

## Anika Bhagavatula, NSF APNA Youth Ambassador Summer 2016

The moment I discovered that there was an opportunity to teach an English workshop and conduct a Spelling Bee in India, I was motivated to participate in it. Despite being a 7th grader going to 8th grade, I felt that this opportunity couldn't be passed up. The Spelling Bee workshop that I conducted only lasted a few days. However, I still was able to learn about the life of students in South India and provide them with an opportunity to learn English from a native English speaker.

I usually travel to India every other year to visit my grandparents and relatives. This year, since I knew that I wanted to participate in this program, I started looking for a school to teach in. I talked to my family and we identified B.R.R. Girls High School in Barkatpura, Hyderabad. It was located directly across the street from my grandparents' home, which was very convenient. We met the Headmistress and the English



teachers for fifth and sixth grade. By the end of our meeting, we decided that I would teach the 6th graders and we finalized the dates and the timings of the workshop. The Spelling Bee workshop was planned to be held during the last week of August in 2016 and I would be teaching 65 students in all.

Weeks before the workshop, I read the material provided by NSF and looked through the vocabulary words for the Spelling Bee. I organized what was going to be taught on each day of the workshop. However, it was difficult to predict how much the students already knew with spellings and pronunciations. I created worksheets based on the practices provided and I picked a few hundred words for the spelling test. I decided that it would be best if I taught the students English pronunciations, prefixes, suffixes, Greek roots, and Latin roots. I prepared the information sheets and the worksheets to be distributed to the students each day. I also printed certificates and hand wrote the name of each student in calligraphy. I also organized trophies and prizes (books) for the top three winners of the Spelling Bee contest to be held on the final day.



Finally the first day of the workshop arrived. When I met the students for the first time, I realized instantly how respectful they were. The students were all eager to learn English from me. I used a projector and a screen to present lessons to the students and exposed them to technology that we generally use in the U.S. for school. On the first day of the workshop, I introduced myself and explained what a Spelling Bee is. Some of the students seemed very interested in learning and participated a tremendous amount during the class. The second day was also a great success! I taught them prefixes, suffixes, and roots and gave them a worksheet to practice what they had learned. Unfortunately, the third day of the workshop was cancelled and rescheduled due to a heavy downpour during the morning. Students typically walked to school and it was nearly impossible for them to come to school that day. This showed me the difficulties of getting to school for students and that natural occurrences interfere with the commute to school. The day after, I reviewed all the material, and helped them prepare for the competition.

The last day, Friday, was supposed to be the Spelling Bee competition. There was an unexpected government bandh on that day. That night we were scheduled to return to the US and I was very disappointed that I couldn't finish the Spelling Bee with the students. But I did not want to give up! I enlisted the help of my cousin who lives in Hyderabad. We decided that she would be present in the classroom and would help me conduct the Spelling Bee from the US using skype. The next



Wednesday, we successfully conducted the Spelling Bee. The contest was scheduled at 1:30 PM, which was 4 AM for me. The students were very enthusiastic and competitive! The competition went on for 8 rounds until we found the winners. They all took pictures with their certificates, trophies, and prizes. Although I faced many obstacles while conducting my workshop, I was able to successfully complete the program, and make an impact on the students. I am thankful for Venkat uncle for introducing me to NSF and my parents, my relatives and the B.R.R. Girls' High School for supporting me through this incredible journey. I look forward to conducting more such workshops in the future.