

NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Education Committee Meeting
Information Sheet

DATE: June 01, 2022
TO: Education Committee
FROM: Kerri Steel, Director of Instruction
SUBJECT: New Canadian and Refugee Families (2022/2023)

As we emerge from the pandemic, immigration channels, and refugee programs are opening up, and we are beginning to see an increase in the number of new Canadian students and families with refugee experiences arriving in the community.

We have a strong partnership with the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (CVIMS) and are engaged in ongoing collaboration with them to ensure that families are well supported as they arrive. CVIMS has received a grant to establish a Reception Centre in Nanaimo, which is expected to open in early 2023. They anticipate that somewhere between 40-150 families will arrive in our community over the next 12-18 months. When families arrive through a private sponsorship, we are often not aware of their arrival until the moment they arrive in our schools. Where they are supported through a formal government program, they will typically be supported by CVIMS, and schools will have a week or two to prepare for their arrival. We have established a registration protocol whereby the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) facilitate the registration process for all new Canadian students in partnership with our Central Registration Office. This is to ensure families receive needed information and have support where they may be missing official documentation or have limited English skills.

This spring, we have welcomed about 10 families arrive from a number of different countries. There is a high level of diversity in the personal experiences, as well as level of English proficiency, among these learners. Our ELL staff have collaborated closely with school teams to ensure that appropriate support is being provided, and that the families have access to the resources they need. We are developing a number of resources in several languages for families, including a “Welcome” handout which describes the registration process, and orientation to school, to assist the CVIMS team and our registration office, with this process.

We have also been working on some capacity building opportunities and resources for school teams. The Ministry of Education recently released a resource entitled Students with Refugee Experience, to support school teams in this work. For example, we have created an orientation checklist for school teams to use when touring new families around their school, and are working on some start-up kits for school teams to have on-hand. We have a session planned with elementary ELL, Inclusion Support Teachers and counsellors in June where we will provide some visual tools, introductory teaching strategies, and coaching regarding the social-emotion support that will be required for many students with refugee experiences. We are also collaborating with secondary schools to ensure they have the knowledge and resources needed for working with ELL learners.

Our goal is to provide as much information as possible to staff this spring, so that they are prepared for the families who will arrive before September. We will staff our current ELL vacancies this spring and continue to monitor things throughout the month of August, so that we are ready to pivot and establish additional support where it is needed in the fall.