

RightStart 2017 Report

RightStart 2017, our annual teacher training programme took place from May 24th to May 28th at the IIT campus. Here is a detailed report.

Organisation

As we had done in the past we organized RightStart 2017 also at IIT. All the outstation teachers were provided accommodation at the IIT hostels. Local teachers were taken to the staff canteen for lunch. The training sessions were held at the Vanavani school inside the IIT campus. As the number of teachers had significantly increased this time, the classrooms were insufficient and Vanavani was gracious to offer us the use of their AV room which was big enough to seat all the teachers and other visitors.

The last day function was held in conjunction with Asha Impressions at the IC&HR auditorium. This was made available by Prof. Kamakoti of the Computer Science department. This was a fully air-conditioned facility and was an excellent venue for our last day functions. The support from Vanavani, its staff throughout the programme was extremely good. Tea and biscuits were served twice a day at the training venue.

On the 26th evening Srinivasan also organized a local sightseeing tour for the teachers. They went to the Marina beach and saw other places along the beach.

Trainers and Sessions

We had planned 2 days of English sessions, and 2 days of Maths. On the fifth day many of the teachers moved to the IC&SR auditorium to assist with the Asha Impressions competition. These were mostly teachers who had had some computer training. The other teachers were given basic computer training by Mohan our computer teacher at Besant Theosophical School.

English Session: Mrs. Jayashree Arun is a senior teacher at PS Senior Secondary School. She is a volunteer of Asha Chennai and has been conducting the training for the teachers for the last one year. She has also been conducting the online training for the teachers. She trained the teachers in how to teach the lessons in term I and basic English grammar.

Ms. Meena Suresh and Ms. Kalyani from Ramanujan Museum and Math Resource Centre have been working with Asha Chennai in training the teachers and other aspects of improving the quality of Mathematics education for the last three years. The focus this year was to get the teacher to come forward and show how they would teach the lessons in term I. On the second day Mrs. Meena Suresh also taught the teachers some Maths for themselves.

The computer session by Rajaram and Venkat dealt with understanding the basic hardware of a typical machine (like RAM, hard disk etc.), basic features of the OS (like folders, tasks etc.) and finally the different programs that form Open Office.

Mohana Sundaram is our computer teacher at the Besant Theosophical School. He conducted the training session on basic use of computers, structure of folders, basic applications and the use of Internet.

Participants

The following teachers participated in RightStart 2016.

Project Sangamam, Sangamam Kanini etc.	33 teachers and 1 coordinators. Some of the teachers had to commute every day from their place. Some of them with young children travelled back to their villages on some of the intermediate days.
Project Pearl	5 teachers and the project coordinator came for the training.
Project Thulasi	Three teachers from Project Thulasi for the training. The two teachers at the tuition centre could not come as they had their degree exams and day-work.
Poorna Vidhya	One teacher came. The other teacher couldn't come because of health issues..
Project Manigal	Two teachers from Manigal came for the sessions. The others had various commitments and couldn't come for the training.
TEA Trust	Teacher from Little Flower Convent run by TEA trust have been regular participants at

the RightStart. Four teachers from TEA trust came this year as well.

Navajeevan Trust

Five teachers from Nava Jeevan Trust who are supported as part of the UQE Thirunelveli attended the training. However one of the teachers injured his back and had to return back without attending anything but the first day sessions. Two other men also didn't show up after the first day!

Arivu Maiyam

Arivu Maiyam sent one teacher for the training. She had come the previous year as well. Our volunteer Paripooranam was known to this NGO and they approached Asha through her to have their teacher also participate in this training.

Reward Trust

They are based near Kalpakkam in Kanchipuram Dist and have been supported by several chapters of Asha USA. We invited them to RightStart for the first time. Three of their teachers came and their trustees also attended some of the sessions.

Sri Krishna Middle School

Five teachers from Sri Krishna Middle School in Thappalampaliyur near Thiruvavur attended the training. This is a government aided school.

Olcott Memorial School

One teacher attended the training from this school which is a long term partner of Asha Chennai.

Felicitation Function

Asha Impressions competition was held in the morning of May 28th at the IC&SR auditorium. We are not going into the details of that here.

We were honoured to have Prof. Bhaskar Ramamurthi, the director of IIT-Madras as the chief guest and Mr. Joo Min, the Managing Director of Hyundai Glovis as the special guest for the evening.

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Mr M. Narendran from Hyundai Glovis was there to see the show. He also spoke a few words about the work his company is supporting. We were very happy to have our CSR partner participate with us in our activities. Hyundai Glovis has always been eager to participate in and help us with all our activities.

Rajaram thanked everyone who has helped us with this event including, IIT, Vanavani management and staff, the trainers and the teachers themselves. We didn't have the time to distribute the certificates on the stage as many of the outstation teachers had to leave to catch their trains and busses. We instead passed the certificates around during the show.

Mrs. Vijaya Sundaram compered the function. She called on stage Prof. Bhaskar Ramamurthi, Mr. Joo Min, Rajaram, Asha Chennai coordinator and Prof. Kamakoti who has helped us a lot in organizing RightStart 2017 and earlier editions. Rajaram made a presentation about Asha Chennai and in particular our work with Government Schools. Then Prof. Bhaskar Ramamurthi was called give his speech. He spoke about the special connection between the teacher and the student and how the lighting of the spark can totally transform the lives of the children. He wished Asha success in catalyzing the lighting of such sparks in these villages.

Then Mrs. Jayashree Arun was called to speak about RightStart. She explained what we do at RightStart. Then we called all the participating teachers and presented them the certificate of participation in the training programme.

Then Venkat Ramasamy came on stage to talk about the Asha Impressions programme. Arjun Shankar one of the judges was also called on stage to describe how well the children had done in the morning. He expressed his amazement that these young children could make such great presentations. Then we called the winning teams on stage to give them their prizes. The team that won the first prize from PUMS Manjakuppam for their presentation on Women's education then made their presentation to all the guests.

Then Mrs. Vijaya Sundaram presented the vote of thanks and also gave mementos to the guests, judges and the trainers.