Courage to Teach program serves as 'catalyst' for alum

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After earning his Master of Science in Education degree from Dominican in 2012, Jim Fish arrived at a crossroad in his teaching career. His path led him to the Courage to Teach® program at Dominican.

Beginning its ninth year on August 11, Courage to Teach is a professional development opportunity that offers retreats for the personal and professional renewal of teachers and administrators from pre-kindergarten to college. A record 30 educators were registered to attend Courage to Teach’s summer retreat, one in a series of seasonal retreats held at the Santa Sabina Center adjacent to the Dominican campus.

Fish is very familiar with it.

“Courage to Teach gave me courage to be myself and teach my way, with a real clarity about the whys and hows of serving the real growth of each student,” he explains. “I’ve been attending Courage retreats for four or five years now, and each one serves as a benchmark for my career and spiritual growth, and a new catalyst for the coming adventures.”

Fish, who now teaches mathematics and sciences to middle and high school students at Fusion Academy of Marin, was teaching at-risk students at another school when he considered becoming a full-time artist. A Courage to Teach retreat reaffirmed his chosen profession, and helped him to re-connect with his passion for teaching.

“I really liked the idea of taking the time to reflect on my teaching calling in a quiet low-pressure retreat,” Fish says. “The Courage retreats helped me keep my balance and clarify for myself what nourishes me and what I can do to make a difference.”

Fish was inspired to attend a retreat by Margaret Golden, whom he called his “fearless leader” during his teaching certification years. Golden, a professor in Dominican’s School of Education and Counseling Psychology, directs Courage to Teach, the only retreat series of its kind in Northern California which focuses on renewing the inner lives of professionals in education.

“I believe that Jim figured out that as a teacher, he excelled in a one-on-one teaching environment. He had been a tutor prior to getting his teaching credential, and although he really wanted to work in a low-income public school, the work he has done in the Courage to Teach program helped him to realize that he was better suited for a place like Fusion,” Golden says. “After attending an introductory Courage to Teach retreat, he decided to join the seasonal retreat series while he completed his Master’s degree and began his teaching career. It proved to be a very supportive and instructive experience for him while he pursued his career goals.”

Courage to Teach helped guide Fish into a dream job.

“In opening up that surrender, life then led me to my perfect job teaching from my true vision in my ideal school setting,” Fish says. “Go figure!”