Methods for Conducting Complex Service-Learning Projects in Recreation, Parks and Leisure Services Curricula

Cheryl A. Estes
East Carolina University

Susan Wilson
State University of New York College at Cortland

Rachelle Toupence
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

Abstract

Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students in recreation and leisure studies classes can complete structured projects designed to promote learning and community benefits. While service-learning projects are very beneficial, orchestrating these complex learning opportunities with relatively inexperienced students presents numerous difficulties for both instructors and students. A collection of techniques, tools and tips based on principles of self-directed classroom and organizational development theories was developed through a reflection-in-action process. Applications of these techniques to the operation of the student-run Annual Cortland Recreation Conference at the State University of New York (SUNY) College at Cortland and the Haunted Forest at East Carolina University (ECU) are discussed. Sufficient detail and references are included so other faculty can adapt these techniques for use in their own classrooms. Use of these techniques creates a positive learning environment that empowers students to become an independent, high performing team, in a relatively short time span. Ideas for reciprocity and reflection, two key components of service-learning, are discussed.

Keywords: service-learning, experiential learning, student-directed, project, situational leadership

Biographical Information

Cheryl Estes is an Assistant Professor at East Carolina University in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, 174 Minges Coliseum, Greenville, NC 27858-4353. Susan Wilson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the State University of New York (SUNY) College at Cortland,

P. O. Box 2000, Cortland, NY 13045. Rachelle Toupence is an Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, Department of Recreation Management and Therapeutic Recreation, Wittich Hall, LaCrosse, WI 54601.

Introduction

Professional studies programs in higher education traditionally utilize experiential activities such as volunteer work, practicum, internships, and projects in conjunction with theoretically based classroom instruction in order to prepare students to apply theory to professional practice. Many of these projects have a community service component reflective of the current trend to increase service-learning opportunities in higher education (Ralston & Ellis, 1997). Because many service-learning projects require a combination of multiple tasks, long-term efforts, and extraordinary commitment on the part of students and faculty, techniques for facilitating the smooth operation of service-learning projects are very useful.

The purpose of this paper is to present a new compilation of techniques, tools and tips derived from existing theory for conducting complex service-learning projects in recreation and leisure studies curricula. Examples of two different applications are provided. These techniques are the result of a five-year process of theory-in-action and reflection by three instructors drawing from principles of service-learning, student-directed learning, and organizational development theories. Successes include students' meeting educational and service objectives with a substantial reduction of problems experienced prior to implementation of these techniques. Overall, the use of these techniques allows both the instructors and students to stay more focused, professional, and even more relaxed, throughout the duration of very complex projects. While the techniques discussed in this article can be applied to any complex experiential group project, they are targeted to service-learning projects in particular. A discussion of service-learning elements such as reflection and reciprocity are included. This article builds on previous service-learning literature by describing both the techniques developed and the authors' experiences applying these techniques. Examples are drawn from a four-year period serving as the faculty coordinators for the student-run Annual Cortland Recreation Conference at the State University of New York (SUNY) College at Cortland and one year supervising the Haunted Forest at East Carolina University. An overview of service-learning projects is presented to familiarize the reader with the nature of service-learning and the potential problems that can arise from complex service-learning projects. The remainder of the article discusses the specific techniques developed. Two examples of how students at SUNY Cortland and East Carolina University were empowered to plan and implement complex service projects are described.

Service-Learning

Service-learning is a concept that is getting a great deal of attention in the field of parks, recreation and leisure services (Ralston & Ellis, 1997; Williams & Lankford, 1999).

Recent SPRE teaching institute, NRPA educational sessions and the Leisure Research Symposium have all had speakers discuss the topic and some of the "best practices" used in the field. Attendance at these various sessions would lead an individual to the conclusion that service-learning represents a large continuum of activities within a college curriculum. For the purpose of this paper service-learning is defined as "a method by which students acquire knowledge while working in volunteer, community service" (Nilson, 1998, p. 108). Nilson goes on to indicate that individuals associated with service-learning refer to it as a " . . .positive, life-changing experience for students . . .". This definition has not been altered much since the time of Dewey where experience was used in tandem with academic learning to enhance a student's development (Dewey, 1938). The important component of the experience is its link to classroom learning (Ralston & Ellis, 1997).

While it can be agreed that active involvement is the key to service-learning, there are several components that must be included in service-learning in order for students to achieve a solid learning experience (Williams & Lankford, 1999). The first is relationship to academic subject matter. The project, therefore, must be something that students will use in the future. For example, in this paper, the planning and interpersonal skills needed for putting on a conference or the "Haunted Forest" are skills that students have learned in other classes and are now putting into practice in a "real" way. These key skills are the building blocks of good programming and will be used by the students throughout their careers. More importantly to service learning, they are learning skills that they can directly link to courses such as administration, programming, and leadership. The instructor and the students share the responsibility of making those connections explicit throughout the specific course and the curriculum as a whole.

Williams and Lankford (1999) also discuss the concept of civic responsibility. Some proponents of service-learning talk of civic responsibility more narrowly, but in the case of the Cortland Recreation Conference we see students giving to the community of the profession. Students provide an outcome that enhances the professional growth of individuals in the northeast region. Although this may not be linked to a specific community it is, in fact, instilling in students a sense of civic responsibility in terms of their chosen field. Students enter the profession understanding the need for service to professional organizations and the need to continue their own growth. Students from the conference class tend to find themselves in leadership roles in their own state conferences fairly soon after their entry into the profession because of their background and expertise.

