

Our First Four Years

Our work at ConnectTeach generates measurable, meaningful impact in the lives of teachers, students, and communities. We don't view education as an outcome; we treat education as a sustainable vessel for transformational societal change. We have generated a portfolio of measured results, demonstrating our organizational capacity, effectiveness, efficiency, and growth potential.

By the end of our first year of operation, ConnectTeach had delivered programs and services including 769 hours of professional development to 48 teachers, which directly impacted educational outcomes for 2,400 students in India. Now, as we conclude our fourth year of operation, we have directly impacted 5,150 teachers and 337,854 students in six countries. In addition to delivering thousands of hours of professional development, our programs and services have expanded to include conferences for teachers, students and community members on Education as a Human Right, student development initiatives aimed at engaging students both as change-makers for today and caretakers of the future, and needs-driven education resource development so that teachers in the most underserved communities can deliver the highest quality instruction.

Through our proven track record of success, we demonstrate that education can fundamentally transform students, teachers, and communities, not only through the development of economic and social potential, but also making measurable gains in the areas of gender equity, health and well-being, and community-building.

Economic and Social Potential through 21st Century Skills and Digital Literacy

As teachers, we know that basic literacy and numeracy skills alone are not enough to fundamentally impact long-term outcomes. Being able to turn on a computer and navigate a website is not enough to make underserved children competitive in the 21st century. We combine quality instructional practices, high expectations guided by international standards, and a student-centred research-based approach to teaching and learning to develop the economic and social potential of students and teachers in our partner schools.

For the 2015- 2016 school year, LKG through 5th Standard students in Hope Foundation Nursery and Primary School in Kannagi Nagar slum in Chennai made an average 70% increase in academic achievement in reading (that growth is in spite of two months of instruction lost due to the floods!). This programme included teacher and student development and which included the launch of *Connect Into English*, our series of English Language Literacy manuals designed to teach students comprehensive English language skills while meeting the needs of teachers who are non-native English speakers themselves. Students participating in our "Empowering the Next Generation" programme sponsored by Dell reported a 130% increase in their ability to use technology



in a meaningful way. But these numbers only tell part of the story- each student from our data has a trajectory of potential. Naveen is a sixth grader who wants to improve the electrical infrastructure of his community, which faces near daily power cuts. While he is still exploring the conditions of this problem, we know that with the right support from a well-trained staff of dedicated teachers will unlock his ability to address this and other issues in his community.

What ensures that students like Naveen continue to grow and develop is that we also work to advance the knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy of the teachers who serve them. Through on-site and online professional development, the teachers participating in this programme have shown tremendous progress. On average, teachers reported a 40% improvement in self-efficacy as well as growth in English language skills (14% growth in writing, for example). One of these teachers is Karthik, a dedicated Tamil medium Math teacher who gave a presentation in English in our end-of-year workshop. His stronger English skills allow him to access more web-based resources and ideas to use in his classroom. He is an example of our model's success, but he is by no means an exception! When educators have access to high quality training, resources, and support, they consistently rise to the challenge.



Gender Equity, Justice, and Inclusion

Gender equity, justice, and inclusion is a goal with many barriers. There are currently 62 million girls worldwide who are out of school. But even when girls are in school, it is not guaranteed that they will learn the skills and knowledge required to overcome the steep challenges of gender inequity. Overall, 130 million children who are in school do not meet basic proficiency standards. In rural India, less than half of all fifth grade students can read at a second grade level and only one-fourth of fifth grade math students can solve a simple division problem.¹ At, ConneCTeach, we have been happy to celebrate our academic gains, which include a 15% overall gain in math achievement after the first semester (which, again, included two months of no school due to the floods!).



In addition to the challenges of access to quality education that affects both boys and girls, several international studies have demonstrated that teachers often have a hidden bias that steers girls away from achievement in science, technology, and maths, starting in the elementary grades. We address these biases as well other beliefs

¹ Sperling, Gene B., & Winthrop, Rebecca (2016) *What Works in Girls' Education*. Washington, D. C. : Brookings Institution.

and practices that perpetuate the cycle of gender inequity in education. When we surveyed teachers from several schools, we found that only 22% of teachers believed that girls and boys are equally capable in science and technology. Compare that to 59% of teachers participating in our “Empowering the Next Generation” programme who believed that girls and boys are equally capable!

