

*“Education is not preparation for life
Education is life itself.” ~John Dewey*



~a perspective from Arushi Agastwar



With my twin sister, I came to Vishnupuri, Kanpur, to do something worthwhile and spend my time giving back to my community. I wanted to share my knowledge with the students in India, and share the experience of NSF, in learning Spelling and Vocabulary.

When my father told me about the NSF-APNA -program, I was excited. The NSF-APNA program gave youth ambassadors a chance to conduct a Spelling Workshop and a Spelling Bee in underprivileged schools, in India. It was an opportunity to give needy but smart children the NSF experience, and give them valuable English skills which they could use in the future.

“The **Indian Heritage** is throbbing in my veins”

My twin sister, Avishi Agastwar, and I, Arushi Agastwar, are seventh graders from California, America,. We came to Vishnupuri, Kanpur, to do something worthwhile and spend our time giving back to the community.

Undoubtedly, I am very proud of my Indian culture, and if there's one thing that touched me most during the experience, it was the opportunity to contribute to positively influence even a small number of lives in India, my home country. Honestly, I hope this created an unforgettable experience that empowered the students.

Being of Indian heritage, I genuinely care about giving back to my community and share what I have learned through experiences throughout the years.



“My **Unforgettable Journey** ~ 2016 NSF Program”

As being NSF youth ambassadors and participating in the NSF contests and workshops for years, we wanted to organize a workshop and a competition in a school in India, to allow others to attain their utmost potential through stimulating success in every field by participating in the Spelling Bee Contests.

In today’s society, two of the most important qualities of our world leaders are the abilities to speak and write fluently.



So, we decided to come to Seth Motilal Kheria Inter college to host an English Workshop and Spelling Bee. We held the workshop and competition for 80 students. The students learned extremely valuable spelling and vocabulary techniques, and then took part in an exclusive competition after the workshop.

“Education is a **gift**
for a **lifetime.**”

Education is so important. If people were educated, they could get a job, and live a prosperous life. If people were educated, they could pursue their dreams, and decide the kismet of their futures. If people were educated, happiness would no longer be unattainable. And so, after I heard of the NSF program, I eagerly wanted to take the opportunity. I realized that this year, my visit to India would be quite memorable.



“The art of **communication**
is the language of **leadership.**” ~*James Humes*



Take a look at President Barack Obama, or former President Bill Clinton. Or, take a look at our great businessmen, salesmen, doctors, lawyers, politicians, teachers, engineers. We can see that they are all good communicators. All of these people have the power to effectively convey their message to their audience. They can connect with the audience, they can learn and discover with the audience, and most importantly, their powerful words can leave an everlasting impact on the audience. Spelling and vocabulary are absolutely critical skills which can lead to effective communication and a world where we can all make a change--because we communicate our ideas effectively, and others effectively communicate them back. That is the **power** of communication.

“With great **power** comes
great **responsibility.**” ~*Spider Man*



I am so fortunate to be living in a life of luxuries~a great school, a great place to live, and probably everything else~one would need. So I have a responsibility. While trying the hardest to become successful in my own life, I have the responsibility of helping others and standing up for what I believe in--whether it's educating--or speaking up to express my opinions--or **fighting** for change.

“Getting To **Work**
Right **Away**”

We decided to work with an English Medium School called Seth Motilal Kheria Inter College School in Vishnupuri, Kanpur.

The principal of Seth Motilal Inter college, Mr. Mishra, kindly accepted the offer and was excited to host the program in his school. We discussed the details with the principal and the English teacher. We decided that we could conduct the workshop for fifth and sixth graders. It would be a three day workshop, one day bee, and finally an award ceremony. We would teach 80 students in one class for two hours each day. As soon as I heard this number I was awe-struck, but super excited.



We saw the hall we would be teaching in and checked if the school would have a projector so we could present our powerpoints. Luckily, the school did have a projector. We showed the material we were teaching to the English teacher, and he said it was perfect.

Before the workshop started, my sister and I still had more than two weeks to prepare the English material for the workshop. We really wanted to make the material amazing for the students. So, my sister and I looked through the NSF powerpoints and organized them. We created new powerpoints and put all the material together. We thought of ways to engage and connect with the students, so they would not get bored. We were excited about this workshop and committed to making it the best possible. Before the first day, we worked strenuously to polish up the powerpoint.

“So often you find
That the students you’re trying to **inspire**
End up inspiring **you.**” ~*Sean Junkins*

We taught the students prefixes, suffixes, nouns, and verbs, as they wrote it in their books. We played many interactive games, and held many quizzes.

What I loved was that the students were so well-behaved, so excited to learn, and they all eagerly answered our questions. While my sister taught the whole class, I made sure to go to every student--especially at the back--to have a one-on-one conversation and see if they were understanding what we were teaching them.



The students called me “Arushi g,” “Arushi didi,” or “ma’am,” and I loved being addressed like that.

After about an hour, the English teacher came in to see how the class was performing. He was surprised and very excited to see the progress of the students. The Chemistry teacher even recorded us teaching the class, and the manager took many pictures.

