**ESL Ministry: Basic Description**

ESL (English as a Second Language) Ministry is any ministry that uses the teaching of English as the starting point for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in both Word and Deed.

Most ESL Ministries start with an ESL School. These are free schools for adult Internationals in your community that are staffed by church volunteers. These classes are divided by fluency level. You determine the fluency level of each student through a short interview process (that you learn during our training). The 3 basic fluency levels are beginner, intermediate and advanced. But those can be broken down into more levels. The classes are English immersion meaning that only English is spoken in the classroom. Most classes are about 2 hours long (with a break time in the middle). Classes can be in the daytime or in the evening.

Volunteers do not need to speak a foreign language or be professional teachers. All they need to do is speak English and love Jesus and we can teach them the rest. It is best to have at least 2 trained teachers per class. This way they can share the workload. (It takes about 2 hours to write a lesson plan.) Also it helps when one teacher has to be out due to illness or vacation. In addition it is nice if you can have trained classroom helpers.

Most ESL Ministry Schools use secular life skill curriculum that is used at community colleges. MNA ESL does have curriculum that it recommends but we do not sell it. You must order it from the publisher (and we do not get any financial incentive to recommend their curriculum). You will see samples at the training, plus the MNA ESL Director can share which curriculums have worked well at other ESL Schools. We recommend secular curriculum because you will attract many more students to your school. We feel that you can ethically advertise free English Classes if in a 2 hour class you only do 2 short prayers and a short devotion. However, if you use the Bible as curriculum you must advertise it as a free Bible Study teaching English. That will mostly attract Christians.

Although your classes are free, we do recommend that you ask for donations from your students for their textbooks. That would usually be about $25 per student.

The Gospel is incorporated into your ESL Classes through prayers at the beginning and end of each class (in Jesus’ name) and short devotions (5 minutes) during each class. Our hope is that teachers/classroom helpers will be developing relationships with their students both inside the classroom and outside the classroom. The Gospel is shared more easily within these relationships.

Once your main classes are going well, you can expand your ministry to include more Bible-based options such as an International Sunday School Class or Home Bible Study. These would still teach English but the Bible would be your main textbook.

Your classes will be different from college classes in that you will have open registration; meaning that you could get a new student any week of the year. The Lesson Planning format that is taught during our training will help you adapt to this. Each lesson must stand alone. You will introduce new vocabulary for each class period. Everything you do that class period will revolve around that new vocabulary. You cannot make lesson plans with part 1, part 2, part 3, etc…..

You will also most likely experience a revolving door of attendance. In community colleges where students pay tuition there is a 50% drop out rate. You will have this and possibly more. Nationally in faith-based ESL Ministries we have seen that you will have a core of faithful students. This could be up to 50% of those that are registered. Then you will have some that come regularly but not each week. This is due to job and/or transportation issues. And then you will have some students that come between one and six times and never come back. If your student is poor there is a high chance this will happen because he will be moving frequently for jobs and housing.

We believe that even if a student comes only one time, God can plant a seed in their life. They will have been prayed over 2 times and heard the Gospel once. God can use that!!! However, it is very frustrating for teachers and other volunteers if they don’t know to expect this. There are ways to work against this revolving door. The first is prayer. Each student should be prayed for by name each and every week by their teacher. Next you need to make sure that you are teaching well. No one is coming back to a class that isn’t helping them. And you need to be cultivating relationships with the students. Students come back to places they feel welcomed, wanted and loved. Also, it helps if you can provide childcare. Always follow up with a student if they are absent through a phone call or a snail mail note.

Most ESL Schools go with the public school year. During summer months there are other ways to continue meeting with your students that don’t require as much lesson planning.

We recommend that all ESL volunteers take our training. It is 12 hours long and is usually done in a Friday night and all day Saturday format. We also do the training on Zoom in four consecutive days (3 ½ to 4 hours each day). We encourage even ESL professionals to take this training so they will understand it as a ministry rather than just a school. During this training people will learn how to lesson plan from any curriculum. This is not all lecture. Participants will be practicing what they learn during the training. They will learn and practice repetition drills for introducing new vocabulary and dialogues. They will learn and practice communication practice activities. They will do two lesson plans during the training – a beginner and an advanced lesson plan. In addition, we will look at how to incorporate the Gospel into your ministry.

This is just intended to be a small snapshot of the structure of an ESL Ministry. Please get in touch with the MNA ESL Ministries Director, Nancy Booher, for more information. 410-868-3025 [nbooher@pcanet.org](mailto:nbooher@pcanet.org)

There is also an introductory video and a start up kit (with detailed organizational information) on our website: [www.pcamna.org/esl-ministries](http://www.pcamna.org/esl-ministries)