Gender inequity not only colours how students are taught. Teaching is predominantly a female profession, especially at the primary level, which is often underpaid and comes with a lower social status than other jobs with similar education requirements. Taking this into account, our training has empowered our teachers in ways that extend beyond the classroom. We find that in the course of our programs, our teachers often build confidence in addition to knowledge and skills. Usha says, “This training has built my confidence. I know now that I can do my best.” Combine that with the effort of students, such as Jennifer in 6th Standard, who wants to start a campaign to put girls in school, and you have a powerful recipe for change!

Community Health and Well-being

The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity.” Efforts to promote health in marginalized communities are largely focused on the immediate medical needs to prevent and treat specific health conditions while neglecting the emotional, mental, and social factors that also contribute to health. As a positive and consistent social institution, schools often serve as centres for wellbeing, with teachers acting as counsellors for students and parents. We recognise the role that schools and teachers play in reinforcing the health and well-being of the community, and we work to provide tools and resources to support them in this role.



The cognitive impact of stress on learning is well-documented. Teaching a class of one hundred six-year-olds can impact the well-being of the best trained teachers and most well-adjusted students. We provide workshops and coaching on how to create a positive environment in the classroom. Our work develops self-efficacy in both teachers and students. To measure well-being, we surveyed teachers who attended our program for one year as well as teachers in similar schools who did not receive the training. After one year of training, our teachers scored on average 70% higher on statements such as “I consider myself a leader in the school.” and “I make a difference in students’ lives”. On reflection, teachers explain how our programs and services have impacted their wellbeing, such as a teacher in Hyderabad who wrote “For me now, it’s a great joy to teach... Before the training, I was fearful. After ConnectTeach, I have changed my complete way of teaching.” The students reported a 13% overall increase in self-efficacy over the course of the year, scoring especially high in the areas of motivation and choice. And that’s not all- students who strongly agreed with the statement “I am learning how to

help my family.” increased by 50% and “I am learning how to help my community” increased by 69% over the course of a year. This survey included students like 7th grader Gokulraj, who is researching how to reduce the practice of burning plastic in his community.

Conflict Resolution

According to a recent study commissioned by the World Bank, over half of women in Africa report that being beaten by their husbands is justified in certain circumstances. In Uganda, that rate goes up to 77%.² This is supported by the observation made by one of our hosts: “Some women think that if her husband does not beat her, he does not love her.” When we went to Uganda this spring to do a workshop for over 370 teacher trainees, the topic of corporal punishment quickly came up. On the second day of training, 66% of trainees agreed with the statement “Beating when necessary is ok.” After interactive sessions with a lot of debate, discussion, and practical strategies, only 25% of students still agreed that “Beating when necessary is ok.” while the rest of the students pledged that they would never beat their students. We know from their follow-up assignments that this is still a primary topic for discussion– how to end violence in communities and corporal punishments in schools.



In our work, we have found that conflict resolution and community-building are especially critical skills for the teachers and students living in marginalized communities. Living in one the largest and most dangerous slum resettlement colonies in South Asia, Belsiya Mary believes that the biggest problem facing her community is conflict. She would like to solve this problem by getting people to work together and talk to each other. In achieving a 42.7% increase in math skills, Belsiya is developing the skills and resources necessary to play a critical role in conflict resolution and community-building. Vasanth, a computer teacher in Kannagi Nagar, is also supporting this effort with his students, who want to change the violent reputation of the community as it is seen by outsiders.

Our Commitment

We have developed a research-based, needs-driven model that demonstrates the power of transformational teaching and learning practices that are both instructionally

² <http://blogs.worldbank.org/african/domestic-violence-and-poverty-in-africa-when-the-husbands-beating-stick-is-like-butter>

effective and community-focused. Our holistic approach to education posits schools as the heartbeat of the community, with the power to unlock the potential of its youngest members to create both immediate and lasting change. We empower teachers to support these efforts as leaders and mentors.

Our work addresses problems that are interrelated, systemic, and occur within a community context. To this end, our programs and services thoughtfully and intentionally integrate local needs and background. As teachers ourselves, we have the professional experience to be flexible in our approach to meet those changing needs while effectively and directly addressing the issues faced by the students and teachers in our partner schools.

Each year, we are committed to continuous improvement and sustainable organizational growth. Through our responsive approach to program and service delivery, we have demonstrated our capacity to scale our model both in scope and size while maintaining the integrity of our vision, which is cultivating education as the fundamental driver of change by developing teachers and students as leaders and change-makers in their communities.