Race and Ethnicity
Data Collection Policy
LEA Implementation Guide

Spring 2010

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Implementation Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide Local Education Agencies with an understanding of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education's (OSSE) new policy for collecting and reporting data on ethnicity and race for elementary and secondary students. This implementation guide will provide a detailed understanding of the following questions:

(1) What the new policy is,

(2) How this new policy will impact student data collection,

(3) How this new policy will impact student information systems, and

(4) How this new policy will impact the data reporting process?

TOPIC 1: OVERVIEW OF POLICY CHANGES

1.1 Policy Overview

In 1997, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published new standards for federal agencies on the collection of racial and ethnic data. The Department of Education (Department) carefully examined its options for implementing these new standards and discussed the options with a variety of individuals and organizations representing educational institutions to ascertain their needs and interests, and examined how other agencies collecting similar data were providing guidance. The Department carefully balanced the needs of collecting comprehensive and accurate data in carrying out its responsibilities with the need to minimize burden on educational institutions.   In December 2007, the Department published new standards for collection of data on race and ethnicity.

These new standards allow a respondent to self-identify his or her race and ethnicity, and allow a respondent to select more than one racial designation. The new standards require the use of a two-part question, focusing first on ethnicity and second on race when collecting the data from individuals.

1.2 Race and Ethnicity Data Collection Requirements under the New Policy

Under the new policy, two different questions and distinct responses are required. The first part asks about the broad category of ethnicity, and the second part asks about the more narrow divisions of race. The first part asks the respondent to identify his or her ethnicity as a Hispanic or Latino. This ethnicity question must be asked first. The second part of the question asks the respondent to identify his or her race. The respondent may select one or more races. The respondent must answer both the ethnicity and the race question. Hispanic is considered an ethnicity, and therefore Hispanic is not included in the race selection. LEAs may not include a category for "multiracial", "other race", or other similar categories when collecting data from individuals using this two-part question for ethnicity and race. A Local Education Agency (LEA) may include additional race categories to reflect the diversity of its population. The only requirement is that the additional categories must be collapsed into the five federal race categories as listed in the following example.

EXAMPLE FORMAT

Part 1: Ethnicity

What is this person's ethnicity? Check one:

☐   Hispanic or Latino (A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.)

☐   Not Hispanic or Latino

The above part of the question is about ethnicity, not race. No matter what you selected above, please continue to answer the following by marking one or more boxes to indicate what you consider your race to be.

Part 2: Race

What is this person's race? Choose **one *or more*** races to indicate what you consider yourself to be.

Race		Classification
☐	**American Indian and Alaska Native**	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintain 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. It includes "Asian Indian," "Chinese," "Filipino," "Korean," "Japanese," "Vietnamese," and "Other Asian."
☐	**Black or African American**	A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. It includes people who indicate their race as "Black, African Am., or Negro," or provide written entries such as African American, Afro American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian.
☐	**Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander**	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands. It includes people who indicate their race as "Native Hawaiian," "Guamanian or Chamorro," "Samoan," and "Other Pacific Islander."
☐	**White**	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who indicate their race as "White" or report entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Near Easterner, Arab, or Polish.

Parents and Guardians:
The District of Columbia, in compliance with guidance from the Department of Education, requires each student have an ethnicity and race response recorded. If you do not provide a response, school staff will be required to perform observer identification and provide a response on your behalf.

1.3 A Comparison of Current and New Federal Race and Ethnicity Data Reporting Standards

Race and Ethnicity Categories Comparison	
CURRENT Federal Reporting Standards	NEW Federal Reporting Standards
American Indian or Alaska Native	Same (American Indian or Alaskan Native)
Asian or Pacific Islander	Separate into two categories: • Asian • Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
Black or African American	Same (Black or African American)
Hispanic or Latino	Same, except that individuals are now asked to choose an ethnicity (Hispanic or Latino or not Hispanic or Latino) as the first part of a two-part questions, as well as race(s).
White	Same (White)

