

# Big Help for Education Post Internship

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For my internship through Bighelp for Education's youth internship program I visited the government Zilla Parishad High School in Kukatpally, Telangana, India. The school goes from 6th grade to 10th grade. They teach in the mediums of English, Telugu, and Hindi, though almost all of the kids speak Telugu with each other. The school has four floors with about twenty classrooms. The staff consists of twenty-five teachers and there are about 800 students. The school looks very nice from the outside but the classrooms were crowded with kids. The headmaster of the school is Mr. Venkata Ramana. I only met one teacher because when I visited section C of 10th grade the same teacher taught section C of 9th grade. The C sections are in English medium so it seemed that the teacher, Sridevi Madam teaches English. I met several of the students, some of their names were Divya, Lily, Mounika, and Dharini. There were many things I learned from these kids and the other students there, but I am only going to state two. I learned that the Indian education system has these tests called the board exams. The board exams are equivalent to the SATs. They are scores looked at by colleges and universities. They are graded and returned to the students with only their scores. A graded answer sheet is not returned. This is much like the SATs. I did not learn about this until the students were asking questions and someone asked if the US had something like the board exams. Another thing I learned about Indian government school students is that they go home for lunch. Almost all of the students live a walking distance away from the school. They go home for lunch, eat, and then return back to the school to continue with their afternoon classes.

On the first day I had planned to do the introduction and interactive speech and the first activity which was origami jumping frogs. I was sent into the 9th grade section C. I started my introduction, but was then told that we were in the wrong class. I felt bad but I was relocated to the 10 grade section C. I was only able to do the introduction speech for one and a half hour because they said that any longer would be a major disturbance for the kids' curriculum the teacher planned. The class was full of 10th graders learning in the English medium and there were sixty of them. I introduced myself to the kids and I talked about Bighelp, where I am from, and some other little things. Then we talked about similarities and differences of my school and their school. It was a very interactive experience where I learned equally as much from them as

they learned from me. I talked mostly in Telugu, but since the class was in English medium I was able to put in a little English here and there. I spoke a couple of sentences in English to see if they could pick it up. After the similarities and differences I had the kids ask questions that they had. They had several good questions. Almost all were academically oriented. I explained second languages and how SATs work. Someone asked about jobs and fees for schools. They asked if schools in America have activities in the same way schools in India do. They asked about the subjects I take and activities I do. I was able to laugh with the students and hold conversations with them. The experience I had there was not a teacher talking to a student, but rather student talking to a student. It was like a conversation someone would have with a pen pal. It became an informal and casual conversation as more time passed. The beginning seemed very structured but as I talked more and they had more questions it lost that business like feel. In the end I asked fifteen questions about the US and things I had talked about at the beginning such as the name of my school and how much snow fell this year. I was able to appreciate how much attention they were paying because they remembered quite a lot from what I had spoken about. There were so many kids raising their hands that I felt bad that I was only calling on some people. The fifteen people that I did call on and that answered the questions correctly, got backpacks with the Bighelp logo on them. I then explained to the kids that the money for these backpacks was from the fundraiser, Youth Dance Dhamaka, that I held. A lot of the kids were impressed by it. I explained that my fundraising started with little things I did with paper and markers. I did not go out and buy a lot for this. Since many of the kids were impressed I am hoping that they are inspired to do something. As we were leaving I wished the kids good luck as they continue in their schooling. They wished me the best of luck as well. It was a great experience and a fun one at the same time. I learned a lot from the kids and the big thing was that we are not that different. It was like having a conversation with a person I am meeting for the first time, which it was. It was a conversation with sixty new people who I was able to become friends with. I was not able to learn a lot of their names in the short time I was there but I do remember a lot of faces and we have several photos that my parents took. It was a wonderful experience that I seriously enjoyed.

