



Office of the State Superintendent of Education

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MAYOR ADRIAN M. FENTY

March 18, 2010

Dear LEA Leaders:

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is issuing new guidelines for how all local education agencies (LEAs) must collect information on race and ethnicity. Beginning in fall 2010, OSSE will require the families of students to complete a new data collection form. LEAs must do this both for all newly enrolled students and for all current, continuing students.

This change is being made to conform with federal requirements issued by the Office of Management and Budget and following guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education. Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, LEAs must use a two-question format to separately ask individuals to report their ethnicity and their race. In addition, individuals must be able to select more than one racial category. Previously, LEAs used forms that did not permit the selection of multiple racial categories and did not separately ask about the individual's race and ethnicity. These new categories are designed to provide a more accurate picture of the nation's ethnic and racial diversity.

The data from the new racial and ethnic categories will be used in the same manner as the previous categories. The new categories will replace all existing categories for use in state and federal data collections that include data on ethnicity and race. We are aware of the impact this change may have on data collection in your LEA and any trend data that is collected, including reporting and analyzing test results for the District of Columbia Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS). OSSE will make every effort to minimize disruptions to trends by "bridging" the data from the old to the new categories. Bridging is a methodology used to estimate how multi-race individuals would have identified under the old single-race system to facilitate trend analyses using data collected under the old and new standards.

Enclosed are two guides to help you implement this change: an LEA implementation guide that provides further details about the requirements and a training guide to prepare registrars and other data entry staff to implement this policy. Additional information regarding the new federal standards for collecting race and ethnicity data is also available on the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/rschstat/guid/raceethnicity/index.html>. OSSE will offer web seminars to assist LEAs in implementing these new guidelines. Information on these seminars will be distributed at a later date. Please contact Gretchen Guffy (Gretchen.Guffy@dc.gov) if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
/s/

Kerri L. Briggs, PhD
State Superintendent of Education

Enclosure