Catching Fire Staff Formation Program

What is it?

The Catching Fire Staff Formation Program is a whole community approach to staff formation in your school. It means that a core number of staff members from across your staff community will be invited to be directly involved in specific programs designed to connect with their role and context. The involvement in these programs not only signals a commitment to the gift and growth of individual staff, but supports the spiritual heart of the whole school community. The entire program runs over four years and is targeted, developmental and sequential in nature. The engagement in any one program runs over three years.

1. Keepers of the Flame Teachers Program

- One group of 3 experienced teachers begins in 2014 (Phase J)
- A second, and final, group of 3 experienced teachers begins in 2015 (Phase J.2).

A retreat-style Program running over three years, Keepers of the Flame begins with a 2½ day live-in retreat for experienced teachers focusing on developing reflective capacity for their personal and professional spiritual journey. The initial retreat makes for a ‘kairos’ experience for these ‘seasoned players.’ In the first year, this retreat is followed up by a Day 4 that is centred around the St Stephen’s Cathedral precinct. The developmental nature of the program includes reflection on individual stories (my story); our shared archdiocesan story and Church story (our story) centred within the broader meta-narrative of the Jesus story and journey into God (the story), with an understanding of how vocation sits within that. This is a program that allows teachers to reflect on the journey of their lives and their teaching vocation in the company of other teachers.

Features:
- For teachers with approximately 8+ years’ experience in the classroom (3 from each school in first year; another 3 invited in the second year to begin the three year program)
- Use of Parker Palmer approach around ‘the teacher within’
- Focus on own personal and professional journey into teaching
- Includes practical sessions on ‘sustaining the fire’
- Develops a reflective capacity in company with other teachers, using narrative and the rich resources from the Christian tradition
- In the second year, develops the focus on church and vocation within ‘the big picture’
- In the third year, develops a focus on sustaining personal spiritual practice and witness
- Members of the Keepers of the Flame program actively support the Spirit Fire team in their school with initiatives focused on the spiritual life of the staff.
2. Spirit Fire Program

- One group only (APRE + 2 staff) begins in 2014 (Phase J).

The Spirit Fire Program is generally not a live-in Program. It is comprised of 4 formation contact days in the first year, an additional 3 formation contact days in the second year, culminating in a live-in retreat in the third year. The program has a two-fold purpose: to offer spiritual formation to participants and to develop skills for use in their own school staff communities.

The 3 people from each school in Spirit Fire may be drawn from right across the school staff, one from the school leadership team – usually the APRE - and any other two staff members (teaching or non-teaching staff). This core team is not broadened to other staff, but rather concentrated energy is put into this team to further depth their capacity within their school communities over the three years. A key focus is the reading of their own lives through an understanding of scripture and psychospirituality, as well as the learning of skills to walk with others and facilitate small group initiatives and reflection time. Back in their schools, they have particular carriage of systemic resources provided to schools, especially Staff PrayerFire.

Features:
- For those on staff identified as already having interest and potential to be ‘spirit fire’: 1 person from leadership team (e.g. APRE) and two other staff members (including school officers and professional and support staff)
- This core team remains the same over the 3 year Program
- Has two-fold focus: personal formation and skill for being ‘animators’ in the school community
- Days 1 & 2 are consecutive and there is an option (not a requirement) to stay overnight on site.
- Uses scripture tools, prayer practices, group spiritual discernment and psychospirituality tools to allow participants to explore and reflect on their own spiritual journey as well as learn new tools to lead and facilitate
- Includes planning tasks and practice between gathering days
- Directly connective to vocation and Catholic educational ministry.

3. Guiding Lights Leadership Program

- Principal (+DP in secondary schools) begins program in 2014 (Phase J)
- Other Leadership Team members begin in 2015 (Phase J.2).

The three-year Guiding Lights Program begins with a 2½ day live-in Program. Designed for principals and other members of school leadership, Guiding Lights gives particular focus to deepening an understanding of the spirituality of leadership with a ‘head, heart and hands’ approach and includes an ongoing leader companioning program.

