

# HOW TO DISCOVER LITERACY MISSIONS NEEDS

Teaching an adult to read and write, teaching someone to speak English, or tutoring a child who needs help with schoolwork can be a ministry - a ministry called literacy missions. This survey will help you discover literacy needs in your community.

## 1. Find local newspaper articles.

Look for local newspaper articles about your community's literacy needs, educational levels, student performance on standardized tests, students reading proficiency, ethnic population, etc.

## 2. Check the Internet.

Check such web sites as:

National Institute for Literacy [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov)  
national and local statistics (including esl)  
Literacy resources  
links to 57 home pages - national, regional, state

National Center for Educational Statistics [www.nces.ed.gov](http://www.nces.ed.gov)  
Digest of Education Statistics  
Higher Education: Enrollment statistics (for # of international students)  
Drop out rates in the United States  
National Assessment of Educational Progress -  
Reading Report Card for the Nation and States

U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service  
[www.ins.usdoj.gov](http://www.ins.usdoj.gov)  
Immigration and Naturalization Annual Reports  
(# of immigrants and refugees)

## 3. Contact the following organizations. (This list is not exhaustive. It is a beginning point.)

Begin by telling them:

“Our congregation is exploring the possibility of beginning a literacy missions ministry, either working with adults who are functional nonreaders, teaching English as a Second language or tutoring school age children and youth. We are trying to discover what the needs are in our community.”

Do not make promises about what you will do. You are only in the exploratory stage.

A. Ask the person responsible for church and community ministries in your Baptist state convention and the person responsible for church and community ministries in your association:

- Do you have any statistical information about literacy needs in my area?
- Do any area churches or Baptist Campus Ministries have literacy missions ministries?
  - What are their names, addresses? Who is the contact person?
  - What type of literacy ministry do they have?
  - What are dates and times of the ministry?

B. Ask your local Board of Education:

- How many nonnative English speakers are there in the school system?
- How many students drop out of high school each year without graduating?
- How many students are reading at below grade level?
- How many in our city/county over the age of 18 are not high school graduates?
- What services are available to help adult nonreaders and adult non-English speakers?
  - Where and when do they meet?
  - What is the cost?
  - How many are currently served?

C. Ask your local elementary school, junior high school/middle school, high school:

- Do you have students that would benefit from tutoring help?
- How many students do you have who are nonnative English speakers?

D. Ask your local university or community college:

- Do you have international students? How many?
- Does your school provide any services for adults with limited reading skills or wanting to learn to speak English?
  - Where and when do they meet?
  - What is the cost?
  - How many are currently served?

E. Ask your local library:

- Do you have statistical information about the education levels and literacy rates in our community?
- Do you have any statistical information about the high school drop out rates in our community?
- Do you provide any services for adults with limited reading skills or wanting to learn to speak English?
  - Where and when do they meet?
  - What is the cost?
  - How many are currently served?

F. Ask government agency personnel (i.e., social services, community health, jails)

- Do you have clients that need help learning to read and write or to speak English better?
- How many?

G. Ask at military bases (i.e., chaplains, family service directors, base education officers)

- Do you have personnel or family members who need help learning to read and write or to speak English better?
- How many?

H. Ask local businesses (i.e., hotels, restaurants, factories)

- Do you have employees that need help learning to read and write or to speak English better?
- How many?

I. Ask ethnic/language pastors

- Do you have congregation members that need help learning to speak English better?
- Do you have children in your congregation who need tutoring help with their school work?
- How many?

J. Ask ethnic association representatives (i.e., Chinese fraternal organizations, Latino Associations, American/Russian Societies, etc.)

- Do you have association members that need help learning to speak English better?
- How many?

K. Ask your local community-based literacy programs:

- What statistical information do you have about literacy needs in our community?
- What services do you provide?
  - Where and when do they meet?
  - What is the cost?
  - How many are currently served?

NOTE: People working with local community-based literacy programs may suggest that volunteering with their program is the best way to help meet literacy needs in your community. But it is not the best way for your church to reach people and proclaim the gospel. Beginning your own church or associational literacy missions ministry provides the best organizational support for the goal of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Your church literacy missions ministry can cooperate with existing literacy programs without being controlled or limited by their guidelines or restrictions.

#### **4. Compile and present your information**

A. Organize information in three groups - Adult Reading and Writing, Teaching English as a Second Language, Tutoring Children and Youth.

B. Under each heading:

1. Compile the statistical information. If the information is in percentages, multiply percentage times the population/student enrollment etc. for the total number.
2. Make a calendar showing days and times existing literacy services are provided.

NOTE: The existence of other groups providing some services should not prevent your church from beginning a literacy missions ministry. The number of people needing help usually exceeds the capacity of existing programs. The structure, cost, and time schedule of many community-based programs prevent some people from using these services. Students who want to learn to speak English often want to attend classes several times a week and will participate in more than one program.

C. Present this information to your Woman's Union, Missions Development Council, Men's ministry, or whatever group is considering beginning a literacy missions ministry.

#### **5. Pray for guidance.**

Ask God to guide you to the literacy missions ministry your congregation or association should begin. Do not try to begin all three ministries at one time. It is best to start with one. Get that ministry well established before you try to begin a second ministry.

#### **6. Arrange to attend a basic literacy missions training workshop.**

There is a 16 hour basic literacy missions training workshop to equip you to begin and conduct each of the three different ministries: Adult Reading and Writing, English as a Second Language, Tutoring Children and Youth. Contact the person responsible for church and community ministries in your association or Mission Service and Ministries Department, Kentucky Baptist Convention, to see if a basic workshop is scheduled in your area. If not, ask for assistance in arranging a basic training workshop to be lead by NAMB trained workshop leaders.



North American Mission Board  
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**[www.kybaptist.org/literacy](http://www.kybaptist.org/literacy)**

**[www.namb.net/literacy](http://www.namb.net/literacy)**