

Race and Ethnicity Data Collection FAQ

Questions parents and students may ask regarding the Federal Government's revised race and ethnicity data collection categories

Q: Why is this information needed?

A: In the last few decades, the demographics of our society have changed significantly. As a result, the Federal Government issued revised race and ethnicity reporting categories which allow students and staff to describe who they are in a more accurate manner. This information is also used for funding and evaluation purposes, as well as civil rights compliance. Racial and ethnic data also aids in evaluating placement and program needs. The U.S. Census utilized these new categories in 2000, and education and human service agencies will follow.

Q: Haven't we provided this information before? Why do you need to ask again?

A: The Federal government is collecting this data in a different way. To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to identify him or herself more accurately, the data is being recollected.

Q: Will the school release my student's race and ethnicity to other parties?

A: Individual student records are protected by the Federal Education Records and Privacy Act (FERPA). The new race and ethnicity standards have no effect on FERPA's protection of student records. FERPA does not designate race and ethnicity as directory information, and race and ethnicity have the same protection as any other non-directory information in a student's education record. This information will not be reported to any Federal agency in a way that would identify you or your child. No one will check immigration status from the information you give here, nor will your student be discriminated against in any way. However, the total number of students in each category of each school is reported to ensure schools are receiving the proper educational programs and services they need.

Q: Why do Hispanic/Latino students need to identify a race?

A: The Federal Government recognizes the fact that members of Hispanic populations can be of different races. Marking a person's race and ethnicity are two parts of one question. If the question is not answered completely, an observer must fill in the missing information on the person's behalf.

Q: Can I refuse to provide this information?

A: Yes one may choose not to provide this information; however, if one chooses not to provide such information, schools are required to provide an answer on one's behalf.