

CHAPTER 8

Sanctuary Schooling

A Promising Model for Supporting Immigrant Students

**KAREN HUNTER QUARTZ, NINA RABIN,
MARCO A. MURILLO, AND LEYDA W. GARCIA**

THIRTY YEARS AGO, Donald Trump bought Los Angeles' famed Ambassador Hotel with plans to replace it with the world's tallest building. Using eminent domain, the Los Angeles School Board took the property from Trump and built the Robert F. Kennedy Community Schools to serve the local high-poverty immigrant neighborhood. When the school opened in 2009, no one could have imagined that Trump would continue to shape the property through his presidential policies on immigration. As one teacher shared, when "ICE was being very aggressive in the community, a lot of parents were afraid to take their kids to school." Countering this fear, the Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) Community Schools stood united—with the school district and state—in opposing the Trump administration's immigration policies. In this chapter, we share how one of these schools, the UCLA Community School, has established over a ten-year period a set of norms, structures, policies, and practices that provide one model of sanctuary schooling. We offer this example knowing that not all communities

could or perhaps would even want to replicate our model, but that many policies and practices are transportable to other school contexts.

The UCLA Community School supports and encourages immigrant students like Pedro, a high school sophomore who fled his home country in Central America at the age of seventeen. At the school, Pedro participated in a special seminar for newcomers, engaged in open discussions of immigration policy in several of his classes, and formed supportive and trusting relationships with teachers and peers. All this eventually led him to disclose to a school administrator his fears about an upcoming hearing in immigration court that would almost certainly have led to his deportation, because his family had hired an untrustworthy attorney to represent him. Sensing his anxiety about initiating a legal consultation on his own, the school administrator personally walked him to a legal clinic on the school campus where he could receive help. In the weeks and months that followed, Pedro grew more engaged in school as his fears regarding the possibility of impending deportation receded. Now, with support from teachers and legal representation, Pedro is on a path to legal status and continues to work towards his G.E.D.

Pedro's story, described in more detail below, illustrates the potential of sanctuary schooling. In a time when schools, college campuses, towns, and even states have used the term "sanctuary" to express their solidarity with immigrant communities, it is surprising that the term itself does not have a clear definition. We offer one model of what a robust, multifaceted conception of sanctuary can signify within the context of a school district, city, and state that have also claimed sanctuary status. This means going beyond keeping ICE agents off the school's campus, although clearly this is one important piece of sanctuary.¹ We focus on the school's efforts to create trusting relationships and a strong sense of belonging where immigrant youth and families feel not just a sense of safety but also agency. This conception of sanctuary aims to counter the wide-ranging marginalization of immigrant youth and families in society by creating an equally wide-ranging set of institutional structures, policies, and practices designed to integrate immigrants as coequal partners in the school community and beyond.

Our chapter begins by mapping how and why schools have become a key site for today's sanctuary movement, and how these dynamics played out in the specific context of the UCLA Community School. We then de-

scribe four key steps the UCLA Community School took to create a sanctuary campus: (1) articulating a school policy; (2) creating safe and inclusive instructional spaces; (3) supporting meaningful family engagement; and (4) providing legal resources and support.

DESIGNING SCHOOLS AS SANCTUARIES

The sanctuary movement began in the 1980s, when churches offered shelter to Central American refugees in flight from horrific civil wars ravaging the region. The US legal system failed to recognize the asylum claims of these migrants and actively pursued their deportation. In response, a growing network of churches and synagogues offered the migrants sanctuary. In the renewed sanctuary movement of recent years, schools have been a natural locus of activity, serving two distinct subpopulations of immigrant youth. First, there are the “DREAMers”—the term used for young undocumented people whose parents brought them to this country when they were young and who have received all or most of their education in the United States. These young people tend to be completely acculturated to the United States and yet live with the constant fear that they and/or their family members could be deported to a country they do not know and the ongoing uncertainty about their legal status and future. Schools have become a key site where their vulnerability and the immense societal challenges they face play out.² Second, there are “newcomers,” the term Los Angeles Unified School District uses to refer to any English language learners who have arrived in the United States within the last three years. Many of these students are part of a wave of unaccompanied youth and family units from Central America, who have fled the violence and turmoil in these countries in increasing numbers in recent years.³

