

Chapter meeting minutes

1. Meeting minutes for discussion of the proposal. (please include chapter comments on project's response to QED questionnaire: such as aspects of quality that project is already addressing well, and those that can be improved)

Conference call minutes within Asha Atlanta (Jan 25, 2011) –

Attended by: Rakesh, Padmanava and Chandan

This proposal aims at teaching English to nursery to 3rd class students using theater, role-plays, games, songs, and dances. We felt that getting exposed to alternate ways of learning English would be fun and engaging for the students. These modes of teaching would also help enhance their auditory discrimination skill and develop their listening skills as very often it has been found by the project that children make mistakes in writing and speaking as they are not listening carefully. Vidya n Child has proposed a quantitative way of assessing the student progress by means of regular tests. The proposal addresses the QED principle of holistic (intellectual, emotional, artistic, physical) learning and hence is a good candidate for the QED grant.

Discussions between Asha Atlanta (Chandan & Padmanava) and Asha Minnesota (Subodh, Akshay, Ketan) –

Q1) Given that children are coming from medium or lower income group, who may not be speaking English at home or not using even as 2nd language, what is the rationale to pick English over any other native language? Any language which child is not using at home is always hard to teach and sustain.

An important aspect of what Vidya & Child wants to do is Mainstreaming of children at different levels –

- a. Mainstreaming in quality schools post 5th Standard
- b. Mainstreaming in quality schools post 10th standard
- c. Mainstreaming in quality colleges post 12th standard
- d. Enabling mainstreaming in today's external competitive world in to a professional career

In today's context English language has become an imperative as far as professional career and work scenario is concerned. Also, the amount of information available across different sources for any topic that a child might be interested in is very high in English language. Quality mainstreaming at different levels as mentioned above hence requires good command on English language for both sourcing information as well as articulating oneself. And the fact that the children are less exposed to English language at home, makes it further imperative that we take this up in a manner which is intensive and well thought through.

Q2) Is Asha Atlanta currently supporting this school system in some way? I see a 1-time disbursement of \$3000 towards them in May 2010 on the Projects' page - is that intended to be continued for 2011 as well? And will that be above the \$1200 available through QED funding?

Vidya n Child (VnC) had requested a one time funding from Atlanta in 2010. There are no additional requests for 2011.

Learning English Creatively (Vidya n Child) – Asha Minnesota

Q3) The proposal says Asha Atlanta will be helping the organization become self-sufficient over the years. The proposal only refers to school children in the age group of 4-10 years. What activities does Asha envision will make the organization self-sufficient? Perhaps they teach other skills (basket weaving, pottery, and other such cottage industry related skills) to children of an older age-group - if so, please clarify, as this is not evident from the proposal.

VnC is actively talking to (and has already partnered with) some foundations and corporates like Mahindra foundation, HCL, etc. to help run some of their programs. Effort is now to partner with more organizations to make this program self-sufficient.

Q4) Number of teachers attending the training is said to be 15. Is this teachers from 1 center (where this project is being piloted) or all 4?

The pilot is for 1 centre and then the plan is to expand it to one more after 6 months

Q5) One of the budget items list "Part time facilitators". Does this mean these facilitators will be training the teachers separately (and teachers will in turn teach these lessons/activities to the children) or will the teachers and children be taught together by the facilitators?

Together

The classes will be taken by a part time faculty and the regular Language teacher will also present in the class and hence training of the teacher will be experiential

Q6) Number of students supported in proposal is 300 - is that all from 1 school (where this project is being piloted) or a selection of students from all 4?

One Centre

Q7) The "assessment" techniques to be used to gauge affect of this program are really vague. As this is a fairly subjective skill (learning and/or becoming comfortable in a new language), can you provide some more detail on how we can see if this is really proving to be beneficial? Doesn't necessarily have to be a test/paper or any other academic test. For instance, will there be a play or songs presented at the end of the term, or some other such criteria to see the level of improvement?

We (VnC) have mentioned four points –

1. How well is a child able to articulate verbally the learnings of a particular session
 2. Has the interest level of a child increased in the English Language Class
 3. Have remedial classes been reduced
 4. Has the confidence of the child increased when speaking in English
- Point 3 above is objective and we would create a framework to actually track this.
 - Point 1 and 4 would be adjudged through a mechanism whereby the children will be able to express their learnings through an English play / skit presentation. We would create a framework of observation where in teachers will observe specific aspects like confidence level, way of representation, clarity of representation etc.
 - Point 2 is subjective and we would turn to teachers, external faculty and also children to provide a judgment on the same

Q8) I see that the frequency of the classes will be twice a week. How long will these sessions be conducted for - 6 months, 1 year, longer? At some point will the teachers be able to conduct this by themselves without the need for the outside facilitators?

Every class will need this for minimum 1 year. Plan is to build / enable teachers to conduct this independently in future.

Q9) What steps will be taken to ensure that any progress made is not lost? Will the students continue to have a class or 2 in English after that?

The English learning program will be continued as part of the curriculum followed by VnC. So anything the children learn will be used and built upon in later classes. VnC has english classes throughout all its classes and hence the learning/progress won't be lost.

Q10) If the goal is to create a path for students to enter the "mainstream" schools, is there a plan to maintain/improve proficiency in the language between the end of this program and the time students are ready to move to 5th standard and above in other schools?

As such there is no "gap" because VnC follows the school academic year so when the kids complete their classes in VnC and are ready for mainstream schools, VnC helps them get enrolled in the schools immediately.

