

- Prepare



This summer I worked with Prepare, a nonprofit I started in high school. Prepare provides quality STEM education for financially disadvantaged students attending government schools in rural South India. The long term goal of Prepare is to help level the playing field between government school and private school students by providing early exposure to STEM education. Since 2018,

Prepare has been working towards this goal by creating an online curriculum, donating technology materials, and hiring part-time teachers. Prepare currently has 5 active schools located in the Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh.

Due to the pandemic and a shift in local politics, many issues have been brought to light recently. These include lack of health awareness, discontinuation of government health initiatives, and infrastructural challenges for Prepare's schools. My summer project focused on both correcting some of these issues as well as laying the groundwork required to continue addressing these issues from overseas. For example, one side effect of the pandemic was that almost all of Prepare's veteran teachers resigned for various personal reasons. Prepare hired new teachers earlier in the year but online training proved very difficult due to internet connectivity issues and the hands-on nature of the curriculum. To address the immediate issue of having untrained new teachers, I hosted training sessions while in India where teachers practiced teaching the lesson plans and developed their online communication skills. To allow for continued teacher development via Zoom, I worked with one of Prepare's donors to secure internet for teachers who did not have at home wifi and for two government schools.

In addition to training sessions, a large component of this project was laying the groundwork to develop a health curriculum in the upcoming months. I volunteered at three medical camps and shadowed three doctors to get a better understanding of the target audience and build connections with medical professionals. The directors of the medical camps I volunteered at are now connecting me with various specialists who will record videos for Prepare's upcoming health curriculum and review the lesson plans I create.

I also worked with the Telugu Association of North America to sponsor and coordinate free eye camps for all of Prepare's schools. Every student in attendance the day of the camp received an eye exam and prescription eyeglasses and/or eyedrops if necessary. I also conducted a survey and interviewed the older students to get a better understanding of why students do not receive eye exams regularly. The survey conducted at the first school revealed that this camp was the first ever eye exam for more than 85% of students (n=517). The remaining four camps took place after I left India.

Additionally, I worked on creating a volunteer onboarding folder, financial report, progress tracking tools, website updates, logo redesign, and other administrative tasks that will allow Prepare to be remotely managed in an effective manner. Overall, this summer turned out to be very different from my original proposal but I am grateful for all the new and unexpected opportunities that presented themselves.