In addition to these migration dynamics, the concept of sanctuary schooling is built upon the idea that “the fates of urban schools and communities are linked.”⁴ The community schools movement, set in motion more than a century ago by John Dewey and Jane Addams, embraces this shared fate. Community schools are “the hub of the neighborhood, uniting educators, community partners, and families to provide all students with opportunities to succeed in school and in life.”⁵ Marcelo Suárez-Orozco and

Carola Suárez-Orozco emphasize that “embracing and helping immigrant students to achieve their full potential is the educational challenge of our generation.”⁶

The UCLA Community School was designed in 2007 to build on the assets of local students and families and meet a broad range of social, economic, legal, and educational needs.⁷ Housed together on a historic site, the six RFK Community Schools share responsibility for an enormous twenty-four-acre physical plant that serves over four thousand students and spans an entire city block. Principals from the six schools serve on a building council that governs the site in accordance with a shared vision rooted in the social justice philosophy of the schools’ namesake, Robert F. Kennedy, who was tragically assassinated in 1968 in the Embassy Ballroom of the Ambassador Hotel, now the site of the school’s library. Kennedy’s long-standing friendship with Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and other civil rights leaders is memorialized in this space in a public art mural by Judith Baca entitled “Seeing Through Other’s Eyes.” It is this social justice legacy and ethic of compassion that lays the foundation for sanctuary schooling at the UCLA Community School as well as the other five Robert F. Kennedy Community Schools.

When the UCLA Community School opened in 2009, students living in the adjacent neighborhoods moved to the school from over sixty schools throughout Los Angeles, ending long bus rides out of the community to find a good education. More than 75 percent of children (age seventeen and younger) in the school’s neighborhood are in immigrant families (children who live with at least one parent who is foreign born).⁸ The school’s one thousand students are predominantly Latinx (81 percent), Asian (10 percent), and Filipino (5 percent), and most (92 percent) qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. One in six of these students was born outside the United States, most from Central America, Mexico, and the Philippines, and almost all students speak a language other than English at home. Class sizes range from twenty-two to twenty-five students in elementary grades to thirty to thirty-six in the upper grades. Thirteen percent of students are complex learners, educated in a special education inclusion program. Three administrators oversee a support staff of three counselors, one school psychologist, one psychiatric social worker, one coordinator, one ELL coach, a parent center representative, and several aides and paraprofessionals.

Becoming a sanctuary school has been a decade-long process. Since its opening, UCLA Community School has addressed immigration status at an individual and structural level to build trust between the school and students as well as parents. From ensuring that students could participate in an internship program without requiring a background check to helping undocumented students navigate the college choice process, the school's early years brought to the forefront the need to carefully consider the intersection between legal status and education. Over the years, the school has developed structures and systems to protect students' privacy when they disclose their legal status, seek guidance to attend college, and make post-secondary educational decisions. Through research and local partnerships, the school's work on immigration issues has evolved beyond college going to include wraparound services and supports that address broader needs related to legal status.

ARTICULATING A SANCTUARY SCHOOL POLICY AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

Although the ingredients of a sanctuary policy have been integral to the UCLA Community School since its founding, it was the 2016 anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies of the Trump administration that led the school to a more explicit articulation of its stance. The process was set in motion when the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) board of education passed a policy resolution entitled *LA Unified Campuses as Safe Zones and Resource Centers for Students and Families threatened by Immigration Enforcement*.⁹ A year later, in 2017, the Trump administration issued an executive order that threatened to withhold federal funding from cities like Los Angeles that implemented sanctuary policies to protect immigrants from enforcement activities.¹⁰ Possibly as a response to the federal government's threats, or due to a change in leadership at the board of education, LAUSD passed a new resolution in 2017, with language from the California Constitution and the California Education Code guaranteeing schools as safe havens for learning, free of racism, and discrimination of any kind.¹¹ This resolution presented immigration as caused by "social, economic, and political factors . . . which result partly from U.S. government and corporate policies and interests."¹²

The 2017 resolution reemphasized that ICE presence near schools has negative effects for all students and mixed-status families, and compromises the primary mission of schools: to create a safe learning environment. In response, the district created a companion reference guide with definitions of terms, pertinent laws, education code, as well as a checklist for schools to follow in case of any ICE presence or activity at or near a school site.¹³ The board resolution required the superintendent to ensure all schools became resource centers and included partnerships with community-based and legal organizations to sustain schools as safe havens.

