



POLICY WITHOUT PRACTICE: Barriers to Enrollment for Non-Status Immigrant Students in Toronto's Catholic schools

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Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) staff is largely unaware of the rights of non-status students to public education under the Ontario Education Act. This is not the fault of an individual staff person, but rather a systemic problem requiring a system wide solution at the TCDSB Board level.

“Policy without Practice”, an audit of all 201 Toronto District Catholic schools, released today by the Social Planning Toronto, looks at the barriers to enrollment for non-status immigrants in Toronto's catholic schools and is a follow up to Social Planning Toronto's 2008 report entitled: [“The Right to Learn: Access to Public Education for Non-Status Immigrants”](#).

Posing as an extended family member, we conducted phone calls to all 201 TCDSB schools in the City (169 elementary and 32 secondary) We asked each if a non-status child could be enrolled and, if so, which documents were required for registration. Only 31 schools out of 201 indicated that such a child could be enrolled while 57 completely denied admission and 113 did not know if a non-status student could be registered. Out of the 31 that would accept a non-status student, 19 of them required immigration documents such as landing papers, visas or passports, to be provided in order to register.

“These numbers are quite shocking” commented Raluca Bejan, principal author of the report. “And if you only have 31 schools that will admit a non-status child and 19 of them require immigration documents, well, if you do the math, there are only 11 schools that will in fact comply with the Ontario Act and TCDSB policies in regards to the admission of non-status immigrant students.”

Despite the fact that it is the school's responsibility to register a non-status child, many schools that did not know if a child could enroll, suggested we pursue other means in order to seek admission; 97 suggested we contact the TCDSB head office/Board and 17 recommended that we contact the TCDSB Newcomer Orientation Centre.

“This report indicates that significant staff development needs to be done to ensure that all children, and their families, know that Toronto's Catholic schools offer them a safe, welcoming environment, regardless of their immigration status. If this report results in

just one more child being able to access the education they are entitled to, it will be worthwhile.” added John Campey, Executive Director Social Planning Toronto.

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