

APPLICANT INFORMATION

A Quick Guide to Working in a Flexi

- 1) **Know your young people really well and let them know that you genuinely care about them**
- 2) **Be professional in every aspect of your work and keep young people at the centre**
- 3) **Have fun at work and be supportive of and engaged with the community**

Youth+ Flexible Learning Centres (FLCs) are complex places. They have a staff mix of Teachers, Social Workers, Youth Workers, Administration Workers, Chaplains, Counsellors and others. This, coupled with a cohort of young people with an amazing mix of personalities, histories, life experiences, behaviours, stories and expectations, mean that these are vibrant and sometimes challenging workplaces.

FLCs have no rules, no uniforms, no fees and no religious requirements for attendees. Couple this with working from a framework of two very complex, concepts- “**Operation by Principles**” (Respect, Participation, Honest and Safe and Legal) and “**Common Ground**” and daily life and interactions are usually colourful. Staff induction, formation and training introduces these two key concepts and also touches on trauma informed practice, de-escalation and non-violent intervention training, critical reflective practice, empathy and other concepts and skills that are of assistance to workers. These are all wonderful for a worker’s “toolbox”. However, the work is based on **RELATIONSHIPS** and if we don’t start here then the use/application of these valuable skills/tools and daily work itself can be challenging. We walk with, work alongside and share the lives of these young people and we are simply guests in their lives for a brief part of their life journey. To do this well we must really seek know them well.

FLCs need to be warm, welcoming, non-judgmental and inclusive communities. They need to be the ‘family’ that many of these young people have never had. Unconditional acceptance and love should be the dominant themes. We must have belief in the inherent goodness and potential of every young person. It is our challenge to provide each one with a sense of a HOPE FILLED FUTURE. Traditional “power over” responses to sometimes obnoxious, offensive, disrespectful and possibly violent behaviours will simply perpetuate the responses and behaviours that the young people have exhibited in the past and often reinforce and engrain in them the false perception that they are a failure or dumb or worthless. One of our biggest challenges is to be able to let go of this power over people and opt out of “black and white” solutions. We need to embrace the ‘power with’ position that flows from Common Ground.

Our young people deserve the very best professionalism and work ethic from all staff. The academic program needs to be flexible so young people have the opportunity to learn when they are ready and learn at their level so they can experience success. Some actually realise for the first time that **they can learn**. We need to be punctual, well planned, and fully engaged at all times. We must be constantly checking in with young people, problem solving and thinking outside the square about ways to provide education programs that are appropriate and relative to their individual needs. These young people are the most valuable resource in our country and they deserve the very best of our talents and energy.

Finally, **WORK SHOULD BE FUN!** FLCs should be joyful places. We should smile and laugh often and enjoy our work and our community. These are special places and I believe it is a privilege to be able to work in what really are some of the most authentic Catholic Schools in the Edmund Rice tradition and potentially some of the best educational settings available to young people.

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