

Kristin Cartwright

Service Learning Workshop/ Oct 25th 2012

The Service Learning Workshop was very informative. Before attending this workshop and taking part in this Module, I couldn't have defined *Service Learning (SL)*, but now I feel that I know what it is, and have more ideas about how I can try to use it in my classroom. For this reflection paper, I decided to use one of the *Frameworks for Reflection* discussed in the workshop called, "What, So What, Now What."

What?: The American Association of Community Colleges defines Service Learning saying, it "combines community service with academic instruction, focusing on critical, reflective thinking, and personal and civic responsibility. Service Learning programs involve students in activities that address community-identified needs, while developing their academic skills and commitment to their community." In the workshop, the instructor also made it clear that SL is not simply volunteerism.

So What? : Although service is obviously a big part of SL, instructors need to help students go beyond that. We can do this by incorporating *structured* reflections that ties their service to academic learning. Doing so not only helps meet needs within the community but it makes the community a "living textbook" where connections are made that reinforce topics studied in class. As we select community partners for SL opportunities, we need to match the knowledge of our discipline and the skills of our students to an un-met, community identified need.

Now What?: After leaving the workshop, I am motivated to explore ways that I can incorporate SL in my classes. While I now feel motivated, I still find myself struggling to figure out how to actually match some of my General Education course learning outcomes with a community need. One idea I liked was to have my Math 1010 students tutor younger students in math. This would definitely meet a community need, as well as help strengthen their communication skills, which is one of my learning outcomes for that course. Also, I currently teach Math 1020 (Medical Math). This is a class for pre-nursing majors. There is already a Service Learning extra credit project in place for that class where the students can serve for 15 hours in a local hospital or medical facility. They are encouraged to use and reflect on the medical terminology and problem solving skills learned in our class. Now that I know more about SL, next semester I plan to make sure more students understand the benefits of participating in this extra credit project.