

## Education Review

Reseñas Educativas



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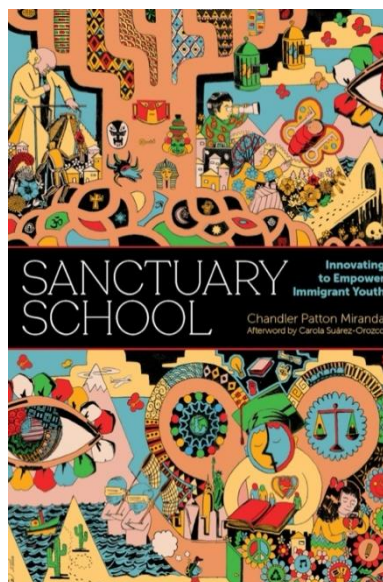
**Miranda, C. P. (2026).** *Sanctuary school: Innovating to empower immigrant youth.* Harvard Education Press.

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In *Sanctuary School: Innovating to Empower Immigrant Youth*, Chandler Patton Miranda offers a timely and compelling intervention into debates about immigrant-origin youth, schooling, and education justice. Rather than approaching sanctuary as a legal status or district declaration, the author conceptualizes sanctuary as a deliberate design orientation, what she terms “radical welcome,” that reconfigures the everyday life of schools around immigrant justice. Grounded in ethnographic research in an International High School within the Internationals Network, the book provides a richly textured account of how educators, students, and families enact sanctuary amid intensifying immigration enforcement and xenophobic political discourse.



*Sanctuary School* builds on and dialogues with the work of Carola Suárez-Orozco, a leading scholar of immigrant-origin children and youth whose research traces how immigration, legal status, and social policy shape development, schooling, and belonging. The book culminates in an incisive afterword in which Suárez-Orozco situates Miranda’s study within broader debates on immigration, equity, and trauma-informed, culturally sustaining schooling, and calls on educators and policymakers to build sanctuary-oriented systems that protect and empower immigrant youth.

The book’s central contribution lies in repositioning sanctuary from symbolic resistance to immigration authorities toward a practice-rich, whole-school framework. Miranda argues that sanctuary must be understood as empowerment, not merely protection, and that schools committed to immigrant justice must be designed with immigrant students in mind. In doing so, she extends scholarship on culturally responsive and equity-oriented school design by demonstrating how policies, schedules, curricula, and adult practices

can be reorganized so immigrant-origin students experience safety, belonging, and shared power across all dimensions of schooling.

Structurally, *Sanctuary School* moves from conceptual framing to ethnographic portraits and then to implications for policy and leadership, offering readers a coherent analytical arc. Early chapters introduce radical welcome as an organizing principle, situating it within literatures on enforcement, surveillance, and the climate of fear that shapes immigrant students' access to schooling, attendance, and academic engagement. Subsequent chapters trace students and educators through admissions processes, advisory structures, classrooms, and family meetings, showing how specific design decisions, open admissions, multilingual communication routines, flexible scheduling, and relational advisory systems, collectively buffer immigration-related trauma. The final sections turn toward leadership, institutionalization, and the limits of sanctuary, inviting readers to consider how sanctuary work might travel beyond the Internationals Network.

Miranda's theorizing about radical welcome is particularly generative. She defines radical welcome as a whole-school orientation in which immigrant, migrant, and undocumented youth encounter consistent signals of safety, dignity, and shared power in classrooms, hallways, offices, and community spaces. Key elements include rethinking admissions to avoid gatekeeping, building advisory models that prioritize relational trust, and establishing multilingual practices that position families as partners rather than problems to be managed. Policies and routines are organized around students' strengths and constraints, including work responsibilities, caregiving, and transnational family ties, rather than demanding that they conform to inflexible institutional norms. This framing resonates with equity planning approaches that treat justice as a guiding design question rather than a supplemental initiative.

The ethnographic chapters are the heart of the book and will be especially valuable to scholars of immigrant education and school climate. Miranda and Suárez-Orozco follow students and educators through high-stakes moments, such as detentions, deportations, and abrupt policy shifts, as well as mundane routines, demonstrating how sanctuary is built through repeated small gestures as much as through formal policies. These portraits illuminate how the school functions as a protective environment in which students can process trauma, access legal and social services, and imagine futures not wholly determined by legal status. Just as importantly, the authors resist romanticizing sanctuary: she attends closely to resource constraints, accountability mandates, and the emotional burdens borne by staff who sustain radical welcome in hostile political climates.