When it was time for the students to go to lunch, my sister and I dismissed the class. I was so happy that the students looked so cheerful and I was sure that they had really enjoyed the class. A lady brought me

tea, which I sipped slowly while discussing how the day had went. Soon, after five minutes, when we were getting ready to leave, students came rushing in. Then, they grabbed their notebooks and ran up to us for our autographs.

Again, I felt elated. With my signature, I made sure to write something special about each and every child, which I had learned about them in class.

“As you **grow**, you will discover
you have **two** hands,
one for helping yourself, and
one for helping others.” ~Audrey Hepburn

While seeing a BBC documentary, I noticed that a child who was getting educated had dreams of becoming a physicist, and was using her knowledge to teach others. If I used my ability to educate, more people would lead a life full of opportunity. I wanted to be the person to not only make the change--but create the change. I was self-motivated to help educate underprivileged children in India to their fullest potential. Life is more than becoming great yourself, it is helping others along the way, being the voice for them, and giving others what you have, but what they don't have.

“The one **exclusive** sign of thorough knowledge
Is the power of **teaching**.” ~Aristotle

At the end of a class, a little girl who was sitting at the very back of the class asked us a quick question. We answered the question and then asked a few questions back about what we had taught the class today.

“What is the meaning of SPECT-”

“To look at!”

“What is the meaning of ANTHRO-”

“Man!”

“What is the meaning of CHRON-”

“Time!”

My sister and I beamed, and patted the student on the back. At the same time, the teacher also beamed proudly. Invariably, the students had made a huge progress in learning and grasping the concepts.

I knew my sister and I had been successful in the way we were teaching the material, engaging the students, and helping them understand the topics.



“Some people **dream** of success
While others wake up and **work**
hard for it” - *Napoleon Hill*

On the last day before the exam, we gave the students 50 words to write down and study the spellings at home. We told the students we would select some words out of that list for the spelling test and there would be new words as well.

With diligent concentration, the students willingly wrote down all fifty words. At the end of class, we told the students how they should prepare well, so they can test their knowledge and be able to assess how much they have learned.

The next day, the students listened carefully to the rules and instructions of the test.

Consequently, we passed out the test papers and began the Spelling test. When it was over, we collected the tests and concluded the Spelling Workshop. We explained about the award ceremony and how all the participants would be awarded certificates, and the top ten winners would be awarded a prize.

At the end, we explained how much fun we had teaching the students. We thanked the students for joining us in the learning journey.

The students rushed up to us and again asked for our autographs and thanked us. I knew that they *had* learned a lot in the English Workshop.



“Have **pride** in how far you have come
Have **faith** in how far you can go.” ~A Scholar

Throughout the workshop, my sister and I discussed the award ceremony-- which we hoped should be exciting for the kids. Honourable Mayor of Kanpur gladly agreed to come, but couldn't, because of a last minute infection. Still, important dignitaries which included: professors, leaders of the Department of Education, Government Officials, the press, photographers. and many others accepted to grace the ceremony. All of these people were very excited to hear that we, students from America and NSF youth ambassadors, had come to India



for our vacation to give back to our community and hold a NSF Spelling Workshop/Competition for 80 students. We were very happy to hear that they could come to the award ceremony to celebrate the winners' achievements.

My family laminated the certificates and bought 10 dictionaries for the winners of the competition. We prepared a banner for the award ceremony. My family was a huge help in terms of making all of this happen.

The award ceremony turned out to be a blast. It happened in the main hall of the school, which was three times larger than the class we had taught in. The parents sat at the back, the students sat at the middle, while the dignitaries and the principal sat on the stage at a dias.

We called out the top ten winners as they came up to the stage, while the dignitaries handed them their certificate and dictionaries. The students proudly came up to the stage and posed with the principal, dignitaries, faculty, and us. The press and the photographers took our pictures. The dignitaries and the principal said a very inspiring speech, thanking us for holding an amazing workshop and celebrating the students' achievements. One thing that stood out to me was what Dr. Dinesh Narayan, a professor, said about the importance of learning how to spell and write fluently.

My family proudly sat at the back--which included both of my grandparents--my dad's side from Benarus--and my mom's side from Kanpur.

“A teacher affects eternity.

He can never tell where his influence stops.” ~Henry Adams

Our NSF story ended up coming on the college's large board, on the college magazine, and on the Dainik Jagran, the Amar Ujala, Ashok News, and the



Compact Newspaper.

“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.” ~Nelson Mandela

Education is one of the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world. With knowledge, one can achieve anything; be it being a global leader or a great mind or an innovator. With education, we can solve the many problems of hunger, poverty, health, equality our human rights and implement the United Nation's goals which include infrastructure, industrialization, economic growth, energy, peace, justice, strong institutions, water and sanitation, and many more (United Nations sustainable goals). I will spread my knowledge and try to give others the same access so they can achieve their fullest potential to become successful people.

“Be the change you wish to see in the world.” ~Mahatma Gandhi

Whenever I hear this quote, one thought comes into my mind. The power of helping others is so great; but the feeling you get, and the impact that is made, is even *greater*. I will stand up for what I believe in and **be the agent of the change I want to see in this world.**

My Journey has just begun...

*Through public speaking, through education, through innovation,
I aspire to encourage a others, to achieve anything and everything
they dream in life.*



Citations:

UN Sustainable Goals: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>