Finally, Williams and Lankford (1999) point out that service-learning requires reflection. This process allows for students to understand the role of the project within the larger context of their own student learning. Reflection during and after the projects allows for students to discover their own strengths and educational needs regarding their professional development. The reflection on both of these events allowed students to understand, in both a formal and informal way, the impact of the project on their educational goals. The definition of service learning used in this article is a broad interpretation of the

concept, but one that allows for a variety of innovative activities to be incorporated into classroom learning and for students to have a larger understanding of giving back to a community.

Need for Application of Existing Theory

Many service-learning projects require a combination of multiple tasks, long-term efforts, and extraordinary commitment to ensure both quality community service and student learning outcomes. Students typically begin a complex project with limited skills, a lack of knowledge related to the event, and minimal commitment to the communities to be served. The instructor is challenged to create a learning environment that provides the necessary guidance to produce a quality project, with relatively inexperienced and unskilled students, while simultaneously ensuring that it is the students who are completing the project, and not the instructor. Perhaps the dilemmas are obvious: The instructor has responsibility for ensuring a quality product that provides real services to a community—the expectation of quality is real and important. The instructor is also responsible for ensuring that students master learning objectives. In order for this to occur, the students must be personally responsible for planning and implementing the project. Yet this must be accomplished with a team of students who arrive at the class without the skills, knowledge, or commitment they will need to develop in order to plan and implement the project. Without careful guidance students are prone to under-planning and last minute panic. A dilemma felt by the instructor is one of dual responsibility for facilitating students' learning through personal experiences, that by necessity embrace both successes and failures, and ensuring the delivery of a quality service project. The dilemmas for the students include taking the risk of having responsibility for a project they don't yet know how to do and meeting the expectations of their instructor(s) and the communities they serve.

Organizational development theories and student-directed learning experts provide some insights that both explain why these dilemmas exist and provide a starting point for resolution. Situational leadership and group development theories characterize newly formed teams (such as student classes) as immature groups with limited skills and commitment. As a newly formed team they need much guidance and support to develop the necessary skills and commitment to the project before they will be able to work more independently (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982).

Warren (1995), an expert in self-directed classroom applications, discusses the feeling of being the instructor in a student-directed class:

> The teacher's role in the student-directed classroom is challenging in its subtlety. I sometimes feel as if I'm tiptoeing the line between intervention and stepping back. As most experiential educators can affirm, it's an intuitive guess at times whether to: 1) actively facilitate the process either to maximize learning or to keep it from becoming miseducative, or 2) let the students' struggle with the experience service as the didactic lesson. (p. 251)

The instructors' roles when directing a service-learning project are important and complex, and it requires much more labor than a typical classroom lecture to facilitate a quality service-learning experience. It also requires that the instructor find the right balance between guidance and stepping back—being available to support, provide resources, problem-solve, and provide feedback, without unnecessarily interfering, is an on-going challenge.

Techniques, Tools and Tips

The techniques presented here are the result of a five-year process of reflection in action undertaken by the authors who taught classes where complex service-learning projects were implemented. Shon (1995) describes the rationale for, and process of, "teaching as scholarship" that provides the foundation. Teaching as scholarship embraces a different epistemology than that of traditional science, and a view of the "teacher as scholar" implies that there is a kind of knowing embedded in competent practice. Knowledge is contained in the teacher's actions as she teaches (performs), and by observing herself in the process of teaching, reflecting on what is observed, describing it, and reflecting on this description she can generate new knowledge through a process Shon calls "reflection in action."

This discussion describes the results of the reflection in action process that resulted in the development of specific techniques, tools and tips derived from existing theory. Specifically, student-directed learning (Warren, 1995), Situational Leadership® II (Blanchard, 2000; Blanchard & Hersey, 1996), team development (Blanchard & Carew, 1996; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977), and other theories related to training and supervision (Employee Development Systems, 1985; Estes, 1998; Hathaway, 1990; Simerly, 1990) are applied.

Applications from Student-Directed Classrooms Theory

Warren (1995) identifies seven key components the instructor must keep in mind in order to facilitate an educative experience in student-directed classrooms:

(1) Informed consent
(2) Establishing a concrete vision
(3) Ground rule setting
(4) Process tools
(5) Resource person
(6) Confidence in the process, and
(7) Closure assistance

Informed consent and concrete vision. Informed consent means letting the students know at the outset what the precise course description is and defining the roles of the students and the instructor. Informed consent is accomplished by giving the students a detailed course outline with course objectives at the outset of the class.

Information about the scope of the project (goals) and student/instructor roles should be discussed in the first class meeting to establish a concrete vision. It is helpful at the outset to provide the student with one or more options—to take this course with the service-learning component or alternate paths to completing degree requirements. If the course with the project were required, the students would not have the freedom to choose, thereby losing an important opportunity to gain intrinsic student commitment to the project.

Ground rules. In setting ground rules, the instructor sets and models basic operating principles that serve as a safety net for class function. Determining ground rules at the outset provides an important reference point for later reflection and feedback within the student group and between the students and instructor. Ground rule setting can best be accomplished through a team effort between instructor and all students. A model for behavioral ground rules called "Group Norms" is very useful for facilitating discussion about behaviors that are expected of all team members (Petzoldt, 1974). The instructor presents three categories for relationship-oriented behaviors to the class: Individual to individual, individual to group, and group to individual. The session begins with the brainstorming of ideas for each category—"How should we treat each other, individual to individual?," "What responsibilities does each individual have to the group?," and "What responsibilities does the group have to the individual?"

