community partner who participated in the service-learning project. Consider using a pre- and post-test method (questionnaire or survey) for evaluating the results of the SLP impact on students and community partners (Borges & Hartung, 2007; George & Shams, 2007).

3a. **Time requirement.** Data Collection Source: Course syllabus and/or supporting materials. Criteria: Details of time students should devote to the service-learning project should be specific enough to provide students the necessary guidance (Berle, 2006). Specify if the SLP should be a semester-long project, and specify the minimum (and maximum) number of hours students are required to devote to the project (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Consider requiring students to submit a timeline or time log with an estimate of the time devoted to planning, implementing, evaluating, and writing the project final report.

3b. **Grade value.** Data Collection Source:

Course syllabus and/or supporting materials. Criteria: The SLP should be given a point value and assigned a percentage of the course grade appropriate for the project assignment. In our experiences, the SLP accounted for 30% to 40% of the course grade. Individual project reports were evaluated on a 100 point scale, and included the presentation of the project to the whole class.

3c. **Type of project.** Data Collection Source: Course syllabus and/or supporting materials. Criteria: Specify the type of project required. Types of SLPs include direct, indirect, and advocacy or civic action. Fertman (1994) defined the three types as follows: Direct service is personal contact with those to whom the service is provided, such as cooking and serving food to the homeless; indirect service "involves channeling resources to solve a problem," (p. 13) such as fundraising for the homeless; civic action involves "active participation in democratic citizenship" (p. 14), such as petitioning the local government to address housing needs of the homeless. Students should be informed if they are to choose their own project (unlimited choice), choose from a menu (limited choice), or be assigned a predetermined project. Werner & McVaugh (2000) found that providing a choice increased the quality and interest of the project and resulted in an increase in learning and internalization of the value of service. A study by Mayhew (2000) suggested that students learn whether given limited or unlimited choice. In our experiences, we allowed students to choose their type of project, according to specific criteria provided. Students predominantly chose direct service and implemented worthwhile projects that provided a needed service to others, within the guidelines of the project description and appropriate to the course. Instructors may want to complete a chart that summarizes the types of projects students implemented.

3d. **Location.** Data Collection Source: Course syllabus and/or supporting materials. Criteria: If the SLP is to be implemented in a specific location or with identified community partners, the instructor should develop community connections regarding the SLP location (Kaye, 2004). For example if a SLP is assigned in a reading methods course, the instructor should have made a connection with the administrator and teachers in a school to facilitate implementation of the SLP. The

Table 1. Checklist for Planning Implementing and Evaluating Service-Learning Experiences

Stage One: Preparation

1. Course Description. Prepare your course syllabus with clear alignment of course and service-learning project (SLP) goals and objectives; specify course objectives tied to the service-learning project.
2. Integration of SLP into Course Content. Purposefully plan the course syllabus with integration of the SLP into the course content and class sessions.
3. SLP Description and Requirements. Specify the SLP requirements, directions, and methods for evaluating the project. Include elements of the SLP, such as the use of ongoing reflective journal writing; timeline and time logs; formative and summative evaluation procedures; SLP presentation; questions upon which students should reflect on the value of service-learning in areas such as personal development, affective development, and civic responsibility; and on course content; final paper/report; and supporting materials. Provide a clear and detailed description of the SLP that specifies:
 - a. time requirement—amount of time required to devote to project
 - b. grading criteria for the project, and value toward the total course grade
 - c. types of projects—direct, indirect, or advocacy
 - d. location of SLP—where service is to be provided and with whom
 - e. evaluation—how project will be evaluated. Prepare a scoring guide or rubric that is aligned with and in the same format as the SLP components. Include point or percentage value to components. Provide the scoring guide or rubric to the students in advance, and encourage their use of the instrument in preparing their final project report.

Stage Two: Implementation—Performing the Service

4. Foundation for service-learning. Prior to allowing students to begin a project, provide a foundation for service-learning as a philosophy and as pedagogy. Introduce service-learning as a valuable instructional technique; provide the rationale and theoretical research base. Assign readings or have students locate articles or stories of teachers who have implemented service-learning projects (Chen, 2004; Dudderar & Tover, 2003). Provide examples of completed projects as models for students to review.
5. Student support and feedback. Consider requiring the students to submit the SLP in parts; give regular feedback to students, especially during the planning and early implementation stage (Swick & Rowls, 2000). Allow students to share ongoing progress and dialogue with others in class (Mayhew, 2000). Encourage students to reflect on the experience as it progresses and at the end, such as through reflective journals (Dudderar & Tover, 2003). Answer questions and assist students in problem solving as issues arise.

