

NSF-APNA SPELLING BEE WORKSHOP

PMG High School, Palakkad, Kerala

By: Adithya Anand

I did the NSF Spelling Bee Workshop during the vacation before 10th grade, the summer of 2016. I filled out the application form, sent it to Mr. Venkat Gade, who had suggested the workshop for me, and got it approved. Soon, the school year was over, and in no time, I was on a flight to India.

My parents and grandparents had decided to have the workshop at P.M.G High School in Palakkad, Kerala. We met the headmistress of the school soon after we got to India and together we decided a week where we could conduct the workshop. I was to teach 5th and 6th graders in the school. Soon, that week arrived. I had gone through the slides multiple times in advance. My aunt, who is a teacher, told me to keep the session for and as interactive as possible. I had two sessions a day for two days. One session for fifth and another for sixth. Each session had about 30- 35 kids. When I walked into the media room the first day, I provided them with an introduction of who I am, where I came from and what my objective was. I also explained some basic spelling rules of English and how to do their homework I had prepared for them. They were not interactive at all and that disappointed me a little bit. Occasionally, the one teacher that was in the room had to explain what I was saying with simple English and some Malayalam. I thought I was speaking slow and basic English, but they needed it to be slower and more basic. Because my mom had impressed upon me to speak Tamil at home and not English, I had an easy time learning Malayalam, which is spoken in Kerala, as a child. Being able to speak both Tamil

and Malayalam fluently and without an accent worked hugely in my favor. That night, when I told my mom about how my English was too advanced, my mom told me to take it easy on them. It turns out that in that school, English class only starts from fifth grade. It changed my view completely.



The next day, the kids came running from the classroom to the media room with enthusiasm and the excitement to learn was evident on their faces. As I started the class again, I felt much more comfortable around them and the students felt a bit too comfortable around me. Some started talking to the extent that I had to ask them to stand up from their seats. There was no teacher that day to supervise but I felt completely alright. I spoke more in Malayalam the second day and I finished the spelling lessons that day. I gave the students a packet of words to study. I told them that they had an assessment and made them all yell “Yay”! Multiple time to get them pumped up and ready for the test.

I had to give the students a day off from my classes the next day because of some school activities. This gave them an extra day to study and recognize prefixes, suffixes, and how some basic spelling rules work on the words. With my day off, I gave a presentation at Bhavan's



Vidya Mandir, which is where my aunt teaches and my cousin goes to school. The assessment day arrived and my aunt and my mom came with me to P.M.G High School to help me correct the assessments. We reached the school very early, just when classes were about to begin. I told my aunt and mom to stay in the headmistress's room while I hand out the assessments. The kids were very happy to see me and I was also happy to see them. The fifth and sixth graders were each in different classrooms and their assessments were at the same time. I walked in said "Good morning! You have an exam today," and made them all yell "Yay!" to get them ready for the test. I went to both classes, alternating between them and checking on the students and answering any questions. After the exam, the students came up to me and shook my hand and said "Thank you chetta," which means "brother" in Malayalam. I left the classrooms and went

back to my mother and aunt and we corrected the tests. I had to go back again for the tie-breaker round of the students in the top three.

Later on the assessment day, we had the award ceremony, which was preceded by the Educational Minister and the Counselor.



On the award ceremony, I spoke about the importance of reading at least 20 minutes a day. Every student was given a certificate and an English to English Malayalam dictionary for participants.



The top three in each grade each got a Parker Pen in addition to the dictionary and certificate. I taught the students many spelling lessons and I left the school knowing that the students liked my classes and hoping they would benefit from it for the rest of their lives. I on the other hand, as I gave knowledge, gained courage. I gained the courage to be able to speak in front of a group of more than five. Even though they were just fifth and sixth graders, the sessions left me knowing the the next time I had to speak in front of a group I wouldn't shiver with fear.

I also took a class for 8th graders in Bhavans Vidya Mandir on the importance of reading. In it, I talked for 40 minutes about reading and its benefits. I felt that I did extremely well, and I couldn't have done it without the training given to me by the workshop. It helped me speak with courage, passion, and enthusiasm so I could have the students speak and interact with those same characteristics.

I feel like I have accomplished something absolutely remarkable, but I wouldn't have done it without the teachers and staff of the school, especially the headmistress Mrs. Latika madam and Mr. Venkat Gade. And I definitely wouldn't have been able to do anything without the love and support of my aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and of course, my siblings and parents. I hope to do this in another school the next time I visit India as it was a learning and beneficial, giving-back-to-the-society experience for everyone that partook, even if it was little bit, in the North South Foundation Spelling Bee Workshop.