Students typically respond with general statements like "respect," and the instructor needs to elicit more information by asking questions like "What type of behaviors demonstrate respect?" It is critical that the instructor press the students for behaviorally specific descriptions of what it will look like when each ground rule is being followed. For example, a person is showing respect when they listen carefully, show up on time for class and other appointments, keep commitments, and so on. The instructor should expect to be a contributing member to the discussion, and when necessary, state important ground rules that the students fail to articulate themselves. Anticipate teachable moments. For example, it may be useful to discuss "I statements" and ask students to incorporate I statements" when making suggestions for ground rules (e.g."I think everyone should be at class on time").

After an initial brainstorming and listing ideas for ground rules in each area, the group returns to the list, selects and clarifies statements, and adds others deemed necessary by the group or instructor. The product of this discussion should be copied onto a poster and placed in a prominent location where it will remain visible to the students and instructor as they work on the project.

Group process skills. To facilitate the development of group process skills the instructor imparts techniques to aid thinking as a group, decision making, leadership, problem solving, feedback, and debriefing. Each instructor can select various group process tools. Process tools typically needed for effective teamwork include: problem solving and decision-making, giving and receiving criticism, leadership skills, and debriefing. It is probable that several of these group process skills have been taught in

other recreation and leisure courses, but it makes sense to review and reinforce the application of these skills. An example of one skill that should be reviewed is brainstorming. The instructor can briefly review ground rules and then facilitate a class brainstorming session as a model for the students. Models for solving simple and complex problems provide another example of process tools students may know but need to review. One problem-solving model these authors have used successfully is in Drury and Bonney's The Backcountry Classroom (1992). Active listening is another familiar skill that should be reinforced (Blanchard & Carew, 1996).

There are other group process skills such as coping with criticism that students are not likely to have learned, so class time should be devoted to instruction. Giving and receiving critical feedback should be taught to any group to further effective communication (Hathaway, 1990). The skill of giving and receiving critical feedback works in conjunction with a group norm that individuals have responsibilities to each other and to the group to speak openly about concerns. One strong cultural message that works against a healthy interpersonal environment, where criticism is constructively given and received, is "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything" (Hathaway, 1990, p. 3). Teaching the students Hathaway's "Describe, Acknowledge, Specify, Reaffirm" (DASR) model builds on the communication skill of "I statements" emphasized during group norms discussion. When a student has critical, constructive, feedback to offer to another student, the group, or the instructor, he or she should do the following: Describe—the situation and the goals/expectations involved; Acknowledge—the feelings they have about the situation; Specify—what behavior or action they believe is needed; and Reaffirm—their confidence that the difficulty can be resolved (Hathaway, 1990).

It is important to teach that the DASR model works just as well for positive feedback as it does critical feedback. The instructor, and all class members, should strive to give positive feedback as much as possible. Open communication that includes honest and caring feedback (such as that based on the DASR model) is crucial to developing a high performing team (Blanchard & Carew, 1996). The instructor should expect to teach about feedback, frequently model it, and reinforce student's use of feedback, to establish an atmosphere of trust, acceptance, and a sense of community where team members become aware of each others strengths and weaknesses (Blanchard & Carew, 1996). Additionally, students in recreation and leisure studies have typically engaged in leadership training, and the service-learning project provides and excellent opportunity for students to apply and refine their leadership skills.

The group process skill of debriefing is especially important for reflection.   Reflection is an important component of experiential education in general and service-learning in particular. Debriefing occurs in several ways: during meetings with the instructor, in report writing, and during class round-table sessions. A debriefing model that effectively mimics the cognitive process of reflection and processing experience is the "What?, "So What?," "Now What?" described by Shoel, Prouty, and Radcliffe (1988) in Islands of Healing. More details on the reflection process will be discussed in another section.

Other instructor roles. In addition to providing the initial vision and teaching group process skills, the instructor is a resource person, role model, cheerleader, and co-problem solver. The instructor's role in assistance with closure is discussed later in the section on reflection and reciprocity.

As a resource person the instructor provides specific connections to readings, speakers, programs, and so on. In so doing, the instructor can markedly influence the quality of the course content. In the role of resource person the instructor should locate quality written materials, guest speakers, and key contact people that can help the students with the project. At all times the instructor is a role model for leadership, communication skills, problem solving, motivation, and commitment to the service-learning project.

In order to build confidence in the process the instructor serves as a coach by pointing out that struggles are a necessary part of growth and by expressing delight in the progress of the team. The instructor's enthusiasm for the project and students' accomplishments will contribute greatly to motivation. The instructor needs to remember to "catch students doing things right" and deliver as much specific, positive, feedback to individuals, and the group, as possible.

The instructor's role as co-problem solver should not be underestimated. A Socratic-type approach to problem-solving, where the instructor asks a series of questions designed to lead the student to discover the answer for him or herself, can be very effective. If the instructor can co-problem solve with the student by leading him or her through the problem-solving process then the student will be empowered to solve the next problem he or she comes across more independently. If, however, the instructor solves problems for the students then the students will continue to rely on the instructor rather than their own resources.

