

Reflection #1- SWYIS

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### **Overview/Summary of Activity:**

My first After School Science Club went very well in my opinion. Originally, there were only 2-3 kids signed up for the activity because they have the option to choose from a lot of other activities happening in the gym. As soon as I explained that we were doing catapults and started interacting with the kids, the group grew to about 8-10. They all were very enthusiastic about the activity and loved telling me all about their school and their weekend plans. My favorite part of working with kids is just making conversation, so I was happy that this is a talkative group.

The kids really enjoyed the activity overall and ended the time with competitions and building connected catapults. I really think that one of the main takeaways of this activity and learning in general is the principle of autonomy and creativity. Unfortunately, students lose a lot of creativity through the process of schooling, as we are always told to follow certain directions, memorize word-for-word what we are told, to be able to obtain a certain grade. I think that this program can be a great way to kind of push back on that narrative/cycle. I want to prioritize the creative spirit in each kid by not pushing one way to do things. For the catapults, I did show them the example for reference, but really encouraged them to put their own spin on their catapult by adding another spoon, more sticks, etc. I was happy that in the end there were no two of the same style catapults.

I have elementary schoolers, and quite a few needed help putting on rubber bands. There were multiple kids asking for help at once, but they were all very understanding and patient during the process. The kids were super helpful during clean-up without me even having to ask, which was awesome. Overall, this is a great group of kids, and I am so excited to continue working with them.

### **My Philosophy on Relationship Building:**

How I approach my relationships with the students is by building a personal connection early on by getting interested in them and their lives; asking questions, finding connections, and building up the strength of that relationship. In summary, investing in the kids early on, building that trust and mutual respect is vital in having a solid foundation for that relationship (easier to set the tone early on as for what is expected, how the club is going to be run, etc.)

### **Personal Reflection as it relates to STEM:**

While obviously our activities are STEM-focused, I don't think that is the main takeaway from any activity or experience. I am a true believer in experiential education, where the students learn by experiencing things on their own, by experimenting with their own creativity, and then reflecting on that process. I have never learned best with a strict guided plan/instructions, and

often resent plans and instructions in my own learning. To reiterate my points made in my first instruction, I think my main role as a facilitator in these activities is to inspire a spirit of autonomy and creativity in the students, which can carry over to any field/future interests/opportunities. While we are exposing them to STEM concepts, I don't think my main goal/aim of this club is to "inspire them into STEM" as one of my peers wrote. It is to inspire and facilitate free thinking, patience, understanding, and teamwork, which can be carried and applied to all types of work.