Q11) If MN does put this forward, logistically, how would this work? We are very strained for volunteer bandwidth, and so will not be able to do the follow-up as closely as desired - this is purely because of volunteer strength, and nothing else. So, is the understanding that Atlanta (Chandan?) will be acting as the steward for this project, and will be responsible for all reporting responsibilities as well as any other requirements by the QED and/or Central Treasury teams? Of course, we would be interested in being made aware of any such communication, and will provide any support we can.

Yes, I (Chandan) will be monitoring the progress of this project and taking care of all the responsibilities. I'll keep you guys posted on the progress as well. At any time, if MN wants to get actively involved with the project then that'll be really awesome as well but it's not a requirement.

2. What is your view on success of the proposed initiative? How will the chapter evaluate the effectiveness? If successful, is your chapter willing to fund this initiative after 2 years?

Success in this context would mean that the kids become better English language speakers and writers over time. Their performance in the academic assessments should also increase because of this initiative. The chapter will consider the assessment reports sent by Vidya n Child regularly and monitor the progress of this proposal.

The chapter (Minnesota with Atlanta's help) is willing to fund the proposal after the 2 yrs of QED grant subject to availability of funds. We would also be working with Vidya n Child towards making this initiative self-sustainable through other funding sources outside Asha so that the children do not get affected at any time.

3. Do you intend to continue funding the project for next 2 years? Can a site visit be arranged between June 2011 and Dec 2011?

Yes. We will try to arrange the site visit between June and Dec 2011.

4. How is this proposal different from other proposals? (in case your chapter received more than 1 proposal for this grant)

This proposal focuses on teaching English to different kids (Nursery to 3rd) through short role-plays, theater and games. The 2nd proposal is about teaching the students about values, soft skills, mental & physical health, objective and goal setting (submitted by Asha Atlanta).



Chandan Dasgupta <chand0709@gmail.com>

QED call update (3/12): Asha Atlanta & Minnesota proposals finalized

Chandan Dasgupta <dasguptachandan@gmail.com>

Sat, Mar 12, 2011 at 11:43 AM

To: asha-projects@yahoogroups.com

Cc: treasurer@ashanet.org

Asha Atlanta and Asha Minnesota proposals discussed and finalized through the conference call (Srikanth, Rajeev, Chandan, Ketan from Asha and Supriya & Ninad from Vidya n Child)

Call summary below.

Thanks,
Chandan

Call Summary (QED discussion 3/12)

Vidya n Child overview

- How many teachers? 48 (on rolls)
- 35 volunteers
- How was the CBSE curriculum decided instead of other curriculums?
 - o Mainstream children into CBSE curriculum so it was a natural choice
 - o So VnC curriculum is based on CBSE
 - o Most of the children attend private schools
- Can students avail the private school quota for underprivileged kids?
 - o Not a law in Noida
 - o Difficult to avail because not all schools follow
 - o VnC splits the school expenses with the parents (depending on their paying capacity)
 - o Know the family very closely so VnC can gauge what they can/cannot pay towards school.
- Demographics
 - o Migrant population
 - o Mothers: Maids, servants
 - o Fathers: Drivers, sweepers, daily wage laborers
- Do children help their parents and hence miss out on attendance?
 - o Depends on the area – if new then there's a problem

- Over time VnC communicates the importance of the school and attendance, parents send the kids regularly (90-95% attendance)
- Teacher profile
 - Teacher from community + Retired teachers from school
 - Regular teacher training programs
 - Handled by the contents team (writing the content + training teacher)
- Outreach to other organizations to help them?
 - VnC is pretty stretched but have done it in the past
 - Grammar-based teaching curriculum given to another organization for training

Engaging Minds (Asha Atlanta):

- Pilot done: 8 children workshop and 3 teacher, none for parents till now
- Feedback from pilot implementation:
 - Increase in effective interaction between the teachers
 - Concentration in the workshop high
 - Children engaged in the workshop because of the alternative methods e.g. videos, etc.
 - Need to conduct further evaluation into learning gains
- Facilitators are a mix of regular teachers or long time volunteers (more experienced)
- Workshop content is planned 1-2 months before workshop based on the children's requirement
- Facilitators are trained into – why workshop is required for children, what is the content, what should be done every hour of the workshop, what is the expected outcome.

Creative English program (Asha Minnesota):

- This is a new program that VnC is planning on starting
 - Begin with designing the session first
- Based on some other organization's program?
 - No, based on VnC's experience
 - VnC has not come across organizations teaching English role plays, theater and storytelling; they have a volunteer who conducts theater workshops
 - Children wrote their own script
- Understand and learn phonetics and words
- Any specific reason for the age group?
 - Aim is to target from the beginning of the child's education

- o Important to target the lower level

On Thu, Mar 10, 2011 at 10:46 PM, Chandan Dasgupta <dasguptachandan@gmail.com> wrote:

Calls for this Saturday. Goal is to review respective QED proposals. You can read the proposals here -

<http://wiki.ashanet.org/display/projects/QED+Grant+Proposals>

March 12 Saturday: 9:30 AM **CST** (We'll start with Atlanta proposal, followed by Minnesota)

Conference Dial-in Number: [\(218\) 339-2500](tel:(218)339-2500)

Participant Access Code: 981156#

***For those calling from India* (March 12 - 9pm IST)**

If you can call one of the numbers given below as a local call, please dial in and use the conference id and pass code given below. If you cannot, then please let me know so I can arrange to call your phone from US.

conference id: 1591242

pin: 8637

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Let me know if you face any issues.

- Chandan