



SANCTUARY SCHOOLS POLICY REVIEW 2021/22

New Westminster Schools is committed to providing education to all children living in our community, in safe and welcoming environments – including children and families with precarious immigration status or no immigration status.

The Sanctuary Schools Policy has been in place since May of 2017. This year significant changes in our processes, related to the opening of our new Welcome Centre, have given us timely opportunities to review, revisit and hone the practical applications of the Policy.

Our goal has been to build on past successes and improve the overall experience of each family and each student who wants to join our District ... ensuring that we treat every family equitably and create safe and welcoming experiences that build trust. Why? Because every child in New Westminster deserves to receive our support, no matter what life circumstances brought them to live in our community.

ENROLLMENT NUMBERS

For the first few years of this policy being in place, our District was not actively tracking enrollment numbers, and therefore between May 2017 and September 2020 there were no students officially registered under the Sanctuary School Policy.

But, in order to better gauge how many students and families are being supported by the policy, when registration was centralized a new process was put in place to start to measure that. It's important to note that this information is not shared outside of the Registration Manager (and key administration leads, only when necessary).

During the 2020/21 school year there were six students (five families) registered under the Policy and so far during the 2021/22 school year there have been seven students (five families) registered under the Policy.

MINISTRY FUNDING

All students registered under the Sanctuary Schools Policy at the time of the September 29, 2021 1701 submission were claimed for Ministry funding.

Our goal is to claim all students registered under the Policy after September 29, 2021 for funding in September, 2022. In the spirit of the Sanctuary Schools Policy, we will work confidentially with any family who needs time to provide documents sufficient for Ministry funding. There has been no delay in placement at school or education provided to those students whose family has needed more time and support.

REGISTRATION PROCESS

The opening of the Central Registration Department in January, 2021 followed by the opening of the Welcome Centre in September, 2021 has brought significant and exciting changes to the registration process experienced by newcomers to New Westminster Schools. Having a centralized

process has furthered our ability to uphold our commitment to providing a safe and welcoming environment for all families and students. It has also better enabled us to imbed processes into the registration experience which are all tied to the goal of removing barriers for families.

1.0 Communication

- 1.1 The “[Document Guide for Parents and Caregivers](#)” which lists the documents required for registration, speaks to New Westminster Schools being the first BC district to introduce a Sanctuary Schools Policy and states clearly that if for any reason any of the listed documents are not able to be provided, that a confidential conversation will start the process and offer other options.
- 1.2 The District Website invites parent(s)/caregiver(s) to confidentially discuss options should they not be able to provide any of the registration documents listed in the “Document Guide for Parents and Caregivers”.
- 1.3 The “[Access For All](#)” postcard is posted in both English and Spanish on the District website, displayed openly in the Welcome Centre as well as in schools and offices throughout the District. This postcard describes our pride in and commitment to the Sanctuary Schools Policy.
- 1.4 Administrative Procedure #300 has been updated to imbed the Sanctuary Schools Policy within it, making the Sanctuary Schools Policy part of the process rather than a stand-alone Policy.
- 1.5 When families walk into the Welcome Centre they are greeted and welcomed by the staff within it. The well-trained team at the Welcome Centre are passionate about helping people and their goal is to leave people feeling safe and supported.

2.0 Training/Education of Staff

Training and education of staff at the Welcome Centre and throughout the District is essential to upholding our commitment to the Sanctuary Schools Policy.

- 2.1 Thorough training of Registration Clerks and other staff located in the Welcome Centre.
- 2.2 Ongoing education and discussion of Sanctuary Schools Policy at District Leadership Team meetings.
- 2.3 Education of Clerical Staff at clerical in-services throughout the year.
- 2.4 As part of our annual process, each August we speak to the District Leadership Team and Clerical Staff about the upcoming school year and always include a portion on the Sanctuary Schools Policy.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Through our evolution to a Central Registration system, staff have truly appreciated ongoing input from our families and support from our multi-stakeholder Sanctuary Schools Committee. With such a significant transition to our District operations, there is a learning curve and we are committed to continual improvement in order to best support and welcome our families to New Westminster Schools.

The process our staff follow should a problem or disagreement arise is as follows: it is first handled by the Registration Manager. If no resolution can be reached through the Registration Manager, it is passed next to the Associate Superintendent.



To date, the limited number of issues have been resolved through the Registration Manager and have not had to progress to the Associate Superintendent. Every resident who has applied under the Sanctuary Schools Policy has been enrolled in one of our schools.

CELEBRATING SUCCESSES

The changes to our processes, content and staff training have enabled us to count many successes this year.

- Our staff have seen a great growth in knowledge.
- Families have reached out to us for follow up, feeling comfortable, safe and excited to reach out with updated documentation.
- All students have been successfully placed at one of our schools and have started classes within 2–5 days of registration (depending on which day of the week they registered).

REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While we will continue to review and hone how we work, this new process is continuing to deliver on our established commitment in efficient, safe and supportive ways.

Conversationally, the bulk of the experiences our staff have had are positive in nature. We continue to evaluate each interaction as we strive to ensure we're always meeting the full needs of the community, through our interactions with each individual.

Recommendations moving forward:

- Further imbed registration processes listed in the Sanctuary Schools Policy into Administrative Procedure #300.
- The District should review all relevant administrative procedures that pertain to what the processes and responsibilities are when enforcement agencies reach out to any staff member requesting information.
- Continued reinforcement of the Policy as it relates to staff training.
- Look for opportunities to showcase the positive impact it has on the community.
- Ensure that the work coming out of the District's Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion commitments include considerations for how we can best serve students and families, enrolled under the Sanctuary Schools Policy, who continue to learn in our schools.

