

Diocese of Townsville

Catholic
Education



STAFF FORMATION FRAMEWORK

**Catholic Education Schools in the Diocese
of Townsville**

“Our staff deserve all the assistance we can give them to explore the deepest currents of their lives and of their hearts, i.e. their spirituality, if we want them to discover that working in a Catholic school is to work for God.”

- Bishop Michael Putney (2012)

“AMONG MY TOP 3 PRIORITIES FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN THIS DIOCESE IS THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF OUR TEACHING STAFF...”

- Bishop Michael Putney (Light for the Journey... 2009)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Queensland Bishops initiated a research project that spanned three years to identify the 'Defining Features' of Catholic schools for the 21st Century in 2001. The report from the Townsville Diocese listed the following Seven Defining Features of a Catholic School:¹

Catholic Schools in the Townsville Diocese will:

- Have a consistent commitment to Gospel values
- Play an integral role in the evangelizing mission of the Church
- Model God's love for all by being a renewing community where all are valued, affirmed and empowered
- Be staffed by qualified, competent people who give witness to Gospel values
- Be communities of learning that provide quality, relevant, holistic education
- Be sacred places where the spiritual life is nurtured
- Be welcoming and open to all who seek a Catholic education

These Defining Features have been taken on as the Vision Statement for the Townsville Catholic Diocesan Education Office. In order to maintain the strong Catholic identity of these schools, the report also noted as a consequence, that:

“Staff of Catholic schools will have appropriate professional qualifications and ongoing formation”²

1. Townsville Catholic Education Office (2001-2003) "Seven Defining Features of a Catholic School"

2. Queensland Catholic Education Commission (2001) "Catholic Schools for the 21st Century: A Report to the Queensland Bishops" p.7

INTRODUCTION

“UNTIL CHRIST BE FORMED IN YOU...”
(GAL: 4, 19)

We live and teach in a different and changing world. Spiritual formation that might have been presumed among these involved in Catholic Schools 30 years ago can no longer be so presumed. Lay staff have replaced predominantly religious staffing in schools and have quite different formation needs in a post-Vatican II Church and contemporary Australian Culture. Younger staff members have emerged with philosophical and cultural influences that present new challenges for the effective nurturing of their spirituality in a Catholic educational context. Bishop Michael Putney has, as one of his priorities, named the formation of staff in Catholic schools.

There is a challenge for our schools to engage all staff in positive ways in the mission of the church, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus within the spiritual heritage of Catholicism. This needs to be done through an approach that is both connective and respectful of individuals, and that relates meaningfully to their contexts and backgrounds.

The development of these formation programs builds on the good work already in evidence across our schools and allows individuals to grow and develop within the context of their own spiritual journey. Christian Spiritual formation is deeply personal and radically communal in its vision and praxis. While the shape of a spiritual life is, in the end, a matter of unique mystery between God and the individual person, spirituality in the Christian tradition is developed in company.

The healthiest way to view spiritual formation is to see it as a journey. So we refer to it as a path or journey to remind us of where we have been, where we are and where we are going. Not only does it remind us of ourselves, it reminds us of others who have also embarked on the path toward becoming more like Jesus.

WHAT IS FORMATION?

Formation is the spiritual, intellectual, and personal preparation that the Church offers to those men and women who have been called by God to a specific mission. The educational vocation in the Catholic school is one that requires renewal of mind, heart and spirit. Two sources for this renewal are the inner teacher who speaks in solitude, and the formal community of fellow educators. Formation in the Catholic school is both an individual and professional endeavour that involves:

- Recognising the established expertise of the staff in the diverse fields that comprise contemporary education. These professionals are then invited into a formation experience that centres on the foundational concerns that inform the distinctive identity and mission of Catholic Education.
- Recognising that we are all engaged in teaching, learning, leading and serving, no matter the job title, thus expanding our understanding of the truth that “We Teach Who We Are.”
- Acknowledging the lifelong learning process in education which includes formal study courses.
- Providing the opportunity to consider important questions about working in a Catholic school and the ethos, tradition, history, scripture which are part of the school in its role in the Mission of the Catholic Church.
- Understanding that while exploration of one's “inner teacher” is a personal experience, it need not be entirely private, and can often be facilitated through community/parish/school and diocesan programs.
- Acquiring a working knowledge and skills to lead the mission and ministry of education, designed to nurture an educational community who genuinely identify with the Church's ministry, who appreciate its distinctive richness, and who are willing to commit to its long-term viability.