Thus the framework developed by Warren (1995) provides a foundation for the techniques the authors applied to facilitate group process during service-learning projects. While each instructor will be challenged to decide when to actively facilitate, and when to step back and allow the students' struggle to be part of the learning process, these guidelines provide the instructor with concrete techniques, tools, and tips that can create the kind of environment necessary for students to plan and implement a complex project as independently as possible.

Situational Leadership® and High Performing Team Theories

Blanchard's Situational Leadership® (Blanchard, 2000; Blanchard & Hersey, 1996; Hersey & Blanchard, 1982; Pfieffer & Ballew, 1991b) and group development models (Blanchard & Carew, 1996; Pfieffer & Ballew, 1991a; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) provide another useful framework for developing additional support mechanisms. These tools can be used to assist the instructor in developing a group of individual students into a high performing team that is empowered to complete the service-learning project as independently as possible. Students implementing the complex service-learning project

are likely to spend 60 to 90 percent of their time in group activities, so further attention to the training and support of the high performance team and its leaders is warranted. Blanchard and Carew (1996) note that much of the time employees spend in group activities is wasted or used ineffectively due to lack of knowledge and training in skills needed to work in groups. This section outlines techniques designed to help the students learn to take charge and work effectively together to become a high performing team.

Key principles from Situational Leadership® and team development theory form the foundation for the tools that follow. Situational Leadership® II illustrates four styles of leadership that the instructor[1] can choose from depending on the readiness of the students for the situation: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996). There is no one best leadership style—the key is for the instructor to understand the students and the situation and to choose the most appropriate style. Generally speaking, the group of students develops into a high performing team by progressing through stages sequentially and over time:

- Orientation, or forming, phase where group members convene and are eager to participate but unsure how to work together

- Dissatisfaction, or storming, phase where working together is more difficult than anticipated and conflicts become evident

- Resolution, or norming, phase, where group members learn how to work well together and tasks are accomplished, and

- Production, or performing, phase, where a group is truly a high performance team as the collective produces a synergy greater than the sum of its parts (D. Carew & E. Parisi Carew cited in Blanchard & Hersey, 1996; Blanchard & Carew, 1996; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).

The instructor needs to choose an appropriate style based on an understanding of both the nature of the tasks and how ready, willing, and able the students are to perform these tasks. When directing the forming team (a team that is motivated but lacks readiness) the instructor is in the role of an authority figure who directs students with information, tasks charts, and time management aspects of a project. The instructor assumes the style of a coach when she is both directive and building commitment to the team and project. Here she teaches group process skills and promotes teamwork in addition to providing task specific direction. As the group gains task skills, resolves conflicts, and develops teamwork, the instructor can change to supporting and delegating styles of leadership. When supporting, the instructor acts more as a group member; she represents herself as an equal in discussing the tasks and supporting the group process. Her voice is not an authority above the students, and the students will respond by becoming more

---

[1] Hersey and Blanchard speak of "leaders, managers, and subordinates," for this article the term instructor is used in place of leader or manager, and student is used in place of employee or subordinate.

self-motivated and self-regulating. The delegating instructor goes one step further to encourage the now able, ready, and willing students to take the last step towards independent functioning. Delegating allows the high-performing team to complete the tasks in relative independence. The leader will step in to check on work, provide support or resources, and give guidelines about deadlines and quality of services and products. The students must be both very able and willing to direct their own behavior on the project for the instructor to delegate effectively. The instructor will know when the students are able and willing by keeping frequent checkpoints to assess progress key tasks. A frequent error in the supervision of a capable team is to assume that once the students are "trained" they will independently complete tasks with little supervision (Employee Development Systems, 1985). Therefore, even when delegating to a performing team, the instructor needs to maintain frequent check points in order to provide feedback about quality of partially completed products and to convey clear expectations.

The importance of understanding the concept of <u>readiness</u> should not be underestimated. <u>Readiness</u> is the amount of willingness and ability a student demonstrates while performing a specific task (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996). Hersey and Blanchard point out that it is important to understand the degree to which willingness and ability interact to determine readiness—the number one error in determining willingness is to view someone who is insecure or apprehensive as unmotivated. It is therefore important to recognize that the willingness of the student will vary with their degree of confidence, commitment, and motivation. Several scenarios are possible. One student who appears "unwilling" may be very committed to the project and motivated to do the job, but insecure about their ability. Another student may have ability but lack commitment and motivation. Assuming that the majority of students majoring in recreation and leisure studies are motivated to help others, and that the service-learning class is something the student has chosen to do, one can conclude that most students who appear unwilling to act are probably insecure about their abilities, knowledge, experience, and/or skills.

In order to successfully utilize the Situational Leadership® II model, the instructor needs to empower students by moving them from a low level of development to a high level of development. This is done by providing specific supports to develop the students' readiness for both new and unfamiliar tasks and building strong relationship abilities and supporting the student's level of team development with appropriate situational leadership styles. In this way, the instructor is more directive when the students are forming and storming, and more coaching and delegating as they gain readiness, knowledge, and confidence. Thus, the "situational instructor" can assist students over the hurdle of insecurity by providing task information and facilitating relationship development among team members.

Developing student readiness for tasks. One way to develop task readiness for students who are unfamiliar with a project is to create written records of information such as a handbook, archival notebooks, and videos. According to Blanchard and Carew (1996) ensuring that all team members have access to all information relevant to their

mission is one key to team empowerment. When information is clear and accessible team members are empowered to share responsibilities, help each other out, and take initiative to meet challenges (Blanchard & Carew, 1996). When properly structured, a project handbook can provide history, purpose, task and timeline descriptions, in addition to serving as a collection point for other support resources deemed useful to the project. Archival notebooks serve as a collection point for previous years work on continuing projects. Videotapes of key aspects of the event help provide a visual representation for those unfamiliar with how the project may unfold.

