

Asha Site Visit to Balavihar (CCD):

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Summary of the visit:

- Visited 3 government schools and one private school.
- The HMs of the schools seem to have very good connection to Chitra and Balavihar members
- Interacted with kids in 3 schools namely,
 - Pinewood: Intro, simple questions for different classes, asking what they learn from Balavihar teachers/volunteers etc. The kids are awesome!!
 - Amarjyothi and Kaveripura govt school - simple games with kids
- The materials used to teach are very good and from my discussions with many other NGOs and personal experience, happy to see good concepts into action
- Detailed discussion about history of Balavihar, salary of employees, relation with Government school, other needs etc with Chitra Akka
- Visited another neighboring school near Chitra Akka s house
- Got back with nice memories with kids.

More Details:

I visited Chitra Akkas home in the morning which is further down in Mysore Road near Mailsandra area. Then we planned quickly the visits and she coordinated with Balavihar teachers about timings. They we went to schools at Vijayanagar, Bangalore which is 15-20 min drive from her home via Bangalore University. First we visited Pinewood School, which is a low-cost private school. They students are mostly in English medium. The HM is a very active lady and she mentioned her kids went to the same school. We had quick discussions about the quality of education and the impact Balavihar is bringing to the school. They work with different batches of students and not only focus on English and making regular subjects interesting, but conduct yoga and craft workshops. The students are very energetic and the >class 5 students

are quite good in English. I have spent some time with them to know their best and worst subjects. I also played some word games and simple math operations. Then the students performed a play. Then some of them showcased few yogasanas and their art/craft works. I interacted separately with students learning different things in the school. The HM corporates great deal with Balavihar's initiatives and given my experience with teaching in other school/NGOs, I find the students in this school very good in communication. We went downstairs and saw the Almirah that was bought in Asha funds. Also, we saw other craftworks and had few words with Balavihar teachers.



Kids at PineWood School



Students at PineWood School demonstrating Yoga and their craft works



Craftworks in Calender, artwork & storage space in the Almirah bought by Asha funds

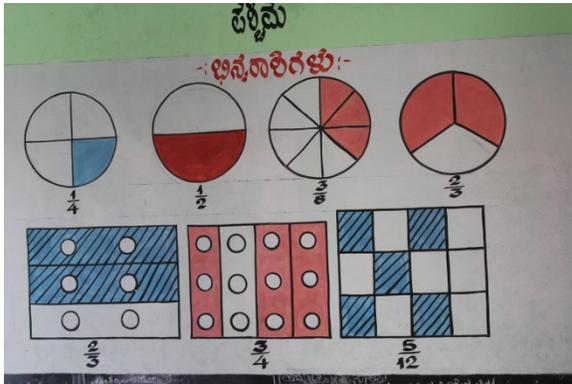


Chitra Akka with PineWood School students

After Pinewood school, we went to Kaveripura with one of the teachers, Tulsi. In the mean time, I talked to Chitra Akka regarding the teachers salary. It seems like they follow an hourly rate and some calculations based on the seniority and involvement in Balavihar. The salaries seem comparable to the amounts given to temporary teachers in other back up coaching/ school adoption centers, I am aware of.

Kaveripura looks very similar to regular Karnataka government schools. They have a good space for Balavihar upstairs and I really like the decorations of the room with scales, maps,

charts etc. I spent some time with the kids. They demonstrated some techniques with flash card and small english books (bought from Sapna book stores). Since I also taught voluntarily English to some Kannada govt schools, the materials look very appropriate for a good quality english teaching. A school inspecting officer was present at that time. They sit in a circle and did some demonstrations of the things they learn in the center. They follow lots of materials developed by Chitra Akka as well which makes the learning better.



Kaveripura Decorations



English Teaching Materials (one of the available ones) & Kids in Kaveripura



Kids sitting in circles



Kids and Me (Padmanava)

After that, we went to Amarjyothi nagar area and interacted with 3 classes. In the first one, I played word games with six kids. Then we went to another class and kids recited few poems, teachers explained how it is beneficial for the school for the involvement of Balavihar. Then we went to a class with little kids and they showed nose, eyes etc in English. They seem to enjoy the learning methods.



Playing games with sentence construction and word chains

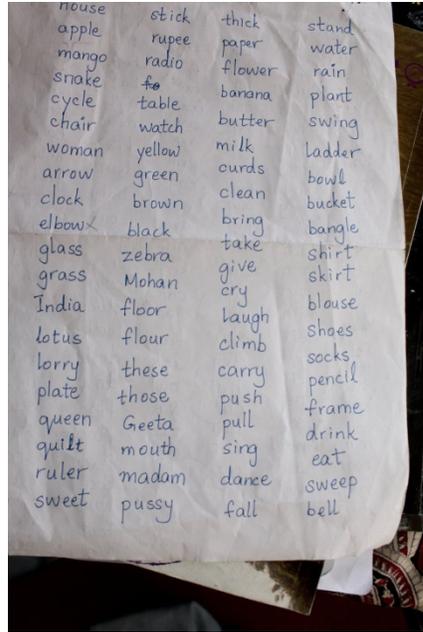
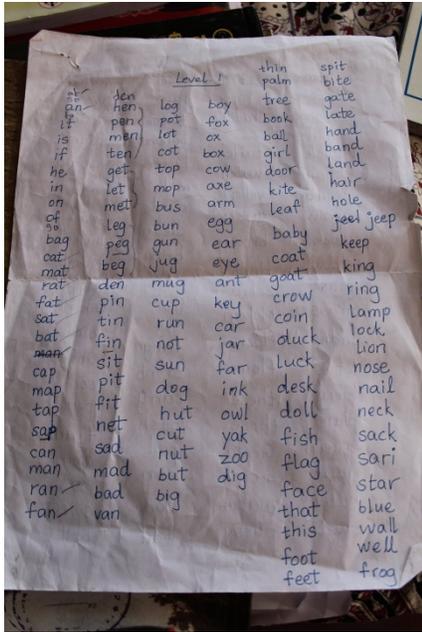


Interaction with students in Amarjyothi nagar



Little students learning their first words

After this visit, we came back to Chitra Akkas home, had lunch and then went to Mailasandra school nearby. There she showed some materials she use to teach english and I had quick chat with the students.



Some words used for teaching phonics



Students in Mailasandra School

Overall, I think the visit was very positive and the work done by Balavihar is quite beneficial to the students. The Government syllabus in itself is not enough to satisfy the needs of marginalized students and first generation learners. The additional help given and the alternative materials used to create interest work well with the existing syllabus and accelerate their learning curves.