Individual Data Collection Format Comparison	
CURRENT Federal Reporting Standards	NEW Federal Reporting Standards
Respondents are to select one of the five racial and ethnic categories above. The category that most closely reflects the respondent's recognition in his community should be used for purposes of reporting on persons who are of mixed racial and/or ethnic origins.	Respondents are asked to select both an ethnicity and one or more of the above five racial categories. (Hispanic/Latino is considered an ethnicity, not a race category.)
Some data collections request race and ethnicity separately. If those were used, the minimum designations were: **Race** (Choose one): • American Indian or Alaskan Native • Asian or Pacific Islander • Black • White **Ethnicity** (Choose one): • Hispanic origin • Not of Hispanic origin	A two-part question is mandatory, with the ethnicity part asked first. **Ethnicity** (Choose one): • Hispanic/Latino • Not Hispanic/Latino **Race** (Choose one or more, regardless of Ethnicity): • American Indian or Alaskan Native • Asian • Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander • Black or African American • White

1.4 Why is OSSE Implementing this Policy Change?

OSSE is implementing this policy change to comply with the guidance defined by the Department of Education. The new policy will allow individuals to more accurately identify themselves, reflect population and census changes, and align with other agencies that are using the new standards. OSSE has fully adopted the Department's requirements and additional recommendations made by the Department to promote data quality and efficiency in OSSE's data collection and reporting efforts.

1.5 What is the Effective Date for the New Ethnicity and Race Collection Policy?

In accordance with the Department's timeline, OSSE is requiring all LEAs begin reporting data using the new ethnicity and race collection categories for all students by no later than the beginning of the 2010–11 school year.

1.6 How Will This Policy Change Impact Student Enrollment Forms?

LEAs are required to revise and implement these changes on all forms that collect responses for race and/or ethnicity by the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year. The data collection forms will need to be revised to include the new ethnicity and race question in two-part format. The forms will also need to be revised to allow individuals to select more than one race as depicted in the example on page 5 of this guide. In line with the example on page 7, new data collection forms must:

1. Ask the ethnicity question first; and
2. Allow respondents to select more than one race category.

TOPIC 2: RE-IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Re-Identification Requirements for Returning Students

OSSE is mandating LEAs conduct re-identification for all returning students enrolled in the 2010-11 school year. LEAs should request the parent or guardian of all returning students to re-identify the student's ethnicity and race using the new two-part ethnicity and race question.

2.2 Re-Identification Requirements for Students that Participated in Pre-Enrollment

OSSE is mandating that LEAs conduct re-identification at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year for students that pre-enrolled using the new two-part ethnicity and race question.

2.3 Re-Identification Requirements for Future School Years

After the implementation of the new ethnicity and race codes for school year 2010-2011, LEAs will not be required to conduct student re-identification for students previously enrolled. LEAs must require all new students enrolled after the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year to provide answers to the two-part ethnicity and race question.

TOPIC 3: OBSERVER IDENTIFICIATION REQUIREMENTS

3.1 Observer Identification Requirements for Respondents that do not Respond to Both Parts of the Question

The preferred method of collecting race and ethnicity data is through the parent, guardian or the student. However, for elementary and secondary education students, if a parent, guardian or student does not complete the two-part question, then the educational institution should take steps to ensure that the respondent has intentionally refused to complete both parts of the question, before using observer identification.

The Department requires the use of observer identification at the elementary and secondary school level as a last resort, if ethnic and racial data are not self-identified—by the student or more typically for K-12, the student's parents or guardians. In alignment with the Department, OSSE is requiring school level observer identification when the parent, guardian or student refuses to complete both parts of the question.

For school level observers, OSSE is providing the following guidelines for observers to help perform this duty.

3.2 Observer Guidelines

Each student enrolled must have an ethnicity and race response recorded. Observer identification is used <u>as a last resort</u>, after other efforts to increase the chance of having a student, parent or guardian identify the student have failed. If a parent, guardian or student fails to provide a response to the ethnicity or race question, OSSE is requiring school staff to make an attempt to have the parent, guardian or student complete the two-part question. If the school staff fails to secure a response to the two-part question by the parent, guardian or student, school staff **ARE REQUIRED** to complete the two-part question using observer identification.

Self-identification is based on how people define themselves and their children. Assigning a race and ethnicity to an individual is a somewhat arbitrary exercise because these are not scientific or anthropological categories. Assigning race and ethnicity to another person is a difficult task, given the emotionally charged feelings and deep beliefs that many people have concerning the issue. Your role as an observer for federal reporting purposes is simply to assign ethnicity and race categories to the best of your ability. ***It is important that you are consistent in your observations, and make your judgments objectively.***

In addition to visual observation there are ways to help determine an individual's race and ethnicity. 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 re-identification. There is, however, a possibility of different race and ethnicity among siblings as a result of adoption and blended families.

