

Site visit report: Balavidhyalaya Center, Chennai.

By Ganesh Murthy, Asha Minnesota Volunteer

December 14th, 2018, 9:30 AM-11:00 AM

Site Location

Balavidyalaya School for Young Deaf Children and Institute for Teacher Training, Shastri Nagar, Chennai

Summary

Type of visit: 1-day heads up

Staff count: 14 teachers, plus 5 administrative

Number of children at center: about 63 (Fewer as compared to previous years, but is attributed to more of Balavidhyala's centers opening up in districts)

Overall impression: Very good. I spent some time touring the classes for both Early Intervention (infants; <3 years), and Pre-school (3-5 years) groups. Then I spent some time talking to parents, as well as teachers. It was positive feedback and impression in all cases. The children all seemed to be enjoying the interactions, and the teachers were also very patient in handling them. Parents felt they were seeing great improvement in the children. So overall, all as we at Asha would have liked to see.

Details

I reached there about 9.30 AM while the Early Intervention classes were in progress. I met with Principal Valli Annamalai and was shown around the classrooms by their senior staff. In each of the classrooms, I saw 2-4 children sitting with 1 teacher, and engaged in small pronunciation and language exercises (all in English). They were being trained to watch lip movements while they heard the sounds using their hearing devices. The children seemed to be well engaged in the exercises, and all looked quite cheerful – happy to greet me when I stepped in or out 😊



*Coloring exercises.
1:2 teacher to children ratio in this
classroom.*



Working on pictures, and naming objects

Video link of the Early Intervention sessions:

- <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1tXzOiTGbRVXuObRETRiYr3lwpXhQvpxO>
- <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1r8i3ClaRs11TK5dt9X9ZeWEWExfHdAr7>

At about 10.15 am or so, the Early Intervention classes finished, and the children came out to be picked up by parents. I had casual conversations with several of the parents, and they all seemed quite happy with the progress their children were making, after starting at Balavidhyalaya.

After about 10.30 am, the Pre-Schooler groups were in the classrooms, and we did another round of viewing of the classrooms. This time, I could note the level of progress many of the children had made over the course of the program (quite a few have been students here since infancy). So I could see them read aloud full sentences (all English), as well as have conversations with the teachers. They all seemed well-acquainted to their hearing devices.



Working on reading and pronunciation tasks



Writing descriptions of their activities from the day before, and then reading out to each other

Video links of the Pre-Schooler sessions:

- https://drive.google.com/open?id=1IXbexkvWTDMD8Ipb2IA_85a-JBWGnj-
- https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Tct2m1INQryNhXba_ux9zqcZorg5AooQ

After the classroom tours, I spent some time with Principal Valli, talking about plans for 2019. It's their 50th year anniversary, and they are planning a celebration + publicity event to spread the word out more.

Balavidhyalaya is making a lot of effort to expand their reach across districts in Tamil Nadu. The number of centers – including partnered centers, has grown substantially since last year. Principal Valli also talked about expansion into other parts of India, as well as Sri Lanka.

As for their 2019 funding request to Asha, we can expect to receive requests related to the most important causes they named this time – Teacher's salaries, and Anniversary event-related costs.



Map showing Balavidhyalaya's growing footprint



Banners as part of their 50th Anniversary preparations (above), and updated Auditorium all arranged for Anniversary event (below)



Conclusion

Balavidhyalaya has been a good project to work with, and their management makes diligent progress towards the cause every year. The Asha Minnesota team looks forward to continued engagement with the school.

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