



August 2007

Dear Friends,

The school got off to a slow start. Even though I had gone out into the community trying to round up new students, on the first day of school (July 5th) only about 60 students showed up. Of those, only two or three were new. As you may remember, I had been hoping to teach about 80 children this year. To accomplish this, I would have needed 20-30 new students. You can imagine, I was pretty discouraged.

But after a couple days, parents started trickling in bringing their children to be registered. Every day I would register another 4-5 students. I was busy trying to keep track of this as well as get students fitted with their new uniforms, see that each student was in the correct class, make sure everyone had their textbooks, take passport type photos of all the children, manage the teachers (a bit of a trick last month since one of my teachers was absent for two weeks because of a kidney stone), and teach English to all the classes. Near the end of the month when I finally sat down to add up the numbers I was very surprised! We had over 90 students registered. I've learned that in this community the concept of pre-registration does not exist. Even now, into August, parents are still coming.

So much so that I had to start telling some parents that I was very sorry, but I could not register their children because our lowest level class is more than full. But two days ago, when more parents showed up with a total of six potential new students in one day, I started thinking harder about another solution. Was there a way we could accommodate another kindergarten class? I considered starting an afternoon session; the same teacher could teach both sections. But yesterday one of the teachers suggested that we hold one of the smaller classes in our verandah. That would free up a classroom for an extra class. I have decided to hire another teacher,; I know of two people that would be suitable and are available. Our expenditures will rise by about \$80/mo.

In order to place new students in the proper class, I had designed a small admission test. It tested reading in Hindi and English as well as basic math skills. Some of our new students came from other nearby schools, especially from one that had started as a school for the poor, but now is charging rates that, though reasonable, are prohibitive for poorer families. I was pleased to see that, comparing class-wise, our students are at a considerably higher level than children from other schools, especially in English and math. I could see that we are indeed giving our students a much better education than they would get at other local schools. While sad that other schools are shortchanging their students, I was pleased that our school compared so favorably.

Thank you so much to all of you who sent donations recently. Your continuing generosity helped give me the faith to expand the school further than I had expected.

love,
Connie