

Big Help for Education Post Internship

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My name is Akhila Penumarthi and I participated as a youth Intern on behalf of the Big Help Organization. The school I attended was S.K.D.V.S High School, Pinapadu, Tenali, Guntur district, A.P., India. There are 45-50 students in Grade 10. There are six subject teachers in the school and five classrooms.

Ethically, Tenali is known for its rich cultures and popular scholars. Many well-known poets, actors, freedom fighters, scientists, and educationists originated from Tenali. Because of its contribution to literature, stage drama, movies and education, it is also called as Andhra Paris. Tenali is second educational center in Guntur district by having several Schools, Junior Colleges and Degree Colleges with various Postgraduate courses. The town thrives on trade and agriculture. The region around the town has fertile black soil irrigated by the Krishna river and its canals. The town holds a large middle class, making up more than 75% of the total population. Ultimately, the primary source of living is agriculture (with two to three crops each year) followed by small-scale businesses.

My grandparents (my father's parents) are both natives of Tenali. My father was born in Tenali. Both my grandparents did their graduation in this town as well. My great grandparents were also priests in Tenali. My grandfather, retiring as a GM in Telephones in Hyderabad, came back to Tenali around 2001 and got settled here with my grandmother.

For the Indian culture, the idea of modesty is very extreme. Unlike the U.S, the girls in the school or even in public are unable to wear clothes revealing too much skin. Shorts, sleeveless tops, and other clothes are seen inferior here. In the Indian education system, mainly in the school that I interned in, the ratio for the teachers and the students are higher than here in

the U.S. Also, the teachers are the ones who change classes while the students just remain in their classroom.

Some teachers that I met were Madam Padma (science teacher), Sir Phalgun for principal who teaches math, and Madam Laxmi (social studies). Some students that I became close to are Lavanya, Madhuri, Swapna, and many more.

During the workshop, which was a three-day internship, I taught the students cultural differences between the U.S. and India, environmental awareness, and also gave them a writing seminar (types of poems). During the first, I initially introduced myself and had the kids introduce themselves in order to feel connected with the kids. I planned to share with the students about what I observed about the differences in culture between the two countries. We as a class interacted superbly and initially, the students were eagerly asking questions and thinking of the cultural differences. Ultimately, we discussed about clothing, seasons, time zones, holidays, housing, school, extracurricular activities, currency, food, etc... This discussion took around 1.5 hours. During that time, I also had the opportunity to share with them photos and items that I brought to depict the lifestyle in America. After, I briefly transitioned into the topic of environmental awareness. In this 3 hours I had with the class, I was successfully able to share the meaning of environmental awareness, the causes and effects of greenhouse gases, things to avoid, and proactive ways to improve the earth. In the beginning, we ultimately interacted and talked about each topic. While we were bringing up ideas, I was using the chalkboard given and made other students write their ideas and I also wrote objectives so when we complete, I am satisfied that all the students knew the main points of the lesson. I also handed them notes and a worksheet, which we all discussed as a class.

The next day, after the greetings, we revised for 45 minutes what we learned the day before. The kids thoroughly remembered what we discussed about the environment. We went over the objectives and then began our next topic: poems. For 1.5 hours, I was able to teach the kids three simple poems that they could create all by themselves. We went over diamantes, haikus, and couplets. When I gave them the notes, I would ask one person to read aloud the brief explanation and then ask someone else to summarize that in their own words. If some still wanted to explain more deeply, I had examples of each poem in the worksheets and went over it thoroughly to show them the significance of each line and how it transforms into the specific poem. After looking at all the poems and analyzing them, we created a class haiku relating to environmental awareness and the importance of trees. The teamwork amazed me since they were all in unison when we were counting the syllables of each line.

After completing this, we began to create team bonding in order for me to get to know everyone as well as create team-bonding. We played simple games, such as charades. I also brought my violin, since they all wanted to hear the instrument. I performed a brief part of a classical piece for them, at the end received such positive feedback. After such games, I handed out simple gifts to the students as rewards for their excellent attitude which made the workshop very interesting and fun. Later, I was able to relax with the kids and we all had an interactive conversation about more cultural questions. During this day, we were able to plant 4-5 trees surrounding the school. This day ended so soon since the students and I never had a time we did not do anything. The next day was Independence day, which was the resolution of the workshop. We ultimately donated 75 Big Help bags to the outstanding students in academics. We gave each of the kids pencils and notebooks, and backpacks to some of the kids.

The opportunity Big Help gave me opened my mind to culture and gave me a chance to impact kids that desire education but need external support. This workshop helped me understand that one should be grateful in the possessions and opportunities they have. Seeing all the kids being eager to learn new topics and hear about the culture in different countries portrays the desire for education and the importance of wisdom. Therefore, I learned that education is something that many people should not take for granted and should rather take advantage of.

I am highly thankful to the principal, Secretary and Correspondent, teachers and students of S.K.D.V.S High school for extending their valuable time in supporting me. My parents were so helpful in every single step in my internship. My mom and dad donated 25,000 rupees to the school for their science and technology dept. I was also given opportunity by the school authorities, to give speech to the students on the Independence day, August 15th. Also, I thank the people who were with me for months trying to prepare for this workshop. My mentor, Mythili Eadara, was a key part of my success with this internship. Without her aid and consultations, this workshop and experience would not have been as enlightening and enriching. I also thank Chand Pasha, Rekha Gundimeda, and Anitha Bachina for giving me advice on my presentation and supporting me through all the work I put in for several months.