INTEGRATING A SANCTUARY SCHOOL POLICY AT THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY LEVEL

Equipped with the district's reference guide and checklist, local schools faced the challenge of operationalizing and crafting their own sanctuary status. This challenge was taken up by a group of students at the UCLA Community School, who participated in a citywide educational justice coalition called Students Deserve. Initially, students met through their local Students Deserve chapters to discuss how they were impacted by the draconian immigration measures. Students also talked to parents and held forums to ascertain the situation from those most affected. With the support of teachers and parents, students became familiar with the language and elements of the district resolutions and formed a coalition of parents, teachers, and students across the six-school complex to take action. Together, this coalition created the RFK Community Schools (RFK-CS) Sanctuary School Protocol that operationalized key aspects of the board resolution, such as devising a quick-response system and training of personnel across the six schools. The RFK-CS coalition held several meetings and engaged with the community to create a protocol tailored to the distinct needs of the RFK complex with its multiple entry points. The protocol opened with a definition of sanctuary, fittingly called Preamble, an allusion to the US Constitution and the rights therein:

RFK Community Schools are committed to being a safe place for its students and their families in the wake of immigration enforcement efforts.

A sanctuary school is as strong as a school's organization. We believe it is important to be proactive in protecting and providing resources for our families. Our site, in partnership with community organizations and legal services, will be a refuge where families can seek safety, information, and resources if they feel threatened or afraid.

The RFK-CS protocol was divided into three major sections: (a) Safe Zone Protocol, (b) Resource Center Commitment, and (c) Fostering a School-wide Safe Zone Culture. The Safe Zone Protocol included prerequisites for implementation, such as a commitment from all six schools as well as the training of existing crisis teams and all stakeholder groups. The coalition also created preformulated letters for parents in case of ICE activity in the neighborhood. To move its plan forward, the RFK-CS coalition presented the protocol to the RFK-CS building council, knowing it would need the principals' support to train all the teachers from the six schools, campus aides, cafeteria workers, and custodians. Three points of contention arose in the course of these discussions.

First, the Safe Zone Protocol called for "higher security at campus entrances" and the allowance of "fleeing community members as part of a 'policy of temporary refuge'" into a designated area in the campus. The coalition's request focused on street vendors around the site, all of whom were parents of children at RFK-CS. The discussions involved visitor policies and overall safety. In spite of the evidence presented by the students, parents, and teachers regarding the high level of ICE activity in the neighborhood and its negative impact on the community, and the fact that the section mirrored the LAUSD board resolution, the principals were uneasy about enacting such a "radical" protocol.

Second, the Resource Center Commitments included issuing identification cards for parents. Administrators were unsure if they could create forms of identification for the hundreds of parents at the site. The RFK-CS coalition decided to let that request go unfilled as it felt other parts were more pressing.

And third, the RFK-CS protocol requested that school police make a statement—separate from the resolution—to reiterate their commitment to students and families as well as their position not to enter into any

agreement with immigration authorities or agencies. School police did not want to make a separate statement and felt their position, as district employees, was already part of the resolution. The RFK-CS coalition felt a separate statement would assuage the fear felt in the community. This demand was not met, but the school police officer met with students on several occasions and attended Students Deserve meetings to assure students of the protective role of school police and their commitment to never cooperate with immigration agencies. More recently, in light of the Black Lives Matter protests, Students Deserve has been active in conversations to defund school police.

Despite these areas of contention, the council accepted the majority of the protocol. After a few more meetings, they slowly began to calendar days for the RFK-CS coalition to train teachers and staff on the protocol—a requirement of the district resolution. Once the trainings were underway, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Teachers at all sites were moved by the heart-wrenching videos and personal testimonies students presented during their training. Students also trained cafeteria workers and supervision staff. They attended coffee-with-the-principal meetings throughout the site to assure parents that their school was a true sanctuary, a safe haven for students and their families.

