

ELL with a Heart for Service Changes Lives

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The Make A Difference (MAD) program is a student-parent volunteer organization at the American Embassy School (AES) in New Delhi that aims to provide a high-quality English education to underprivileged students from the impoverished resident camps situated near the school. Initially, founded in 2010-11, by the former American Ambassador's wife, Sally Romer, the program has since expanded to include around 100 volunteers working with approximately the same number of students. High school students at AES work directly with parents and faculty from the AES community to teach and lead the program. This allows for a unique synergy that has led to significant gains in the students' English education.

Students in MAD progress through nine levels of English learning, ranging from basic concepts to advanced, college-preparatory academic English. The first six levels of MAD follow a "Reach Out/Step Out" English Series for young Asian language learners, grades 1-6, an Asia Pearson Publication, authored by Mary Catherine Frazier, PhD. The next three levels of MAD follow a pre-college curriculum, created primarily by high school students working under the tutelage of Dr. Frazier over the past four years. Together, the two facets of the MAD program have successfully allowed students to achieve a high degree of academic English proficiency and attend prestigious Indian universities.

Pre-college (PC) level courses at MAD are entirely run by AES high school students. After three years of classes, a formalized Scope and Sequence (S & S) was developed. This S & S strikes a balance between literacy standards and relevant India-centric humanities content. Thereby, allowing students to both develop academic English skills and explore socio-economic topics not usually encountered in the Indian schooling system. While the S & S of the curriculum presented here is unique to the circumstances of the students at MAD, the framework of this curriculum and the process by which it was designed are applicable to any program, in any location. The focus of this paper – and of the accompanying presentation – will be process of the program's development with an emphasis on its results. It should be noted that this type of program can be created and implemented by any group of students and teachers working together, anywhere in the world.

Curriculum Design

In September 2014, a group of students who had completed the Reach Out/ Step Out curriculum began the first year of the PC program. At the time, the intention of the PC program was not to develop college-preparatory academic English skills as much as it was to provide a space for students to continue practicing their English skills; in fact, the class was originally referred to as “Level 7”. Nonetheless, the teaching team quickly realized that the students in Level 7 aimed to attend prestigious Indian universities through a scholarship program working in conjunction with MAD. Thus, advanced English speaking skills would be an advantageous asset to these students in their admissions’ process. Thus, the concepts of academic English writing, reading, and analysis were chosen as the basis of the course.

Alongside instruction in academic English, the teaching team decided to introduce topics from the humanities into the course. The principle idea was – and remains – that these social-science subjects provide a framework for the English-language acquisition process. A particular topic is chosen, and students develop vocabulary and information around the curricular topic, which has evolved through students’ preferential choice. Students subsequently use their knowledge of the topic to analyze relevant texts and compose their own arguments in written and spoken form. In this way, the chosen humanities topics form the basis for the students’ literacy development and process of language acquisition.

Originally, the topics of instruction were chosen by the “camp” students. As time went on, however, the PC teachers formalized the content, adding certain topics and discarding others in order to create a curriculum that would best serve these students. In the new curriculum, the topics are chosen based on “central questions” or “issues of importance,” ensuring that topics are relevant to the students and focused on content which they would not normally be exposed to in their Indian schooling system.

In the summer of 2017, a formal curriculum based on three years of ad hoc teaching was written. A Scope and Sequence was created with scaffolding literacy standards and humanities topics. For literacy, a list of twenty standards was developed (Annexure 1), which may be summarized as the following broad goals for PC students:

- Develop syntactic and grammatical precision;
- Successfully write or present an analytical essay based on acquired prior knowledge and original ideas;
- Read at the Common Core Grade 8 Level with the ability to comprehend complex information and vocabulary;
- Delineate and analyze arguments;
- Engage in academic conversation or socratic seminars, speaking with complete- or near-fluency.

