

FAQs for volunteers:

1. What is PRAYAS? What is its objective?

Ans. Yes, I have a dream. You too have one, and even those little kids have theirs. Why not weave all our dreams together, to create a better society to live in!

True to its Hindi literal, 'PRAYAS' , an endeavour of IIT Kanpur students, is mainly focused on providing education to the marginalized kids, at least upto the level where they too can dream big. We try to nurture the zeal of enthusiasm in the kids. Quite understandably, we cherish every moment we spend amidst them. We strive for the overall development of the children, so they can find and follow their own way whenever they want. Every child we have a chance to deal with, has a dormant spark waiting to be kindled. Believing in this philosophy, PRAYAS was started by some enthusiastic members of the IITK community as an Evening school and was formally incorporated to be Students' Gymkhana in 2001. We are a voluntary organization and we do not provide any salary or formal certificate.

The basic objectives of PRAYAS are:

- To make quality education accessible to those who are deprived of it.
- To inculcate values and provide moral education to the students.
- To promote personal development of the students through various co-curricular activities like Music, Sports, Painting, Debates, Dance, Poetry, etc.
- To create awareness about Health and Social issues and also about the 'Need of Education' among the students.
- To develop a methodology of teaching that would attract the kids towards Education and prevent Drop-outs.

In short, the Aim of PRAYAS is 'to Inspire and Enable'.

2. What does voluntary service mean in reference to PRAYAS?

Ans. By voluntary we mean that it is your free will to join PRAYAS at any time of the semester according to your convenience. But once you commit to PRAYAS, you are expected to respect your commitment as life because career of a lot many kids depends on this.

3. How do I join PRAYAS?

Ans. There is no formal procedure of registration. Just walk in to New SAC-105/105-1 during 4:30 PM to 7:00 PM, see how it works and talk to the coordinators and you will be allotted a specific subject/class as per your convenience and need at PRAYAS.

4. I joined PRAYAS in a 'chill' semester. This semester I am very much busy. What should I do?

Ans. It is understandable that things change here semester-by-semester and even in a semester. Considering this, you can leave PRAYAS for week(s) or semester(s) by informing the coordinators in

advance so that proper arrangement can be made in advance and the functioning of PRAYAS is not affected.

5. Do I get an acknowledgment for my services in PRAYAS?

Ans. We do not impart any formal certificate to the volunteers but we do acknowledge the services rendered by the volunteers. If they require it when applying for placements or other places provided they have completed at least 100 hours of service at PRAYAS. The coordinators have the rights to ascertain if the contribution is worth 100 hours of credits.

6. What is the routine of PRAYAS?

Ans. A typical day in PRAYAS follow the following chronology:

4.45 pm - All the students reach PRAYAS

4.50 pm - Assembly begins (Prayer, Recitation, Attendance and talk by Volunteer)

5.15 pm - Commencement of classes

6.45 pm - End of classes

6.50 pm - Concluding Assembly (National Anthem)

7.00 pm - Most of the students go home. Students of higher classes have extra classes till 8.00 pm

7. What is the mode of teaching at PRAYAS?

Ans. We use conventional teaching methods i.e. using portable blackboards and chalk. But we also use other teaching aids like projector and demonstrations occasionally, to keep the kids interested in education. We try to keep the class interactive and encourage the kids to speak out.

8. Which class will I get to teach?

Ans. The volunteers are asked their class and subject preferences when they join. While we try to consider everyone's preferences, one might be allotted a different class if the need be so (according to vacancy).

9. What is the minimum commitment required as a volunteer at PRAYAS?

Ans. It is preferable that a volunteer takes care of at least entire one subject of a class. That may mean 2/3 days per week according to the class allotted.

10. What is the medium of teaching at PRAYAS? What syllabus do we follow?

Ans. The medium of teaching is Hindi. We follow the UP Board syllabus as most of our kids go to schools which are affiliated to UP Board. There might be a few kids from English medium or form CBSE board. In that case, we try to teach the union of the syllabus and try to acquaint all the kids to the technical terms in both the languages.

