

My Pratham Experience

By: Sarina Motwani



After teaching my art class at a Pratham Site in Mumbai. All the children are holding up their artwork.

My First Time at Pratham

On December 28, I went to visit a Pratham site for the first time in Mumbai, with my Mom and Anamara. We were able to see four Pratham classes in session. Most of the children we saw were between age three to six. I was so impressed at how dedicated the teachers are at Pratham, and how eager the children are to learn. Almost all the children were smiling the whole time we were there. In one class all the children stood up when it was their turn and recited their name and the numbers in English.

We also saw a government school in the same area. The differences were so clear. In the government school the children were the same age but the teachers were not paying attention to the them. The children were either talking to each other or just

sitting not doing anything. This made me think about how much Pratham is doing for the children of India.

After going to Pratham sites and watching the classes, I wanted to do more. Since I am very passionate about art my Mom suggested the idea I teach an art class at a Pratham site. Anamara was able to coordinate with one of the teachers, so on January 2, I was able to go teach an art class to about twenty-five children ranging from age nine to fourteen.

The Art Class

The night before teaching the art class, I was very nervous. I am not completely fluent in Hindi and I didn't know if the kids would be able to understand me. The morning of the art class I had printed out paintings from my previous art show, and I had drawn many designs on pieces of paper. For the girls I had drawn paisley designs, flowers, hearts, and a puppy. For the boys I had drawn bicycles, cars, and a train. My Mom and I bought two packets of markers as well as many sheets of paper for the children to use.

When we got to the site all the children were sitting in a circle. The teacher introduced us in Hindi to all the children and told them that they have a special lesson. I told them a little bit about myself and my artwork. I asked for all the girls to be in one group and all the boys in a different group. The girls chose one of the four designs I had drawn for them. They wanted me to teach them how to draw a paisley so I showed them different designs and helped the younger girls. I was impressed because some of the children had amazing drawings skills but because they couldn't afford all the art materials that I had they couldn't do anything about their talent.



All the girls with me after we had drawn many designs.

The girls used their imaginations to finish their designs while I taught the boys how to draw a bicycle. Since there were almost triple the amount of boys I taught them a lesson from the front of the room instead of a small circle. I made it easier for them by showing them my drawing that I had done the previous night as well as drawing it in front of them while I spoke.

Some of the younger boys needed help and I was grateful that the older boys helped me teach the younger ones. They were all able to understand my broken Hindi which was a relief to me.



Boys exhilarated with their finished bicycles



An attentive and excited class learning to draw a Christmas tree.

After I finished teaching the boys and girls separately I got them to sit together while I was in the front of the room. Since it was the holidays, all of the children were interested in drawing Christmas trees and presents. I showed them how to draw the trees as well as ornaments and gift boxes. Since their school time was almost over, I wanted to teach them one last thing. I wanted to teach them how to write I love you in English, with a little heart emoji. It was incredible as some of them wrote I ❤️ You, but others wrote the entire sentence "I love you".



The children's drawings of Christmas trees and I ❤️ you's.

When I came back to our hotel in India, I realized how important this experience was to me. I was so grateful to Anamara, the teachers of the Pratham class, the students, the Pratham board, and my Mom for allowing me to have this wonderful experience. I was amazed at how much the children focused and listened the whole time I was there. They were very intelligent and tried their best. Most of them were very talented in art but they didn't have the resources and materials to use their talent. They were very welcoming and even though my Hindi wasn't great they still listened to me. I will never forget such an amazing experience, and I hope that I will be able to help Pratham even more in the future.



Pratham teachers, my Mom and I



A 14-year old girl so happy and proud