



2014 Site Visit Report

Project: Sikshana Foundation

Date of Visit: Dec 23rd, 2014

Report By: Sudhi Gulur

Rajkumar, the operations manager for Sikshana In Bangalore, coordinated my site visit to 2 of the Asha-sponsored schools managed by the Sikshana Foundation. As we drove from Bangalore to the schools we discussed the updates happening in the Sikshana Foundation programs.

Rajkumar shared that the “Visit Delhi” program had been morphed and they had decided instead to bring the kids to Bangalore as most of these had not seen Bangalore and it was lot more cost-effective. During the last visit to Bangalore the kids visited places like ISRO and got to interact with scientists and ask a lot of questions. Rajkumar also shared that a program had been offered by one of the board members that taught the kids how to make solar reading lights. The Gurupuraskar program, previously offered by Sikshana, is now being delivered by the Gurupuraskar Foundation.



When we arrived at the school the kids were very eager to greet us. As I started taking some photographs of the site the kids congregated around me asking me to take pictures of them along with their friends. Here is Mr. Vishwanath, the mentor from Sikshana foundation, along with some of the kids.

The Sikshana stars were clearly visible on the students. The Sikshana star program is an **incentive program that rewards students for academic and non-academic achievement** (e.g. engagement in the class room, curiosity) that they could redeem for writing instruments (e.g. pencil, erasers). It was very apparent that this program had been successfully replicated across the Sikshana managed schools. Some students wore a “Student Club” badge. This is a new program launched by Sikshana where they select few students as student leaders/mentors and give them the opportunity to **develop leadership skills**.





As student leaders they get to work on issues affecting their daily school life (e.g. requesting new books for the library) as well as mentoring other students so that everyone progresses in their learning. The student leaders shared how they run the student club. The president of the club convened the meeting and looked through her notes of what they had discussed in the prior meeting and discussed what each of the students were doing.

Each of the student leaders then reviewed the progress of learning for the student they were coaching/mentoring. Using a simple dashboard (seen on the right) they tracked where the student was making progress and where they still had to improve. It was very impressive to watch these students, who were learning these subjects themselves, objectively assess how their mentee was progressing.



Here I am posing for a photograph along with the future leaders and the school principal.

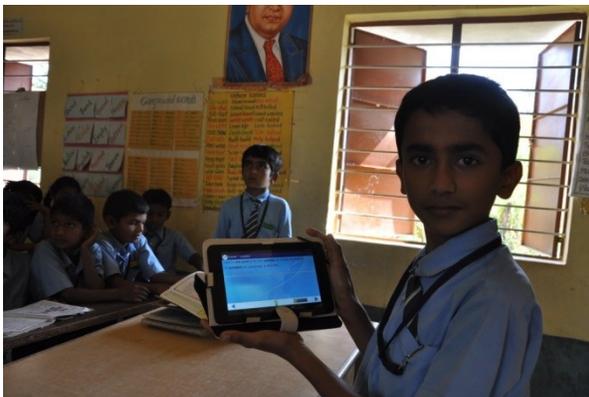
We then went into one of the class rooms where the students shared their work. Here again it was apparent that the student diaries distributed by Sikshana were widely used. To enable a sustainable model, the Sikshana program plans to progressively transfer the responsibility of creation and distribution of these student diaries to the local village leaders.





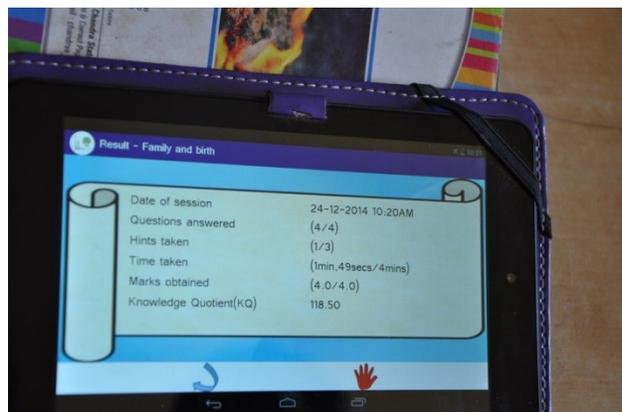
The students also proudly shared their “learning tree” at the back of the student diary. This is another fantastic incentive system created by Sikshana where the students have to show progress in learning to earn stickers to complete the tree. Some had successfully completed the entire tree while few had some missing elements.

The students then shared how they use the apps on the mobile learning devices that had been provided by Sikshana. These are simple apps that test the student’s ability to solve math problems and correct English sentences. Each school/class has been provided a certain number of these devices. These devices have been provided by the other supporters like Dell.



The Sikshana team researches the available apps in the app stores and deploys them to these devices. As these are generic apps and not tailored for the curriculum that these students are going through there is considerable effort in selecting the appropriate apps for use. It was very exciting to see these kids comfortably operate the device and use the apps.

The apps provide these students immediate feedback on how they performed on the tests. Internet connectivity is an issue and hence most of the apps selected for use here must operate without connectivity. Here one of the students is sharing the results of the test he took on sentence completion.





The students also took me outside their classroom to show the trees they had planted. They had planted fruit and expensive teak wood saplings. These saplings were provided by another agency and the students were assigned the responsibility to water and care for them.

Before leaving this school I told the students that I would come back and check next year and check on how many of these plants had survived.



We then proceeded to another Asha-sponsored government-run school in Thatekere. As we entered the school there was a drawing of a girl along with the caption "Let's all learn, let's all grow".

Rajkumar, the operations manager at Sikshana, interacted with the students to understand what they were learning. Here again the students were using mobile devices provided by Sikshana. Rajkumar shared with me that while most of the apps available are tailored for average or above average students there are very few targeted towards kids who have learning challenges.





Again here in the classroom I could identify the replication of the Sikshana Star and Student Club programs.

It was interesting to watch few of the students solve their multiplication problems on the wall. We learned from the teacher in this class room that they would like additional mobile devices with content/apps tailored for some of the kids with high potential.



As we drove back to Bangalore I shared information about some of the after-school programs that kids are exposed to in the USA and how we might want to consider offering similar/tailored opportunities to those students to enhance the learning opportunities.

Sikshana has done a wonderful job launching innovative and viable programs, replicating and scaling across several schools and consistently delivering those programs.