Features:
- For Leaders (Principals, Deputies, AP’s and APREs – in Catching Fire schools: in the first year, principals and DPs; in the second year, APs and APREs)
- In first year, uses Enneagram tools to focus on link between spirituality and personal leadership style
- Includes an ‘on the streets’ experience
- Includes a ‘leader companioning’ element as a sustainable form of mentoring and ongoing individual support and development
- Day 4 follow-up to first retreat experience
- In second year, builds focus on wider context of school and church
- In third year, builds focus on sustaining personal spiritual capacity and building spiritual leadership impact in community.
What does it mean to be part of Catching Fire?

As a Catching Fire school, there are 4 boundaries, within which you can shape and plan as creatively and freely as meets your needs.

_Those boundaries are …_

1. **The BCE Spiritual Formation Framework:** You undertake to use this as your basic framework for spiritual formation planning and approach.
   a. It is important that members of the School Leadership Team become familiar with the Framework document.
   b. We encourage you to familiarise staff with key aspects of the Framework.
   c. We recommend working through the Framework section by section as part of your team formation.

2. **Planning and Goal Setting:** You undertake to do some planning and goal setting in the area of spiritual formation – connecting these to your annual goal setting and strategic renewal planning.
   a. Staff spiritual formation should be clearly identified within whole of school strategic planning and goal setting
   b. Appropriate budget provision should be allocated for involvement in the Catching Fire program and for other staff spiritual formation opportunities.
   c. Identify goals and strategic planning for ways in which involvement in Catching Fire will provide a catalyst for whole of staff engagement in spiritual formation.
   d. The 9 Formation Capacities can be very helpful in identifying areas for goals.

3. **General Systemic Initiatives and Resources:** You undertake to use these. They include the Light a Prayer Candle website; the Staff PrayerFire resources available on the Catching Fire website; the Spiritual Formation Network; MusicFire offerings; the Planning and Goal setting resources; web resources.

4. **Staff Formation Program:** (Details on following pages.) You undertake to participate in the three foundation programs: Guiding Lights Leadership program; Keepers of the Flame for experienced staff; and Spirit Fire.

_Within these boundaries …._

Be as free and creative as you need to be to shape formation to meet the context of your staff community. Think outside of set programs to look at what you’re already doing through the lens of the framework, and include simple strategies that integrate easily into staff life.

_Remember some Key Messages …_

☆ This is a wholistic approach – HEAD HEART AND HANDS
☆ This is about Catholic Education – EDUCATION FOR TRANSFORMATION
☆ This is a person-centred approach – MY STORY-OUR STORY-THE STORY
☆ This is about BUILDING POWERFUL DEPTH – not adding another function/load
Staff Discernment:

Involvement in *Catching Fire* Staff Formation Programs

*Give some time to sifting through your thoughts using these questions as your guide*: 

- What was your first instinctive response on beginning to hear about this initiative, and the possibility of direct participation in one of the spirituality programs?
- What does that tell you?
- What is your considered response about it now after some time has passed?
- Has your initial response strengthened... changed in some way?
- What does that tell you about your where you sit with it now?
- What are your other involvements in school initiatives this year?
- Are you able to make the dates for each Program? If not, this is a deal breaker for you this year.
- What other responsibilities/concerns are you carrying this year?
- Do you think that direct involvement in the program will add to the complexity/responsibilities of the year for you or do you think it will support/help/energise you for those responsibilities in some way? (Only you can know the answer to this question)

After considering these things, if you would like to be considered to be part of the face to face programs, write a brief written response to the following three questions and email to your leadership team for consideration.

1. What have you heard/What do you feel ... that draws you to involvement in one of the *Catching Fire* spiritual formation programs? Which program draws you?

2. What are your hopes in terms of what you might gain personally from involvement in one of the programs? (What might be ‘the gold’ for you?)

3. What are your hopes in terms of what the whole staff community might gain from the school’s involvement in *Catching Fire*? (What might be ‘the gold’ for the community?)