THERE ARE FOUR RELEVANT FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

- QCEC Policy Statement: Accreditation to Teach in a Catholic School and Accreditation to Teach Religion in a Catholic School <http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/administrative-services/employment-in-catholic-education-in-queensland/teacher-accreditation>
- Senior Leadership Positions in Queensland Catholic Schools <http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/administrative-services/employment-in-catholic-education-in-queensland/senior-leadership>
- The Religious Dimension of Senior Educational Leadership in Catholic Schools in Queensland <http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/administrative-services/employment-in-catholic-education-in-queensland/religious-dimension>
- A Guide to Develop a Framework for Staff Formation in Catholic Schools in Queensland 2011 www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/committees/catholicethos_form

FORMAL STUDY

This includes an extensive range of possible courses, some are listed below.

- Graduate certificate in Catholic Education (James Cook University)
- Graduate Diploma of Religious Education/Theology (Newcastle, ACU)
- Master of Theology (University of Newcastle)
- M Ed Lead (ACU)

SPIRITUAL FORMATION PROGRAMS

Each year Townsville Catholic Education offers a series of spirituality programs including retreats. These usually three day programs offer opportunities for reflection, prayer, silence and engaging with scripture. This also includes some opportunities for sponsorship for a “Masterclass” – a formal retreat or spirituality program in Australia or overseas.

COMPLEMENTARY PROGRAMS

A range of opportunities are provided at Principals, Deputies/APAs, Middle Managers, Leading Teacher Christian Meditation meetings, TCEO Induction programs, Assistant to the Principal Religious Education cluster meetings to be immersed in Catholic Ethos, Spirituality/Religious Education/Prayer and Scripture/Religious Life of the School/ Catholic Church History and Tradition.

INFORMAL PROGRAMS

These occur through visiting speakers invited by Townsville Catholic Education and by the diocese. TCEO support pilgrimages organised by parishes and the diocese and encourages Principals to choose sabbatical programs which enrich their experience including courses for audit at Boston College USA. Opportunities to attend World Youth day are encouraged and supported. Parish retreats provide further openings for spiritual development.



QUOTES FROM VATICAN DOCUMENTS

From **ECCLESIA IN OCEANIA**

"...The identity and success of Catholic education is linked inseparably to the witness of life given by the teaching staff. ...School staff, who truly live their faith, will be agents of a new evangelization in creating a positive climate for the Christian faith to grow and in spiritually nourishing the students entrusted to their care."

From **THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM**

"...In the Catholic school, prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers, as individuals and as a community, ...for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirits of human beings."

And

"...Moreover, we must remember that teachers and educators fulfil a specific Christian vocation and share an equally specific participation in the mission of the Church, to the extent that it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose".

CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITY STAFF FORMATION

1. Formation starts from where people are at, not where other people would like them to be, hence the importance of an invitational approach. Guided and led by the Spirit as Jesus was, this approach connects with the person's unique life story and offers ways to connecting with the Spirit through prayer and contemplation.
2. A formation framework will consist of a variety of ongoing formation experiences, and not be a "one off" presentation or experience. It would be helpful therefore to include a range of formation experiences into which staff can enter with confidence and comfort and which provide them with good choices.
3. Formation needs to reflect a relational culture modeled on Jesus Christ who sought to foster a climate of love and compassion and emphasized the dignity of each person. Formation experiences contribute to forming a unique Christian school climate. In the Catholic school, prime responsibility for this rests with the teachers, as individuals and as a community. Staff in Catholic schools can never remain in isolation from the community, but must live in a continual interaction with others.
4. A vision of Church, Christianity and discipleship that reveals what we believe ourselves to be about. It will inspire and express what the Catholic school community holds close to its heart, how it engages others and uses its resources.
5. The programs outlined will be theologically and ecclesially well founded. It is important that schools provide an understanding and experience of Jesus Christ and His Church for staff, students and their families. Formation should be characterized by strong partnerships between parents, teachers and students and with the local church and wider community.
6. The framework will recognize the context of its participants and offers a way to engage critically with the local cultural and social milieu. It is in local community where values are mediated by authentic interpersonal relationships among the various members that form it and be the individual and community acceptance of them.

