

Big Help for Education Post Internship

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As I walked into Govt High School of Girmajipet located in the Warangal District of Telangana, I could feel hundreds of eyes staring at me from classrooms, judging me. At that moment, I thought to myself, "This is going to be a long day." I was volunteering at this school as a youth intern on behalf of the Big Help Organization and I was very excited to meet the students and introduce myself. However, as soon as I stepped foot into the school, butterflies started to fly around in my stomach. I didn't know what the students would think of me. I had met the principle of the school earlier in the week and he assured me that the students would be very pleased to see me but I wasn't so sure at the moment. Taking a deep breath in, I walking into the classroom. Immediately, I was bombarded with a cry in unison by the students: "Good morning Miss." I was so shocked to see that the looks of judgment I had perceived earlier were in fact mirrored faces of nervousness. As much as I felt anxiety for meeting the students, these kids had twice as much for meeting me. I realized that this is an incredible moment for them because they probably never had a visitor from America. For a moment, I just stood there and laughed. After a little while, some of the students joined in and laughed. This released all the tension that was building up and we all could start with a clean slate.

We started off by making nametags for everyone so that I can call the students by their names and not "hey girl in the blue dress." Then I introduced myself and told

them that I would prefer that they treat me as an equal and call me Neha rather than like a teacher. We talked about the differences between American culture and Indian culture and answered any question along the way. Although, I observed that they were a quiet and shy group. They did not ask many questions and still called me Miss. As an attempt to stop them feel more comfortable around me, I started calling the students Miss and Mister. This got a couple of laughs from them and seemed to lighten the mood.

Now, we could get down to business. I handed out supplies and explained the science project we were about to start. To get the students through a boring lecture without having them fall asleep, I handed out fruit snack gummies for them to eat. However, I kept them on their toes by asking random students questions about what I had just said. If they answered correctly, they got a smile from me but if they answered incorrectly, they got a giggle from the class. After I explained the procedure, we started with the project. We were creating a Solar System Scale Model. First, I showed them how big the sun would be in our model but only gave them a quick glance to keep the surprise element. Then I told them to fold the paper in half; one side for the sun and the other for the planets. For each planet, I wrote the scaled down diameter of each planet and told them to draw it on their paper. Then using the diameter, they were to create a circle which would be the scaled down planet. While they were drawing, I enlightened them with interesting facts and conditions of each planet. They were really interested but it was sometimes difficult for me to explain it in their language and so somethings were lost in communication. To further explain the facts that might be lost in translation, I showed them picture that I had brought with me and cleared up the confusion. The students were so surprised and excited by the pictures. We passed them around and

then hung them up on the bare walls of the classroom. Then, I took out the sun model I had shown earlier and held it up next to the planets we just drew. It left the class with a moment of silence. The planets looked miniscule in comparison with the sun and the students were very surprised to learn this. However, we only depicted the scaled size of each planet, not the distance between them. So we went outside and found the scaled down distances. I showed the students that with the already small scale of 1:3000, only one or two planets would fit in the area designated outside for the science experiment. Therefore we had to scale down the already scaled measurements to have some more planets fit. However we still could not fit some planets into the model. This really showed the students how immense the solar system actually is. My point in this experiment was to show how big the universe is and how small the Earth, or the human race, is in relation. However no matter the size of one person compared to the world, they can make a huge difference, like me. I was able to bring happiness into all these kids life, even if for only a couple hours, that is otherwise a dull and difficult. The whole experiment took about 5 hours. By the end of the day, I had formed a bond with the students and became friends with them.

The next day, as I arrived, I was greeted very differently than I was the first time. Today we were going to play volleyball and so I brought my brother and younger cousins from Australia so that they could also learn about Australian culture and so that my cousins could play as well. As I walked in with my cousins, students from all grades left their classrooms and either waved from the balconies or crowded around us all trying to meet me. It was amazing, and I felt like a superstar in a cluster of fans who desperately wanted to meet me. However, it was hard to handle all the students at

once. The teacher came and slowly took them away to give me some space to work. I set up the net and then called down the students I was working with the day before. I first stretched out with them and did some exercises. Some exercises I showed and some the students showed to me. After that, I split the class into teams and showed them the basic movements, one at a time. While I taught one group, my brother helped watch over the other group and correct their passes. Then the two teams played games against each other. It was very fun but I noticed that many of the students did not even have proper footwear for sports. There were two things that were hard for me to control. Just like in my school in America, the boys were excluding the girls because “they were not good enough”. I was faced with this many times in America and was surprised to see that it was common in India as well. I eventually solved the problem by showing that some of the girls were better than most of boys at volleyball. The other problem was that many students from other classes kept asking to join because it seemed like so much fun. There are many students and not enough teachers to control them all so many students left class to watch or join. It was hard to differentiate between the students I was working with and students who just joined. Eventually the teacher decided to let the students watch and even some of the teachers were excited and wanted to play. Overall, it felt like there was a professional volleyball match at the school and the students were the crowd cheering the teams on. There was a very festive mood in the air and enjoyment all around.

After the volleyball match, there was an assembly. Here I gave a little speech and handed out backpacks to the highest scorers of the class. All the students shared their feeling about the two days I spent with them. One of the comments hit me the

hardest. The student Mahalaxshmi said “Neha has made these two days very exciting and I like the way she is very friendly and acts or speaks freely. She inspired me.”

This internship was very exciting as well as informing. I knew that not all people had the same things that I had but this trip showed me how much difference there really was. These poor kids did not even have a proper pair of shoes to wear. Some of the students did not even have a home and they slept at the school. All they had is their education and hope that their education might help bring them into a better level of life. I wish to help these students in any way I can. I am thankful for all the advice and mentoring I received from Big Help, especially Chand Pasha, Rekha Gundimeda, and Anitha Bachina. Most importantly, I am thankful for my family who supported me all throughout the project. I give a special thanks to my mom for inspiring me to do this internship and help others. Without her, I would not have even taken a second look at the invitation to this amazing opportunity.



Students listening to the introduction



Students drawing their scale models



Measuring the distances between the planets in the scale model



Class picture



Warm-ups before volleyball



Students practicing their passing skills



Handing the students their backpacks