

**Site visit report:** Balavidhyalaya Center, Chennai.  
By Ganesh Murthy

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**Date:** September 1st 2015, 9:30 AM-11:30 AM

**Class location:** Balavidyalaya School for Young Deaf Children and Institute for Teacher Training, Shastri Nagar, Chennai

### **Summary**

Type of visit: Unannounced

Staff count: 15 teachers, plus 5 administrative

Number of children at center: about 100 (about 60 in Early Intervention and rest in Pre-School)

Overall impression: Very Good. I visited the class sessions of both the Early Intervention (infant; < 3 year old), and the Pre-School (3-5 year old) groups. In both age-groups, I found the teachers to be very patient and understanding in handling the children – just as it was on my last visit in 2013. The facility was neat, spacious and well-organized. The staff was very patient in working with the children and there was good 2-way rapport. The children looked enthusiastic and well taken care of. Overall, I felt that my expectations going into the site visit were well met.

### **Detailed Breakdown of Events**

I arrived at around 9:30 AM at the premises. I was promptly received by one of the head-staffers, and taken around the facility.

The 9:30 AM batch was for the Early Intervention (0-3 year olds). We visited all classrooms where sessions were in progress. Classrooms had 1-5 children with 1 teacher each – the teacher was working closely with the children using Balavidhyalaya's DHVANI methodology. Teachers were providing the children instructions verbally – and the children, many of whom were still new to hearing aids, were being trained to respond by performing the appropriate action such as saying a word, or pointing to a figure or object. There were separate English-medium and Tamil-medium sessions in progress, and we visited about 10 classrooms. In most sessions, the children's mothers were also present – either watching or actively engaged with the child.

At around 11 AM, the Early Intervention program wrapped up and the Pre-School (3-5 year olds) batch started. We visited the classrooms again – the children in this next level program showed advanced level of skill – reading 2-3 lines of written text, reciting poems, and other improved verbal tasks.

Along the way, we visited the library, several teacher training sessions, and a session with parents. Many of the parents said that they came to know of Balavidhyalaya when purchasing the hearing aid for their child. So they noted that the school was well-recognized by outsiders in the same field.

I also spent time with Dr. Meera, discussing Balavidhyalaya's plans. Dr. Meera said that due to their relationship with the state government, there were now similar specialized teaching centers open in all 32 districts of Tamil Nadu. These are funded by the state, and Balavidhyalaya's role is mostly in providing training to the teachers & guidance in running the center. Another

achievement mentioned was the opening of a new center in Sri Lanka, funded by the local government, with teachers trained by Balavidhyalaya. Dr. Meera is expecting the reach of the DHVANI methodology to widen throughout India, as word spreads on its effectiveness.

I also noted from Dr. Meera that Balavidhyalaya's main expenses are from running the one center in Shastri Nagar. Other centers (like the ones mentioned above) were funded by other entities and Balavidhyalaya's role was mainly in providing training for the teachers in their special DHVANI methodology.

We wrapped up the conversation with Dr. Meera mentioning that she was working on a new funding request to send to Asha Minnesota.

Overall, I thought this was a productive visit, and felt that my expectations going into the site visit were well met.

## Pictures



*Early-intervention (infant) session in progress. Child was given tasks to exercise speech-action coordination*



*Another early-intervention (English) class in progress*



*Attending a parent address*



*Pre-School class in progress. Children were writing/reading short 1-2 line sentences*



*Another Pre-School session in progress. These children had few years of training already and were able to read/write short sentences, associate pictures with words, etc.*



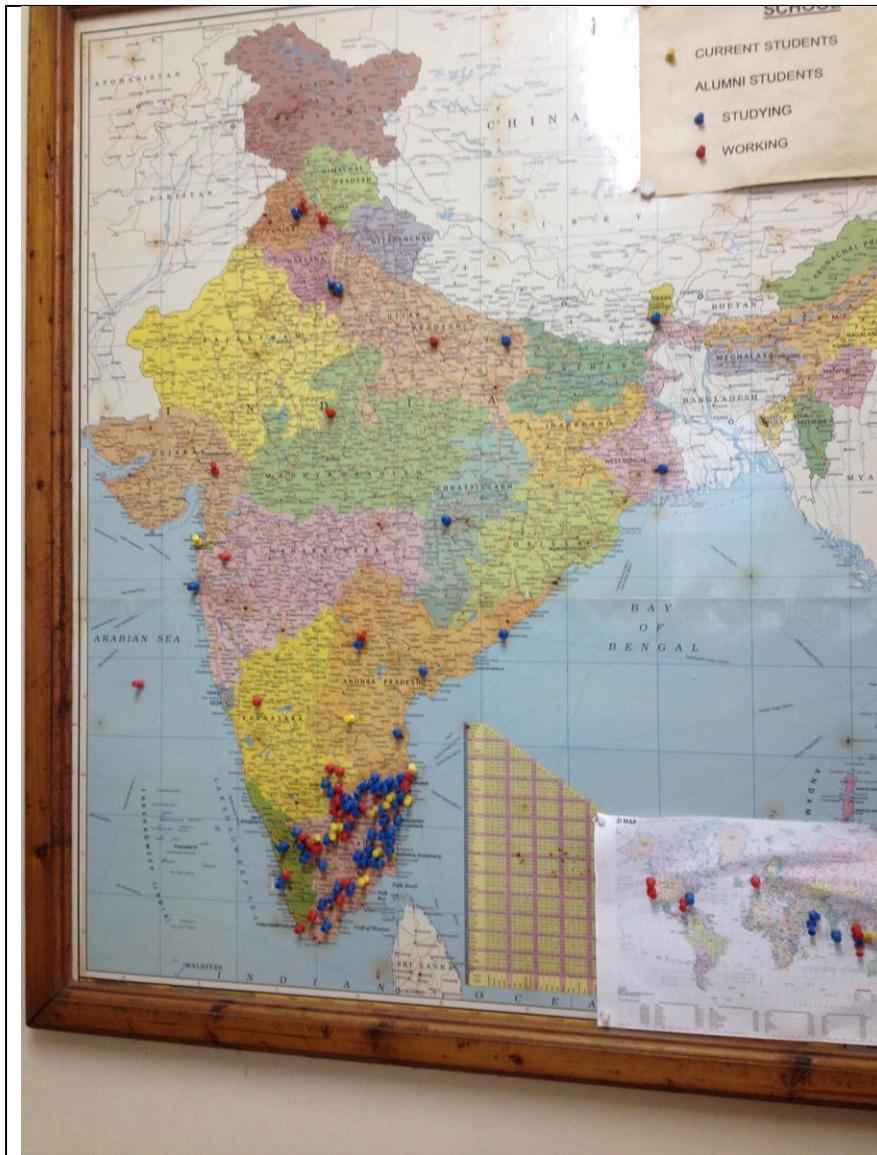
*Teachers in training were watching a class in progress. Dr. Meera is addressing the children*



*Another classroom with teachers in training*



*A map in Dr. Meera's office showing all the centers in Tamilnadu*



*Another map in Dr. Meera's office marking locations of reknowned alumni of the school*



*An outside  
view of the  
facility*

**Additional links to movies**

Class in progress #1: <https://goo.gl/rHf7g4>

Class in progress #2: <https://goo.gl/BWRDiu>

Class in progress #3: <https://goo.gl/yPG3qm>

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