

## **Bighelp for Education Post-Internship Report**

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My name is Vaibhav Duggirala and I participated in the Youth Internship program, a program of multiple made by the BigHelp<sup>®</sup> For Education organization. The school which I volunteered at is called Mandal Pradhamika Patashala. It is a Government Private School in the weaker section of the HMT (Sriram Nagar Colony, Addagutta near JNTU, Kukatpally Mandal, Hyderabad). I completed my internship at the government elementary school where there are 45 students in 5th grade and 11 teachers total. There are two classes and almost 500 students. There are also 4 administrative staff and one principal named Mr. Galaiah.

My interactions over the course of the two days were engaging and interesting. Developing friendships and being able to interact with these kids, who I expected to be so different from me, really showed me how different our worlds were, and yet how similar they were. When I interacted with the kids, I was happy to see that many of them were kind and caring and accepted me into their community. On the first day of the internship, I gave an interactive introductory speech, with some questions and a map, to interest the children. The children were good listeners and actively participated, sharing their thoughts as well as their personal experiences. Where I was able to give the students a look into my life, like my school days and where I came from, the kids helped me better understand their lives and where they come from. We discussed numerous topics ranging from my daily life, to the seasons, to important monuments in America. I was able to provide visual aids to help cement the information; for example, I passed around some money, some pictures of monuments and once, a picture of a

snowman. As we went back and forth, I was also able to learn about their lives in India, affirming the differences (like our daily routines), but also showing the similarities (like Indian festivals we both celebrated). After we introduced ourselves to each other and I gave my intro speech about my life, I began my first activity - where we discovered what 'going green' meant and how we could support the environment. I passed out pictures, showing how bad pollution was in certain places, and explained how you could reduce this pollution by recycling or reusing. We discussed the appropriate steps to take and when/how they are to be taken. I also explained what can be recycled and what can't, because there are many differences between what can be recycled and what cannot, and most people don't take the time to recycle because they don't know if they can recycle that item. After the lesson I conducted a quiz about going green to see how well the kids were paying attention and to clear up some doubts on incorrect answers on the quiz. As I finished the first day, the students and I planted some trees outside the school and explained that planting trees is a good way to help the environment because many trees are being cut down, so we need to replace those trees.

Shortly after I gave my 'Thank You' speech to the administrative staff and students of the school, I returned back to my classroom. We began by going outside where I taught the kids about basketball, a popular sport in America. I taught them some basic rules, showed them where players are supposed to go when, some ways you can foul, and how to play both sides (offense and defense). After, the students and I had some informal basketball games to demonstrate how to apply what I had taught them. I encouraged them to play as it is a fun sport and it would give them plenty of exercise.

The most important thing I learned from this experience was that in every (real) society in the world, there is a hierarchy (for example, a caste system). There are many differences between every single individual, every group of people, but in the end, everyone is the same: a human. An idea which has been engrained throughout the global community since the beginning of society is the divide between rich and poor, smart and dumb, white and black or employed and unemployed. I may not have seen these kinds of differences or any outright discrimination, but I truly believe that no matter who you are, you should not be defined by said previous characteristics, but by what you do in your life.

This youth internship through the bighelp organization was one of my first experiences where I really interacted with children coming from completely different backgrounds. I have never gone to many places, and even then, haven't really interacted with the people in that place, but Bighelp changed all of that. Going into the project I was very apprehensive because I thought there would be no way for a person like me to connect with and properly interact with these kids, not to mention my extremely poor grasp of telugu, I was worried that I might project myself as ignorant and a show-off. Considering the fact that I could basically not even speak the native language, I was from somewhere they had never heard of across the world, only seen on a map, we dressed differently, talked differently, had completely different lives, the children were remarkably similar to me. This was the one thing that stood out to me during the internship and while I reflected on my experience. The stereotypes and fears I held during the program dissolved completely while I talked with them. I think it was probably the most important lesson I learned and the most eye-opening account from my experience. I would like to thank my mentors Rekha Aunty and Anitha Aunty who pointed out how I could improve my speeches, and worked very hard over long hours with me over the course of the past few months. Ultimately, I

believe that Bighelp has really opened my eyes, showing me how easy it is to connect with people, and strong relationships can occur even when the two participants have never seen each other before.

