

Nikyra Wheaton

October 14, 2025

Dr. Shea

Reflection 2

This semester has definitely been one full of changes, adjustments, and learning experiences. At the beginning of the semester, our original plan was to partner with the Jackie Joyner-Kersey Foundation to work directly with students in the after-school program to gain knowledge about their educational field. The goal was to hear from the students themselves, understanding what they wanted to see added to the existing program, how we could better support their learning, and what would keep them engaged. I was really excited about the idea of connecting with kids, helping shape something meaningful, and being part of an interactive learning environment. It felt hands-on, personal, and a way where I could actually connect with the kids.

However, some things changed and instead of working directly with the students, our focus moved toward how to get people interested in environmental conservation through education. Creating informational plaques for the community has been one of our important pieces to add. These plaques are meant to explain what is already in place, what's growing in the garden, how insects are being introduced into the ecosystem, and why those things matter to the community. The new goal became to get people more engaged and interested in the space, rather than trying to change or expand the program itself.

Being a person who loves to interact with others, I enjoy environments where there's direct communication, collaboration, and energy. Moving toward more informational, research based work felt more boring honestly, but as I started to get deeper into the project. What we're doing now may not seem like much, but they serve an important purpose of educating the public and creating awareness. They help people understand the ecosystem around them and feel more connected to it. It started to realize that engagement doesn't always have to come through conversation; sometimes it's about how you present information in a way that sparks curiosity and connection. This also allows me to use my major in psychology to figure out what actually gets people interested.

Through this process, I've learned that flexibility is a big part of community work and research. Things don't always go as planned, and being able to adapt without losing sight

of the bigger purpose is important. I've also realized that I enjoy projects that balance creativity and information, something that lets me express ideas visually and clearly while still having meaning behind it. Not saying that I don't enjoy this but it's a give and a take when the work feels too distant from people or lacks direct feedback. Looking ahead, I hope our project continues to grow in a way that keeps the community involved. Maybe these plaques will be the first step toward something bigger, like guided tours, workshops, or community days where people can come learn hands-on.