

## NSF Apna

As a child of Indian origin, I feel a responsibility to give back to the community. As a result of this responsibility I traveled to Martur, a rural village near Guntur in Andhra Pradesh to teach at the local school, named Sri Sarada Niketan Public School. This school serves underprivileged children who otherwise would not have a good education.

I arrived at the school on Sunday, August 5<sup>th</sup> 2018 with my family and stayed in the guesthouse of the school. When I arrived, I was very anxious and scared to teach children that were older than me. Also, I was nervous to teach children that did not speak English as their first language. I was not very confident coming to teach these kids, and I had been worrying about teaching for many months. The temperature was also very hot and there were many insects and ants. This added to my trepidation of teaching at the school.

On the first day of teaching, I observed my sister teaching 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders English. I was amazed at how the kids were confident in their English skills. They were so confident that they could speak to us in English even though they had never met us before. I thought that if they could do that I could definitely teach them. Also, I was amazed at how confidently my sister taught kids that were older than her.

After I saw my sister teach English, I prepared for my first class teaching math to 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders. As I read through their textbook I became even more stressed about teaching. I eventually decided to teach polynomials and I wrote 3 pages covered in notes about what I was going to teach. When I arrived in the class I saw forty students sitting on the ground before ready to learn. By the time I got ready to teach I was covered in sweat and I forgot all of the things I planned to say. It felt like the silence was crushing and I could feel the weight of the kids stares. I could feel the anticipation in the air waiting for me to say something.

I started by trying to write the word "Polynomials," on the chalkboard, but the chalk was wet and I did not see any mark being left by the chalk. I pressed harder and the chalk split in half and fell on the ground. My face turned red as a tomato and I bent down to pick it up. I took a deep breath and counted to 10. I started again, but I promised to myself that I would not give up. I pretended that I was just talking to my friends and started again.

After that, the class went smoothly and when my parents signaled that the class was over, I breathed I sigh of relief and I realized that I did not use the notes once. I taught the class from memory and I felt like the class connected with me and I connected with them. For the next 4 days, I taught 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup>, graders and I felt much more comfortable and confident teaching the class.

At the end of every day, I went to the study hour and worked through problems individually with the kids. I learned about where they came from and what issues they face. I also learned that we are very similar and we might live in different places, but we all have similar successes and failures. On the last day, I could recall most of the kid's names and I felt like I knew many of them personally.

As a result of this teaching experience I feel much more confident. I also feel like I understand Indian education and culture better after teaching at this school. I would like to thank the Sri Sarada Niketan Public school for giving me the opportunity to come and teach. Most of all I would like to thank the students for making my experience at this school a pleasant one.