



SEPTEMBER 2011

Welcome to the ANCIE Bulletin, a quarterly electronic newsletter that explores different topics about newcomer children living in BC, including immigrants, refugees, international students and children of temporary foreign workers. This e-bulletin focuses on international students.

International education is a key driver of the BC economy—but what do we know about the social and settlement dynamics for international students in our K-12 schooling system?

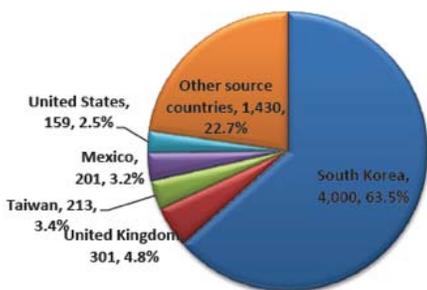
International Students in BC’s Elementary and Secondary Schools

International students, as defined by Statistics Canada, include students in Canada on a visa or refugee claimants, neither of which have a permanent residency status in Canada. In 2009 there were 55,508 international students in BC and 11.4% of them were children (aged 14 and under), higher than the 8% national average. The number of international

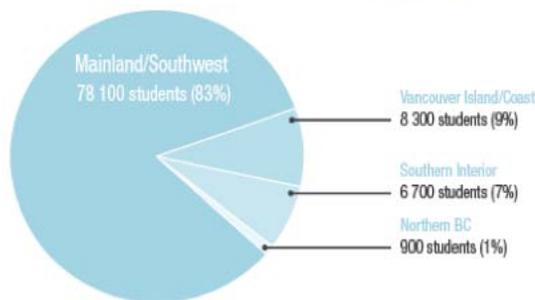
student children in BC has doubled in the last ten years from 3,117 in 2000 to 6,304 in 2009 (Immigrant and Temporary Resident Children in British Columbia. WelcomeBC).

International student children come from over 80 countries and settle in various regions across BC.

Chart 7: Top 5 Source Countries for International Student Children in B.C (2009)



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT NUMBERS BY REGION



International Education Programs in British Columbia

In BC there are 60 public school districts and many independent schools that offer international education programs for newcomer children. While the programs are similar in many ways, each district and private institution has their own policies and application procedures. The following represents some general information AMSSA has collected from the international education programs across various BC public school districts:

- Length of Study: Most programs offer short-term and long-term study options. Short-term programs average 3-8 months and students typically do not achieve academic credits. Long-term programs are one year or longer and students are credited for their studies.
- Program Placement: School placement for elementary students depends on the child’s English language ability, age and the location of the parent’s home. Secondary students are generally placed in school

courses according to assessment results in English and math.

- Program Fees: Program fees range from approximately \$12,000 - \$14,000. Additional fees may include: application fee ~\$200, medical insurance ~\$500, homestay placement fee ~\$500, homestay monthly fee ~\$900, custodian fee ~\$500.
- Homestay/Custodian Accommodation: In the public school system, elementary school students are required to live with a parent or custodian (another adult who is asked by a parent to take care of their child during their time of study). Children over 13 years of age are allowed to live with a Canadian homestay family.

Visit the provincial government website for more information: www.learnlivebc.ca





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The Business Perspective

International education is a key driver for BC's economy. In 2010 international education was one of BC's top five sectors contributing \$1.8 billion dollars to the economy and providing over 21,000 jobs across the province. BC attracts the highest number of international students in Canada and each school district and private institution has developed a targeted recruitment strategy (International Education in British Columbia: Summary of Findings. British Columbia Council for International Education. 2011).

The Social & Settlement Perspective

While the research conducted to prepare this bulletin demonstrated a clear business case for international education, there was an apparent lack of information about the social and settlement issues these newcomer children face. As a provincial association for multicultural non-profit organizations, AMSSA was able to leverage the resources and knowledge of our networks to share the following information about international education and newcomer children.

i) Reasons international students come to BC

Children study in BC as international students for a number of different reasons. Many come to learn English and gain exposure to the Canadian system – an experience which is believed to offer an educational and professional advantage to these children.