In addition, the schools agreed to issue explicit instructions regarding ICE activity around the neighborhood, which required school security to notify administrators, who “would mobilize additional security as needed to campus periphery, while seeking to verify rumors through contacting community-based rapid response networks. Security works to ensure that ICE activity does not spill over onto campus.” The protocol specified that schools would be placed on lockdown given verified ICE activity; information would be shared with teachers and staff. Students would be allowed to check in with families, crisis teams would be activated, and legal service providers would be contacted to support families. Once the building council implemented these campuswide steps, UCLA Community School student and parent trainers visited every advisory in the high school to shed light on the detrimental impact of ICE raids on the community and explain the rationale for the protocol. These visits also included “Know Your Rights” trainings for all secondary students. One teacher expressed concern over the presentations because the stories felt too “real.” Overall, students were not

shocked by the accounts included in the presentations because those stories represented part of their lived experience. Seeing students lead the trainings and share important information was inspiring for the whole community and helped mobilize more members to join a neighborhood rapid response network called the Koreatown Popular Assembly. The school initiated a campaign to sign up parents to receive texts (available in five different languages) regarding ICE raids in the area.

Ultimately, the RFK Community Schools Sanctuary Schools Protocol operationalized and breathed life into the district-level policy. Led by a coalition of students, parents, and teachers, the protocol was a collaboratively crafted, sanctuary schools policy that was locally negotiated and set in motion across the six-school complex and its surrounding community.

CREATING SAFE AND INCLUSIVE INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES

Complementing the school's sanctuary policy, UCLA Community School has worked for over a decade to foster students' and families' sense of belonging and safety inside the classroom. Teachers have designed instructional units on immigration intended to foreground immigrants' humanity, migration stories, and cultural richness. For example, students in an English class might discuss the social construction of having "papers," while in their government class they will debate the contributions of immigrants to the US economy. In addition, the Spanish teacher might facilitate a discussion on ICE, asking students to critically examine its role in promoting a culture of fear in neighborhoods, as well as ways to challenge anti-immigrant systems. It is difficult work to bridge education and legal status issues, but as one teacher shared, "[T]eachers have to be very deliberate in creating spaces where students are encouraged to share their identity." In doing so, teachers affirm and honor community members' immigrant origins and prepare students to be active and critical participants in society.

Drawing on students' and families' funds of knowledge, teachers have developed classroom practices that affirm and acknowledge the intersection between immigration and education. Most classrooms are decorated with posters and signs that indicate educators' support for immigrants. Some have taken the initiative to learn about students' migration journeys and

have joined a community of learners brought together by Reimagining Migration, a project that aims to build young people's knowledge and understanding of migration. Moreover, as a dual-language school, teachers embrace students' home language to enhance learning and build on families' linguistic repertoires.

Despite the heightened barriers to immigration, each year the school welcomes many newcomer students, some of whom arrive unaccompanied from Central America, are eighteen or older, and have interrupted schooling. In response, UCLA Community School created integrated and designated spaces to support newcomer students' educational transition. For example, the school has created a specialized seminar class for newcomer students. This elective offers newcomer students the opportunity to receive targeted academic and social supports. It is a safe space to help students acclimate to the school and their new country, while providing teachers the opportunity to learn about students' lives in their birth country and connect them to support networks. Throughout the semester, guest speakers share resources with students, provide one-on-one support, and talk to them about college and career preparation. Overall, the class fosters a community of learners with shared experiences, whose needs are at the center of the course.

UCLA Community School is one of a handful of span schools in the district and state, serving students from the ages of four to eighteen in transitional kindergarten through twelfth grade. This structural design decision was intended to foster trusting, long-term relationships with students and families and mitigate the risks of students becoming alienated from school when they move between different elementary, middle, and high schools. The TK–12 span also affords powerful opportunities for multi-age learning. For example, to honor students' immigrant status and to support their English language development, the school created an instructional unit for newcomer high school students to write and illustrate a children's book about their migration journey. Throughout the semester, students reflect on their migration journey, giving careful thought to the words and pictures they choose to include. Months of work culminate with a book presentation to fourth- and fifth-grade students. After the presentation, the younger students offer supportive and critical feedback, making recommendations on

the story's flow and ways to enhance its illustrations. Many are also happy to share that they have family members with similar migration stories. This is one of many practices at the school that intentionally address immigration—providing a safe space for exploration, agency, and reciprocal learning.