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 or parent's country of birth or country of origin;
- The student's home language or parent's language of preference; and
- Knowledge about the community to which the school belongs.

3.2.1 Observer Identification: Selecting an Ethnicity

If, in prior records, an individual has indicated that he or she was Hispanic, then the ethnicity question is answered. Your role is to observe and select a racial category. Many Hispanic individuals consider "Hispanic" as their race (partly due to past experience of using this as if it were a racial category). They may look for "Hispanic" or "some other race" in the race question. When they do not find it, they leave it blank. Following up might be all that is needed to collect the information directly from the student or parent.

A student may volunteer his or her ancestry rather than answering "yes" to the Hispanic/Latino ethnicity question. The following is a list of Hispanic ancestry groups to which Hispanic individuals may refer themselves:

Spaniard	Andalusian	Asturian	Castillian	Catalonian
Balearic Islander	Gallego	Valencian	Canary Islander	Mexican
Mexican American	Mexicano	Chicano	La Raza	Mexican American Indian
Mexican State	Costa Rican	Guatemalan	Honduran	Nicaraguan
Panamanian	Salvadoran	Central American	Canal Zone	Argentinean
Bolivian	Chilean	Colombian	Ecuadorian	Paraguayan
Peruvian	Uruguayan	Venezuelan	Criollo	South American
Latin American	Latino	Puerto Rican	Dominican	Hispanic
Spanish	Californio	Tejano	Nuevo Mexicano	Spanish American

If an individual has indicated their ancestry is one of the groups listed in the previous table, then the observer should provide a response indicating the respondent is **Hispanic or Latino**.

3.2.2 Observer Identification: Selecting a Race

In general, the new federal requirements merge race and geographic/national origin. For example, "White" is defined to include people who originate from Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. Though not an exhaustive list, the following chart may help in connecting geographic/national origin with a race.

If an individual considers him or herself to be:	…or comes from one of the following countries or regions:	…and assuming single-race, the individual may be identified as:
European American	*Northern Europe* such as: Britain (Scotland, Ireland, Wales) Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden *Western Europe* such as: Belgium, France, Holland, Luxembourg *Central Europe* such as: Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Switzerland *Eastern Europe* such as: Belarus, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Ukraine *Southern Europe* such as: Bosnia, Catalonia, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Malta, Montenegro, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain *Other* such as: Caucasus, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan	White
Middle Eastern American	Afghanistan, Egypt, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria. Turkey, Yemen	White
North African American	Algeria, Egypt, Morocco	White
Black, African American, Afro-American	Bahamas, Barbados, Botswana, Ethiopia, Haiti, Jamaica, Liberia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Nigriti, South Africa, Sudan, Tobago, Trinidad, West Indies, Zaire	Black
Asian American	Asian Indian, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, Cambodia, China, Taiwan, Philippines, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Okinawa, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lankan, Thailand, Vietnam; or ancestry groups such as Hmongs, Mongolians, Iwo Jiman, Maldivian	Asian
Pacific Islander	Caroline Islands, Fiji, Guam, Hawaiian Islands, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Polynesia, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tarawa Islands, Tonga	Pacific Islander
Australian or New Zealander-not an indigenous person	Australia, New Zealand	White
Aborigine, Indigenous Australian, Torres Straits Islander, Melanesian	Australia, New Zealand, Torres Straits Islands	Pacific Islander

TOPIC 4: RECORDING THE NEW ETHNICITY AND RACE CODES IN STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The two-part ethnicity and race question will need to be recorded in your school's student information system. Providing the ability to record the two-part question in your school's student information system will require a technical change to the student information system.

4.1 How Will This Policy Change Impact the Method by which LEAs Report Race and Ethnicity Data Recorded in the SIS to OSSE?

Beginning with the 2010-11 school year, LEAs must provide an electronic report that captures a response to the two-part race ethnicity response. LEAs must electronically report data to OSSE in the following format:

1. **Ethnicity Question.** LEAs are required to provide a respondent's selection in electronic format that identifies a respondent as "Yes" for Hispanic or "No" for Non-Hispanic.
2. **Comprehensive Race Question**. LEAs are required to provide a Yes/No response for each and all race categories. The responses must be provided to OSSE in electronic format. The electronic format **must** indicate a selection for each race category.

