



## ELEMENTS OF SERVICE-LEARNING

**Source:** *National Service-Learning Clearinghouse* <http://www.servicelearning.org/>

The service-learning process is comprised of three major elements: *preparation, action, and reflection*.

**Preparation** consists of the learning activities that take place prior to the service itself. During this period, students learn what is expected of them as well as what they can expect from the service activity/project.

Activities typically include:

- \*Identifying and analyzing the problem to be addressed
- \*Selecting and planning the project
- \*Training and orientation

**Action** is “service” itself. It must be meaningful, have academic integrity, provide student ownership, have adequate supervision, and be developmentally appropriate.

Types of “service” include:

- \***Direct Service** via personal involvement in the service activity (e.g., tutoring, cleaning up a park, etc.)
- \* **Indirect Service** via channeling resources to the problem (e.g., donating items for distribution to service agencies)
- \* **Civic Service** via efforts to promote change (e.g., lobbying, letter writing campaign, petitions, etc.)

**Reflection** occurs when service participants engage in a thought provoking activity that deliberately connects the service experience to learning objectives. It can transpire before, during, and after the service experience. Reflection may involve writing, reading, telling, and showing.

Activities that can facilitate the reflection process may include:

- \* Journaling
- \* Group discussions
- \* Directed writings
- \* Research papers
- \* Online discussions
- \* Service logs
- \* Personal narratives
- \* Portfolios
- \* Individual and group presentations (audio and visual)

NOTE: Many practitioners include two additional elements: *celebration* and *reciprocity*.

**Celebration** provides closure to an ongoing activity. It also provides opportunities to recognize service participants for their contributions and to let them know that their efforts are appreciated.

Examples of celebration activities include:

- \* Media Coverage
- \* Parties
- \* Recognition Ceremonies
- \* Certificates

**Reciprocity** concerns the server and the group or person being served. The goal is to avoid placing students into community settings based solely on desired student learning outcomes and providing services that do not meet actual community needs or that perpetuate a need without seeking and addressing the cause of need. Students develop a greater sense of belonging and responsibility as members of a larger community.