

DUKE ALUMS ENGAGE

Guidelines for Thoughtful Engagement

The process of reflection-in-action can be unfamiliar and intimidating but is crucial to expanding and deepening the service experience. It requires you to set goals at the outset of your project:

- What do you hope to accomplish for your community partner, for Duke alumni, for the beneficiaries of your project?
- How will you make these goals evident in the design of your project?

And it requires planned structured time in three steps:

- Pre-service reflection
- Conscious engagement during the service activity
- Post-service group activity to process the experience

Pre-Service Reflection (5-10 minutes)

- Allow for gathering and greeting time
- Introduce the DAE project, community partners, goals and timeline for the day
- Explain reflection dimension
- Ask that alums be mindful of “conscious engagement” and questions to think about during the project

Conscious Engagement during the Service Activity

- Be an active participant in service-- Observe, think, talk, listen and ask
- Assess the needs of the event-- Whom are we serving? What do they need and why?
- Analyze the group’s work-- Are we meeting the goals of the project? What are the unique skills/contributions being shared by different people?

Post-Service Reflection and Feedback

- Include volunteers and the community partner
- Distribute index cards and ask for responses to a few of the following questions (selected by the leaders prior to the event):
 - What was your favorite/least favorite part of the project and why?
 - Which goals did you meet? Which did you not meet?
 - How does the situation resonate with your own values?
 - What assumptions are you making about the community participants? About yourself? About the situation itself?
 - How does this service differ from other service work you have done?
 - What did you get out of this personally?
 - How does it relate to your personal history?

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- What emotions and thoughts did the project trigger in you?
- How do you evaluate your own effectiveness in this experience?
- What behaviors (verbal/non-verbal) enhanced or diminished your effectiveness?
- Allow 3-5 minutes for responses and then ask someone to collect the cards
- Ask the group to share their responses with one or two people near them, giving everyone a chance to talk (10 minutes total)
- While everyone is talking, the leaders will look for themes in the cards for group discussion
- Assist the group in articulating the major lessons learned from the experience
- Plan for the future by discussing the next steps in the relationship with the partner