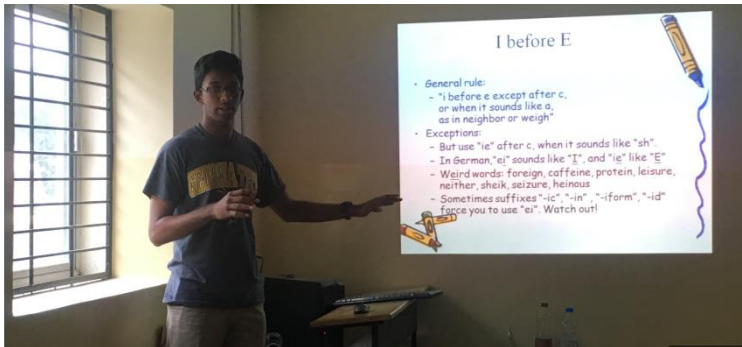


Anudeep Nakirikanti

NSF APNA Youth Ambassador Program

The summer of 2016 constituted a pivotal transition that my life was beginning to take on. As I realized that I was taking the next major step in life by attending college that fall, I knew that I wanted to do something meaningful during that summer. The perfect opportunity presented itself when my parents informed me we would be traveling to India. Immediately, I remembered my mother telling me of a remarkable program my cousins had participated in—teaching children in India English spelling. This was it! This program was the perfect chance to provide a significant positive influence in the lives of others, as well as help develop me into an individual of greater character. I am proud to say that this program succeeded in doing just that and much more.

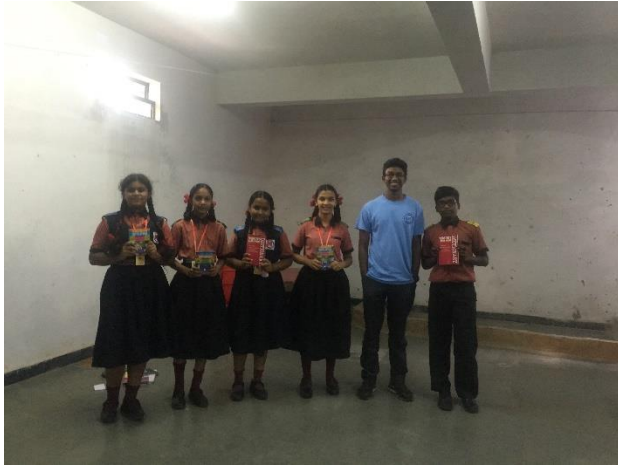
The APNA Youth Ambassador Program truly transformed the way I came to view education. I developed a newfound admiration for the work of an educator. Simply reading from



a presentation and repeating the material given to me was not a successful strategy when it came to teaching students. Rather, I learned to captivate the students by

providing insights to the material from other areas. For example, when presented with a Latin root for an English word, I was transported back to my high school Latin class, where a rich Roman history existed within the word. While relaying this material back to the students, the glow of excitement and intrigue present in their faces told me all that I needed to know: they

were genuinely interested. Accordingly, I began to saturate my instruction with personal anecdotes and cross-curriculum material. By teaching in this manner, I truly understood what it



meant to be a teacher. I looked back on all of my high school classes with a new level of understanding and respect for all that my teachers had done for me. In fact, after the experience, my father reminded me of an event when he was in school in India. During this event, he and his classmates acted as teachers

for one day. He told me that he understood what it meant to teach a class, and approached his academics with an increased enthusiasm. The insight my father gathered that day paralleled the exact insight I was developing through this program.

The most rewarding facet of this experience stems from the students I was fortunate enough to teach. For two days, I was able to work with brilliant, driven, and diligent ninth grade students for two hours each. On the third and final day, I administered a test to determine the top five students out of nearly forty. The top five students received either a dictionary or encyclopedia each. These were students I was not accustomed to seeing in the United States. Each one of these students loved learning for the sake of learning, and were driven beyond measure to challenge themselves and learn as much as possible during the two days. There was no shortage of questions during the workshop, and I was happy to answer all that I could. What equally amazed me was the respect with which they addressed me and the teachers. Each student greeted me at the beginning of class and each student never failed to directly thank me and say goodbye at the conclusion of each session. Moreover, I was incredibly impressed by each

student's attitude during the last day of the workshop. The students who did not place top five at the end of the workshop still talked to, greeted, and thanked me with the same passion and delight I noticed during the first day of the workshop. On the last day, I did not hesitate to let each one of them know about their intelligence, potential, and superlative initiative.

Ultimately, the APNA Ambassador Program was an experience unlike any other in terms of the impact it had on me. The ability to teach kids in India who did not have the same opportunities that I had in the United States greatly humbled me. The passion and dedication with which they approached their academics inspired me and reminded me that my education is not a requirement, but rather a gift—a key to the innumerable doors of the future. Most importantly, I am delighted to know that I had given the students a positive influence that transcended the act of teaching them English spelling material. For this experience, I cannot thank enough my family, Mr. Venkat Gade, the administrators at Nagarjuna International School at Hyderabad, and the North South Foundation.