

## India Reflection – Children’s College

During my visit in India, I had an exceptional experience engaging with the children at the Children’s College. The students appeared to have been eager to engage with us. They were giggling into each other’s arms the moment we walked into the room. We began the visit with a cultural exchange where each group of us sang and danced to our culturally significant songs. Then afterwards they integrated us into their song and dance. It was outstanding to see the patience each of them had with us, as we struggled to perform movements that were so flawless and effortless for them. I was impressed with the maturity they had during that interaction. It was a joyous moment as we came together, with a lot of smiling and laughing.

After the song and dance, they partnered up with each us from the U of A to provide us with an impactful tour of their campus. I was impressed by how clearly they spoke English. I even felt a bit guilty that I couldn’t reciprocate their native language. Moreover, they were enthused to share this part of their life with us. They presented everything to us from the rooms to the books on the bookshelf. I felt honoured to have been welcomed so openly by the children into such intimate spaces.

Once the activities were over we all settled down to get to know each other more deeply. I asked questions in regards to their views about their education, the college and their aspirations. The children at the college have high aspirations for their future careers that were inspiring. They appear enthused to have learning opportunities that are integrated with social and cultural activities. From my experience at the college, I could see the program has been very impactful and empowering for the children. It promotes individual development through education while still maintaining one’s cultural identity. The facilitators encourage each child to be proud of who they are and to believe in themselves to do anything.

This experience relates strongly to some of the work I am engaged in back home at the U of A. Currently, I am working with an organization that supports new immigrants and refugee student’s integration into the Canadian education system. Although the context between that organization and the Children’s College is quite different, the learning philosophies and practice are much similar. Since I’ve returned, I have been reflecting a lot on my experiences at the Children’s College to promote effective practices back home.

The experience truly did have an impact on me and enhanced my knowledge and understanding of communities. On behalf of the ALES students at the University of Alberta, I thank you for your hospitality and this special opportunity.

- Sandra Gosling