Avehi Abacus Site Visit

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By: Sheetal Kulkarni

Visited Eksar Talepakhadi Municipal School, Borivali West, Mumbai and Tare Marg Municipal School, Dahisar East, Mumbai. Both schools have students from very hardworking and low-income families.

Simantini, Director of Avehi Abacus and her team joined me on this visit. The team manages many schools in capacity of Field Observer who trains the teachers to conduct activities in few classes. Team is actively involved with Avehi’s work in the field. We visited 5th, 6th and 7th grade classrooms. Teachers and children went over a lesson from Avehi’s Sangati kit. Teachers were very accustomed to teaching with the Avehi book which is based on storytelling to teach the kids. Mr. Vinay Kumar Singh, 6th grade teacher from Eksar Talepakhadi BMC Hindi school used his technical skills to display the book on screen. He also tied the stories with what happened in real life, he talked about an accident that happened a few days back and how people came to help the victim. Our interaction with the children and the teachers in the classroom was engaging and fun. Everyone seems to enjoy Avehi kits and were eager to respond to all our questions with enthusiasm and confidence.

Ms. Pritam Pimple, 5th grade teacher from Tare Marg Hindi BMC School was very energetic and encouraging in explaining a story from the book. Students were able to relate lessons learnt from the story in day to day life. The thing that I noticed was how happy the students were in participating in Q&A and how easily they conversed in English.

Teachers quizzed the students on Avehi’s Sangati kit and the students enthusiastically recalled the stories from their previous years’ learnings.

Surprisingly the girl student’s ratio compared to boys was very high in these schools. I found out that it is very common for parents from low income families to send their boys to English medium or to private schools and send
girls to Hindi medium public schools. That was tough for me to understand but the male dominant culture in India was responsible for this discrepancy. With that being said, I was happy to see the students in these school were enthusiastic to get the opportunity to learn new things. They also have big dreams like any other child would. With this positive energy and attitude, and dedicated teachers, I really felt that these kids could achieve whatever they wanted in their life and sky is the limit for them.

Being in those classrooms really made me become child again. It was an amazing experience and it brought my childhood memories back. All in all, the atmosphere here was like any other school in the world with innocent kids looking forward to learning new things.

Simantini and her team talked about the different challenges in their line of work. We talked the help they received from BMC and teachers while also the different issues securing funding and challenges with parents preventing kids from coming to school in order to work in fields or day to day work. The team however was dedicated and seemed unstoppable in accomplishing their mission and driven by the fact that they were making a difference in the lives of these kids.