On the way up to the classroom on the second day a boy said hi and complained that I had entered their class and left. I explained that it was their class I had come to visit for the day. It touched me to see that he remembered and wanted me to do the workshops I had planned and started explaining to them. We waited for a couple of minutes where we thought the auditorium would be set up. Instead it was taking longer than expected so I entered the classroom and started my brief introduction there. The class consisted of 9th graders of the English medium. There were seventy-two kids present. In my brief introduction I talked a little about myself and the US. Then I gave an explanation of the Bighelp organization and what it does. I passed out fifteen bags at the end of the workshop the first day. The next day I decided to pass out the bags periodically to the kids. This would entice them into paying more attention. I gave the bags to the people who answered the questions correctly. The questions were about what I talked about. I talked about the US, Bighelp, the history of origami, and the basics of chess. The kids were very

energetic and it seemed to be that everyone participated. They raised their hands and tried to get me to call on them. There was such enthusiasm for answering questions about what they learned. Then I started my first activity. I changed the order and did the chess game first. I used the chalk board and explained the game on the board. Kids who understood chess and how the horse moves, picked up the game very quickly. Other kids asked for my help. I explained it to four or five kids at a time so they could ask me their questions and I could make sure they were playing the game correctly. We had the highest scores give their papers to us and then we checked to make sure that they had moved the horse properly. After we found two winners the auditorium was ready. At this time all the kids moved to the auditorium. The Headmaster, Mr. Venkata Ramana and the Bighelp representative, Mr. P. Sreeramulu spoke a few words and Mr. P Sreeramulu even sang a song. A Bighelp banner was hung up behind us. After all that, I handed out bags to the kids who answered the questions in the classroom. We had written their names down in the class but they got their bags in the auditorium. After we took photos I gave my vote of thanks. Then I started the next activity which was origami. I passed out the paper, handouts, and explained about the history of origami. I went step by step. The frogs they were making are symmetrical so for everything you do on one side you do to the other. I explained only one side and went around making sure that all the kids understood that step. As I was going all the kids would ask me if they had done it correctly. When I answered yes they seemed very proud, Some kids picked it up very fast. They continued by themselves looking at the handout or repeating the step on the other side without me having to tell them. They are a smart bunch of students. They all took out pens and pencils and drew the dots for the eyes and wrote their names on their frogs. After that I asked for feedback about the workshops. The headmaster said if anyone had anything to say at all they could. Four girls spoke. The first three spoke in English, they said thanks to Bighelp, their headmaster, and me and my family. The last girl's name was Dharini. She gave me a gift that she and her twin sister Mounika made. She said that it was from all of the kids in the class to me. Coincidentally the gift she gave me were quilling paper earrings. My first fundraiser for Bighelp I did was through selling quilling paper earrings. As this opportunity present itself I explained to the kids why these earrings meant so much more to me than the girls had expected. I talked about how I raised money and I explained how it was small simple things that I sold for small amounts of money. I told them how I gave that money to Bighelp and sponsored a child. Dharini then said that when she heard me talking to their classes for that brief moment the first day, she wanted to give me something. She said she told her mom about how I had come to do some activities and that her mom said that she and her sister should make earrings. I was really touched by the thoughtfulness of the gift. I had not even stayed in their class for thirty minutes. I did not even get a chance to interact or talk with any of them for long. It was a wonderful surprise that I will cherish. Afterwards I gave quarters to the kids and explained what they were. They asked how much of a value they have in rupees and I did a quick calculation and said it was sixteen rupees. Since I did not have time to do the debate I gave those gifts to the headmaster and the class teacher. Then I gave a brief explanation of what a debate is and how the kids can debate in their free time. I gave them the topics I had researched so that if they want to they can have

some topics to debate. I also told them that the chess game is something easy for them to play all by themselves in their free time. I told them all thanks and their class teacher said a few words about how Bighelp can be an inspiration to all the students. As they were getting ready to leave many of them asked for my contact information so I wrote my email and home phone number down. After the banner was taken down I wrote it on the chalkboard. Two of the girls gave me their phone numbers so I would know it was them. Some of the boys sitting in the back had taken my handout for the frog and folded it into a paper frog. They gave it to me saying it was a gift. It was very spontaneous and well folded. The kids all said goodbye and headed back to their classroom. My dad took some photos of me standing in front of the school. Some of the kids from the class were walking by and they said bye. Some younger kids joined in a photo with me. As we got in the car some of the kids from the 9th grade saw me and waved goodbye. I was very touched by the hospitality and their ability to take me in as a friend so quickly. I am so happy to know that in these two days I have made so many friends. It was a wonderful experience for me to be able to share what has been taught to me. That giving back to the community is so very important. It was amazing to see so many of the kids inspired by Bighelp and what I have done. I only hope that they will go on to do great things through inspirations like Bighelp.