Beyond the classroom, there are other instructional spaces that address the challenges faced by undocumented students. The college counselor, in collaboration with teachers, administrators, and community members, weaves documentation issues into college presentations and supports for students and families. School staff have learned to be sensitive and responsive to legal status issues and have been diligent in helping students navigate the college application and decision process. As a result, the school sends most of its graduates to college. For example, 100 percent of the class of 2017 graduated with plans to attend college and 86 percent enrolled in college the fall after graduation, compared with 56 percent of students nationally who attend low-income, high-minority schools.¹⁴

The story of Tania is one example of how the school's college-going culture supports undocumented students. Tania had been separated from her mother for a decade and traveled from El Salvador as an unaccompanied youth to be reunited. She kept to herself and had a difficult time adjusting to her new school environment. It took weeks for anyone to hear her voice, but it was evident in her journal entries and artwork that she was a budding artist and scholar. Tania enrolled in the newcomer seminar and shared her immigration experience being held for weeks in detention centers in New York and Texas, until she was finally released to her mother in California. Connecting with adults and peers at the school helped Tania find her way. By the end of sophomore year, she had straight As and was very interested in going to college. Tania graduated in 2018 and is currently a student at California State University, Los Angeles. Her dream is to become a therapist and help other immigrant-origin youth navigate their journeys.

Overall, the school's classroom practices and learning opportunities demonstrate a commitment to center immigrant students' assets, needs, and experiences as a core part of the instructional program. This work requires educators to take the time to know students as well as develop the expertise and sensitivities to address a deeply charged and emotional issue.

SUPPORTING TRANSFORMATIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

A hallmark of community schools is their deep engagement with families, supported through structures such as parent centers, representation on governing councils, home visits, work opportunities, and extended learning programs. Transformative family engagement takes an asset-based approach—challenging the prevalent deficit-based ideas about families from low-income communities of color.¹⁵ For example, parent leaders at the UCLA Community School conduct classroom observations, both to learn more about the school's instructional program and to share their feedback with teachers and administrators. They also analyze data on the school's progress and freely question particular educational practices. In general, teachers are open to these critiques and recognize parents as equal partners in the school community. The school embraces opportunities to support both parent agency and a sense of belonging and safety. To illustrate how the school has created safe spaces for immigrant families, we share the story of one long-standing afterschool program.

The Multigenerational Afterschool Arts (MASA) Program is held in a classroom each Wednesday, providing a creative, inclusive, and fun space for the school's TK–12 students, parents, and family members to gather. Together, they make art, build community, and honor home and cultural traditions. The program is taught by UCLA teaching artists, who work closely with MASA participants to co-construct meaningful learning opportunities. Each weekly session typically accommodates between thirty and forty participants, a large group representing a wide range of ages and artistic competencies.

The teaching artists are informed, sensitive, and creative in engaging families in art making to celebrate long-standing cultural traditions, such as *Día de Los Muertos*, that tie immigrants to their home country.¹⁶ For example, one of the mothers in the program shared (translated from Spanish):

When I made the Day of the Dead projects, I honored my grandmother. In those projects, I remembered and chose to put things that my grandmother taught me, small things like this and that, but things I know that she likes and gave me. It is an honor to think of my grandmother this way because

it is an example of all the sacrifices she made and things that she has given our whole family.

Another parent discussed the complexity of honoring the home culture through the arts, describing an art project she first learned from her grandmother many decades ago, in a different country, as “bittersweet.” While it is joyful to do the projects with her three children because “it helps keep us close as a family and a way to remember our history, and that makes me feel so glad,” this mother described it as a sad experience because as time has passed, the loved ones she is honoring and their home country are both far away and long gone. Sensitivity to these complexities is crucial when asking participants to reflect on their families, childhoods, and home culture.

Community circles are a practice designed to create safe and inclusive spaces to share issues of concern to individuals and/or the group. Part of the larger restorative justice movement, these circles are guided by norms of trust that allow each person to express themselves. For example, on the morning of November 7, 2016, parents huddled in the school courtyard, talking and crying. One father told a counselor, “You know, I am not a rapist. I work hard, I love my children, I don’t hurt anybody.” Later that day, MASA participants gathered in shock and distress and formed a community circle to share their emotions about what the election of President Trump meant to the country, the community, and individuals in the room. There were a lot of tears and fears expressed by everyone, all ages. Sharing in this way gave voice to the collective anxiety and disbelief.

