

Sangamam Kanini Trip Report October 27, 2016

I am a volunteer with the Chennai Chapter of Asha. My name is Venkat Ramasamy. I visited 3 schools on October 27, 2016 that we support as part of the Sangamam Kanini Project. The project is stewarded by Rajaraman Krishnan.

The schools I visited were Narayanapuram, Manjakuppam and Ramanjeri. The purpose of the visit was to see how our computer teachers were doing and to see the progress the students were making with the technology and tools we have provided our teachers.

Here are the observations from the schools.

Narayanapuram School

I visited the classroom with 4th and 5th standard children along with Asha hardware technician Muthu. There were 11 children present on the day that I visited. Our computer teacher Jayashree was in the classroom. She is a new teacher and had just taken over from another Sangamam Kanini teacher, Sakila, just a week earlier. The Headmistress was also present in class.

As we walked in the children were playing games on the computer. They had access to just one computer which Asha had given to Jayashree. Many of the children were huddled around one computer. They turned around to greet us and quickly turned back to pay attention to the game they were playing. Clearly, the children were motivated to be on the computer. The game they were playing was one that is part of the TuxMath software package Asha has provided. The purpose of the game is to improve the speed at which children add, subtract or multiply numbers. The game gets harder as you progress and takes you to next levels.

The children were eager to talk and talked about being able to use Open Office Presentation for Kids which had been the focus a few days earlier. They knew how to create a file, type their name, change the font and so on. They showed me the presentations they had created while Muthu was fixing Jayashree's computer.

They also showed me another piece of software that demonstrated energy options including Thermal, Nuclear, Solar and Wind Energy. However, they didn't really understand what the software was trying to teach them. They just liked clicking on different items and see the animation that it created.

The biggest downside I saw was the fact that they only had the one computer and the Government has not provided this school with any other computers.

The Headmistress was extremely happy with both Sakila and Jayashree and the progress they were making with the children. She was grateful to Asha for providing the technology where none of the students had really seen a computer before our teacher had started working there.

Manjakuppam School

I visited the classroom that our teacher Rajkumari was teaching and it happened to be the 5th Standard class. This school had 4 computers and were setup with enough room for 3 children to share a bench in front of the computer so they can work with them. Rajkumari had her computer bringing the total to 5 computers. However, 2 of the computers were not working. Muthu fixed one of them by adding RAM and upgrading the windows software. The other one still needs to be looked at.

The children were divided into 3 per computer and were asked to create a presentation with Open Office for Kids Presentation. They started working on their own without requiring any help from the teacher. One of the children usually drove the project and each group was expected to create a presentation. They were asked to do a presentation with flowers, animals, or Indian leaders. Each person in the group was asked to create a page with a picture and add text. Some of them added their name and other name the flower or person or animal. These kids were the most advanced of the ones I saw that day since they not only created the page, but changed fonts, sizes, colors and even created animations.

I met with the Headmistress here too and she was really thrilled to have Rajkumari. She mentioned that until Rajkumari started working there, the computers were hardly ever used if at all. The kids were now very enthusiastic and were waiting for the day that Rajkumari would come to work.

Ramanjeri School

Ramanjeri School is one where Asha has prior relationship with as we have a full time teacher besides the computer teacher we send in once a week. I met with Aishwarya and Seetha who are both Asha teachers who were available on the day we were there. I went with Srinivasan who is the coordinator for the Sangamam Kanini project. He needed to go meet with the headmistress while I stayed in the class Seetha was teaching. The class she was teaching at the time was 3rd Standard. They were working on multiplication and division

using a software that is part of the gCompris package. The kids seemed to love the colors and characters and really got involved in the game. They had 2 computers – one was Seetha's and the other was Aishwarya's.

There were 3 classes in the same room and even though there were 3 separate teachers it got a little loud. The lack of enough computers created a bit of an issue with the children wanting to be able to play and asking to be next and couldn't wait for the previous person to be finished. However, everyone in class got a chance to finish one game and hand the computer over to the next person. It was tough for the teacher to make sure the students who had completed their turn on the computer to monitor their next activity as other children were still on the computer.

I also met with 4th and 5th grade students who explained how they produced presentations.

Conclusion

The teachers seem to have a set of software that they use for the different classes and all of the schools seem to be progressing in a very similar fashion and moving on to the next level. The children love being on the computer. It seems that they are able to do mental math to help them do additions or multiplications within the given time, so they can move to the next level. There is obviously motivation to do this. Some of the 4th and 5th Standard children were eager to make their page special and others were just happy to get a chance to work on it. The children seem to enjoy the time they spend with the computer teacher. They are able to use computers without being weary of them. It will take a while to figure out if it has enhanced their ability in math and english.