This internship has been such a wonderful opportunity and experience for me. I absolutely loved it. I would not have gotten this chance if it were not for Bighelp and Chand Uncle for providing me this as an option. I thought that my actions of giving would stop at the fundraisers and giving the money to Bighelp. I thought that Bighelp would carry over the message in my actions to India. Instead they provided me an opportunity to do it myself. I was able to see through the whole cycle of giving. I was given the chance to share what I have been taught by my parents and what has been encouraged by this organization. That giving back to the community builds character, opens our eyes to the rest of the world, and makes us happier. I was able to teach the kids in the Zilla Parishad High School some games and activities but I was also able to convey my message. When the kids asked how I was able to visit them and why I did it they provided me time to explain what I have been taught. They gave me the chance to inspire them to do great things as well, but above all they allowed me an opportunity to be a happier and prouder person. They provided me the ultimate gift of teaching them something that makes me happy and being inspired which makes me proud. None of this would be possible without Bighelp. This is such a great experience that I would recommend to anyone if they get the chance because you learn so much more than you think from a wonderful ordeal like this. This program is double sided though. So far I have talked about how I have benefited from this program, which is plenty, but I have not mentioned the impression I hopefully left on the kids. I hope that those kids understand the goodness and wonderful feelings that you get when you do something like this. In truth I hope they were able to see it on my face. I told them that they do not need to go to some other place and teach kids to get this feeling. In reality small actions can sometimes lead to the biggest differences. Something as small as me making and selling bookmarks has definitely made a lasting impact for my brother. He now can see the importance of giving. The great thing

is he has been taught it a young age. For the students I hope that when I explained my fundraisers, they realize how important that giving back is. Beyond realizing its importance I really do hope they do something. "Don't give to get, give to inspire others to give". I really think that this quote from Simon Sinek sums up what Bighelp has to say about giving. I want these kids to do something. To go out and spread the message of giving or be inspired to take action themselves. I think the biggest effect I can have on these kids is the lasting impression of that message of giving back.

Though I have mentioned what intangible aspirations I hope I gave to the kids, I want to mention what I gave that they can remember by touching and seeing. I gave all the kids one US quarter. I also gave them all Hershey chocolates as well. Kids who answered a question correctly received backpacks with the Bighelp logo and contact information on them. The girl who won first place for the chess game got a LED flashing clock. The boy who won second place got a LED flashlight. I also gave the Headmaster a LED flashing clock to thank him for allowing me to visit their school. The LED flashlight I gave to the class teacher was for her support and allowing me to disturb the class plan.

I know thanking the following people will not come close to repaying them for what I have gotten from this internship, it is the least I can do. So first I need to thank Chand Pasha Uncle, the founder of Bighelp, for this opportunity. Bighelp in general for their support and execution of this internship. Anitha Bachina Aunty and Rekha Gundimeda Aunty for their help in preparing me. They helped me with the workshop material and they listened to me and gave me pointers. Saroja Aunty and Mr. P Sreeramulu for coming to listen to me conducting the workshops and teaching the kids. My parents have been such avid supporters through this whole journey of giving. My mom helped me with the workshop preparations and both my parents helped me by passing out material and talking to the kids as well. My brother who did not have to be there decided to come and he took many if not all of the photos. He too helped pass out material. If my family was not there to help me I know the program would not have run as smoothly as it did. I need to thank the Headmaster, Mr. Venkata Ramana, for his support in this internship. If he had not allowed me to teach the students there would be no way that this internship would have gone the way it did. The class teacher, Ms. Sridevi Madam, for allowing me to take her students and teach them which most likely disturbed the class plan. Last but not least, I need to thank the students for taking me in as a friend and not only a teacher. They listened patiently, were so supportive, and participated with enthusiasm. I could not ask for a better group of students. So a huge thank you to them and everyone aforementioned.