To allow for further dialogue and processing, the teaching artists introduced a “Community through Collage” lesson, in place of the previously designed lesson—exemplifying the type of flexibility necessary in culturally responsive pedagogy. As one teaching artist reflected, “I have noticed that the lesson plans are not the focus of this program, but are starting points for students to build on.” The collage lesson required very few instructions and served as a way for the students and parents to continue sharing their feelings regarding the election, but through art making. Participants made two- and three-dimensional collages in response to the prompt: What does sanctuary mean to you? The collages were then assembled into a sanctuary quilt that felt as

raw and true as the experience in the community circle. The quilt was later displayed in the school's Immigrant Family Legal Clinic, serving as a powerful representation of the community's commitment to supporting one another.¹⁷

As the MASA program example illustrates, sanctuary schools provide myriad spaces that affirm the identity and experiences of immigrant families and give them opportunities to participate in school as equal partners. These spaces are culturally sustaining and support parents to meaningfully engage in the life of the school. Restorative justice practices such as community circle extend beyond the classroom and school day, reminding all members of the community that they belong and are safe.

PROVIDING LEGAL RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

Another key component of the school's robust conception of sanctuary is the on-site Immigrant Family Legal Clinic. This unique partnership between the UCLA School of Law and the LAUSD opened its doors in January 2019 and undertakes three interrelated types of activities: community education, direct legal services, and policy advocacy. This three-part strategy recognizes that legal support is not only about ensuring that immigrants caught up in enforcement have legal representation, although this is a crucial goal of the clinic. In addition, the legal clinic seeks to build trust and empower the community by expanding the number of young people on a path to legal status, providing students and parents with legal orientation and information so they are less susceptible to intimidation and exploitation, and giving legal expertise and support to community efforts to advocate for more just and humane immigration policies.

The story of Pedro, previewed at the outset of this chapter, illustrates how these various components work together. As part of its community education, the clinic provides classroom presentations on a variety of legal topics, including a presentation to the UCLA Community School's newcomer seminar on the basics of the US immigration system for unaccompanied minors. The orientation emphasizes the importance of obtaining legal representation and describes various forms of legal status for which young immigrants might be eligible. After one such presentation, Pedro spoke to a school administrator about his personal concerns about his own immigra-

tion case, and she helped him make an appointment for one of the clinic's free and confidential consultations.

Identifying clients in this manner, through classroom presentations and school-based referrals, is a unique and powerful benefit of having a legal clinic integrally embedded in the school community. There are certainly other legal service organizations that provide representation to immigrant youth and families, but many young people may not connect with these organizations for a range of reasons. First, young people may not recognize the life-changing difference an attorney can make. In addition, they often lack the stability and resources to seek out assistance at an organization that is not already part of their daily routine. Finally, in some cases, like Pedro's, they *do* seek out legal assistance but fall prey to low-quality assistance or even outright exploitation.¹⁸

Pedro had arrived in the United States about two years before the clinic met him, after leaving his home in a rural community in Central America where he had been raised as one of eight children. His mother suffered from numerous health problems, and his father was abusive and violent toward her and his children. When Pedro was twelve, his father abandoned the family, and Pedro dropped out of school to work full-time. He got a job selling handbags in a local market, where he was regularly robbed and threatened by gang members, and sometimes stoned by local vendors who resented his competition. Meanwhile, although his father had moved out, he continued to harass and abuse the family. At seventeen, Pedro could not withstand the stress and abuse any longer and traveled on his own to the United States in the hopes of reuniting with an older sibling who had migrated several years before. Upon arrival, he was immediately apprehended by Border Patrol. After about three weeks in a detention center for unaccompanied minors, ICE released him to his sibling in Los Angeles. His sibling lived near the UCLA Community School and promptly got him enrolled in school. Meanwhile, his sibling also found him an attorney who charged thousands of dollars to prepare an asylum application, which was rejected for technical mistakes. Pedro had several hearings in immigration court, with the judge growing increasingly impatient.

In his consultation with the legal clinic, Pedro explained that he was nervous about the lack of communication or effectiveness of his attorney. The clinic recognized that Pedro had a strong case for a special visa available to

young immigrants who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected by one or both parents. Pedro's attorney had not been familiar with this type of visa and had not taken steps to apply for it. Pedro had a tight time frame to get the application filed before he became too old to be eligible and before his immigration case progressed to the point of a deportation order. The clinic worked intensively with Pedro, aided by the convenience of its location in his school. Pedro, like many newcomers, juggled nearly full-time work with school, so the clinic's accessibility was crucial in getting the work done to file for the visa on time. Like nearly every aspect of the current immigration system, the visa process is backlogged, but while Pedro's application is pending, the immigration judge agreed to pause his removal proceedings, and he received work authorization.