...where values are mediated by authentic interpersonal relationships among the various members that form it, and be the individual and community acceptance of them. In this way, the life of communion of the educational community... directs its formational action as a service for the achievement of a culture of communion.

In *Christifideles Laici*, Communion is explained in terms of life giving participation: the incorporation of Christians into the life of Christ, and the communication of that life of charity to the entire body of the Faithful. It is a great gift of the Holy Spirit, to be gratefully accepted by the lay faithful, and at the same time to be lived with a deep sense of responsibility. For this to be realized, staff in Catholic schools can never remain in isolation from the community, but must live in continual interaction with others. In this context, formation aims to develop the rich potential that each has inherited.
7. Formation needs to be developmental as it has the power to lead to personal transformation. Some consideration needs to be given to its sequential nature but this does pose the challenge of trying to cater for staff mobility and the tracking of individual programs over time.
8. An emphasis on the experiential can reveal many hidden treasures.
9. The principles of adult education should be applied to ongoing formation processes.

(A Guide to Develop a Framework in Catholic Schools in Queensland. QCEC)



CONCLUSION

Teaching and working in the Catholic School is an important part of the Mission of the Catholic Church and it is hoped that a formation framework will help all staff to grow personally and professionally (QCEC A Guide to Develop a framework for Staff Formation 2012).

Formation is always designed around the distinctive mission of the individual who is being formed. So the formation of staff in Catholic schools must be designed around the vocation of staff in the church's mission in the world. Catholic school staff, in the midst of the world, need a formation that addresses the unique challenges of their calling. This may include the need to be prepared to evangelise individuals, cultures, and structures that may be non-Christian.

"Since the laity share in their own way in the mission of the Church, their apostolic formation is specially characterized by the distinctively secular and particular quality of the lay state and by its own form of the spiritual life." (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 29)

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OUR COMMITMENT TO FORMATION

The Catholic Education Office will:

- Be guided by the Bishop's priorities for Catholic Education
- Disseminate information and remain current in QCEC Guidelines for Catholic school formation
- Provide opportunities for spirituality programs which include the chance to "depth" understanding
- Support formal study in Religious Education/Ethos/Spirituality/Theology with sponsorship opportunities
- Support Principals in taking up the sabbatical leave in ways which meet their needs
- Work with James Cook University to provide some opportunities in this diocese for such study
- Record on KIOSK and make available to staff details of courses completed and renewal hours accrued
- Promote to schools diocesan initiatives for formation

The Principal will:

- Be familiar with the QCEC documents on Accreditation to teach/ Accreditation to teach Religion in a Catholic school, Senior leadership in the Catholic school and The Religious Dimension of Senior Educational Leadership in Catholic Schools in Queensland and bring these to the attention of all senior staff
- Use a selectivity process together with the staff appraisal process to ensure staff have the opportunity for formation
- Discern the needs of the individual and the needs of the school when supporting the TCEO based spirituality programs
- Monitor on KIOSK the accreditation renewal hours and formal study records to ensure the school staff are meeting their obligations in this area
- Work with Administration teams and TCEO Education Consultants to provide some opportunities for formation within their own school community
- Encourage staff to take up diocesan formation opportunities

The Teacher will:

- Be familiar with the QCEC documents on Accreditation to teach/ Accreditation to teach Religion in a Catholic school
- Undertake formal study where required in the first 5 years of service as specified in the employment contract
- Seek out opportunities for formation - formal and spiritual through the school, TCEO and the diocese
- Monitor on KIOSK the renewal hours and pursue prospects local and diocesan to meet the QCEC requirements
- Keep his/her own records of attendance at such programs, and sign in to all so that hours can be recorded on KIOSK



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