The sequence of the literacy standards begins with foundational skills, including syntax, vocabulary, paragraphs, and grammar. Students who enter the program are assumed to have familiarity with written English, and are able to read and understand Common Core Grade 5 Level texts. The sequence of the PC's linguistic development is as follows:

- **Year One:** Cements basic pre-existing abilities, and works on students' expository writing and reading comprehension, as opposed to argumentative writing and textual analysis.
- **Year Two:** Brings the focus to analytical writing, with students being asked to eventually compose original five-paragraph essays. Students begin this process by considering the difference between a fact, an opinion, and an argument. These skills lead to the concept of an analytical paragraph, from which the jump to analytical essay writing is relatively easy.
- **Year Three:** Applies the concept of analysis to reading. Students gradually analyze the sources with which they are presented, engaging with the concepts of bias and reliability. The eventual goal is for students to, upon being presented with three texts at the Grade 8 level, be able to comprehend and analyze the texts, use these sources, and their prior learnings to compose an essay.

Humanities topics in the curriculum scaffold not only by year but also by strand, or main idea. There are four major strands in the PC curriculum: 1) creative exploration 2) sociocultural studies 3) public affairs and 4) global questions.

There are twelve topics, with three per strand and four per year. Each topic is a repeated theme through a “core spiral curriculum” (Bruner, 1960 <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED538282>) (Johnston, Howard Education Partnerships, Inc.), which follows logically from the previous year’s topic and those that were from the previous strand, taught in prior years. For example, in the second year, students learn about corruption in the Indian government. Their ability to understand why the government is corrupt naturally depends on their understanding how the government of India is structured and how it functions – a topic taught in the first year. The conversations they have about how corruption is perpetuated also relies on their understanding how the media functions, which is the topic immediately preceding corruption in the S & S. As such, the curriculum spirals. A full table depicting this spiralling through all four years is provided in Annexure 2.

Working of the Scope and Sequence

The S & S serves as the basis for the entire instruction in the course. It was written by Shreyas Rajesh, presenter, and co-authored with a team of high school students, and was modified and formalized in 2018. A portion of the S & S, from one subtopic of politics, is included in Annexure 3, for reference.

With the intention to use humanities as a way to teach English, the team realized this type of content also broadened the students’ thinking and understanding of their world beyond their rote learned Indian course content. The S&S has 4 key components.

- I. Key understanding related to actual social science content
- II. Recycled skills connected with the literacy standards.
These learning goals all spiral as per the guidelines articulated herein.
- III. Vocabulary relevant to standards and key understandings
- IV. Connections from curricular key understandings to real world examples

Additionally, the S & S is especially tailored to the daily lives of the students. For example, while discussing pollution, for example, the students are asked to discuss the pollution they cause through their everyday activities. It is through this type of personalization that the curriculum becomes relevant to the students. An additional benefit, is these types of “authentic” discussions allow for the diversification of classroom discourse, eventually deepening students' understanding of the concepts.

Student volunteer AES teachers, for instance, often have the chance to share their own unique examples; and thus, share their perspective and cultural experiences, which again broadens students' ways of thinking. An example of this is seen during the politics unit in 2017. During this time, student teachers had a chance to discuss their own cultural practices with the MAD camp students. Consequently, the MAD students learned about Korean or American cultures from their AES student teachers, which deepened their understanding of cultural diversity. Since these other cultural examples were presented, the MAD camp students could compare their own Indian cultural experiences with those of their AES students' lives.

Results

While only one year has passed since the formalization of the S & S, the course is now in its fifth year and five students have completed the three-year sequence. Of these five, one is of college-age and has successfully enrolled in the Honors Program at the prestigious Delhi University. The other four students, along with all the students beginning the course in 2016 and 2017, will also eventually attend university.