Some parents also believe that their children are not functioning or succeeding at school in their home country. The Canadian education system is often perceived to be easier and offer better support for learners. Parents want their child exposed to North American culture, but not for so long that they lose their traditional values.

Although these reasons for why children come to study in BC are well understood among immigrant service specialists, there is a lack of information about the benefits these children actually receive as international students at such a young age. How long they need to study here and the cost benefit analysis of the emotional and displacement issues are not well researched.

ii) Caring for the needs of international student children

Newcomer children who come to study in BC may face a number of issues related to the care and support they receive in their home life. In the public school system, elementary school students are required to live with a parent or custodian. This is typically reported to be the child's mother, while the father remains working in

the country of origin. These families may be isolated, and the mother often has insufficient understanding of Canadian norms, values and systems and minimal English language skills. Furthermore, she is not eligible for settlement services although she may need such support.

In other situations the child may live with another adult who is asked by the child's parent(s) to look after them during their time of study. This homestay situation raises the questions of whether the child's needs are the custodian's primary concern, and whether being removed from immediate family members had led the child to become more susceptible to mental and emotional health issues through feelings of isolation and a lack of social networks.

iii) Support services for international student children

Many newcomers to Canada experience stress in adjusting to Canadian customs and systems, which is further complicated by language challenges and cultural differences. These adjustment issues are significant and the service supports that children generally receive as international students, either in school or the community, do not provide sufficient support.

Generally international students are not eligible for government-sponsored or community-based settlement services that are available to other immigrants to support their full participation in and contribution to the economic, social, cultural and political aspects of Canadian life (the exception being refugee claimant children, who have some access to settlement services). While they face many of the same challenges as immigrants, international students can be a particularly vulnerable group because of their young age and the fact that many are not living with their parents.





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The international education programs within each school district are managed independently and offer different support services. Some of the services offered include school counselors, international advisors and private fee-for-service tutoring, but there is often a lack of knowledge in these systems about settlement-related issues. Some districts in BC have settlement workers/multicultural workers in the schools but their primary role is to serve English as a Second Language students. While some of these workers may provide services to international students they are not funded to do so.

iv) Educator's Perspective

International students bring diversity to the classroom and can enrich the education of BC students; however, some concerns have been raised by teachers, such as:

- International students can be assigned to classes without additional support. This means they don't necessarily have the educational and social supports available to other students, which places teachers in a challenging situation of where to focus their attention. When teachers respond to the needs of the international students this may reduce the support they can provide to all of the other students in the

class (Kuehn, L. and Field, A.. "BC International-Student K-12 enrolment and tuition fees in decline: Update, 2009-10" 2011).

- International students may have behaviour and emotional issues. If English is a second language, this inability to communicate freely can be frustrating for a child. This can affect a child's learning and relationships with the teacher and/or peers. Furthermore, international students may experience "culture shock," which can be expressed through anger, aggression, depression, sadness, anxiety, confusion or withdrawal. And international students' experiences of being "differentiated" from permanent resident students can lead to isolation and lowered self-esteem.
- International students can run the risk of falling significantly behind. Students who speak English as a second language are required to focus on learning a new language in addition to advancing academically. Furthermore, many international students study in BC for short periods of time – this can be disruptive to their learning and also to the teacher's curriculum and planning.

Next Steps

The apparent lack of information and formal research about international student children in BC is a concern for immigrant service providers. AMSSA and our member agencies recommend that investigations into the following issues be conducted to better support resident and newcomer children in BC:

- The educational outcomes of international students – the value of international education for future advanced education and professional development.
- The standards of support services in place to support international students and their parental accompaniment.
- The impact of international education programs on individual school districts – the effects on budgets, staffing, ESL programs and resident children's education.
- The impact of international education programs on individuals.

AMSSA's Newcomer Children's Champion Program

For more information about AMSSA's Newcomer Children's Champion Program or to subscribe to the ANCIE Bulletin, please visit www.amssa.org/ancie or contact Rishima Bahadoorsingh at newcomerchildren@amssa.org.

AMSSA is a province-wide association that strengthens its 75+ member agencies, who serve immigrants and build culturally inclusive communities, with the knowledge, resources and support they need to fulfill their mandates. For more information, please visit www.amssa.org.

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