

## **Galapagos ICE ESL teacher training Context**

### **Context of Education in Santa Cruz, Galapagos**

#### General:

There are currently 8 primary schools and 5 high schools on Santa Cruz Island. Four of these are private schools. Private schools typically have students attend for 6-8 hours a day and government schools 3-4 hours a day. English has been a compulsory subject for a decade or more and both primary and secondary schools have designated English teachers. There is a chronic lack of training for teachers in Galapagos, leaving both teachers' English skills and their teaching skills underdeveloped.

#### Specific to Colegio Adventista and Linda Loma:

Currently (August 2011), Galapagos ICE works with a combination primary-high private school. The primary school is called Colegio Adventista and is located about 15 minutes walk from the harbour. The high school is called Linda Loma and is just a minute or two from the harbour. The two schools collectively employ around 30 teachers. The primary school has 200 students and the high school has 100 students. The school day begins at 7am and ends at 1pm. The school has three holidays throughout the year: one week in July, one week in November and 4 weeks in February.

Class sizes are typically 20-25 students in the private school. Each lesson is 45 minutes. Students in the primary school have a 'main teacher' who teaches them basics such as maths, spanish, nature and social studies. Specialist teachers are then brought in for the teaching of english, music, ICT and PE. In the high school, students have a tutor and then a different teacher for each subject.

The school has a reasonably good supply of exercise books, textbooks and basic stationery. Both the primary and high school have computers available for student use and the high school also has internet available for student use.

Extra-curricular activities include visiting the highlands or the beach. Once a year, the primary school goes camping with the high school. Parents, teachers and students help fundraise throughout the year and a parent committee decides what the money will be spent on, for example finishing the roof.

As well as the underdeveloped English skills of English teachers on the island, the greatest challenge facing these teachers at the moment is the introduction of a new

“code” of conduct by the Ecuadorian government. This code has some positives in that it is aiming to incorporate some of the “restorative justice” techniques popular in Western education systems. This encourages students to reflect upon their own behaviour and decipher through discussion, rather than punishment, how best to correct their own misbehaviour. The code has also seen an increase in contact with parents, encouraging schools to invite parents in to ask questions or to get to know the environment in which their children school. There is also currently an increased emphasis on building critical thinking skills in students rather than the more traditional ‘rote-learning’ style of teaching that many of the teachers here have trained in.

However, the code is also proving highly challenging as it outlaws many forms of sanctions that, alongside reward systems, are the bedrock of successful school behaviour policies. Teachers are not allowed to do the following as part of a school behaviour policy:

- Use detentions
- Hold students back at break or lunch time
- Stand a student outside the classroom to calm down/reflect
- Reprimand a student for being late, talking in class or other poor behaviours
- Draw an unhappy face to indicate poor effort/behaviour either on the board or in a student’s book.

In addition, teachers at Colegio Adventista and Linda Loma feel that they cannot even impose a seating plan if students refuse to move. There have been several cases where students and parents have threatened to report teachers to the authorities for ‘infringing their rights’ when only simple requests have been asked of them.

The suggested alternative to these sanctions include students asking for forgiveness from another student who they have sworn at or delivering a presentation to the class about the merits of good behaviour if they have behaved poorly. This may, however, prove ineffective due to the unfocused and disengaged attitude many students are beginning to show to education.

There are, however, as often is the case, still a strong majority of students who are engaged, focused and motivated to learn. The teachers are keen to learn a range of behaviour management techniques that can coexist with the new code as well as techniques specifically for language teaching.

## **Context of the role of ESL teacher trainer in Santz Cruz, Galapagos**

Because the teachers are working from 7am-1pm, your hours as an ESL teacher trainer will typically be in the afternoon. Sessions last for approximately two hours. You will deliver the sessions in a classroom at a nearby school and will have a whiteboard and pens to work with. There is the option of moving chairs and tables for different classroom layouts according to activity.

There is the requirement for basic ESL teacher training:

- How to teach: speaking English
- How to teach: listening to English
- How to teach: reading English
- How to teach: writing English
- How to teach: English grammar
- How to teach: English vocabulary

However, there are a wealth of teachers here with very creative and varied ideas who now could benefit a lot from a different type of training:

- Classroom management techniques (especially in context of 'the code')
- Special Educational Needs (currently at the high school, they *think* they have only one student identified as dyslexic, they have very little understanding of dyslexia and no resources to assist) (The teachers have identified ADHD as being something they think exists here but they do not know enough about)
- Differentiation (especially amongst language learners who can differ so radically in their level of skill)
- Assessment for learning
- Building Learning Power

The teachers would also be grateful to receive any training on speaking English themselves. Perhaps a session on 'English language for the classroom teacher' would be useful; phrases such as "Face the front" and "Listen please" are not always known by teachers and not always pronounced accurately.

There is a great deal of potential in the English teachers of Santa Cruz. There are a significant collection of teachers who are positive, hardworking and determined to be the very best they can. Their lessons can be fast-paced, exciting and engaging and there is much evidence of genuine and enjoyable learning amongst the student population.