4.2 How Will This Policy Change Impact our Student Information System?

In order to facilitate compliance with federal reporting requirements, LEAs are required to upgrade their student information system (SIS) to record responses to the new two-part question. The SIS will also require an upgrade to allow registrars and other data entry staff to enter multiple race selections for individuals. Local education agencies are required to implement the SIS upgrade by the beginning of the 2010-11 school year.

TOPIC 5: RECORDINGKEEPING REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENT DATA COLLECTION FORMS

LEAs are encouraged to retain the original paper record at the location where it was received. At a minimum, educational institutions are required to maintain the data collection form used to collect responses to the two-part ethnicity and race question for a period of three years. One obvious exception to the general three year form retention period are cases in which litigation, a claim, an audit, or another action involving the records that has started before the 3-year period ends has occurred. In these cases, the records must be maintained until the completion of the action. Prior to discarding records, LEAs should consult state law at D.C. Municipal Regulations (DCMR) Title 1 chapter 15.

TOPIC 6: DATA AUDITING TO PROMOTE GOOD DATA QUALITY

To ensure the accuracy of data received from the schools, OSSE requires individuals who are responsible for the collection of student enrollment data to audit and review the respondent's answers to the two-part ethnicity and race question. Key areas to review for data quality:

- ✓ Did the respondent answer the ethnicity question?

- ✓ Did the respondent select at least one race?

- ✓ Does the ethnicity response on the student enrollment form match the response recorded in the student information system?

- ✓ Does the race selection(s) on the student enrollment form match the race selection(s) entered in the student information system?

TOPIC 7: STAFF TRAINING

OSSE recommends that all LEAs provide training to staff that are responsible for the collection and/or reporting of student enrollment data. The staff should be trained on the following:

A. Two-part question response requirement and question order;
B. Multiple race selection option;
C. Student Information System data entry;
D. Data auditing procedures;
E. Responsibilities as an observer as detailed under the Observer Identification section of this policy;
F. Re-identification requirements as detailed under the Re-Identifying an Individuals Race and Ethnicity section of this policy; and
G. Record retention requirements as detailed under the Recordkeeping requirements section of this policy.

OSSE recommends that LEAs conduct appropriate training prior to the start of the 2010-11 school year.

To support LEAs and schools in implementing this policy change, OSSE will provide LEAs with a training guide for registrars and data entry staff. This training guide will help your school staff understand the new policy and their responsibilities under the new policy. In addition, OSSE will conduct web seminars for LEAs and schools to review the details of this policy. This training initiative will be offered in the spring, 2010. LEAs should encourage their registrars and other data entry staff to participate in a training session.

TOPIC 8: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

(1) When does this new policy take effect?
The new policy takes effect at the beginning of the 2010-11 school year.

(2) Why is Hispanic not listed as a selection for a race code?
Hispanic is considered an ethnicity and not a race. Therefore Hispanic is not included as a selection for race.

(3) Our school has a student that answered "Yes" to the Hispanic ethnicity question and Hispanic is not included in the race selection. Does the student have to pick a response in the race selection?
Yes. A response is required for both the ethnicity and the race question. Hispanic is considered an ethnicity and not a race. Therefore, the student, parent or guardian must select a response to the race question. If the student, parent, or guardian is unable or unwilling to respond to the race question, observer identification must be performed by school staff to provide a response.

Example
Previous policy: Student A is reported as Hispanic (race)
New policy: Student A is reported as Hispanic (ethnicity) and White (race). (Student A selects no other race categories.)

(4) Our schools have students that have completed student enrollment forms during the pre-enrollment period. How do we handle this?
Students that previously submitted student enrollment forms during the 2010-11 pre-enrollment period are required to re-identify themselves by completing the new form that contains the two-part ethnicity and race question. This re-identification process should be completed at the beginning of the 2010-11 school year by the student, parent or guardian.

(5) When will schools need to start entering the two-part question into our student information system?
LEAs are required to collect the new race and ethnicity data at the beginning of the 2010-11 school year. LEAs should coordinate with your student information system vendor to determine an appropriate time prior to the beginning of the school year to implement the upgrade.

(6) Who will provide training to registration data/entry staff on entering responses to the two-part question into our student information system?

