



May 2006

Dear Friends,

. . . But the main thing that has been taking my time the past few months has been the running of the school for poor kids. The kids' second term exams were held in December. After that, quite a bit of effort was put into preparing for a song, dance, and drama program which was held in early March for the kids' parents and friends of the school . Since then we have been on the home stretch, preparing the children for final exams which were held at the end of April. The school has now closed for the hot summer months of May and June. It is due to re-open on July 3rd.

The founder of the school, a young Indian woman, came to visit in December. She was so happy with the progress she saw at the school. When she left the school in our care, she and another teacher had been teaching about 15 kids in a rather haphazard way. When she visited in December she found about 40 students studying at three different grade levels. Since her previous visit, we had acquired writing tables, chalkboards, a fair number of teaching materials, and the beginnings of a proper school library. More importantly, the teachers and students have pulled together into a caring community of people eager to teach and learn and help each other to do so. On top of notable academic progress, successes of the year have included teaching a stubborn girl to say "sorry," teaching our kindergartners not to give answers to the slower students but rather to let them come up with the answers on their own, teaching brighter students to encourage slower learners instead of teasing them, and teaching calmer and more loving ways of conflict resolution. My dream is that our school community would be a place where the children learn that another kind of community is not only possible, but greatly preferable to the community they live in. I want them to learn that the quiet word can have more power than the bellow, that encouragement triumphs over shame, that unity puts dissension to flight, that forgiveness is victorious over hate, that love conquers all.

Now, during summer vacation, I am busy preparing for the next school year. We need to rent a bigger building. I need to buy textbooks, get more writing tables made, and prepare at least one more chalkboard. I am searching the Internet for resources and ideas to supplement our curriculum. I am also rounding up some new students, and it is in this that I need your help. Every day I walk through town during school hours, I see children out roaming the streets, children who should have the chance to go to school. The only thing stopping me from inviting these children to study is money. Right now we are receiving regular contributions in amounts sufficient to educate about 40 children. If a few more contributors stepped forward, I would be able to add one, two, or even three new classes starting in July. It costs us about \$7 per month to educate one child. I wonder if any of you might be willing to give toward this cause.

Some other exciting news is that the founder of the school has purchased a large tract of land for the school. Right now the land is empty, but it is our hope that the construction of our own building will begin within the coming year. We have plans to slowly expand the school until we are running classes from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Thank you for the support you have shown so far for the school. It has been quite a challenge for me, pushing me to grow in all sorts of ways. But, the challenges it presents fit perfectly with my strengths and I feel happy that I have been given the opportunity to positively impact the lives of my students, their families, and the community in which they live.

love,  
Connie