11. Oops!! I am weak at Hindi, how will I teach?

Ans. If you have a will to teach, you will grasp the Hindi words pretty fast. You can get a lot of help from the resources available in PRAYAS and the volunteers. We have had volunteers from Andhra who didn't know Hindi, but because of their passion for teaching, they kept coming and learnt Hindi a very decent level and left PRAYAS as one of the most popular volunteers.

12. What kind of kids come to PRAYAS?

Ans. Kids belonging to low income groups and living nearby the campus come to PRAYAS. Every kid who studies at PRAYAS is an achievement. We focus on the holistic development of every kid rather than the academic development of just the bright students, since the bright students get opportunities and find their way but the ordinary students are left out and neglected.

13. Is PRAYAS only 1.5 hours of teaching or beyond?

Ans. PRAYAS is way more than just 1.5 hours of teaching. A lot more commitment on behalf of the volunteer is required to make a significant difference. It is very important to realize that the conditions most of the volunteers grew up in were quite different from the condition our kids grow up in. In order to teach them efficiently, we must understand their situation. This can be achieved only when we visit their home frequently and talk to their parents. Also it makes our job easier if we come to PRAYAS with a little bit of preparation. Going through the technical terms in Hindi and having a plan for the day can make things more efficient. Good communication with fellow volunteers teaching the same class helps to coordinate our plans and target; and also to recognize kids who need more attention than others. Punctuality and regularity is something we IITians are not used to; but it is important to realize the impact our irregularity can have. Missing one class on a scheduled day leads to 2 hours of 10 students (20 hours in total) being wasted. If there is some urgent work, pre-informing about your unavailability can help us arrange some alternative. Also it is expected that the volunteers of a given class help the kids in their assembly preparations. Additionally, if the volunteer wants to demonstrate some experiment / activity, coming prepared is very important.

14. Can I contribute to PRAYAS apart from teaching?

Ans. There are a lot of ways one can contribute to PRAYAS apart from teaching. You can contribute by teaching any co-curricular skills like Music, Dance, Fine Arts, etc. during Sundays. Also you can train the kids in a specific sport on Sundays and Fridays. You can help in content development from your hostel rooms. Also you can contribute in developing effective methodology of teaching. You can also help us in collecting educational resources like beautiful demonstrations, interactive videos, developing 3D models, primary kit development, studying the model followed in various other organizations working in the field of education, etc.

15. What happens in the assembly?

Ans. The assembly is intended to help the students develop their personality traits like oration, logical thinking, compassion, etc. We also encourage the students to dream big and try to realize their dream by giving them career counseling and helping them on case-to-case basis. The assembly gives the kids a

platform to put forward their thoughts and discuss issue that is not encouraged at their homes. The assembly is interactive with kids and volunteers asking question after every presentation. The schedule of the assembly is:

- Week 1 – Hindi poem
- Week 2 – English poem
- Week 3 – Talk (The kids choose a topic and put forward their own thought regarding the topic)
- Week 4 – Volunteers
- Monday – Class 3 & 6
- Tuesday – Class 4 & 7
- Wednesday – Class 5 & 8
- Thursday – Class 9 & 10
- Friday – Class 11
- Saturday – Class 12

16. Is attending the assembly important?

Ans. Attending the assembly is very important for the volunteers. The assembly is the platform we get to shape the personality of our kids and build their value system. The kids make mistakes during their presentations and need to be corrected by volunteers. Also the kids expect that the volunteers teaching them listen to their presentations and help them improve. The last week of the month is for volunteers to present something in the assembly. These presentations may serve as ideal for the kids. The kids can have a benchmark and try to achieve those levels. Also the volunteers need to put forward their views in a very balanced way and impart values and good personality trait to the kids.