Due to the fact that LEAs use various student information systems, OSSE is unable to provide support or training on recording responses to the two-part question into student information systems. OSSE will be distributing a training guide for registrars to provide guidance on this new policy. In addition, OSSE will offer web seminars in Spring, 2010 to prepare LEAs and school staff to implement this new policy. These training seminars will be open to LEAs and school staff. OSSE is recommending that LEAs encourage their staff to attend a web seminar. OSSE is also recommending that LEAs provide training for their specific student information system to registration and data entry staff.

(7) What should schools do if a parent or guardian does not answer both parts of the ethnicity and race question?

Each student enrolled must have a response recorded for the two-part ethnicity and race question. For PK – 12 students, each school is responsible for taking steps to obtain a response from the parent or guardian. If the parent or guardian is unwilling to complete the two-part question, a school staff member is required to perform observer identification and answer the two-part question to the best of his/her ability.

(8) Are registrars or other school staff required to perform observer identification in cases where the parent or guardian refuses to complete the two-part question?

A response is required to the two-part ethnicity and race question. If the student, parent, or guardian does not respond to the both parts of the question, school staff are required to perform observer identification to provide a response to the two-part question.

(9) What if registrars or school staff have to perform observer identification for a student and they are not sure what ethnicity or race to select for the student?

The primary requirement for performing observer identification is to answer the question to the best of their ability. School staff should be advised to check previous forms submitted by the student, or if the student has a sibling that attends your school, school staff can check that student's record for any information that may help them determine the student's ethnicity and/or race. For assistance selecting an ethnicity, staff can refer to the Observer Identification Selecting an Ethnicity section on page 10 of this implementation guide. For assistance on selecting a race, staff can refer to the Observer Identification Selecting a Race section on page 11 of this implementation guide.

(10) What are schools required to do with student enrollment forms after the forms are completed?

Schools are required to keep student enrollment forms for at least three years. One exception to the three year form retention period are cases in which litigation, a claim, an audit, or another action involving the records that has started before the three year period ends has occurred. In these cases, the records must be maintained until the completion of the action. Please refer to the Recordkeeping Requirements section of this implementation guide.

(11)   Is OSSE providing student data collection forms to LEAs with the new two-part ethnicity and race question?
OSSE is not providing data collection forms to LEAs. LEAs will need to modify existing forms or develop a new form to collect the new two-part ethnicity and race question and distribute the revised form to your schools.

(12)   If schools have returning students that have previously provided a race on student enrollment forms from a previous school year, do these students have to re-identify?
Yes, all returning students are required to re-identify by providing a response to the new two-part ethnicity and race question. This re-identification process will provide students, parents or guardians with the opportunity to provide a response to the ethnicity question and select one or more races.

(13)   Who do I contact for questions on the two-part question or for observer identification?
For policy related questions, contact one of the following OSSE resources:

Name/Title	Phone	Email
Gretchen Guffy, Program Director Statewide Longitudinal Education Data Warehouse	(202) 727 - 6782	Gretchen.guffy@dc.gov
Tami Martin, Change Management Lead Statewide Longitudinal Education Data Warehouse	(202) 481-3797	Tami.martin@dc.gov

(14)   Where can I find more information on this federal policy?
For more information on this federal policy, please visit the Department of Education's Web site at
http://www2.ed.gov/policy/rschstat/guid/raceethnicity/index.html

(15)   What information can LEAs send to parents and guardians informing them of this new policy?
This guide includes sample letters and a policy overview document that LEAs may use to communicate this policy change to parents and guardians. Please reference Topic 9 of this guide.

TOPIC 9: SAMPLE CORRESPONDENCE FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

OSSE is mandating LEAs conduct re-identification for all returning students enrolled in the 2010-11 school year. LEAs should request the parent or guardian of all returning students to re-identify the student's ethnicity and race using the new two-part ethnicity and race question. In order to support LEAs in this effort, OSSE is providing two sample letters that LEAs may use to communicate the District's revised policy and facilitate the collection of the new ethnicity and race categories using your LEAs revised data collection form. In addition, OSSE is providing an overview, the Government of the District of Columbia New Federal Guidelines for Reporting Ethnicity and Race Data for Students, that LEAs may distribute to parents or guardians to communicate the policy change.

