Asha Impressions 2018

Click here to see the photos from Asha Impressions - 2018.

Asha Impressions is a competition conducted among schools supported by Asha. The competition started in 2017 and is expected to be held every year. Impressions is actually two different competitions. One is for Presentations for 4th and 5th standard students and the one that started this year is a Programming competition using Scratch - a block programming language developed by MIT for 7th and 8th standard students.

About Us

Asha for Education is a worldwide action group formed to catalyse socio-economic change in India through education of underprivileged children. 'Asha' means hope -- the hope that we aim to bring into the lives of these children.

Asha-Chennai is a chapter of 'Asha for Education' based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. It is run entirely by a group of volunteers. You can click on this link for detailed information on various projects:

http://chennai.ashanet.org/

Our Computer Work in Tamilnadu

Several Asha-Chennai projects involve improving the operations of government schools. We provide teachers to schools that have poor teacher student ratio. We also send computer teachers to schools to teacher computer science s well as teacher other subjects using innovative contents on computers.

At Thiruvallur District we are supporting over 45 schools. At 15 of these schools we have appointed regular teachers. In Chennai we support 5 schools with a computer teacher and one in Shastri Nagar with a regular teacher. We support 4 schools in the Kovilpatti-Kayathar area of Thoothukudi District with a regular teacher in each of the schools and one computer teacher that goes to these schools. We support 6 schools in the Senji area of Tiruvannamalai with regular teachers and we will add a computer teacher in the area that will support these schools. We support 5 schools in Kanchipuram District and 1 in the Kadambathur block of Thirvallur District. All of these projects are eligible for the competition.

Our computer teachers have been teaching computer science at all these schools. For 1st and 2nd std children we teaching basics of using a computer. Third std children learn to use Tuxpaint a painting software suitable for young children. Fourth and fifth standard children learn about computer organization as well as OpenOffice a popular free office software which has a documenting software, spreadsheet and presentation. Sixth, seventh and eighth students learn how to use the Internet as well as programming using Blockly and Scratch. Scratch is a child friendly programming environment developed by MIT.

Asha Impressions – Presentation Competition

Computer science is best learnt through doing. Students learn the most when they are challenged to work on their own projects. With this in mind we assign project work for children in 4th to 8th Std.

Children in 4th and 5th Std create a presentation using OpenOffice Impress while chidlren in the 7th and 8th Std develop a software project using Scratch.

For the Asha Impressions 2018 Presentation Competition we had entries from the Thiruvallur schools, the Kayathar schools and the Kanchipuram area schools. The Chennai and Thoothukudi schools were unable to participate and the Thiruvannamalai schools will only start their computer training in the 2018-19 Academic Year.

The teams were organized in groups of about 5 to 8 students each, which seemed like a manageable group size. As in any team, we found that some students did a lot more than their share and there were others who were mostly observers. The goal was to have all students be involved in the project and we achieved that to some extent with even the silent students having to contribute if only by participating a video or picture or typing their name.

We had 89 entries into the competition from these schools. Two of the Asha Volunteers went through the entries and selected the top 10 presentations for the final competition.

Some of the features we looked for in the presentation were:

- Use of Technology
    - Pictures taken by the team
    - Videos shot by the team
    - Audio recorded by the team
    - Incorporation of Videos, Audio and Pictures from other sources
    - Transitions between slides
- Aesthetics
    - Originality
    - Creativity
    - Pleasant Experience
- Content
    - Value
    - Accuracy
    - Understandability
    - Coherence

The 10 presentations that were picked represented 8 of our teachers with only a couple of teachers getting more than one entry into the final. This showed a vast improvement from our teachers in terms of effort compared to the 2017 competition. The showing was thoroughly impressive with presentations mostly about a topic that the children covered in school but also included surprising inclusions like the field trip that they went on to the Birla Planetarium and another which showed how to teach fractions to young children. Most of these presentations had a personal touch of some sort including videos, pictures or audio recorded by the children.

The finalists were invited to present their projects at the Asha Impressions 2018 Summit on April 28, 2018 in front of external judges who were:

- Pratyush Kumar - Assistant Professor, Computer Science & Engineering, IIT Madras

- Nagarajan Ramanathan - Software Dev Manager, Asset Pulse, LLC
- Srikrishnan Chitoor - Founder / Director Carizen Software Pvt. Ltd.
- Akash Kumar, Student of MSc Economics and Director of 180 Degrees Consulting at IITM.

They were expected to judge the presentations based on the previously mentioned criteria in addition to the following:

- Stage Presence
    - Presentation Skills
    - Ability to Communicate their point across
- Technology
    - Explain how they included certain features
    - Ability to come up with answers relating to OpenOffice Impress
    - Explain how they incorporated external multimedia
- Student Work
    - Extra importance given to the percentage of work that was done by students and less for work that was pushed by the teacher

The entire morning of April 28th was set aside for the judges to evaluate the 10 teams and come up with the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners. The competition was fierce and most of the teams had done an impressive job with their presentations. The prizes went to the following teams:

1st Place - Team from Greenvel Natham supported by Deepa Teacher. They presented about the Solar System with each of the students describing a planet with videos shot by the teacher and students.

2nd Place - Team from Seethanjery supported by Divya Teacher. They made a presentation about Sangakalam which was part of their history lesson. They had videos of culture and information about the rulers during that time.

3rd Place - Team from Nanthimangalam placed third mainly because their topic was unique. The presentation was about teaching Fractions. They included videos with songs and dances that showed what fractions are and they even had an exercise section at the end of the lesson.

Asha Impressions - Programming

Asha Computer teachers started teaching programming to the children in 6th, 7th and 8th standards using Logo previously, but switched to block programming using Scratch. Scratch is easier to understand and quite a bit more powerful. The concepts of Object Oriented Programming are easily taught with the help of Scratch.

Asha supports only a handful of middle schools and in most of those we had just started working this year which meant that we taught just Open Office even to the classes 6 to 8 children. The entries for the competition came only from 3 of the Thiruvallur schools. We had a total of 11 entries out of which the Asha volunteers selected 4 for the finals. The afternoon of the 28th was dedicated to the Programming competition. The criteria for the initial selection and during the finals were similar to the presentation competition.

This competition again proved that given the opportunity young students can pick up programming concepts very quickly and be very creative. One of the entries was about an ideal school that would be run by Asha. Another one was a collage of pictures where you can select a picture by clicking a key and an audio description would come up. The entries were all very impressive.

1st Place - Maze - The children had drawn a maze by hand on the computer through which a cat would have to be moved from start to end. If the cat touched a red line while moving, it would bounce back. Creating games from scratch is typically not an easy task, but the power of the programming language Scratch was captured beautifully with this project.

2nd Place - The 2nd place was awarded to a project that seemed like a public interest message about safety while swimming. The students had created multiple sprites and used audio to convey their message. Some advanced concepts like broadcast messages to other sprites was used in this project.

We expect the 2018-19 competition to include many more schools and look forward to an exciting competition.