17. What are the teaching resources available at PRAYAS?

Ans. We have sufficient amount of portable blackboards, chalk sets, mats etc. to carry out classes efficiently at any location in the New SAC. We also have additional teaching tools like visual aids through multimedia projector, 4 computers to acquaint the kids with them, a fully equipped science laboratory, some interactive models for primary teaching, home theatre system and a library consisting of textbooks, reference books and other books for general knowledge, story books, comics, etc. We have sufficient resources to teach the kids in a way that would attract them towards education and keep them motivated.

18. Is reserving one day for sports justified?

Ans. At PARAYS, we teach the kids at their usual play time. Hence our kids have very limited physical exercise and do not get to play games and sports. Not all the students are good at studying; there are some who are more interested in sports or other co-curricular activities. We believe in providing an opportunity to the kids to explore a plethora of options and choose the stream that is best suited for them. Also physical exercise would help the kids to remain healthy. This would help in the kids' overall development. Hence we have one day in the week (Friday) dedicated for games and sports.

19. Why in and around campus only?

Ans. The problem with the education system in India is ubiquitous. But we have to choose a starting point. What better starting point than our own locality? We believe that it is our moral obligation to contribute back to the people who have been serving us for so long. Also proximity factor plays a pivotal role.

20. Why do we focus on every kid rather than emphasizing on bright kids?

Ans. We cannot bring about a change by selectively helping a small section. The bright kids always get opportunities to excel while the average lot remains neglected, especially in the low income groups. And these are the kids who need special attention. This does not mean that we exclude the bright kids who come to us.

21. Why is addressing health issue important?

Ans. As we all know, proper physical, mental and social well-being are important prerequisites for good learning. Of all these, physical health is the easiest to take care of. We have experienced that many of the kids in PRAYAS suffer from various ailments, a few having really serious problems which generally go unnoticed due to ignorance or are deliberately overlooked due to financial constraints. So, unless we address this aspect too, we cannot educate kids properly.

22. Why are we planning to help the kids get higher education / jobs?

Ans. We believe that higher education gives a life changing exposure and is therefore necessary whether one goes for a job or not. In absence of continued support, the kids generally drop out after 12th and might feel that what they had dreamed under conducive patronage of PRAYAS are unrealizable and it might shatter their very faith in education. To preserve this faith so that they can serve as a strong base for their future generation, it is necessary to help them till college education.

23. What do we plan for the kids' higher education?

Ans. Along with regular counseling, encouragement, and help, financial support in form of book grant, partial fee payment, is imperative for helping the kids through college. In case of extremely poor financial condition, we plan to contribute a section of the college fee from PRAYAS.

24. What kind of workshops do we plan to organize and why?

Ans. We believe in the holistic development of our kids' personality. It is important to expose the kids to various skills and train them in their field of interest. Many workshops have been organized for the kids at PRAYAS in the recent past. Some of these are for charcoal sketching, mime, comics making, etc. Most of these events are serendipitous and unplanned. These events expose the kids towards many skills which can help them in their future. Also it provides a refreshing break for the kids from their routine life.

25. Why are we investing in organizing trips to blind schools, schools for the differently abled and excursion?

Ans. We believe that making the kids aware and sensitive to social issues is an integral part of their education. Hence organizing trips to places like blind schools, schools for differently-abled, etc. will help them to evolve as human beings and appreciate these kids. These trips also serve to motivate our kids to learn from their experience and try to overcome the obstacles they face in life. We believe that constant motivation is vital for the kids to excel.

26. Why do we celebrate major festivals at PRAYAS?

Ans. Generally our kids do not get to celebrate these festivals at home due to financial and social constraints. So here at PRAYAS we try to give them a joy, love and affection of these festivities by celebrating together and distributing sweets. This also helps in nurturing a loving relationship between the kids and the volunteers.

27. What is the need of the Annual Function?

Ans. The Annual Function is the only opportunity our kids get to showcase their cultural talents. We believe that this is an integral part of their education. This event marks the annual highlight of PRAYAS and serves as a common platform for the interaction of the kids, their parents, the volunteers and the other campus residents. It helps the kids to boost their confidence and that of the parents in their kids.

If you have any query related to the above FAQs, please feel free to contact any of the following:

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