

Anna Cornell

Reflection #2- SWYIS

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Through my participation in Service with Youth in STEM (SWYIS), I became more intentional about how language, assumptions, and power dynamics shape young people's learning experiences. Our discussions around inclusivity were thought-provoking, and I became increasingly more aware of how easily unintentional bias and microaggressions can surface. I also think that these negative effects can be unintentionally amplified when we are talking/interacting with kids. This is due to both the learning/absorbent nature of children who are taking everything in from their surroundings and interactions, and because of the automatic power imbalance that comes with age, experience, and being an authoritative figure.

Facilitating STEM activities also led me to reflect on my own STEM identity and how representation shows up in learning spaces. I generally categorize my brain as very left-brained, creative, go-with-the-flow, emotional, and reflective. This generally does not fit the stereotypical approach to STEM field topics. I think that by presenting these STEM topics from a creative, exploratory, and reflective nature, encourages the students to experiment with their own creativity and ideas. This is something I think we need a lot more of in our STEM curriculum. I have a lot of strong viewpoints and opinions on the lack of well-rounded courses that STEM majors are required to complete for the completion of their degrees. As an institution, I think the university/ STEM departments need to do a better job of addressing the intersectionality of societal, political, environmental, and economic topics/issues within our curriculum. My belief is

that STEM education should make room for multiple ways of thinking and learning, and encourage different perspectives.

Overall, SWYIS strengthened my commitment to inclusive and experiential education. It reinforced the importance of meeting students where they are, valuing diverse perspectives, and creating learning environments that empower curiosity. These lessons continue to shape how I approach youth mentorship, facilitation, and experiential learning.