Reflection is a critical component of Community-Engaged Learning (CEL). CEL is facilitated by “reflection whereby experience enhances understanding [and] understanding leads to more effective action” (Eyler & Giles, 1999). This document is based on a literature review and environmental scan of models for reflection in CEL. Contact the CEL Office to find out more.
4 Cs Framework (Eyler, Giles, & Schmiede, 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999)

Before a reflection strategy is developed and implemented, it is important to understand what makes reflection activities effective. Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede’s (1996) 4 Cs framework outlines the four principles for ensuring an effective reflection strategy. The 4 Cs explain that good reflection is: 1) Continuous; 2) Connected; 3) Challenging; and 4) Contextualized. Eyler and Giles (1999) later add a fifth C—Coaching—to the framework to emphasize that student reflection is developed through feedback from their instructors.

Continuous reflection means that reflection activities are woven into an entire course or experience rather than a one-off exercise. Reflection must be carried out throughout the duration of a course in order to be effective.

Connected reflection refers to the need for reflection activities to help students make connections between their academic learning and experiential learning. Reflection that is beneficial to student learning is dependent on a student’s ability to make connections between the academic/theoretical learning and what they have experienced in the community.

Challenging reflection involves the need for helping students to question their pre-existing knowledge and assumptions. By asking the ‘hard’ questions (that may push some students outside of their comfort zone) while maintaining a respectful environment, instructors can help students to challenge their perspectives and cause them to reflect more deeply.

Contextualized reflection reminds us that reflection activities should be developed within the context that they are to be used in so that they are relevant and meaningful to the students’ experiences. This includes basing a reflection strategy on the number of students, type(s) of CEL being pursued, level of student (e.g., first, second, third, fourth year undergraduate; graduate), length of course, etc.

The 5th bonus C—Coaching: Eyler and Giles (1999) argue that students need to be coached throughout reflection activities in order for them to improve. Many students do not know how to differentiate between academic writing and reflective writing and benefit from feedback from their instructors. Coaching also involves providing emotional support to students throughout the CEL experience.

References and more information:


The DEAL model was originally developed by Ash & Clayton (2009; 2004) to help students reflect on their service-learning experiences and achieve intended learning outcomes (ILOs). The model involves 3 phases: Describe, Examine, and Articulate Learning. This model can be used effectively in both written and oral reflective activities.

In the Describe phase, students provide a detailed, objective description of their experiences with a high level of detail. This phase helps the student to be present in the experience prior to interpreting their experiences. In their descriptions, students may be asked details such as who was and was not present, when and where the experience occurred, what they saw and heard, what actions they and/or others took (or perhaps chose not to take), and what activities did or did not involve.

In the Examine phase, students evaluate and analyze their experiences according to the specific ILOs or objectives of the course. This phase encourages students to extract meaning from their experiences. This is aided by pairing prompts to ILOs or course objectives.

The last phase, Articulate Learning, involves students explaining what they have learned, “including goals for future action that can then be taken forward into the next experience for improved practice and further refinement of learning” (Ash & Clayton, 2009, p. 41). Building on the first two phases, this phase involves four key prompts: 1) What did I learn? 2) How did I learn it? 3) Why does it matter? and 4) What will I do in light of it?

References and more information:

![Diagram adapted from Driscoll & Teh, 2001, p. 101](image)

Drawn from Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle, this commonly-known framework asks the reflector to describe the situation, articulate why it matters, and what they will do with that information. This describe-analyze-propose action framework does not prescribe a ‘right’ way to reflect; rather, it helps students to “enter into a more meaningful exploration of events” (Driscoll & Teh, 2001, p. 99). Rice (n.d.) adds a fourth element for reflection, which integrates the role of affective expression: Gut?

**What:** a cognitive description of the experience that is objective.

**Gut:** a reflection on one’s interpretation of events and what emotion it did or did not evoke.

**So What:** an analysis of why the experience is important.

**Now What:** how this experiential learning will be applied to one’s life going forward.

References and more information:

[http://learntech.uwe.ac.uk/Data/Sites/26/docs/assessment/Driscoll,%20Teh%202001.pdf](http://learntech.uwe.ac.uk/Data/Sites/26/docs/assessment/Driscoll,%20Teh%202001.pdf)


Rice, K. (n.d.). Engaging all partners in reflection: Designing and implementing integrative reflection opportunities. [https://gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/jcr:87d8e36c-d17a-4c0f-b05d-0f8f223fd97a/ricereflectionpacket.pdf](https://gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/jcr:87d8e36c-d17a-4c0f-b05d-0f8f223fd97a/ricereflectionpacket.pdf)
**Mirror, Microscope, Binoculars** (Cooper, 1997)

The Mirror, Microscope, Binoculars (Cooper, 1997) framework helps students to frame their reflections from different perspectives. These lenses can be used either to engage students directly by framing a writing assignment around each, for example, or they could be used by the instructor to think more broadly about how to address each area with reflection activities.

The **Mirror** perspective asks students to reflect on the micro level: how did they, as individuals, act in the experience? How did they work within the team? Students may also reflect on their values, their assumptions and biases, and how they were influenced, challenged, or successful in their project.

The **Microscope** perspective is dedicated to encouraging students to reflect about the CEL project itself, including how it benefitted the community they worked in and the members of that community. The microscope may be focused on topics such as what impacts the student’s project had, how their experiential learning confirmed or contrasted with their classroom learning, and whether or not they would do anything differently if they were to do the project over again.

The **Binoculars** perspective helps students to look at their experiences in order to reflect on their learning, including identifying areas where they could further enhance their learning and continue their development as critical thinkers. This perspective also encourages students to consider social issues on a larger scale by thinking more holistically about the outcomes of their project within a wider context.

References and more information:

Cooper, M. (1997). *The big dummy’s guide to service learning: Twenty-seven simple answers to good questions on faculty, programmatic, student, administrative, and non-profit issues*. Florida?

http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/sl2/mod01_pl3p_3c.html

https://cee.wsu.edu/about/reflection/