The student handbook should contain a section on history, task worksheets, faculty job descriptions, self-evaluation tools, and other resources necessary for group function. A sense of history for the project is important to developing student understanding of the scope of the project, the communities served, and serves as a foundation for formulating mission statements. Each year, students update task worksheets, initially created by an instructor. Providing job descriptions for the instructor(s) gives the students a sense of comfort in knowing each person's roles. Other relevant task information can be included when appropriate to a specific service-learning project.

TABLE 1

Sample Task Sheet Format (Estes, 1998).

Task title:		
Goal(s)/Desired Outcome: Describe in specific, observable language what the person(s) completing this task will produce.		
Tasks	Deadline/ Customer	Resources

Of all the characteristics of the high performing team, optimal productivity is one of the most important (Blanchard & Carew, 1996). Task worksheets for every project job create the foundation of information students will need to get the job done, meet deadlines, and achieve goals even though they have never done the jobs before. Table 1 illustrates a format for the task worksheet. This worksheet is modeled after a simple action-planning format that provides a task name, a statement of overall goal, and breakdown of specific steps that will be taken in order to accomplish the overall goal. Suggested time frames are included to assist the student with time management, and

customers are identified so the students can better understand the critical project paths (i.e. that other student task groups will be waiting for their finished products in order to proceed with their tasks). A column for resources is included so the student will know who to go to or where to check for further information. In order to familiarize students with how specific task sheets and timelines fit into the big picture of the total project, it is useful to have the class prepare a master timeline on butcher paper using different colored markers to represent each task function. This exercise helps students see critical paths for the project and they can identify areas where some individuals have downtime and others will need assistance. In this way, access to all relevant information is shared and it will be easier for team members to support each other.

Other resources that may be helpful in the project-planning handbook include descriptions of reflection paper assignments, resources on conflict resolution, meeting facilitation, Gantt and PERT chart instructions, and any other planning tools deemed useful for the project.

Developing relationship abilities. Relationship ability refers to how students behave with each other and how they interact as a team. The ground rules set during group norms discussion and other process skills previously discussed play an important role in establishing a climate of strong relationships. Other important factors for developing strong relationships between team members include morale building and establishing clear behavioral expectations. Another key aspect of developing relationship abilities is ensuring student buy-in to, and internal motivation for, the service-learning project through a strong sense of mission and awareness of benefits.

Positive relationships and open communication are important characteristics of the high performing team (Blanchard & Carew, 1996). Use of group process skills previously discussed such as "I statements", active listening, and honest and caring feedback help establish a climate of high cohesion. Points that cannot be over-emphasized are the need for the instructor to consistently role model and reinforce the use of these communication skills throughout the entire course. Public forums, round-table meetings, one-on-one evaluation sessions with students, and any problem solving session provide the settings to model and reinforce strong communication skills. A climate that embraces the group norms set by the instructor and students at the outset of the project ensures open and honest communication This helps to establish the sense of respect, trust, and community that is necessary for peak performance.

A strong sense of morale is one of the most important characteristics of a high performing team (Blanchard & Carew, 1996). Team building activities such as icebreakers and adventure activities can promote high team spirit. Teaching about team development models such as Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) forming, storming, norming, and performing can provide an awareness of natural group developmental processes (Pfieffer & Ballew, 1991a). Recognition and appreciation of individual and team accomplishments by celebrating milestones, accomplishments, and the event can help promote a sense of personal accomplishment. Consider having recognition and appreciation as a part of

class meetings and everyone's job description. Some simple but effective ideas include bringing food and beverages to some of the class meetings and keeping a camera handy to take photos of accomplishments for display.

Another key to ensuring optimal productivity and trust is establishing and reinforcing clear behavioral expectations for each class member. Students arrive in class with varying levels of maturity and understanding of leadership and follower behaviors. A self-evaluation (see Table 2) provides a mechanism to communicate in clear, behaviorally descriptive phrases, what the expectations are for each class member. The self-evaluation is designed to reinforce an overall commitment to quality and professionalism through clear expectations. The instructor should familiarize students with the self-evaluation during one of the first class sessions. The self-evaluation is also designed to facilitate student reflection on their personal strengths and weaknesses. Students can be asked to complete a self-evaluation at a mid-way point and at the end of the project. The instructor should evaluate the student as well—this provides an opportunity to meet one-on-one with each student and openly discuss the student's performance in both formative and summative ways. The initial self-evaluation provides an excellent starting point for providing reinforcement for quality performance and caring feedback about behaviors that need improvement. In addition, the instructor may want to solicit formative and summative feedback on her performance from the students.

Another key aspect of relationship ability is the students' commitment to project mission. A common sense of purpose and values of the project can help students stay clear on what work they should be doing and why it is important (Blanchard & Carew, 1996). The development of a mission and goals statement is an important task the team should undertake early in the project. Additionally, the students should brainstorm a list of benefits that the communities served will receive from the project. The instructor can conduct a discussion on the concept of service and reciprocity as well (see the next section). It may be helpful to have students brainstorm a list of benefits individual team members are likely to receive from working on the project. Examples include references, job contacts, new skills, work experience, and enhanced personal confidence.