LEAs should consider distributing a sample letter to parents and guardians, the policy overview, and your LEAs revised data collection form to parents and guardians prior to the beginning of the school year to facilitate the re-identification requirement.

SAMPLE LETTER 1

[Date]

Dear Parents and Guardians:

I am writing to inform you about new guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education regarding the collection of data on race and ethnicity for public school students. The federal government, which requires all states to collect this information, has developed a new way to report ethnicity and race that includes new categories.

The federal government has developed these new categories in order to provide a more accurate picture of the nation's ethnic and racial diversity. This will enable individuals to be identified in ethnic and racial classifications and in more than one racial category. In the past, forms allowed individuals to be identified in only one racial category and did not delineate between race and ethnicity.

Currently, public and charter schools in the District of Columbia ask families to provide information on students' race and ethnicity at the time of enrollment. Beginning in fall 2010, we will ask the families of newly enrolled students AND of all current students to complete a new data collection form to update their children's ethnicity and race.

The data with the new ethnicity and race categories will be used in the same manner that such information is currently used, such as in reporting and analyzing test results for the District of Columbia Comprehensive Assessment System (DC-CAS). The new categories will replace all existing categories for use in state and federal data collections that include data on ethnicity and race.

The enclosed policy overview sheet provides additional information about these changes. Our office will distribute the new data collection form and instructions for completing the form at a later date. Information regarding the collection of data on race and ethnicity is also available on the OSSE Web site at www.osse.dc.gov.

Respectfully,

[Name]
[Title]
Enclosure

SAMPLE LETTER 2

[Date]

Dear Parents and Guardians:

I am writing to inform you about new guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education regarding the collection of data on race and ethnicity for public school students. The federal government, which requires all states to collect this information, has developed a new way to report ethnicity and race that includes new categories.

The federal government has developed these new categories in order to provide a more accurate picture of the nation's ethnic and racial diversity. This will enable individuals to be identified in ethnic and racial classifications and in more than one racial category. In the past, forms allowed individuals to be identified in only one racial category and did not delineate between race and ethnicity.

Please complete the enclosed form and return to the [office name] by [date]. If this form is not returned, a designated school staff member will observe and select racial and ethnic categories on your behalf, as required by the federal government for reporting.

The data with the new ethnicity and race categories will be used in the same manner that such information is currently used, such as in reporting and analyzing test results for the District of Columbia Comprehensive Assessment System (DC-CAS). The new categories will replace all existing categories for use in state and federal data collections that include data on ethnicity and race.

Information regarding the collection of data on race and ethnicity is also available on the OSSE Web site at www.osse.dc.gov.

Respectfully,

[Name]
[Title]
Enclosure

Government of the District of Columbia
New Federal Guidelines for Reporting Ethnicity and
Race Data for Students

Overview

The U.S. Department of Education requires all states to collect information on the race and ethnicity of public school students and staff. The federal government has developed a new way to report ethnicity and race that includes new categories. The changes should provide a more accurate picture of the nation's ethnic and racial diversity. Beginning in the fall of 2010, families of all students will be asked to complete a student data collection form to update the reporting of their children's ethnicity and race.

If I have already provided this information to the school system, why must I provide it again?

In the past, forms for reporting race and ethnicity to the federal government allowed individuals to be identified in only one racial category. The new form enables individuals to be identified in ethnic and racial classifications and in more than one racial category. The federal government is requiring that ethnic and racial information for all students be reported in this new way in order to more accurately reflect the nation's diversity.

How will the information be used?

The data with the new ethnicity/race categories will be used in the same manner that racial/ethnicity data are currently used. The new categories will replace the existing categories for use in all state and federally sponsored statistical data collections that include data on ethnicity or race. Some examples include student report cards and test results.

Who provides the information?

Parents or guardians will complete a student data collection form provided by your school. The form will allow parents/guardians to identify their children's ethnic and racial identify.

When and how will the new information be gathered?

Public schools in the District of Columbia will follow the new federal guidelines beginning in the fall of 2010. The new data collection form will be distributed to you by your child's school. The families of newly enrolled students AND of all current students will be asked to complete the form and return it to the school.

Where can I find more information?

More information is available on the OSSE Website at www.osse.dc.gov
or on the Department of Education's Website at
http://www2.ed.gov/policy/rschstat/guid/ raceethnicity/index.html

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