Pedro moved from working for cash in construction to a restaurant job on payroll. Several weeks after the clinic filed his application, Pedro contacted the clinic for a new consultation. This time, he did not want to talk about his immigration status; he wanted to know if some of the treatment he experienced in the workplace was legal. Although the clinic did not find any legally actionable claims, it connected Pedro with a local worker center where he could consider getting involved in organizing alongside other restaurant workers for better working conditions.

Pedro's trajectory—from a seventeen-year-old on a path to a deportation order and/or life in the underground economy, to a twenty-year-old with a strong visa application pending, asserting his right to fair treatment—illustrates the way the clinic plays a critical role in the robust goals of a sanctuary school. Through a combination of presentations to students, parents, and community members on legal topics of relevance to the immigrant community, free and confidential consultations, direct legal representation, and engagement in local policy advocacy efforts, the clinic aims to further the school's broader goal of creating a place where students like Pedro are active participants and agents of change in their communities.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This story of sanctuary schooling is a case study of policy making at a highly localized level. It offers an in-depth, on-the-ground examination of how

one school interprets and enacts policies made at the district and state levels. We have looked inside the collective problem-solving process of a specific school, working to create a safe haven for immigrants in a particular community, at a particular time. We have heard about students developing sanctuary school protocols and training teachers, counselors helping meet college funding gaps for undocumented students, teaching artists and families creating sanctuary quilts, and school-based lawyers helping to change the life course of immigrants exploited within their own community. While it is common to acknowledge that context matters in social change efforts, it is rare to see the local as the foreground—what some have called “the new localism.”¹⁹ Espousing a form of participatory democracy, Bruce Katz and Jeremy Nowak have documented how cities create cross-sector and collaborative networks that “mirror the complexities of the challenges we face.”²⁰ Similarly, we have tried to capture, at a micro-level, how local schools can create collaborative structures and practices that address the very complex challenge of educating and keeping safe immigrant students and their families.

We acknowledge that educators’ ability to act and support undocumented immigrants are nested within distinct local, state, and federal contexts.²¹ As such, while possessing a similar spirit to serve as havens for immigrants, sanctuary schools will look different across regions, and states. For example, in 2017 California passed Assembly Bill 699, which requires that all local educational agencies in California implement certain protections to ensure that all students, regardless of immigration status, have equal educational opportunities. Schools in the K–12 educational system in California (as well as New York, Illinois, and other states) are well positioned to curb xenophobia by creating welcoming spaces where students and families feel they belong and are safe. In contrast, schools in other states (such as Florida, Texas, and Georgia) will face significant challenges to local efforts because of state-level policies that seek to ban sanctuary policies and laws and, in some cases, even attempt through legislation or other agreements to require state and local government entities to enforce federal immigration laws.²²

The United States remains divided on immigration policy and reform, although the 2020 reinstatement of DACA and the Biden administration’s progressive legalization bill are signs that the tides may be shifting. This is

good news because the evidence is clear that immigration status has deep and long-term consequences related to individuals' educational trajectories, well-being, and economic opportunities.²³ We agree with Leigh Patel, who argues that "[s]anctuary cannot merely be given or proclaimed as public rhetoric. True sanctuary requires much more furtive, strategic, and selfless behavior on the part of those who already enjoy the protection of walking freely in society."²⁴ Looking inside one school community's "furtive and strategic" effort to create sanctuary within an immigrant-rich central city neighborhood, we have argued for a multifaceted conception of sanctuary that includes but goes beyond policies that keep ICE agents off campus.

For schools seeking to become sanctuaries, we caution that it takes time and a strong commitment to developing trusting relationships over many years. We recommend creating local policies, protocols, and instructional practices that help all members of the community feel a strong sense of belonging, safety, and agency. Take stock of the myriad spaces that can serve as sanctuaries, including classrooms, college centers, afterschool programs, community response networks, and on-site legal clinics. Develop these spaces to build upon and sustain the many cultural assets of immigrant students and their families. In these spaces, we witness the amazing courage of those in liminal states of immigration, which inspire everyone in the community to a greater sense of what it means to be agents of social change. It is from this foundation that schools can create sanctuary policies, practices, and structures to support immigrant youth, their families, and their communities.