Reflection and reciprocity. A critical aspect of service-learning is reflection (Williams and Lankford, 1999). Projects that do not require students to reflect on the project, their role in it, and the relationship of the undertaking to classroom work are essentially traditional "volunteer opportunities" rather than an integral part of the curriculum. Through a process of active reflection, students are not only able to enhance their personal capabilities in areas such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving, but they are also able to bridge the gap of understanding between their professional goals and the traditional classroom. Vehicles that facilitate student reflection can include the previously discussed self-evaluation, personal reflection papers, summary reports of accomplishments, and letters to future class members.

Personal reflection papers should follow the "What," "So What," "Now What" sequence to facilitate the natural cognitive process through which one processes experi-

TABLE 2

Self-Evaluation Form Used To Detail Expectations For Behavior And Professionalism[2]

Directions: Rate yourself on the following areas. Use a five-point rating scale. The descriptions offer suggestions for how a rating of five and of one should look in each area. After rating, multiply that number times the weighted number to determine the score for that area. Add the scores for each area to determine the total at the bottom.

5...   ... 4   ... 3   ... 2   ...1

(score x weight = total)

1. Demonstrates highest **commitment** to the project by attending class on time, coming prepared with ideas for the topics, contributing to discussion, and volunteering to accept responsibility.	Shows no commitment to the project effort. _____ x 2 = _____ score
2. Shows high level of **teamwork** by working closely with other class members to complete tasks and achieve mutual objectives. Keeps all commitments made to others, and follows norms set by the group.	Shows no level of teamwork, does not work with others, does not complete agreed on tasks, ignores group norms. _____ x 2 = _____ score
3. Demonstrates excellent **leadership skills** by facilitating meetings in turn (plans agenda, keeps group on task, gets people involved). Encourages new ideas from others, presents a positive outlook and sets an example.	Show little or no interest in leadership, only does things that one has been told to do, has a negative outlook. _____ x 2 = _____ score
4. Shows high commitment to **learning skills** related to planning a quality project; reads the text, asks questions, seeks criticism, and expresses ideas for improvements.	Shows no interest in learning skills for planning a project. Needs to have all tasks explained. _____ x 2 = _____ score
5. Demonstrates strong **problem solving and decision making skills** by isolating and identifying problems, evaluates courses of action, and using good judgment and common sense when making choices.	Shows no initiative to solve problems or make decisions. Relies on others . _____ x 2 = _____ score
6. Acts as a **professional** at all times, conducts self in appropriate manner; peer, client, and instructor relationships indicate high level of professionalism; accepts criticism and adjusts accordingly.	Acts in unprofessional ways; is inappropriate in conducting relationships; cannot accept constructive criticism. _____ x 2 = _____ score
7. Uses **resources** of the project wisely. Uses equipment only for project planning, comes up with ideas to save recycle and save on use of resources.	Uses resources for personal use; wastes resources unnecessarily. _____ x 2 = _____ score

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Self-Evaluation Form Used To Detail Expectations For Behavior And Professionalism[2]

8. Shows excellent **oral and written communi-cation** skills. Listens actively to others, asks questions for clarification, restates to ensure messages are correct. Uses proper grammar and technique in writing.	Poor oral and written communication skills. Does not listen, does not clarify, gets messages wrong. Writing is poor. _____ x 2 = _____ score
9. **Completes all tasks** assigned with the utmost quality in a timely manner. Attention to detail is evident, and quality of product is checked by a second party.	Fails to complete tasks as assigned, or completes them very late so the product is not useful. _____ x 2 = _____ score
10. Instrumental to the **overall success** of the project, makes a major contribution, always has a positive, can do, attitude, attentive to the needs of others - clients and peers alike, dependable.	Fails to contribute to experience, drags others down with negative attitude, not dependable. _____ x 2 = _____ score

ADD UP TOTAL POINTS ON ALL TEN ITEMS = _____

STUDENT COMMENTS:

INSTRUCTOR COMMENTS:

ences and identifies learning transferable to other situations (Shoel, Prouty & Radcliffe, 1988). For example, the reflection paper could request that students: (1) Describe the high and low points of their experiences, (2) Discuss their thoughts and feelings about these experiences, and (3) Summarize what they learned, and (4) Discuss how they plan to apply what they learned in future situations. These reports provide a starting point for group discussion and reflection about learning and application. Summary reports can include revised task sheets and a collection of documents that can be archived in files or notebooks for future reference. Letters to future class members can provide suggestions that only the 20-20 vision of hindsight can provide.

Reciprocity implies that the service-learning project fulfills an "essential need within the community" (Ralston & Ellis, 1997, p. 15). As discussed earlier, the authors' interpretation of reciprocity includes support to multiple communities in addition to the traditional sense of civic benefits. Money raised by a project can be used to meet various

---

[2] This form was originally adapted from an evaluation developed by Bruce Mathews for Outdoor Education for Person's with Disabilities class at SUNY Cortland

needs of the residential community (e.g. purchase of recreational equipment for a school). Money can also be used to support student development (e.g. travel to professional conferences) or instructional needs (e.g. purchase of equipment to enhance teaching). When project events involve travel, lodging, and meals out, the resident community benefits by the addition of exposure and tourism dollars.

Other community benefits include networking opportunities that enhance connections between students and the community members. These relationships can enhance the "town and gown" relationship between the residential and university communities, as well as the relationships between students and other professionals. Students in the project group benefit by improving their professional skills and adding a valuable item to their resume. They join the community of alumni who have conducted the project in past years, and over time, traditions are created and celebrated.

