

Site Visit Report:

Balavidyalaya School for Young Deaf Children and Institution for Teacher Training

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School

The school is in great condition especially after the flooding in Chennai the previous year. They have also built a new auditorium. Classrooms are pretty large with chairs, a table and sometimes a blackboard. Teacher to student ratio that I observed was usually 1:3 but can go up to 1 teacher with 5 students. There are around 20 teachers with around 80 students. Students are grouped in levels. The children in the highest level will be ready to go to mainstream school within the next 6 months.

The morning group of children consists of the early learners. These are students ages 1-3 who have been diagnosed with their disability early on. The rest of the day is children 3+ who are working towards going to mainstream school.

Most children come in at the age of 2 and leave at 5 to join mainstream school systems. 100% of the students who leave Balavidyalaya (for mainstream education) graduate 10th grade with some amount of extra guidance.



Testing

All students who come to Balavidyalaya are tested, along with their hearing aids. Parents do not have to pay for any sort of school tuition but do have to pay for their own child's hearing aids which are an important and lifelong investment.

The children's aids are tested whenever their teacher feels like there could be some kind of problem.

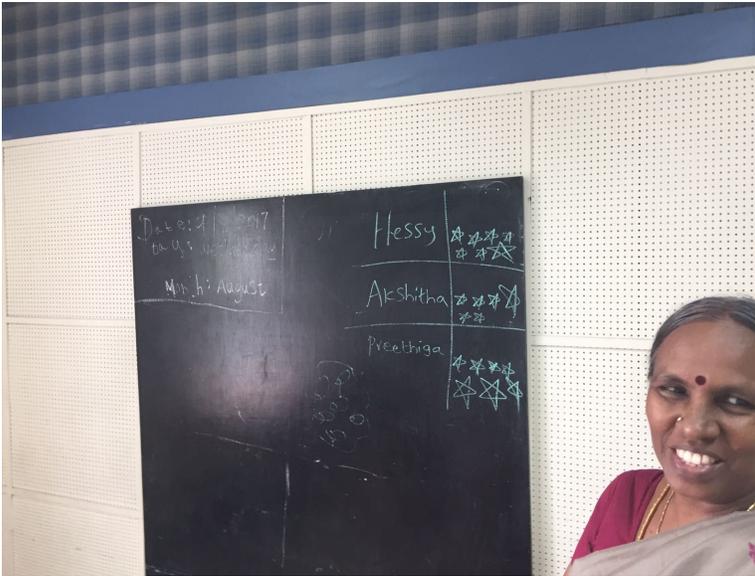
Children of all ages can come to Balavidyalaya to get tested. Early learners and even new born and unborn babies can be tested. Expecting mothers come to Balavidyalaya to get tested if they know of any hearing disability genetically in the family. Newborn babies can be tested with OEA machines which Balavidyalaya has. The school also has a test based on cause and effect. A sound is played in a set of speakers causing a toy to move. This cause and effect scenario is played over and over again for the child over several days. On the last day of testing the sound is played alone but not the toy. If the child doesn't look towards the toy that means that they have a hearing disability.



Teaching

One method of teaching that was used was by starting with a lesson that the children completed and building off from their until they were able to write sentences about what they did. After they completed their lesson the teachers would ask the students questions about the lesson and ask them to write responses using fill in the blank. Then they copy out the responses 3 times while looking at them and once from memory. This activity helps the kids with their writing, memory and comprehension skills. Many times, it is hard for the teachers to get certain students to concentrate so they use different methods. In one classroom, the

teachers gave the very competitive students stars whenever they completed an assignment, all



3 kids worked harder when they were competing for stars.

Funding

The school receives 1/3 of its funding from the government. They receive the remaining $\frac{2}{3}$ from Asha-MN and other sponsors. Balavidyalaya received 2.75 lacs last year from Asha-MN specifically for flood damage, in addition to the regular funding. During the floods, the floors and walls in the whole school got destroyed. Fungus and mold started to appear everywhere. Luckily, the funding from Asha-MN helped them put in new walls and flooring. Now the school is water resistant to prevent water damage in the future.

Mrs. Meera told me she has applied for a teacher training and salary grant, which has been approved by ASHA. Right now Balavidyalaya struggles with retaining their current teachers and hiring new ones. Training teachers uses a lot of resources since it lasts for 1 year and is approved by the Rehabilitation Council of India. After going through all this training teachers expect to get a bigger salary than the meager one the government provides. If teachers leave for better jobs after completing training that wastes a lot of resources for the school.

Balavidyalaya also needs money for small expenses such as chairs for their new auditorium.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Asha-MN's contribution in Balavidyalaya is greatly valued and appreciated. Asha-MN's timely support helped save and rebuild the school after the flooding. Their current support for teacher training and salary helps Balavidyalaya thrive. Thanks to Asha-MN students from ages 1 to 5 with hearing disability have the hope of joining mainstream schools.