



**NORTH SOUTH FOUNDATION**  
**[www.northsouth.org](http://www.northsouth.org)**  
**SPELLING BEE WORKSHOP**  
**Conducted by**  
**Sreeniketh Vogoti**

**Where:** VT High School Library, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India

**When:** Wednesday, June 15, 2016 through June 17, 2016

**Time:** 11:00 AM IST – 1:00 PM IST

## My APNA Experience in Words

**“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” – Nelson Mandela**

When I first decided to register for participation in the NSF APNA Program, I thought it was rather unlikely that my request would be entertained. The program, which was exclusively for high school students who wanted to volunteer their time to help students in India, instantly captured my attention. But there was one hitch: I was a 7th grader, which meant I was ineligible to participate. But fortunately for me, I had placed seventh in the Scripps National Spelling Bee this year (2016). This meant that because I had studied spelling quite extensively, there was a chance — a sliver of a prospect — that I would be accepted as an NSF Youth Ambassador. A few days later, to my pleasure and surprise, my request for registration was accepted.

Once my APNA registration was accepted, we had to decide the specifics of the task: Which school were we to go to, when were we to conduct the workshop, etc. Our first thought was to contact my mom's former school (Visakha Valley School - which is a well-renowned school) and conduct the bee there, but we decided against it, because we were looking for a municipal school to conduct our workshop in since that would be much more beneficial to the students. We finally settled on an old and well-established school that had kids from several low-income families (VT High School, Visakhapatnam). After 1-2 days of conversing with the teachers and explaining the APNA program in detail to the teachers, we were ready to start the lessons.

Once the sessions began, one of the things that surprised me was the eagerness with which the students absorbed what I had to share. About 50 people had appeared for my spelling course within a day's notice. In fact, the students were so thrilled by the sessions that they invited some of their friends to participate, and by the final day, there was a total of 62 people in the classroom. In this sense, what I observed in India is that while the students have the skill and the thirst for knowledge, they suffer from a dearth of resources. Therefore, programs such as North South's APNA are important in spreading knowledge and inspiration, in order to kindle an interest in learning amongst students. In India, the average classroom in most municipal schools contains not much more than a blackboard and benches for the students, but the students scrupulously write down all the notes the teachers write on the chalkboards, and remember 80-90% of the material taught.

But, not everything was perfect. Because the school was not open during the weekend, we only had three days to teach all of the slated spelling material instead of the projected five days. But, as an APNA ambassador and a spelling workshop coordinator, I was also tasked with the responsibility of thoroughly covering whatever material I went over with the students. So, I just had to improvise and still

meet all the objectives. I had to cut out any material that I thought was extraneous, but luckily with some judgment I was able to manage to complete all the important activities without forsaking anything of significance. The teachers were also helpful, and they helped seat and settle the students and provided moral support. The teachers helped me all through the three sessions, and especially assisted me during the spelling bee contest we had at the end of our workshop. The teachers also made sure the students were understanding all of the material and helped me grade the test papers after the spelling bee contest.

On the first day, we covered patterns of pluralization, differentiation between nouns and adjectives in spelling, etc., and started discussing language patterns. On the second day, we finished basic revision of language rules and also completed roots, prefixes, and suffixes. The students were thrilled by the idea of being able to decipher the definition of a word without having ever seen it before. Throughout the sessions, I continually quizzed the students on words we had discussed in class so as to maximize the students' retention of everything that we had discussed. On the third and final session, we went over even more roots (there are always more roots that you can learn) and reviewed the material we had covered throughout the three classes.

Later on the third day, we had our spelling test. Based on the scores from the preliminaries test, the top ten students participated in the oral round. The spelling workshop was neatly wrapped up with the awards ceremony, for which the principal was present. We individually recognized the top ten students, and we gave prizes to the top three students. Despite it not being part of our original plan, we gave away a prize to the student who had ranked fourth since she had gotten a perfect score in the written test but ended up missing a word in the oral rounds. In advance, we had printed out certificates for every one of the participants, and they were very happy to have participated in the program. The principal was exceedingly grateful that we had decided to set up the workshop in his school, and he delivered a powerful speech in front of all of the workshop participants and the teachers. I was moved by the speech, which helped me realize the magnitude and impact that the spelling workshop had on the participants.

In conclusion, I thoroughly enjoyed the spelling workshop because I had the opportunity to help students who otherwise might not have had an avenue to learn spelling rules from. I now have the confidence to teach spelling and vocabulary. Additionally, this experience inspired me to want to help improve education for the meritorious but poor and underprivileged students. I am extremely happy to express my profound gratitude to NSF and Mr. Venkat Gade (the NSF coordinator) for giving me the privilege of participating in the APNA program. I encourage my fellow NSF students to enroll in the APNA program, and I look forward to participating in the program again.

## My APNA Experience in Pictures

Picture#1: Panoramic view of a session in progress



Picture#2: Another picture with me using a chalk & blackboard



Picture#3: My session with teachers standing and students squatting on the floor



Picture#4: Me elaborating on some important stems



Picture #5: A picture of the classroom and the students



Picture#6: Special Recognition and prizes for the Top three winners of the Spelling contest





Picture#7: Certificate of Participation given to all of the students

# NORTH SOUTH FOUNDATION

## Certificate of Participation

*Awarded to*

\_\_\_\_\_

*for successfully participating in \_\_\_\_\_ at*

\_\_\_\_\_

North South Foundation (NSF) is a non-profit organization involved in implementing educational programs for children in North America and India. NSF believes that this world can be a better place to live if the children of today are better prepared to be good citizens of tomorrow. Toward this end, NSF encourages children to endeavor to become the best they can be, by giving their best. Further, while it is self-evident that all humans are created equal, it is education that is paramount to actually realizing the rights of equality including life, liberty, justice and the pursuit of opportunities as the Founding Fathers of this Nation envisaged more than six decades ago.



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Head Master

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India National Coordinator

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