Example 1: The SUNY Cortland Recreation Conference

The Annual Cortland Recreation Conference (ACRC), in Cortland, New York, began in 1951 as the Field Work Conference and was conducted by students in the senior class of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies under the supervision of Harlan "Gold" Metcalf. Over 400 students and professionals attended the 50th year of the conference in 2000 making it the longest continuous student run conference in the United States.

The planning and implementation of each conference took place over two semesters: starting in the Spring, students completed one set of tasks, setting the stage for final planning and Fall implementation of the conference itself. The first semester, students participated in teambuilding using Project-Adventure® type games. Ground rules were set early on through a group norms discussion and a poster displaying norms was placed in the students' conference office. Group process skills were taught and functional roles were established. Design of the conference theme, mission statement, and logo provided a framework for clarity, commitment, and ultimately the selection of keynote speaker and programs. A master time-line for all tasks was created on butcher paper and displayed in the student office; critical paths and customers were identified with colored markers to enhance each student's understanding of their role in the larger picture. The process of putting the timeline together proved more important than the timeline itself because it required the entire team to review each other's tasks, customers, and deadlines.

Students were called upon to make links to issues facing the conference and information they had learned in other classes. One benefit of this activity was the increased accountability students had to each other. Students were encouraged to ask their peers for assistance or advice in completing tasks. This accountability was also seen in the office space. Students were asked to "cross off" tasks completed on the weekly time line. This public display allowed all to see the pieces of the puzzle fitting together.

One challenge was creating a climate that valued honest and caring feedback. Using the DASR model, the instructor coached the students in the early stages, and as they gained familiarity and practiced the model they began using it spontaneously. Additionally, making a "game" out of feedback seemed to assist with the incorporation of feedback into the team culture. This was accomplished by awarding a small prize (e.g. candy) "spontaneously" when students applied the model during group round-table discussions.

Students took turns facilitating class meetings and assuming leadership of task groups. Students were encouraged to choose tasks that fit their availability, interests, and skills. The instructor assisted the students in their choices of roles by carefully reviewing the nature of task responsibilities at the outset.

A Student Handbook for Conference Planning was prepared to provide students with a manual that provided essential task information for planning and implementation of the project (Estes, 1998). This book included a history of the conference, a 14-step conference planning process (Simerly, 1990), task worksheets for both semesters, job descriptions for the instructor and a graduate assistant, action plans (see table 1), self-evaluation (see figure 1), and support resources.[3]

The instructors applied principles of the Situational Leadership® model to develop a functioning team. Although the team was working well, the instructor did not remove herself by simply delegating tasks. The instructor's role was to schedule frequent checkpoints and provide formative feedback to ensure quality outcomes and learning. The instructors found it necessary to maintain frequent contact with all task groups. It was discovered that when the instructor left students alone to complete tasks without checkpoints, the quality of products was often not what the instructor had in mind. Instead of removing herself from the process, the instructor made it a standard practice to set up check points to review each student's work at critical junctures to give formative feedback. In some cases when formative feedback did not occur, the instructor and student were left to a "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" on the finished product. When this occurred it was frustrating for both parties when work had to be redone.

Reflection was facilitated through formal and informal mechanisms throughout the semester. Reflection papers and reports, self-evaluation, and frequent group discussions in the form of round-table meetings proved useful. Self-evaluations and task reports were completed both at a mid-point and the end of each semester. During each formative and summative evaluation period the instructor met with each student one-on-one to provide feedback and encouragement. Round-table meetings allowed for each task group to report progress and receive feedback from other class members. Group

---

[3] Support resources for the Cortland Recreation conference have included office procedures, meeting facilitator guidelines, tips for running effective meetings, customer service and telephone skills, information on accessibility, and a reference/resource list. Every instructor will need to determine what type of support resources are relevant to his or her service-learning project.

discussion of reflection papers provided a forum for identifying learning and application. Letters to future conference planning classes provided advice for next year's group and notebooks containing the archival records for each year's class were placed in the conference planning office.

Reciprocity and value of the conference to constituent communities of students, professionals, faculty and Cortland residents was discussed at the outset and during evaluation. Money raised was used for student and faculty development that benefited the entire recreation and leisure studies department. Examples of specific benefits include money for student-faculty social events, purchase of instruments for collaborative faculty-student research, and seed money for other student-run service projects. Professionals benefited in a number of ways, they received: high-quality workshops and credit for Continuing Education Units (C.E.U.s); networking opportunities with recreation professionals, educators, and students; and an opportunity to recruit and interview potential student interns. Recreation and leisure studies students from Cortland and other colleges networked, explored 2 and 4 year college articulation program options, made contact with agencies for internships and jobs, and attended a luncheon with a professional mentor. Student members of the conference planning team gained numerous applied programming skills, a resume item, and a place in the community of former conference planning alumni. Community businesses benefited from tourist dollars spent in local hotels and restaurants. The sense of tradition generated by the 50-year continuation of the Cortland Recreation Conference has helped to create a strong national reputation for the department and sense of community among the alumni.

