

Anika Bhagavatula, NSF APNA Youth Ambassador

Summer 2018

I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in the NSF APNA program. Through this program, I had the chance to interact with children who live on the other side of the globe, who are growing up in a completely different environment and under different circumstances. This allowed me to share different perspectives and gain an understanding of people's lives far away from my home, while introducing them to a different way of learning.



This was my second time teaching at the BRR Girls High School in Barkatpura, Hyderabad and I was excited to return to the school! The second I set foot on the school grounds, I was eagerly greeted by the 8th grade students who remembered me. I met with the headmistress and I suggested teaching 6th grade again, as I had really enjoyed it. After discussing with some of the other school teachers, it was decided that 9th grade would be a better option, since the students were more advanced and would greatly benefit from this program. There were about 80 students in total. I was a bit hesitant to teach just one grade level below me, but I was pleasantly surprised to see them being respectful and eager to learn! As I walked through the school, I noticed that some of the school facilities had improved over the past two years. There was now a mic and speakers in the main classroom which allowed the teaching to reach a much larger audience.

The first day of teaching arrived quickly. I prepared the syllabus for the week and organized the worksheets I planned to distribute. I created google slides from the material we were given for the workshop. My teaching time began at nine am, right after the morning assembly. To display the slide presentation, I organized a screen and projector which connected to my laptop. Using the screen and the mic allowed even the students sitting at the

back to be completely engaged in the presentation. The lesson plan consisted of teaching common English pronunciations, prefix, suffix, Greek and Latin roots, and common grammar rules. As I introduced myself and began teaching, I quickly learned that they understood better if I talked slower, and consistently engaged them with participation opportunities. After teaching each topic, I reviewed the concepts by asking questions to allow them to think and show their understanding. I found that the students were fond of recitation and were eager to repeat words and definitions.



On the other two instruction days, I introduced new concepts and reviewed previous topics. After a few days, students became more comfortable and were willing to participate more. They even asked questions about the homework and what else they can

do to prepare for the spelling bee. After class, some students would ask questions not only about what I taught, but about my life as well. They were interested in the school I attend and what New York City looked like!

On the day that I planned to conduct the spelling bee, there was an unexpected bandh. The night before, the former Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee had passed away. People used the bandh to remember his contributions to the Indian Government. This brought back memories of another bandh that was called two years ago on the day that I was to conduct the spelling bee! Luckily, this time around, students had school the next day, Saturday, which allowed me to conduct it after all!

During the spelling bee, I found it wonderful to see students applying concepts I taught to words they were tested on. They were initially shy and nervous to be called upon, but soon found themselves comfortable speaking in front of the whole class. The biggest impediment I think was my accent. If I spoke slower and emphasized each syllable, the students were more likely to get the word right. They made good use of the opportunity to ask for the meaning of the word and how it was used in a sentence, before attempting to arrive at the correct spelling. There was a group of students who were clearly very motivated, making the competition very tough and exciting. The competition continued for nine rounds until we determined a winner! I

distributed certificates along with a pack of pencils to all students who participated. The first, second, and third place winners received trophy and a few prizes including dictionaries.

I also visited the class that I had taught two years ago and saw many familiar students. It was very rewarding to learn that the program I taught had made a real impact and the



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students still talked about it. The students in this school come from modest backgrounds, where most of the parents did not have the opportunity to complete school. This is a critical stage in their life, where they either continue on to Junior college, or leave school to get married or take on a job to support the family. It is so important for young girls to understand the opportunities they can have if they work hard and continue with their studies. If they can see what is possible, there is that much more of a chance that they will persevere to stay in school and reach their potential.

I am thankful for NSF, BRR Girls High School, my parents and relatives for giving me this incredible opportunity to make a difference. I hope to be able to continue conducting such programs in the future.