



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Series: 2008-2009
Circular Letter: C-14

TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Mark K. McQuillan *Mark K. McQuillan*
Commissioner of Education

DATE: June 1, 2009

SUBJECT: **New Student Race/Ethnicity Reporting Requirements**

In October 2007, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) released *Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data (Final Guidance)*. In our February 2008 Public School Information System (PSIS) update memo, we informed you of these changes to be implemented in the 2010-11 school year. This circular letter serves as a reminder of these changes, and provides additional guidance.

Starting at the beginning of the 2010-11 school year, the USDE will require race and ethnicity to be collected by the State Department of Education (SDE) using the following two-part question:

- 1) Is the respondent Hispanic/Latino? – Yes/No
- 2) Is the respondent from one or more races using the following (choose all that apply):
 - a. American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - e. White

The SDE will begin collecting student-level race and ethnicity data using these new categories in the summer of 2010, via the PSIS Registration Module. To prepare for this transition, the SDE is encouraging districts to begin the process of reclassifying their existing students as soon as possible (please note that for the 2009-10 school year the original five racial categories will still need to be used for data submission to SDE). Suggestions for collecting this new information include: 1) revising your student registration forms for new students; 2) revising your beginning of the year student information forms; 3) sending parents notification of the change and asking them to reclassify their children on a separate form; and 4) any other method deemed appropriate for your district. Information about the actual data submission via PSIS will be distributed at a later date.

Attached to this letter are three resources:

1. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About the New Race/Ethnicity Categories;

Circular Letter: C-14
June 1, 2009
Page 2

2. Definitions of the Race and Ethnicity Categories; and
3. A sample letter to parents for collecting updated student race and ethnicity data, should a district choose this method.

If you have any questions about the new race and ethnicity reporting requirements, please contact Diane Murphy at 860-713-6891 or via e-mail at diane.murphy@ct.gov, or Kendra Shakir at 860-713-6896 or via e-mail at kendra.shakir@ct.gov.

MKM/se

Attachments

ATTACHMENT 1

Frequently Asked Questions about the New Race and Ethnicity Categories and Reporting Requirements

Q: If a student is identified as Hispanic, do they also need to select a race?

A: One of the major changes is the recognition that members of Hispanic populations can be of different races. The federal government would like to afford Hispanic/Latino populations the opportunity to better describe themselves according to their culture and heritage.

Q: Can a parent refuse to classify their child/children entirely?

A: Yes, a parent can refuse. However, the *Final Guidance* requires that in this event the district must make a determination about the student based on observation. The parent, at time of refusal, must be notified that the district will be designating the race and ethnicity for the child.

Q: What should we do if a parent identifies their child/children as Hispanic/Latino but refuses to answer the question about race?

A: As with the scenario in which a parent refuses to classify their child/children entirely, in this case the district must select a race based on observation. It is important that forms used to collect this information explain the separation between ethnicity (Hispanic/Latino Yes/No) and race.

Q: How will the new race and ethnicity categories impact subgroups for AYP calculations under NCLB?

A: The SDE is currently reviewing this issue. The USDE is giving states flexibility in how they determine the race/ethnicity subgroups.

Q: Do you have to reclassify all of our existing students?

A: Yes. The old classification system does not contain sufficient information to be used under the new system. A student's old classification can be used as a starting point for classification if the parent refuses to classify the student, but cannot be the sole basis for an observation designation.

Q: Why are we changing the new system?

A: To comply with federal education regulations, all states must collect PK-12 student demographics in this manner.

Q: Will the reporting of staff data be affected by this change?

A: Yes, staff data will eventually need to be collected by these categories, but the timeline for this change has yet to be determined.

Q: Are districts required to use the Department's Student Race and Ethnicity Questionnaire?

A: No, a district can create their own version of the questionnaire, but it must meet the requirements detailed in this letter.

Q: How do I conduct an observer identification of race and ethnicity?

A: Below are suggested steps to include in observer identification procedures:

1. Rely first on existing information before you actually “observe” the race or ethnicity of the student, but check your information source to the best of your ability. For example:
 - Check the student’s prior record to determine whether a racial category was selected in the past. This can narrow down the possibilities, but you may still need to determine whether the student is multiracial or has selected one of the “old” categories that has been separated (e.g., Asian and Pacific Islander, or Hispanic with no race identified).
 - Check whether a student’s sibling in the school has re-identified a race and ethnicity during the reclassification. There is, however, a possibility of different race and ethnicity among siblings as a result of adoption and blended families.
2. If sufficient existing information is lacking, you may look for clues from other sources such as:
 - First-hand knowledge about the student or his/her family (check with a teacher or counselor);
 - The student’s and parent’s country of birth or country of origin;
 - The student’s home language or parent’s home language of preference; and
 - Knowledge about the community to which the school belongs.

Q: What should we do if we believe that a student or a staff member is of a different race or ethnicity than he/she claims to be?

A: The school or district must accept an individual’s self-identification of his or her race and ethnicity. Self-identification is a basic principle underlying these changes. The *Final Guidance* specifies that in the elementary and secondary level, the identification of a student’s racial and ethnic categories is made primarily by parents or guardians. A high school student may self-identify his or her own race and ethnicity category.

ATTACHMENT 2

Definition of Race and Ethnic Categories

| Category | Definition |
|---|--|
| Hispanic/Latino | A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. |
| Asian | A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand and Vietnam. |
| Black/African American | A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa or other Pacific Islands. |
| White | A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa |

ATTACHMENT 3

Sample Letter to Parents

XXXX, 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians:

I am writing to inform you about new regulations from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) regarding the mandated collection of data on race and ethnicity for public school students. The USDE has developed a new way to collect and report race and ethnicity, which includes new racial and ethnic categories.

These new categories were developed in order to provide a more accurate picture of the nation's ethnic and racial diversity. This will provide the opportunity for individuals to be more accurately identified in racial and ethnic classifications, and in more than one racial category. In the past, you were allowed to choose only one race for your child.

We are asking parents and guardians to complete the brief form on the reverse side of this letter in order to update the information on their child's/children's race and ethnicity. These data will be used, as in the past, for example, to comply with federally-mandated reporting requirements. It is important to note however, your individual child's data will not be released.

If you have any questions about the collection of race and ethnicity data, please contact

_____.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe
Superintendent of Schools

Student Race and Ethnicity Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions about your child/children in the table below: 1) Is your child Hispanic/Latino, yes or no? and 2) What is your child's race? Check all that apply. Please note that you may refuse to answer these questions, but in this event a school district staff member will need to make the identification for you.

| Child's Name | Is this child Hispanic/Latino? (check only one) | | What is the child's race? (Check one or more, even if you answered "Yes" to the Hispanic/Latino question) | | | | |
|--------------|---|----|---|-------|---------------------------|---|-------|
| | YES | NO | American Indian or Alaska Native | Asian | Black or African American | Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | White |
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Parent or Guardian Signature: _____

Definitions: Hispanic/Latino: A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. American Indian or Alaska Native: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. Asian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines Islands, Thailand and Vietnam. Black or African American: A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa or other Pacific Islands. White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.