Example 2: The ECU Haunted Forest

The students in the fall semester programming class at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, have conducted a Haunted Forest program for the local community for the past five years. The Haunted Forest raises funds for community service programs and student/faculty development while simultaneously providing an invaluable learning experience for students. Many of these techniques were adapted for use in the production of the 2000 Haunted Forest. Students were familiarized with the stages of group development at the beginning of the service-learning project to promote the healthy development of teams throughout the course of the semester. Additionally, students took an active role in the establishment of a mission and of goals for the service-learning project to increase student commitment to the project. The students identified both the value of the Haunted Forest as a learning experience and the potential value to the community early in the formation of goals.

Within their teams, students constructed both PERT and Gantt charts to assist in their understanding of the wide variety of jobs that had to be completed for the successful conclusion of the project. Students were encouraged to provide both critical and positive feedback to one another as well as to the instructor. Opportunities for practicing the giving and receiving of feedback occurred throughout the course of the project.

The instructor was able to move from a directing or coaching style of leadership to participating and delegating styles later in the semester. Students became increasingly able to recognize and solve problems on their own, and the instructor was again able to shift from a Socratic questioning method to one of little direct guidance. Ultimately, the instructor was able to primarily serve in the role of cheerleader as students became increasingly self-directed. Reflection by the students on many aspects of the Haunted Forest played a key role in students' learning. Students were given the opportunity to reflect on their personal performance, the performance of their team, and the success of the project throughout the semester. Such reflection afforded the students increasing opportunities to grow and develop their professional skills. Toward the end of the semester, reflective comments by the students indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the project and its benefits. Many students suggested that the opportunity to "pull together" as a team, create something worthwhile for the community, and practically employ their skills was a highly beneficial and gratifying learning experience. One of the benefits to the residential community from the 2000 Haunted Forest included use of funds to purchase recreational equipment for Pattillo Middle School, a rural southern school that lost the school building and all supplies to flooding following Hurricane Floyd in 1999.

Conclusion

Service-learning projects are a valuable tool for recreation and leisure educators. These techniques provide those who are interested in using service-learning projects in their curriculum with methods that have been carefully developed and successfully applied. The combination of principles derived from student-directed learning and organizational development theories with the principles of service-learning provide the instructor with a framework that can be modified to fit a variety of service-learning and experiential projects. Students working with these techniques have consistently created high quality projects and events while simultaneously gaining valuable learning experiences. Instructors using these techniques have experienced increased confidence in both the quality of the project and student acquisition of relevant skills. The successful application of these techniques requires both commitment and flexibility from the instructor. The instructor assumes a variety of complex roles—a facilitator of group development, supervisor, resource person, co-problem solver, debriefer, and facilitator of reflection. While conducting a service-learning project such as the Annual Cortland Recreation Conference or the East Carolina University Haunted Forest takes a great deal of effort, the benefits to the students, community, and instructor are endless.

References

Blanchard, K. H. & Carew, D. (1996). How to get your group to perform like a team. Training and Development, 50(9), 34-37.

Blanchard, K. H. & Hersey, P. (1996). Great ideas revisited. Training and Development, 50(1), 42-47.

Blanchard, K. H. (2000). Situational leadership II. [WWW Document]. The Ken Blanchard Companies: Areas of Excellence. URL: http://www.kenblanchard.com/areas/situatoinalII.htm

Dewey, J. (1938). Experience and education. New York: Collier Books.

Drury, J. K. & Bonney, B. F. (1992). The backcountry classroom: Lesson plans for teaching in the wilderness. Merrilville, IN: ICS Books, Inc.

Employee Development Systems, Inc. (1985). Communicating to manage performance [employee training program]. Dallas, TX: Author.

Estes, C. A. (1998). Student handbook for the Annual Cortland Recreation Conference. Self-published manuscript, State University of New York at Cortland.

Hathaway, P. (1990). Giving and receiving criticism: Your key to interpersonal success. Menlo Park, CA: CRISP Publications

Hersey, P. & Blanchard, K. H. (1982). Management of organizational behavior: Utilizing human resources (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Nilson, L. B. (1998). Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors. Boston, MA: Anker Publishing Company, Inc

Ralston, L. & Ellis, G. (1997). Service-learning: Connecting practical experience with classroom instruction. Schole, 12, 13-22.

Petzoldt, P. (1974). The wilderness handbook. New York: Norton & Company, Inc.

Pfeiffer, J. W. & Ballew, A. C. (Eds.). (1991a). Five stages of group development. Theories and models in Applied Behavioral Science (Vol. 2, Group). San Diego, CA: Pfeiffer & Company.

Pfeiffer, J. W. & Ballew, A. C. (Eds.). (1991b). Situational leadership. Theories and models in Applied Behavioral Science (Vol. 3, Management/Leadership). San Diego, CA: Pfeiffer & Company.

Shoel, J., Prouty, D. & Radcliffe, P. (1988). Islands of healing: A guide to adventure based counseling. Hamilton, MA: Project Adventure, Inc.

Schon, D. A. (1995). The new scholarship requires a new epistemology. Change, 27(6), 26-34.

Simerly, R. G. (1990). Planning and marketing conferences and workshops. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Tuckman, B. W. & Jensen, M. A. C. (1977) Stages of small group development revisited. Group & Organization Studies, 2(4), 419-427.

Warren, K. (1995). The student-directed classroom: A model for teaching experiential education theory. In K. Warren, M. Sakofs, & J.S. Hunt, Jr. (Eds.), The Theory of Experiential Education (3rd ed., pp. 249-258). Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing.

Williams, A. & Lankford, S. (1999) Service-learning: You can get there from here. Schole, 14, (37-54).