

In April 2015, the IIT Alumni Association of Korea (IITAAK), as part of its mission to contribute to the community, entered into a collaboration with Gyeonggi Suwon International School (GSIS). The idea was to organize monthly sessions for students covering topics that lied at the intersection of the curiosities of students and the expertise of IIT graduates. The responses of all stakeholders in the seven sessions that were held, have been phenomenal.

It all started during one of the regular evening conversations that Pankaj Agarwal, the President of IITAAK, had with his son, Anant, who is a student at GSIS. His curiosity “Dad, why don’t you teach at GSIS?” gave fire to the President’s long unfulfilled need to volunteer in the space of education. He discussed the idea with other office bearers of IITAAK and there was a unanimous decision to go ahead. Immediately, the team found a counterpart in GSIS and held a pilot session on April 10, 2015. The hour-long session that focused on “Problem Solving”, something which IITians are known for, saw a very warm response from the students as well as teachers.



Pilot Session on Problem Solving



IITAAK and GSIS MoU signing

There was no looking back and the modest experiment culminated into a year long partnership. IITAAK & GSIS signed an MoU to clearly define their goals and mutual expectations.

Under that MoU, hour long sessions were held on a monthly basis covering a wide range of fields - from technical to life skills, from careers to passions, and from problem solving to coding. Delivering a successful session required a lot of work behind the scenes for the IIT graduates. They not only had to prepare the content for the session but also had to come up with creative presentation mechanisms to sustain the attention of kids. However, the enthusiasm of the young and bright attendees was a reward worth the hard-work.

Vishnu, who managed the program, said “The biggest hurdle for me was to get all the speakers on the same page. It usually started with deciding the topic and later, designing the session in a

way that would use the strengths and styles of speakers while using methods that create the most impact on students.”

“ The students were very receptive, and could understand the ideas very easily.” said Prajwal, who conducted the third session on Cultivating Passion. “During the course of preparing for the session, I myself learnt a lot about my passions and got an opportunity to look back at my own journey as a student.”



Volunteers and students pose together



A session on careers in Science and Engg.

Sessions were deliberately designed to have mix of technical content and ideas on life skills. For example, the session organized in October, covered topics “Starting to Code” and “Pursuing Passion” and the one organized in November talked about “Careers in Science and Engineering” and “Art of Acquiring a new skill”. Our volunteers often came up with creative ways such as the use of interesting videos and picture quizzes to drive home the main points.

The volunteers showed great flexibility in adapting their content to serve the needs of students. The sessions in January and March focused on the various aspects of programming as per the demand of students. And games turned out to be an effective tool in teaching. Jatin, who volunteered for the session on coding remembers “Kids had a lot of fun playing the game. They were outrunning our pace and we had to stop them in between to teach them the concept. ”

The wonderful journey concluded on April 22, 2016 with a session on “Vedic Mathematics”. The session focused on easy to understand and apply mathematical concepts and techniques from ancient Indian scriptures that make calculations 10-15 times faster. Nishit who led that last session said “Students’ excitement was quite riveting. It totally changed how they approached mathematical problems. Even the teacher was surprised that the problems we solve everyday, could be done so quickly.”



When the teacher becomes student : Mr. Porter looks spellbound

Mr. Brendan Porter, a mathematics teacher and the coordinator of the sessions from GSIS lauded the efforts of IIT graduates by saying that "GSIS appreciates the time, energy, and efforts of the IITAAK members who provide well planned presentations for our students and staff. We can see the benefit from learning practical skills by way of Mathematical strategies and coding as well as life skills as well. One of the central goals of GSIS is to "*Educate the Whole Child*". The IITAAK seminars are part of the vision that GSIS holds to achieve that goal".

IITAAK is motivated to build on to what started as an experiment and to improvise by working on the learnings. Also, the IIT graduates are hungry for more. They are not only planning to have more organized sessions in GSIS but are also considering to launch similar programs in other international schools in Korea.

Details on Sessions conducted

Date	Topic	Volunteers
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April 10, 2015	Problem Solving	Pankaj Agarwal, Vishnu Vardhan Vinjam, Jalaj Jain, Subhojit Chakladar
September 11, 2015	Critical Thinking and Careers in Business and Entrepreneurship	Pankaj Agarwal, Vishnu Vardhan Vinjam
October 23, 2015	Starting to code: Importance of programming, Pursuing passions outside school	Jitendra Kumar, Prajwal Aithal
November 20, 2015	Art of acquiring new skills, Careers in Science and Engineering	Nishit Bhandari, Nupur Kala
January 29, 2016	Starting to code	Rohan Prinja, Jatin Garg, Sreelatha Yenugula
March 18, 2016	Programming	Rohan Prinja, Sachin Goel, Shubham Mehta
April 22, 2016	Vedic Mathematics	Nupur Kala, Nishit Bhandari

Author's note: For a person who has always been a very active volunteer, GSIS program was like a much needed breath of fresh air amidst the busy corporate life. I have learnt a lot, including how smart the kids are now-a-days to how different the education system is. Interacting with the kids, brings so much of freshness and creativity in my thoughts that sometimes I feel that I am the learner and they are the ones' doing the teaching.