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?
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