The results presented here come from the writing samples of three students procured over a twenty-nine month period. While multiple tests were administered to students during the duration of the course, these writing samples from each of the three students were all prompted writing assessments with a time frame of exactly one hour. The nature of the writing shifts from being descriptive to analytical as the course progresses; consequently, the analysis presented here considers both quantitative and qualitative factors. Quantitative measurements include raw word count, academic word count (the number of unique vocabulary terms introduced to the students

during the course), number of sentences, and number of distinct sentence kinds¹. Additionally, notes on structure are provided to indicate how the complexity of the students' thoughts and ideas were developing as the course progressed. Thus, the results take into account the words the student uses, the sentences they write, and the way they structure those sentences into paragraphs and essays. The three students whose work is discussed below are Tripti, Lokesh, and Harish.

Table 1. Tripti's Writing Samples

First Assessment Period: October 2015 <i>Tripti produced a descriptive paragraph about a drum; prior to the assessment, the class had studied music. Tripti's paragraph had no original ideas and was entirely expository in nature.</i>	
Word Count	22
Number of Academic Terms	4
Sentence Count	6
Number of Advanced Sentences	1 (1 compound sentence)
Second Assessment Period: December 2016 (1) <i>Tripti wrote a small, four-paragraph essay describing the influence of the media. Her writing sample this time was still descriptive, but she included introductory and concluding statements.</i>	
Word Count	97
Number of Academic Terms	18
Sentence Count	11
Number of Advanced Sentences	7 (1 compound sentence; 6 complex sentences;)

¹ In the case of sentence kinds, a sentence was counted as any series of clauses between periods, provided the arrangement of the clauses did not violate any grammatical rules. Run-on sentences and other grammatically incorrect sentences were counted as sentences but were not classified as advanced sentences (compound, complex, or compound-complex).

Tripti's Continued Assessments	
Second Assessment Period: December 2016 (2) <i>In the same month, Tripti wrote an analytical piece which included both facts and her interpretations of them; her piece's short length left very little room for complex structuring.</i>	
Word Count	65
Number of Academic Terms	13
Sentence Count	5
Number of Advanced Sentences	2 (2 compound sentences)
Third Assessment Period: February 2018 <i>Tripti wrote an essay on the justice system in India. The essay included a thesis statement and was structured in multiple paragraphs. There were clear introductory and conclusive statements supporting the thesis, and each paragraph contained evidence, accompanied by analysis. As such, the improvement on all quantitative metrics and in terms of structure is quite remarkable. Transcribed versions of Tripti's essay are provided in Annexure 4.</i>	
Word Count	310
Number of Academic Terms	46
Sentence Count	19
Number of Advanced Sentences	11 (5 compound sentences; 6 complex sentences)

Table 2. Lokesh's Writing Samples

First Assessment Period: October 2015 <i>Lokesh wrote a descriptive one-paragraph composition about his thoughts on inequality in India in October of 2015. There was no intentional or advanced structure in his descriptive writing.</i>	
Word Count	130
Number of Academic Terms	29

Sentence Count	9
Number of Advanced Sentence Kinds	3 (3 complex sentences)
<p>Second Assessment Period: December 2016 (1)</p> <p><i>Lokesh then wrote an essay about the media in which he included both facts and his own thoughts. The essay was four paragraphs in length, but it did not include one thesis.</i></p>	
Word Count	253
Number of Academic Terms	48
Sentence Count	11
Number of Advanced Sentence Kinds	5 (3 compound sentences; 2 complex sentences)
<p>Second Assessment Period: December 2016 (2)</p> <p><i>Within the same time frame, Lokesh also wrote an analytical paragraph. Though noticeably shorter than his other compositions, Lokesh's paragraph included distinct facts and analysis, used to support a clear thesis. He likely wrote less in order to focus on structuring properly – a skill the students had just been taught.</i></p>	
Word Count	90
Number of Academic Terms	16
Sentence Count	5
Number of Advanced Sentence Kinds	3 (1 compound sentence; 2 complex sentences)
<p>Third Assessment Period: February 2018</p> <p><i>Lokesh was able to produce an analytical essay with multiple paragraphs, a thesis, an introduction, and a conclusion. Like Tripti, Lokesh evidently made extensive progress in his written English and analytical abilities.</i></p>	
Word Count	647
Number of Academic Terms	93
Sentence Count	30