For scholars and practitioners who work with equity-oriented planning frameworks, the text provides cases that map closely onto dimensions such as engagement, rigor, relationships, assets, vulnerability, and cultural identity. The authors show that rigorous academic work need not be divorced from students' lived realities; instead, they highlight pedagogies that center multilingual collaboration, project-based inquiry, and curricular attention to migration histories and community knowledge. These examples help

reconceptualize rigor not as intensified surveillance or workload but as intellectually demanding work that honors students' linguistic repertoires and socioemotional needs. Equally important, the book challenges conventional indicators of engagement by presenting forms of participation that become possible only when students feel safe enough to narrate migration stories, challenge deficit discourses, or temporarily step away to address family crises without punitive consequences.

The implications for teacher education are substantial. The book offers a repertoire of concrete practices; advisory structures, family engagement routines, multilingual pedagogies, and crisis-response protocols, that can anchor course discussions about culturally responsive and equity-focused environments. Teacher educators can use the text to prompt candidates to analyze how their own schools reproduce or interrupt immigration-related harms and to design policy and instructional shifts that move their contexts toward radical welcome. The book also underscores the importance of preparing teachers to navigate the emotional and ethical dimensions of sanctuary work, including accompaniment, advocacy, and collaboration with legal and community organizations, not only the technical aspects of pedagogy.

For school and district leaders, Miranda insists that sanctuary cannot be left to individual goodwill but must be institutionalized through policy, resource allocation, and professional learning. She highlights how attendance rules, data-sharing practices, and accountability regimes can inadvertently expose immigrant students to risk, arguing that leaders must redesign these systems, so schools operate as buffers rather than extensions of carceral logics. The book's emphasis on cross-role collaboration, among teachers, counselors, social workers, community partners, and legal advocates, offers a practical blueprint for institutionalizing radical welcome at the organizational level.

At the same time, the text raises questions that point toward future research. Readers may wish for more extended analysis of how the radical welcome framework translates to rural districts, non-network schools, or international contexts with different legal infrastructures. While the ethnographic depth at a single International High School is a strength, the localized focus leaves open questions about scalability and adaptation. Moreover, although the authors attend to structural constraints, there is limited discussion of how broader political-economic forces, such as austerity, privatization, or datafication—shape the possibilities of sanctuary school design. Addressing these dimensions could further situate sanctuary schooling within critical studies of education policy and governance.

Despite these limitations, *Sanctuary School: Innovating to Empower Immigrant Youth* represents a significant contribution to scholarship on immigrant-origin youth, school climate, and equity-centered reform. Miranda offers both a robust conceptual vocabulary and a practice-rich framework for redesigning schools in ways that buffer, rather than amplify, the harms of immigration enforcement. For teacher educators, school leaders, and researchers concerned with immigrant justice, the book provides an indispensable resource for

reimagining what it might mean for schools to move beyond declarative sanctuary toward everyday practices of belonging and shared power.

### About the Reviewer

**Anne Holdren** is a clinical assistant professor in the College of Education at Illinois State University, where she brings more than 20 years of experience in teacher training and development to her work with pre-service and in-service educators. Her scholarship examines school climate, student belonging, and educational equity for marginalized students, and pays particular attention to sanctuary as both a policy and a practice for immigrant-impacted students. Through her teaching and research, she focuses on advancing educational access, equity, and inclusive practices. Anne is dedicated to supporting educators as they design balanced, supportive learning environments, recognizing that well-prepared teachers are foundational to positive educational outcomes for all students. Across her scholarship, supervision, and classroom teaching, she aims to ground her work in current research while directly addressing the political and practical needs and lived experiences of educators in the field, especially those working with historically marginalized communities.



### About the Author

**Chandler Patton Miranda** is an assistant professor of Education at Molloy University, Long Island, New York. Her research focuses on urban im/migrant education in the U.S. context as it relates to school leadership, institutional culture, and the politics of language learning. Her most recent work appears in *Harvard Educational Review*, *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, and *Equity & Excellence in Education*. She is a former high school science teacher.



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