

## **F.A.Q.'s**

This is a list of questions asked by teachers at ECA 2007-2008 that we hope will be helpful in planning and preparing for your experience.

### **Before You Leave**

#### **Passport**

Q: How far in advance should I apply for my Passport?

A: The passport process takes about 2 months unless you pay extra for the expedited service. See [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov). This must be completed before you apply for your visa.

#### **Visa**

Q: When should I start the process of applying for a Colombian visa?

A: Usually you would start gathering your documents and actually go for the visa during the last month before you leave - in May, June or maybe July if you are planning to be in Colombia when the school year begins. The most time-consuming thing for the visa is the paperwork from the school. We do the majority of the work here and send you an envelope with 3 documents that you need. You must complete your part of the visa paperwork, and this can be started immediately.

Q: What are the requirements for a work visa through ECA?

A: You need one basic document which proves your ability to teach. You can use your diploma, transcript, or a teaching certificate (state, ACSI or other). That document needs to be notarized and *apostilized* (a stamp that the Secretary of State places on it to validate that the notary is current and valid) and then translated into Spanish. You also need to fill out the visa request form from the Colombian website and get the required pictures. Besides what is sent to you from the school, you will need your passport, pictures, your filled-out application and your teaching certificate (or diploma or transcript) notarized, *apostilized* and translated into Spanish.

Q: Where can I find the requirements?

A: The requirements are listed on the Colombian Embassy Website and on the El Camino Academy website.

[www.colombiaemb.org/opencms/opencms/consulates/work.html](http://www.colombiaemb.org/opencms/opencms/consulates/work.html).  
[www.elcaminoacademy.com/index.php?hub=13&name=potentialteachers](http://www.elcaminoacademy.com/index.php?hub=13&name=potentialteachers)

Q: What does “*apostilized*” mean?

A: An *apostile* is a stamp that the Secretary of State places on the document to validate that the notary is current and valid. Go to your nearby Secretary of State office. You will pay a fee for each document that you have *apostilized* (the original and the translation are considered one document). You typically will leave your documents for 1-2 business days and can either pick them up or have them mailed (if you provide the envelope and stamp). Have your documents notarized before getting the *apostile*. You can check logistics on your Secretary of State website.

Q: What type of visa do I apply for?

A: Temporary Work Visa, unless your mission already has visa options.

Q: Where do I go to get my visa?

A: Getting the visa is a 1-day trip to your nearest consulate. You will most likely leave your information and paperwork with the consulate for at least 1 day. If you are from out of town, bring a stamped envelope for the consulate to return your passport with the visa. They should return it within 1 to 2 weeks depending on their workload. Some consulates will mail the information without return envelopes.

Q: What is the cost of the visa?

A: You will need to pay \$205 dollars for a 2-year temporary work visa, in addition to the costs of obtaining, notarizing, and *apostilizing* your paperwork.

### **Missions Organization**

Q: What is the purpose of a Mission Organization? What are the benefits?

A: We can recommend a few missions organizations used by teachers at El Camino. RCE (<http://www.rce-international.org/opportunities.htm>) is one used by many new teachers. Their purpose is to provide insurance, financial management of donations and expenses, guidance with tax forms, help with raising support, etc. This service makes it easier for teachers to work at Christian schools throughout the world. You can also find more information about RCE and other organizations on the El Camino Academy website.

### **Raising Support**

Q: What are some suggestions for raising support?

A: Support letters, a Blog, prayer cards, speaking at your church, word of mouth, being willing to share, etc., are some ways to let people know what you will be doing and to ask them to donate. Think of it more as raising a prayer-team – everyone needs prayer.

### **What to Expect in Bogotá**

Q: What are living arrangements for teachers?

A: You can live alone (not recommended), with other teachers, or with a Colombian family. Some teachers share apartments about 10 minutes from school (with no traffic), others live with families about 30 minutes away (with no traffic), and others in between.

Q: What should I expect to pay for housing?

A: Apartments range in price depending on the neighborhood and the number of people living together to share rent (\$200-500 a month). If you live with a family, meals may be included in the price of housing.

Q: Are they furnished?

A: The school has some furniture that is used by teachers. Families often help out with finding and providing necessities. Teachers should expect to have some start-up expenses but we try to keep them minimal.

Q: What would I need to bring or buy (bedding, appliances, etc.)?

A: The school has bedding and pillows to lend teachers but some teachers choose to purchase or bring their own. We also have a few appliances such as refrigerators, microwaves, and washing machines available, but not many of each, so teachers may choose to share a washing machine with other teachers in the area instead of purchasing one. Again, the school tries to help find these more costly appliances.