Stage Three: Reflection

6. Student learning and performance on SLP. Reflect on the pre and post surveys, student project reflections, completed project, and course grades. Devote time to review data on student learning and performance. Reflect on the course evaluations and ratings/comments specific to the SLP.
7. Student satisfaction. Reflect on the comments in the students' reflections and on course evaluations, and on instructor observations. Plan in advance to gather sufficient data to provide for a review of student satisfaction.
8. Instructor satisfaction. Reflect on instructor observation and instructor notes, completed projects, and course evaluations. This is a subjective evaluation to be determined by the instructor after completing the experience. Utilize a format for evaluating the results of the SLP assignment and implementation. Discuss SLP results with colleagues and students. Determine strengths and areas in need of improvement; continue to refine.

Stage Four: Demonstration/Celebration

9. Student celebration. Allow students to present their projects (Swick & Rowls, 2000); determine whether the presentation of the project is a part of the SLP grade.
10. Instructor Celebration. Present the results of your experience to other faculty in your university, college, or department. Provide support to colleagues and act as a resource. Share your experience with graduate students and encourage their research with service-learning. Present at national conferences. Publish your results.



volunteer criteria/requirements of the school would then need to be identified and clearly articulated to the candidates. If the SLP is assigned in a course on working with families, the specific location may not be specified as long as the project participants include families. However, the instructor should have connections with family resource centers and include volunteer criteria for those centers, as applicable. We required students to submit to the instructor a proposal indicating the type of project and location—including documentation that they meet volunteer criteria for that organization or agency—and receive approval prior to implementing. Given sufficient location choices, meeting volunteer criteria should not be a hindrance.

3e. **SLP Evaluation.** Data collection source: Course syllabus and/or supporting materials. Criteria: Clearly specify how the project will be evaluated (Cooks & Scharrer, 2006; George & Shams, 2007). Align the method of evaluating the project with the project description. A rubric, for example, should be comprised of the identical components included on the written directions for the SLP, with criteria for levels of performance. Students should be provided the written evaluation document/rubric, including specific information for all components to be submitted to the instructor. Consider including details for evaluating (a) the content of the project final paper, (b) the quality of the written product, (c) the quality of the presentation, and (d) the appropriateness of the project to service-learning and to the course.

Stage Two: Implementation—Performing the Service

4. **Foundation for service-learning.** Data collection source: Class agenda, instructional materials, instructor's notes. Criteria: Provide sufficient information and instruction on service-learning. Prior to allowing students to begin the projects, provide a foundation for service-learning as a philosophy and as pedagogy. Introduce service-learning as a valuable instructional technique; provide the rationale and theoretical research base, the principles and practices of service-learning, and the benefits to teaching and learning. Assign readings or have students locate articles or stories of teachers who have implemented service-learning projects (Chen, 2004; Dudderar & Tover, 2003). Provide examples of completed projects as models for students to review.

5. **Student support and feedback.** Data Collection Source: class agenda, instructor notes.

Criteria: Schedule class sessions to review specific requirements for the projects; include class time to answer questions regarding the assignments, and review students' drafts of projects prior to completion. Periodically, instructors may hold individual and whole class sessions with students to clarify project requirements and give feedback. Class sessions also may include coverage of topics related to specific skills needed to complete the project. Include frequent connections of the project to academic content (Astin et al., 2000). Allow students to share ongoing progress and dialogue with others in class (Mayhew, 2000). Encourage students to reflect on the experience as it progresses and at the end, such as through reflective journals (Dudderar & Tover, 2003; George & Shams, 2007; Mabry, 1998). Answer questions and assist students in problem-solving as issues arise.

Stage Three: Assessment/Reflection

6. **Student learning and performance on SLP.** Data Collection Source: Before and after surveys, student project reflections, community partner feedback, completed project and course grades. Criteria: Instructors should devote time to review data on student learning and performance. Instructors should utilize multiple measures in evaluating student performance on the SLP, including course grades, individual project grades, and other measures including community partner feedback. If a before and after survey or questionnaire was implemented, evaluate the data for indications of student learning (George & Sham, 2007; Zhang et al., 2007). Similarly, evaluate the questions to which students responded in the project reflection section (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Items that address acquisition of course content and impact of service-learning project on the community partner should be analyzed.

7. **Student satisfaction.** Data collection source: Reflection section of SLP, student course evaluations. Criteria: Instructors should have gathered sufficient data to provide for a review of student satisfaction. Student satisfaction of the SLP can be determined from comments on the reflection section of the SLP and in the course evaluations completed by students at the end of the course. On the course evaluations, items pertaining to "course assignments," "course projects," and/or "overall course" should be analyzed. Mean responses to those items as well as student comments should be considered. Student satisfaction may indicate the degree of learning about the academic field and the impact of the project on the community partner. Research indicates that students report

greater satisfaction in courses implementing service-learning (Moely et al., 2002).

