

SATYA'S APNA EXPERIENCE

My name is Satyanarayanan Sivasankar. I am 15 and I live in St. Louis, MO. I have just finished 9th grade and am about to go to 10th grade in the fall of 2016. Over the 2016 summer break, I went to Madurai, India. There, I conducted the Spelling Workshop through the APNA program to 6th, 7th and 8th graders at Corporation Elango Higher Secondary School. The reason for doing so actually started at a very young age. I had always loved teaching. I was known as a good math teacher among my friends at school and I was always someone that my friends could talk to. The reason I loved teaching was simple. A good teacher has the potential to change another person's life. A good teacher can be anyone no matter what age. But most importantly, a good teacher has the satisfaction of helping another person. Usually when someone says teacher, we think of the ones in school, but we tend to forget the ones that affect us the most. This goes from your friend that gave you good advice, to a parent that helped you get out of a difficult situation. My liking of teaching is what has pushed me to be a volunteer in the Accredited Tamil School of Missouri and to serve as an ambassador for NSF. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam once said, "Teaching is a very noble profession that shapes the character, caliber, and future of an individual. If the people remember me as a good teacher, that will be the biggest honour for me." This is very true and this APNA program had only helped me apprehend the full meaning of this quote. Before the actual workshop, my dad and I talked with Mr. Venkat Gade and discussed everything that I would do at the workshop. I took a week to go through the material and made sure I understood it very well and that I could teach it in an easy-to-understand manner as the students were studying in Tamil-medium and were not very comfortable with the English language. Therefore, a lot of what I said to them had to be in Tamil, other than the actual material. Prior to our India trip, my dad had talked to the head master of the school and told him about NSF and the APNA program. He also mentioned the various bees in which I had participated through NSF and the various bees he had judged through NSF. My grandfather who is a retired Deputy Collector also went and met the head master prior to us going to India. The head master was very impressed and agreed to let me hold a one week workshop for the 6th, 7th and 8th graders. On June 3rd, my dad and I went to see the head master and confirm that we would hold the workshop during the following week. The head master remembered us and gladly agreed.

Day 1: June 6th

On the first day, I made all of the students introduce themselves to me as I introduced myself. Then, I talked to them about NSF and how it can help them in their college admissions. All of the kids were very interested and were very attentive. I then gave them an overview of the things that would be covered that week. I also talked about why spelling was important and how being a good speller could help them in the future. To start with the workshop, I started talking about prefixes. I then gave the students a set of words to practice. The students loved the three hours I spent with them.

Day 2: June 7th

On the second day, I gave a quick oral quiz to class and quizzed them on the first set of words I gave them the day before. Most of the kids did great. I then reviewed prefixes and taught suffixes and parts of speech. I showed them the tricks to spell words easily by using prefixes, suffixes, and parts of speech. The students took very good notes and were focused throughout. To end the session, I gave them another set of words to practice.

Day 3: June 8th

On the third day, I quizzed them on the last two sets of words I gave them the days before. Again, most of the kids did great. I then reviewed the things that I taught yesterday. Afterwards, I taught them etymology, word roots, and spelling tricks that are associated with the two. The students were surprised to find that a lot of English words actually came from other languages including languages like Sanskrit. They were "all ears" during my presentation. I also quickly covered a little bit of vocabulary with the students. We discussed tricks such as finding the main word in a complex word and used previous knowledge of prefixes and suffixes. Near the end, we did a mock traditional spelling bee to show them what an actual spelling bee was like. This also served as a way to study for final exam the next day. To conclude, I gave them another set of words and reminded them that the next day would be a big test over the words that they were supposed to have practiced.

Day 4: June 9th

On the fourth day I gave everyone a test over the words that were given to them during the week. It was amazing to see all of the students use the tricks that were taught to them to help them do their best on the test. Everyone was so focused that even their primary teachers were impressed. At the end I collected their tests and went home to grade them. There were many kids that did superb. The first mark was given to a student who scored 95 percent. This is very impressive as the kids were studying in Tamil medium and were not very accustomed to the English language. My dad and I went to go print the NSF certificates for all of the students.

Day 5: June 10th

On the fifth day, I announced the top three scorers and gave everyone their certificates along with a notebook and a pen. Everyone was recognized in the presence of all of the school staff and students during assembly time. We also talked to everyone during the assembly time about NSF and how it could help students in their college admissions. At the end, the head master commended and thanked me for providing this workshop to the students and for informing them about how NSF can help them if the students do well in school. He also praised and encouraged NSF Ambassadors to help students all over India and wished NSF well.

Overall, the NSF APNA experience was very nice and I enjoyed it a lot. I am proud to have served as an ambassador for NSF as it is such a great foundation that makes a big difference in many bright students' lives in India. I would also like to thank Mr. Venkat Gade for helping us do this ambassador program in India. It is very important that more people in my generation and in following generations realize that service to others is in fact a service to oneself as well. Service to others brings so much happiness to the world and especially to the person doing the service. In fact, Rabindranath Tagore once said, "I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy." In the future, I hope more NSF alumni will take part in this amazing program and help make a difference in the lives of the students of India.

Day 1 Pictures:



Day 2 Pictures:



Day 3 Pictures:



Day 4 Pictures:



Day 5 Pictures:

