

REWARD Trust site visit report - Asha Boston Chapter

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On 10 March 2023, I, my mother, and brother attended the SMART (Self Motivation Assessment by Reward Test) prize distribution event organized by REWARD (Rural Education, Welfare and Resource Development Trust). We attended the event in 3 schools run by the Tamilnadu government near Mahabalipuram - Adi Dravida Welfare Higher Secondary School in Nerumbur, Government High School in Sooradimangalan, and Government Middle School (primary), Vittalapuram.

The prizes which included a certificate and a cash amount were distributed in these schools for the SMART test that was conducted in 2019. SMART tests were started in 2011 for classes 6 to 9 in the schools where REWARD teachers work. It is an aptitude test conducted in English comprising questions from 5 subjects (English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology). SMART questions (image of the latest question paper below) emphasize the practical application of knowledge and encourage the students to think instead of writing down the memorized answers. The questions were quite challenging and were in the format of a university entrance test. It is a great effort by the REWARD trust to motivate these students and equip them to compete with other students. Prepping the students with these tests early in their secondary schooling will give them a competitive edge later on in their careers.

In the test that was conducted in 2019, there was active participation by students and quite a few students won cash prizes (image below). The event started with a speech from the school headmaster, and REWARD members, a yoga session, followed by the prize distribution. The students enjoyed the yoga session and actively took part in the interactions with the REWARD members. I took part in the distribution and handed over the prizes to a few students. Also, my brother and I were given the opportunity to speak a few words to encourage the students. The students were particularly interested in listening to my brother who is a Lieutenant in the Indian army. His speeches had a profound impact on them, and a few inspired students met with him after the event to ask him more about the selection process.





We also had the opportunity to interact with Dr. Kalavathi, President of REWARD, Smt. Anathi Baskaran, Treasurer of REWARD, the school headmasters, teachers, and the students. Dr. Kalavathi explained to us the efforts by REWARD to conduct monthly training sessions for the teachers. Teachers are regularly monitored and are awarded performance-based incentives. She also explained the process of selecting teachers, sending them to the schools based on its requirement, the expansion of REWARD over the years, and how Asha has supported them throughout the years. We also met an inspirational person, Mr. Durairaj, a student with a similar background as the school students, raised by Dr. Sridhar and Dr. Kalavathi who has worked hard and is now working at the IGCAR, Kalpakkam. He was the perfect example to the students, and his words also motivated the students.

Clearly, the school headmasters highly valued REWARD members and teachers and depended on them to function effectively. In fact, we witnessed the headmaster of Government Middle School in Vittalapuram explaining the shortage of teachers and requesting Dr. Kalavathi for a REWARD teacher as soon as possible. To meet the increasing demand for REWARD teachers and support the trust's rapid expansion, Dr. Kalavathi requested an increase in funding from Asha.

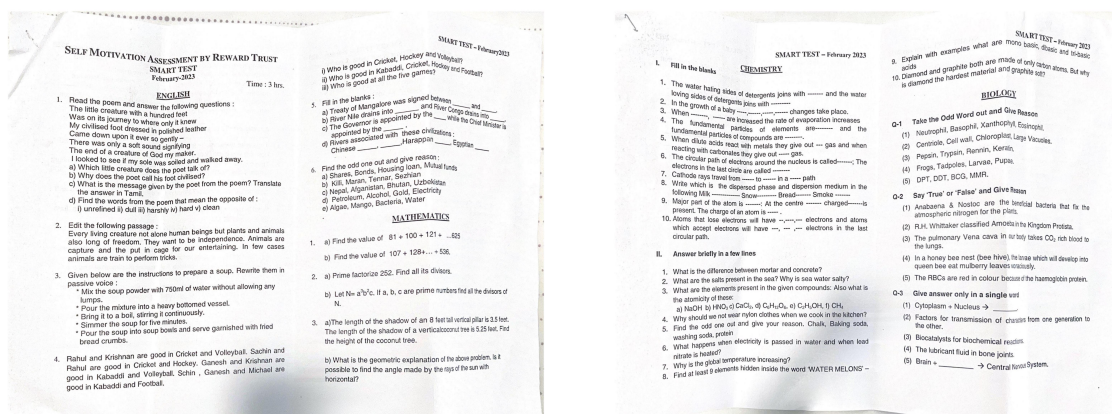


Figure 1: SMART question paper

SMART 2019-20 Intra School Achievers

School	Prize Category	Name	Marks (%)	Prize Bar (%)	Prize Amount (₹)
Vittalapuram Middle School	VI First	Jabakumar R	9.80	25	150
	VI Second	Monika M	6.13	25	100
	VII First	Harish M	19.80	50	300
	VII Second	Jothi M	16.80	25	100
	VIII First	Oviya G	25.87	75	450
	VIII Second	Veeramanikandan V	25.20	75	300
	English	Oviya G (VIII)	25.00	50	500
	Mathematics	Harish M (VIII)	24.67	50	500
	Physics	Veeramanikandan V (VIII)	25.33	50	500
	Chemistry	Veeramanikandan V (VIII)	35.33	100	1000
	Biology	Oviya G (VIII)	36.00	100	1000
			Net Prize Money		4900

Class Prize First Prize ₹600/- and Second Prize ₹400/- for each class
Total marks ≥ 30% gets 100%, ≥ 25% gets 75%, ≥ 18% gets 50% and < 18% gets 25% of the Class Prize
Subject Prize Only First Prize ₹1000/- for each subject
Subject mark ≥ 35% gets 100%, ≥ 30% gets 75%, ≥ 23% gets 50% and < 23% gets 25% of the Subject Prize

SMART 2019-20 Inter School/Prestige Prize Achievers

School	Prize Category	Name	Marks (%)	Prize Bar (%)	Prize Amount (₹)	Prestige Prize (₹)
Ammanambakkam Middle School	VI First	Prakash Raj R	24.60	25	300	
Kalkulam Middle School	VI First	Nishanthini B	24.60	25	300	
Uyyalikuppam Middle School	VI Second	Sumitha P	24.00	25	200	
Kalkulam Middle School	VII First	DivyaBharathi R	29.13	50	600	
Kalkulam Middle School	VII Second	Thendral V	26.60	25	200	
Kalkulam Middle School	VIII First	Monisha S	43.73	100	1200	
Kalkulam Middle School	VIII Second	Tamilarasi M	41.67	100	800	
Anaicut Hr. Sec. School	IX First	Nisha K	25.73	25	300	
Anaicut Hr. Sec. School	IX Second	Suresh K	23.13	25	200	
Vengappakkam Hr. Sec. School	English	Durga C (VIII)	37.00	50	1000	-
Kalkulam Middle School	Mathematics	Kishore Kumar R (VIII)	25.67	25	500	-
Karumarapakkam Middle School	Mathematics	Sanjai R (VIII)	25.67	25	500	-
Kalkulam Middle School	Physics	Monisha S (VIII)	52.33	100	2000	3000
Kalkulam Middle School	Chemistry	Monisha S (VIII)	66.67	100	2000	3000
Kalkulam Middle School	Biology	Monisha S (VIII)	50.00	100	2000	3000
			Net Prize Money		21100	

Class Prize First Prize ₹1200/- and Second Prize ₹800/- for each class
Total marks ≥ 40% gets 100%, ≥ 35% gets 75%, ≥ 28% gets 50% and < 28% gets 25% of the Class Prize
Subject Prize Only First Prize ₹2000/- for each subject
Subject mark ≥ 45% gets 100%, ≥ 40% gets 75%, ≥ 31% gets 50% and < 31% gets 25% of the Subject Prize
Prestige Prize Prestige Prize ₹3000/- for each subject
Subject mark ≥ 50% gets the Prestige Prize

Figure 2: Prize winners

Overall, it was a great and inspirational experience to visit the schools and take part in the prize distribution event. The interactions with the highly talented and motivated students were particularly fun, with many of them wanting to get into Indian public services and the military. It was also humbling to see dedicated individuals who are selflessly working towards the betterment of our country by empowering underprivileged children with education. I believe that the right amount of support can help REWARD do wonders.