

# THE P.A.R.E. MODEL

The P.A.R.E. Model offers a structured approach to high-quality service-learning experiences, which include the key components of Preparation, Action, Reflection, and Evaluation.

## Preparation

Preparation of participants for service-learning experiences increases the likelihood that there will be positive outcomes for both the students and the community. Preparation should include:

- information about the issue, the community, the agency or organization, and the population to be served
- the content of the project—a step-by-step outline of what participants will do
- logistics (time commitment, transportation, what to wear, what to bring, personal safety, liability issues)
- appropriate behavior at the site
- broad social issues related to the service project
- desired experiential and learning outcomes
- motivating participants for the service project
- processing participants' feelings before, and anticipated feelings during, the project (expectations, assumptions, stereotypes, concerns)
- necessary training for service work to be accomplished

## Action

No matter how important preparation, reflection, and evaluation are, meaningful action is critical to successful service-learning. The bottom line for success is action that makes all parties involved feel that a measurable (even if small) difference was made! Issues to consider in planning the service experience are:

- What issue or population will be the focus of the service?
- Is the work needed and defined by the community?
- Where will the service take place?
- Will the service be direct (where students have face-to-face interaction with the client population), nondirect (where students are involved at the service site but not in direct contact with the client population), or indirect (where students are physically distant from the service site or the population being served)?
- Will the service be one time or on-going? If on-going, at what frequency and for what duration? Day, evening, weekend?
- What work will students actually do?
- Will the students serve as individuals or as a group?
- Who will provide necessary materials and supplies?

## Reflection

The work of learning theorists including Jean Piaget, John Dewey, William Perry, and David Kolb indicates that we learn through combinations of action and reflection. Reflection is an essential component of service-learning that distinguishes service-learning from traditional volunteerism or community service. On the personal, subjective level, reflection can address such questions as:

- What did I see and hear?
- How do I feel about what I saw and heard?
- Why do I feel this way?
- How have my experiences and values shaped my feelings and service experience?
- How are the people I met through service like me and different from me?
- How is this community related to my own?
- How might I be part of the problem? How can I be part of the solution?

On the objective, intellectual level, reflection questions can include:

- What are the social and political issues that have influenced the service recipients and the need for service?
- What are the root causes of persistent social problems?
- What are possible solutions to social problems?
- Who holds the power to move towards solutions?

## Evaluation

It is essential to build evaluation into the initial design of the project so the project's impact on both student participants and the community can be measured. Developing evaluation criteria in the design stage enables planners to establish realistic and measurable objectives.

- How will you know if you succeed?
- What observable measures are there (e.g., gallons of paint used, number of trash cans filled, amount of funds raised)?
- How can you do better next time? What changes should be made?
- Does the community feel they benefited from the service project? In what ways? (actually ask them!)
- What were the best aspects of the experience? The worst?
- How can you assess students' new knowledge? Deeper understandings? Changes in attitudes? Increased commitment to community service or social justice?

University of Maryland's Faculty Handbook for Service-Learning (1999).

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