Number of Advanced Sentence Kinds	19 (11 compound sentences; 6 complex sentences; 2 compound-complex sentences)
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Table 3. Harish's Writing Samples

<p>First Assessment Period: October 2015</p> <p><i>The final student, Harish, came into the MAD program already a strong writer. He produced a descriptive essay about music in which there were creative and original ideas, but no cohesive structuring.</i></p>	
Word Count	213
Number of Academic Terms	15
Sentence Count	10
Number of Advanced Sentence Kinds	3 (2 compound sentences; 1 complex sentence)
<p>Second Assessment Period: December 2016 (1)</p> <p><i>In December of 2016, Harish missed one exam period; consequently, only one of his writing samples may be analyzed. This was a quasi-analytical essay in which he wrote about his thoughts on the media. It featured four paragraphs with original ideas and analysis, but it lacked a thesis and, subsequently, a coherent structure.</i></p>	
Word Count	353
Number of Academic Terms	26
Sentence Count	19
Number of Advanced Sentence Kinds	8 (1 compound sentence; 7 complex sentences)
<p>Third Assessment Period: February 2018</p> <p><i>In February of 2018, Harish doubled his word count, producing an essay with seven paragraphs. He had a thesis, introduction, and clear conclusion. This demonstrates the type of progress targeted in the course; Harish clearly made leaps in his writing ability through the program.</i></p>	
Word Count	712

Number of Academic Terms	53
Sentence Count	37
Number of Advanced Sentence Kinds	21 (6 compound sentences; 12 complex sentences; 3 compound-complex sentences)

The table below summarizes the quantitative metrics for all three students. In the case where two writing samples were presented for the same time frame, the metrics of both standards were averaged.

Table 4.. Average Quantitative Metrics Over Three-Year Period

	Oct. 2015	Dec. 2016	Feb. 2018	Improvement*
Average Word Count	122	156	556	435
Average Number of Academic Terms	16	23	64	48
Average Sentence Count	8	9	29	20
Average Number of Advanced Sentence Kinds	2	5	17	15

*Change is defined as the difference between the Fall 2015 figure and the Spring 2018 metric.

As Table 4. indicates, there is a distinctive improvement in average word count, number of academic terms, sentence count, and number of advanced sentence kinds. There is also a distinctive improvement in the qualitative metrics (relating to structure and analysis) as well. These results indicate the extent to which the program was successful in helping students increase their academic English writing abilities.

Conclusion

The PC curriculum and course is unique. It features three communities - of AES adults, high school students, and underprivileged students – volunteering together to master English literacy.

Harish, Lokesh, and Tripti's work demonstrates the extent to which the program was successful. By following an S & S that placed emphasis on literacy within the context of humanities, the students were able to make monumental gains. The students dramatically improved their mastery of English in only three short years – quite a remarkable endeavor!

This program demonstrates not just anyone, with any background, can teach English to students. However, this four-year program of hard work and dedication does show that a group of high school students, who has the motivation to deepen their engagement with the learning and teaching of the English language, can Make A Difference!

Simply by modifying the humanities topics of this syllabus, the curriculum followed in New Delhi, can become applicable within a multitude of different settings and programs. ELL with a heart for service really can, and will, change lives. This English Language Learning experience not only changed the lives of the children from the impoverished camps, but even more dramatically it has changed the lives of the AES student teachers. These student volunteers have enabled students to reach a dream of post-secondary education, which they possibly could not have attained without the PC1, PC2, PC3 curriculum. Today, this accomplishment is carried in the hearts of all the MAD volunteers who are Level 7 & 8 AES Student Teachers; and even more significant, this “dream,” for students of the camps, will be a part of the MAD volunteers' hearts for years to come.

Annexure 1**Complete list of MAD Literacy Standards***Writing Standards*

- WO1 Write insightfully; make connections.
- WO2 Address all guiding questions.
- WG1 Implement advanced relevant vocabulary well.
- WG2 Organize writing fluently; use transitions.
- WG3 Write with syntactic variety; do not write monotonously.
- WG4 Do not allow grammar mistakes to hinder the message.
- WA1 Identify facts versus opinions and arguable statements.
- WA2 Discern main ideas from given information.
- WA3 Use given information to create a relevant, specific, and arguable thesis.
- WA4 Support a thesis with relevant evidence; stay focused.

