

As the rickshaw pulled up to the front gate of the Technical Higher Secondary school for my first day of teaching, I became nervous. *What if they don't understand me? What if they don't like me? What if I mess up and they make fun of me?* Questions were running through my head. They had a daily prayer in which they said the pledge, quote of the day and read some news headlines. I went upstairs to the headmaster, Mr. Shabeer's office. One of the English teachers who I had already met came down the Hall. She told me not to worry, and that I will do fine just as the principal came out. He told me that the class will start at 11:00.. The classroom was pretty big with 7 benches on each side and a blackboard in front. I wrote my name on the blackboard, ALEENA HARIS, and set up the laptop and my notebook. After about 20 minutes, the students, in either 8th or 9th grade started walking in. Each one said "Good Morning Miss" as they walked through the door with a smile. I asked them to go around, saying their name, grade and favorite food. As I began the class my hands were shaking and I was so nervous. Since it was the first day, they had a bit of trouble understanding my accent but they sat and pretended to listen, and they didn't speak a lot that day, so my mom would translate what I said. It didn't take me a long time to become comfortable with all of the students. After I went through the lesson, I showed them how to play Jeopardy with some questions I had prepared using what I taught them, and that's when they all lit up and began talking. They were all so polite, calling me 'Miss' (which I didn't expect), and they didn't say anything when I wrote "replied" instead of "replied" on the board, broke the 2nd piece of chalk as well, and dropped the eraser twice. The days following that, they got used to my accent and I discovered each student had their own personality, and it became easier for me to teach when they opened up. In the beginning of one of the classes, we talked about differences between schools in the U.S and in India, and we talked about what we wanted to be when we grew up. I was surprised to see that the kids would come the next day after learning all of the words I taught them without me even asking



them to study it. The last day after reviewing everything we had some free time where I showed them some of the things we did in class in America and I showed them some games we played like Heads up Seven up. Two boys sang, and they were so good, by the time they left I found out something special about every person. At the end of the class, two kids said a small thank you speech and all of them gave me a painting. The next week there was a test that I made, with a written round and an oral round, to make a spelling bee. The kids were very prepared and they all did very well. We had the certificate ceremony combined with the celebration of Indian Independence Day on August 15th, and I

was able to see what they did with the flag raising and National Anthem. My grandpa, who used to be a teacher was invited as the chief guest, and the parents and teachers gave me a memento after I handed out the prizes and certificates. I loved the school and everyone in it, these students gave me an experience I will never forget.



I went to one more school near my mom's house in Malappuram, a small elementary school, A.M.L.P school, Cholakal, with under privileged kids. Since they weren't able to understand my English very well, I changed the way I taught a little bit. We made two classes over two days with mostly 3rd and 4th graders, during which I taught spelling by reading stories, teaching rhymes and doing crossword puzzles. My cousin Alana came with me to translate what I was saying for the kids. After the classes, I would play badminton with them, they had 4 bats and only 2 shuttles one of which were broken but they still played with it, as we played the rest of the students would stand in a circle around us and watch. There was a little less than 150 students at the school (grades 1-4), and we brought candies for them on the last day. At the end of the week the principal called a parent meeting where they gave me a memento. I got a surprise when I got home

by seeing a small article written about me in the I was excited to become an NSF ambassador, but what I got from being one was so much more different than I thought. I got to teach children, and I also go to see the different culture of India and a part of the country that I don't normally see, as well as meet some wonderful people who I will surely visit.



There are many people I want to thank for this opportunity, first Mr.Venkat Gade, from NSF, who gave me this opportunity, and gave me all of the materials I needed in order to do this successfully. The Principals at the two schools, Mr.Shabeer, and Mr.Shareef (A.M.L.P school) who gave me time out of their very busy school day to let me hold this class.