8. **Instructor satisfaction.** Data Collection Source: Observation/instructor notes, review of completed projects, course evaluations. Criteria: This is a subjective evaluation to be determined by the instructors after reflecting upon the experience. Challenges that higher education faculty face in implementing service-learning, such as an already over-crowded curriculum, lack of time to plan, and the mission and goals of the program or course not aligned with service-learning (Anderson et al., 2001) are important issues to weigh against the benefits of service-learning. Instructors should consider keeping notes during implementation and to reflect upon them following the experience. Instructors should summarize “what I learned as an instructor,” noting what worked, what didn’t, and what next. Further, note any changes made to the project from a prior experience, if appropriate, and the result.

Overall, both instructors were pleased with the results of the SLP assignments and students’ performances. We integrated the SLPs into the course as required assignments, in courses that typically required semester long projects; therefore there was no issue of an “already over-crowded curriculum.” We devoted more time in planning the projects in the first experiences, but time lessened with experience. The conceptual framework of our college, “preparing educators for a just and democratic society,” is closely aligned with the outcomes of service-learning, and therefore supports its use. Both instructors felt we learned much from the experience, but both still consider we have room to grow. Instructor satisfaction was highest in the final experiences.

Stage Four: Demonstration & Celebration

9. **Student and partner celebration.** Data Collection Source: Student and partner presentations. Criteria: Instructors should provide opportunities for students and community partners, if possible, to present their final project results to others (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Swick & Rows, 2000). Class time can be devoted to allow students and partners to present individually or in a poster session format. An alternative is to schedule a Mini Conference during which students and partners will present their project results. Encourage students and partners to submit proposals to local, state, or national conferences to present their results. In our experience, students enjoyed the opportunity to present their findings to the class; some community partners participated in the presentations or were

invited guests at the celebration. Presentations included poster sessions and individual power point presentations. We found the presentations well prepared and engaging overall.

10. **Instructor celebration.** Data source: Instructor presentations. Criteria: Instructors should share their experience with colleagues through informal or formal opportunities. At the local level, instructors can share their results with colleagues at department and/or college wide meetings or forums. Share your experience with graduate students and encourage their research with service-learning. Instructors may prepare a manuscript for publication to share the results of the experience. Finally, instructors may consider submitting a proposal to local, state, or national conferences to present their results. Community partners might also be invited to co-present their perspectives on the projects.

Discussion

Although the literature provides descriptive guidance for planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning in higher education courses, we developed a checklist for planning and assessing service-learning projects in our courses. We included information from the literature as well as our own experiences in developing our schema. We divided our checklist into the four stages of preparation, implementation, assessment/reflection, and demonstration/celebration as presented in the literature, broken into smaller components. We found that it is essential that all aspects of the service-learning project be thoroughly planned and linked to course academic learning and social learning goals and objectives. As recommended by Werner & McVaugh (2000), we determined that offering selective choices regarding projects should be included in service-learning assignments. As Mabry (1998) suggested, we determined a specific number of hours during the semester for the project implementation and developed connections with the community regarding possible projects. We included feedback and review of course academic concepts to enhance learning and support of the project throughout implementation as suggested by Astin et al. (2000). We also recommended that requirements for the project be reviewed throughout the semester to provide support and clarification. We suggested evaluations be conducted prior to the project, throughout implementation of the project, and after the project. The use of formative and summative evaluations provides the instructor with feedback regarding student learning through the duration of the project (George & Shams, 2007; Mabry,

1998). As Bringle and Hatcher (1996) suggested, we recommend the use of reflections, surveys using a Likert scale (George & Sham, 2007; Zhang et al., 2007), presentations (Bringle & Hatcher), etc. as instruments for evaluating student-learning. We also included specific questions on course evaluations and project grades to determine student and community partner satisfaction and student learning outcomes. Similar to the celebration as the last component of a service-learning project, we suggest instructors of courses in higher education who have included a service-learning activity in their course celebrate by sharing their results with colleagues in their departments, colleges, and universities through formal or informal meetings or forums. In addition, celebration might include publishing research on service-learning outcomes for specific disciplines and presenting findings at local and national conferences.

Summary

From our review of the service-learning literature and our experiences, we gleaned the critical elements to consider in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning in higher education. We then condensed that information into a usable checklist. With the use of the checklist, we analyzed specific components of our service-learning experiences. We determined that the checklist provided a valuable structure to assist us in identifying our strengths and weaknesses, and in determining areas needing improvement. We offer this instrument as a means of providing suggestions to those interested in implementing service-learning. We suggest that others use the checklist to assist in determining the specific elements that worked and what is in need of further improvement.

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