Q: What are the apartments like?

A: Normally, the apartments are middle-class and very modern, but not very large. We have natural gas for heating water and cooking, cable Internet, and cable T.V.

Q: What is the suggested budget?

A: \$1,200/month, unless you have expenses in the States to pay also. We suggest aiming at raising \$1,000 a month for living expenses, plus whatever your mission

organization has told you for health insurance, social security, etc. \$1,000 a month is a bit on the comfortable side, but if the dollar is still dropping, it is better to be on the conservative side.

Q: What other fees will I need to be prepared to pay?

A: When you arrive in Colombia, you are required by the government to get a *cédula*, a Colombian I.D. card. The cost is around \$60. To complete requirements for the *cédula* you will need a document showing your blood type (which you can get when you arrive in Colombia or bring with you), a photocopy of your passport, and two 3x5 color photographs with a Blue background. Photos can be bought right outside the door of DAS the day you take your paperwork. There will be forms you will complete when you arrive. You have 15 days after coming into the country to go to the DAS office to apply for the *cédula* before being fined.

Q: What personal items should I bring with me?

A: Anything you can't live without. There are many stores and options. You can find just about everything here and for a decent price. Some items that we found to sometimes be more expensive here are feminine products, towels, bed sheets, lotions and beauty supplies, electronics, and books, though some of these are cheaper at times. Feel free to email someone to ask about other specific items you are unsure of.

Q: Is there any type of training/retreat with staff to start the year off?

A: The first few official days of work are orientation days and workdays. These are the days that we help new teachers get to know the school, staff, and Bogotá. The first weekend of September there is a 2-night staff retreat with the school board in "hot country" down the mountain.

Q: What kind of materials does the school have accessible? What teaching materials should I bring?

A: We have over 20,000 items in our library, a great computer system with 24-hour high-speed internet, 2 videobeams, TV's with VHS/DVD players, overheads, a teacher office with 6-8 computers for teachers only, a computer lab for students/staff, etc. We have 2 photocopiers and other miscellaneous equipment and materials, but if you have things you really like, bring them. We also store basic office supplies and class art project supplies.

Q: What is the best/cheapest way to contact friends and family in the U.S. from Colombia?

A: Lingo Phones are a favorite among teachers. They have to be purchased in the States, need a credit card payment of \$25 monthly for unlimited calls to the U.S., and require a cable connection to the Internet. Teachers also use the Internet for video calls through Skype, computer-to-phone OneSuite calls, email, instant messenger, etc. Cell phone plans for calls to the States are \$.50 to \$1/minute.

Q: Should I buy a 1-way or round-trip ticket?

A: Sometimes it is too far in advance to buy the return part of your ticket. Many staff buy a 1-way ticket and then later in the year buy their return ticket. Most newer teachers buy a round-trip ticket for Christmas. Check prices online to decide what is cheapest for you.

Q: Christmas break: stay in Colombia or go home?

A: If you choose to go home for Christmas, you have a little over 2 weeks. However, there are staff members and families that do not leave Colombia, so you would not be alone for the holidays if you decided to stay. Our families take very good care of those who stay. Also, it is a nice time to see the country and enjoy a calmer Bogotá.

Q: What do teachers typically wear to work each day? What does professional attire mean at ECA?

A: Professional dress means business clothing (suit, jacket, black pants, nice shirt, khakis, etc.). More casual is fine as long as it's not jeans.

Q: What is the weather like in Bogotá?

A: Weather in Bogotá is typically a sunny 65 degrees during the afternoon and pretty chilly (40's) at night. We are closer to the sun so you can get pretty warm when outside during the day. However, there is no heating, so when inside, it is cooler. There is no air conditioning – nor is it needed.

Q: Clothing needed in Bogota?

A: We recommend layers and warmer clothing. That way during the day you can take off a layer in the sun and add a layer when it's cooler. Pants are more common than skirts. Rain usually comes unexpectedly and for short periods of time, so it is beneficial to have an umbrella or rain jacket.

Q: Clothing needed for travel outside of Bogotá?

A: Leaving Bogotá usually means warmer weather because the temperature rises as you go down the mountain. Bring bathing suit, shorts, T-shirts, and summer

clothing for the occasional weekend getaway. The farther down you go, the warmer.

Q: Start and ending dates?

A: School starts for students on August 7, 2007, and teachers should try to arrive 2 weeks prior for orientation and getting settled. The school year ends by the first week of June.

Feel free to write us your own questions at [elcaminoinfo@yahoo.com](mailto:elcaminoinfo@yahoo.com). We look forward to hearing from you!