

Stanford Nanbarhal 2016 - Highlights

AGN SCHOOL, Konganapuram, Tamil Nadu, India

Stanford University students Cate, Samantha and Adele got the opportunity to travel to India on July 29, 2016, through the Stanford program: "Project Dosti". The mission of this project is to foster intercultural exchange, develop the leadership skills and personal growth of the participants. The project got started at AGN SCHOOL by Mason Byles, a friend of both Stanford and AGN, in 2005.



1. AGN School: The front of the beautiful AGN school, which was the first thing that we saw as we got off the bus coming from the train station in late July.



2. Warm Welcome: As soon as we got off the bus, we were shocked and delighted to see that there were two rows of children waiting for us, forming our path to the front of the school. We were greeted by teachers and staff members with the kind but unfamiliar word to us at the time: "Vanakkum." As we walked down the path, the rows of children clapped for us, and we couldn't help but smile. We truly felt like a part of the AGN and Appu family from the very beginning.



3. Tradition and Treats: At the front of the school, near the welcoming sign with our names printed on it, we received red powdered *pottus*, candy, and homemade vases full of flowers. It was a joy to see the proud children who had made these gifts and shake their hands. We didn't know anyone yet, but we already felt like we had good friends at the school.



4. Introductory Assembly: On the first Saturday morning of our stay, we were welcomed once again during the Saturday Assembly, and we got the chance to introduce ourselves in front of everyone at both campuses. We were very moved by all of the speeches, performances, and smiling faces in the crowd. One young boy sang one of our favorite American songs, "Who Says" by Selena Gomez, and it made us feel less homesick. Receiving garlands of jasmine to wear around our necks and beautiful flower bouquets made us feel very special.



5. Fun Teaching Activities: In our second week, we jumped right into the classrooms at AGN to help teach English. We wanted our classes to be fun and exciting, and we wanted to involve everyone in the class in English-learning activities. One of our

favorite activities was the "Introduction Activity," where the students drew a portrait of another student and introduced them to the class by saying their name, their favorite color, their hobbies, and their ambition. We were very impressed by all of the students' English presentation skills, even the little ones! We would usually finish each class by singing a silly song that the students could participate in -- "The Banana Song" was a favorite.



6. Morning Assemblies: We had the opportunity to speak at many morning assemblies for all of the different campuses. Sometimes we would sing songs, such as "The Cup Song," where we would use cups or bottles to make the background rhythm, and sometimes we would give short speeches about meaningful topics, such as "Tips for Productive Studying" or "The Importance of Psychological Wellbeing."



7. The Banana Song: All of the students at the AGN campus joined us in performing "The Banana Song," which is a fun and silly song about a lot of different types of fruits with dance moves that go along with it. The kids always get the biggest smiles on their faces whenever we do it. In some of the classrooms, the students made up their own lyrics and dance moves to add to the song. It is a lot of fun!



8. Happy Independence Day! We had the opportunity to dance with the children during the Independence Day Celebration! We learned traditional Tamil dances and got to wave the Indian Flag during the final part of the dance. The young students were very helpful in teaching us the dance, and we became close friends with many of them. We felt very lucky to be included in this beautiful and colorful celebration of the country that had welcomed us so warmly.



9. Cate's Birthday: Cate was so surprised when she looked down to see the students had spelled "Happy Birthday Cate" with their bodies. She also planted a tree near the stage on her birthday, and the Appu students surprised her with a cake. She'll never forget that day. The AGN and Appu schools gave her the best birthday she's ever had.



10. Cate's Birthday Jananisri Sivaraman of fifth grade offered Cate chocolates in celebration of her birthday! Her family hand-crafted and wrapped the chocolates themselves, and the student presented them to the now-nineteen-year-old in class. Tree Planting Ceremony: On Cate's birthday, Cate helped plant a lovely tree very near the main stage to commemorate our time spent here. Prakash told us that each tree that the school plants symbolizes a very special memory. We hope that this tree will remind everyone of all the happy and fun memories that we have shared. We know that we will never forget them! It is also very fitting because the Stanford mascot happens to be a tree...GO TREES!



11. Cheerful Class: Students of AGN were all in cheers for one full period, thanks to the language games, they learnt from the Stanford friends. The girls of the class were named 'Gorgeous girls'. The boys were called 'Smart boys'. Each team tried hard to outsmart the other. Win or no win, every student enjoyed every second of the time, playing three games and tasting a candy at the end.



12. Comedy Presentation: We enjoyed a lively presentation from a local "funny man," or comedian, who used humor and movement to get students to participate in yoga! The presenter sang songs and danced across the stage and into the crowd, even getting a few administrators and a mass of students to join him in a conga line at the end of the performance.



13. Dance Lessons: We had a lot of fun learning traditional Tamil dances, from the students and from the official dance classes. The dance teacher was very patient with us as we struggled at first, but by the end of the class, we were dancing along with the students with ease!



14. Teachers' Day: Cate participated in the Teachers' Day Celebration with Mano. They played Ball Passing and enjoyed watching the competitive field games unfold on the field. We are so grateful for all of our wonderful teachers!



15. Gorgeous Goa: We had the wonderful opportunity to take a week off from teaching at the school and travel to the beautiful state of Goa on the Arabian Sea. Traveling to Goa showed us a very different side of India: there were many Portuguese influences, from the architecture to the food to the religion. One of our favorite parts of the trip was walking along the beach at sunset one evening. It was then that we decided to write AGN and Appu along with our names in Tamil on the sand. We really missed the school and our friends, and we wanted to show them that we were thinking about them while we were enjoying our adventure.



16. Painting: The Stanford Nanbarhal were inspired to make this painting by a speech that one of the APPU Students – Nivi in 8th Standard gave at the introductory ceremony. She said, "Our school is a garden and you are the butterflies." We painted a garden with flowers, butterflies and a banana tree. The banana are singing – a tribute to our silly "Banana Song".



17. Farewell: The farewell ceremony included many lovely speeches from the students, teachers, Staff and Stanford Nanbarhal. It also included wonderful dance performances by many. The Nanbarhal received drawings and jasmine wreaths. They cried at having to say goodbye to such good friends.