Reading Standards

- RC1 Comprehend simple information presented in an article.
- RC2 Comprehend complex information presented in an article.
- RG1 Evaluate information to make an informed conclusion.
- RG2 Summarize information presented.
- RG3 Discern the definitions of complex vocabulary through contextual usage.

- RA1 Delineate an argument.
- RA2 Support or refute an author’s argument based on prior learning or experience.
- RA3 Understand and recognize bias.
- RA4 Differentiate between concrete facts and authorial claims.
- RA5 Understand authorial intent.

Annexure 2

Humanities Spiraling, by Year and Strand

	Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Creative Exploration	Arts	Technology	Inquiry
Sociocultural Studies	Culture	Media	Philosophy
Public Affairs	Politics	Corruption	Justice
Global Questions	Environment	Governance	Economies

A portion of the S & S, from one subtopic of politics, is included in Annexure 3, for reference.

Annexure 3

Annexure 3

A portion of the S & S: Topic 3.2, The Indian Constitution (Politics)

Key Understandings

3.2	A	A constitution is a set of fundamental principles according to which a state or other organization is governed
	B	Almost all states in the world have a unique constitution that outlines the rights citizens have in the country and the structure and purpose of the government
	C	The constitution of India is considered supreme law and all legal decisions must be based on the principles of this governing document
	D	The constitution of India lays down the framework defining fundamental political principles, establishes the structure, procedures, powers and duties of government institutions and sets out fundamental rights, directive principles and the duties of citizens
	E	The Constitution declares India to be a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic, assuring its citizens of justice, equality, and liberty, and endeavors to promote fraternity among them

Literacy Standards

3.2 <i>WG4</i>	Understand that a sentence must have a subject, object, and verb in order to be grammatically correct
	Learn the correct number of breadths that should be taken when addressing commas, colons, and semicolons
	Recognize what a clause is and learn what constitutes an independent clause

Connections

3.2	One article from the Constitution of India that discusses any one of the many inalienable rights
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Vocabulary

3.2	Inalienable, Rights, Citizen, Duty, Principle, Directive Principles, Adoption, Sovereign, Secular, Justice, Liberty, Amendment, Ratify, Framework, Equality,
<i>WG4</i>	Subject, Verb, Object, Clause

Annexure 4**Final Writing Assessment**

February 2018

OPTION B: Tripti

310 Words Total

The Indian Court Systems is very unjust

Indian Court System is unjust because the lawyers and judges are corrupt; not all but some may take bribes from their clients and they may be biased by taking bribes from rich man towards poor people. The Indian Court system is very careless towards their cases.

Approximately 10,000 cases are pending in the Indian Court system in a month. So if we count for a year it may be $12 \times 10,000 = 120,000$ are pending in a year which is not a small amount. There are a number of judges are too few but cases are countless.

Even police of India is also careless and bias they are corrupt not all but some. Some take bribes, sometimes they present biased evidence in court by taking bribes, and even sometimes they are not able to collect enough evidence. Very often there is incomplete evidence in a case but a decision is made anyways.

They (the courts) always biased; they help only rich people and stay against poor people. According to the report of *The Times of India* that, "many judges in Delhi have been guilty of accepting bribes". It means there are too many corrupt judges, lawyers, and police in Indian Court System.

Poor person get unjust and rich berson won the case whenever it is not right. Many rich people are able to give bribe to police so their case does not appear in the court and poor people get left unjust. They act with impunity.

Court is biased and take favor or big famous person. Like Arnav has been unable to try his case against Modi because he is a famous person. Though there are many lawyers in India, most of them will not help to work for poor.

Overall, the Indian Court system is very unjust, biased, corrupt, and bribe-taking.