

Akhil Meka, NSF Youth Ambassador

I found my experience as an APNA Youth Ambassador very fulfilling. I went to Vijayawada (Andhra Pradesh) to spend a month of my summer vacation and also thought while I was there that I should do something to give back to my heritage and the younger generation of India. My mother got in touch with Mr. Venkat Gade and he forwarded all the supplemental information required to conduct an



English Workshop in India. My mother and my grandfather got in touch with 3 schools and we planned to do 3 workshops but unfortunately due to the Telangana bifurcation and the ensuing school closings and strikes in Andhra, Nikhil Meka (my brother) and I were only able to do a 5 day

English Workshop in only one under privileged school. We conducted the workshop for three grades (6th, 7th, and 8th) at the K.B.C.Z.P. High school in Vijayawada. Every day we would go to the school hoping that no college students would come and close the school. The principal arranged our class in a building which was not part of the main building so that even if the college students came, we would not be disturbed. The roads would be blocked by agitators, so we had to start early and avoid the main roads.

Every day we conducted an hour long class for each grade individually. There were 50 students in 6th, 53 students in 7th, and 68 students in 8th grade. The first four days consisted of spelling fundamentals and



engrossing word games (such as Hangman, which my brother came up with, and modified Scrabble) which the kids absolutely loved. The Spelling Bee was conducted on the last day and the prizes were distributed on August 15th during flag hoisting. We also talked about the scholarships that NSF is providing for needy Indian children. The prizes were 3 dictionaries and we also donated Rs. 5000 towards the school's English lab for new shelving and speakers. We never thought that under the prevailing conditions in Vijayawada we would be able to finish this workshop and the press meet.

Clippings from this flag hoisting were also telecasted on August 16th in a couple of the local city channels (City Channel & Mee TV). This experience was very unique due to the fact that I am currently a student but also had the chance to become a teacher. I now know how teachers feel when the light bulb goes off in

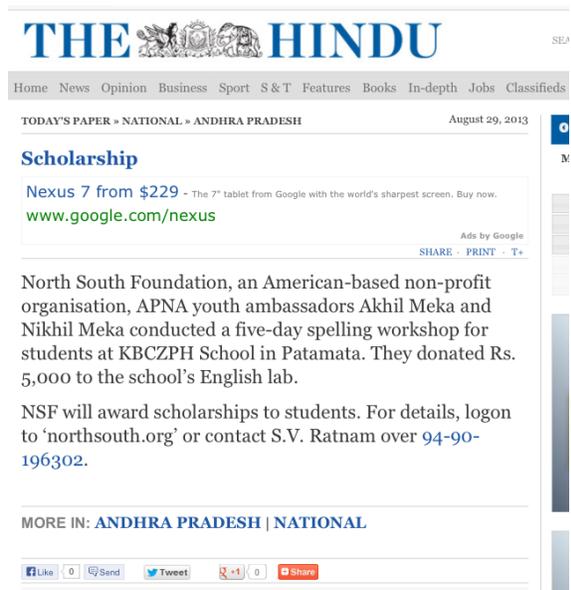


their students' head or when they demonstrate advanced understanding of a skill that was merely taught minutes ago. However, I also now know the sinking feeling when you realize your students are not listening to you or decide that their friend is more important than your hard work. Most, if not all the kids fell in the former characterization. I felt very humble teaching students who had very less but were still voracious for more information (I conducted this workshop at a government school where tuition, supplies, and lunch were provided to the kids for free).

After I finished the workshop, my mom and I decided to spread the word about NSF's scholarships. We organized a press meet on the last day of our stay and

spread the word of NSF's scholarships. As we were about to leave for the Press Club to submit the Press Invitation, one lakh students blocked our road for 3 hours and the police said we could not leave. However, we went through an apartment complex and went to the Vijayawada Press Club one hour late and submitted the Press invitation. I also sent emails to several local newspaper reporters. We also called the newspaper reporters, cameramen, and videographers. There were more than 30 reporters present at the press meet. We distributed press notes to all the reporters. Articles were posted in many local newspapers (as well as The Hindu) regarding the scholarship opportunity NSF was providing. On

August 29th the press meet was telecasted in local Me channel. Before I end this, I would greatly like to thank my mom, Mrs. Srilata Meka, as well as my grandfather, Mr. Ratnam, who both worked tirelessly for 2 months to arrange the workshop and the press meets. Last but definitely not least, I would like to thank the NSF Foundation as well as Mr. Venkat Gade for providing all the teaching materials we needed and answering all of our questions.



The screenshot shows a news article from 'THE HINDU' newspaper. The article is titled 'Scholarship' and is dated August 29, 2013. The main headline is 'Nexus 7 from \$229 - The 7" tablet from Google with the world's sharpest screen. Buy now.' with a link to 'www.google.com/nexus'. Below the headline, there is a sub-headline: 'North South Foundation, an American-based non-profit organisation, APNA youth ambassadors Akhil Meka and Nikhil Meka conducted a five-day spelling workshop for students at KBCZPH School in Patamata. They donated Rs. 5,000 to the school's English lab.' The article text continues: 'NSF will award scholarships to students. For details, logon to 'northsouth.org' or contact S.V. Ratnam over 94-90-196302.' At the bottom of the article, there is a section 'MORE IN: ANDHRA PRADESH | NATIONAL' and social media sharing options for Like, Send, Tweet, and Share.