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News Release

Changes Announced in Collecting Racial and Ethnic Data to Follow Federal Requirements

The Colorado Department of Education today announced changes in how racial and ethnic data will be collected and reported beginning with the 2010-2011 school year.

The changes, triggered by a federal government decision in 1997, will lead to gathering more detail about the race and ethnicity of all students and all district staff.

Previously, federal reporting standards placed students into one of five groups—American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino or White.

Under the new system, parents will first be asked to indicate the ethnicity (Hispanic/Latino or Not Hispanic/Latino) of their children and then choose one or more racial categories—American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, White and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

Respondents must answer both parts of the two-part question:

Part A: Do you consider yourself to be of Hispanic/Latino origin?
(Answer yes or no.)

Part B: Which of the following groups describe your race? (You may select more than one.)
(Answer American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, White or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander)

“We can better serve all students in Colorado by improving accuracy in reporting of data about our students,” said Barbara Medina, Assistant Commissioner for Innovation and Transformation. “This change in collecting racial and ethnic data will more accurately reflect the changing demographics in Colorado and it will also improve reporting by providing categories of identification that better match the diversity within our state. It will also allow us to be consistent with federal reporting practices and enhance access to federal resources.”

The National Forum on Education Statistics cited the following rationale for the change:

- Collecting and reporting racial and ethnic data using these new standards will better reflect the current racial and ethnic makeup of communities.
- The new collection format will allow school districts to allocate their human and financial resources more accurately and equitably.
- The new data will afford individuals of multiracial background an opportunity for the first time to select multiple categories to better represent their culture and heritage. One of the major reasons for the change in collection and reporting is the recognition that members of Hispanic populations can be of different races.
- The new approach is more user-friendly because it acknowledges the racial and ethnic heritage of students, parents and staff members.

The definitions for federal reporting categories are the same for students who identify themselves as American Indian or Alaska Native, Black or African American or White.

The previous reporting category of “Asian or Pacific Islander” will be split into two new categories: “Asian” and “Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander.”

With 64 possible race and ethnicity combinations, the changes mean that regardless of the race combinations of individuals, each individual must be counted in one of the following seven race and ethnicity combinations for federal reporting purposes:

1. American Indian or Alaska Native
2. Asian

3. Black or African American
4. Hispanic of any race
5. White
6. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
7. Two or more races.

Beginning in the 2010-11 school year, these seven new race and ethnicity categories will be used for all state and federal reports, including graduation and dropout rates, pupil and teacher counts and Adequate Yearly Progress reports.

Students and staff who identify as Hispanic or Latino will be counted in the Hispanic category for purposes of state and federal reporting, regardless of the race(s) indicated.

There are several resources available regarding the race and ethnicity reporting changes at www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rvRace-Ethnicity.htm

A chart on page six on the PowerPoint titled "CDE Race/Ethnicity PowerPoint Training Presentation 2009" displays how the detailed race and ethnicity data collected from parents/students and from staff members will be converted to reporting categories.

Since 1997, federal agencies have been working to adopt the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requirements, known formally as the Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity. The U.S. Department of Education released its final guidance on maintaining and collecting data to follow these revisions in October, 2007.

Other federal offices have already adopted the new collection requirements. The U.S. Bureau of the Census used the new approach beginning in 2000; the Federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) began collecting data using the new categories in 2007.

Some districts will be making these changes in race and ethnicity data collection prior to the 2010-2011 school year. Parents should be aware that if they choose not to answer the two-part question, the district is required to identify an ethnicity and race on behalf of the student. The state does not anticipate large shifts in how Colorado students and staff are reported so the impact to student outcomes (assessment

results, graduation and dropout rates, etc.) should be minimal at the state level.

To prepare districts for the changes, CDE's Data Services Unit is in the process of training school district staff about the changes and how to implement the new collection and reporting requirements at the district level.

Frequently Asked Questions

Taken from "Managing an Identity Crisis: Forum Guide to Implementing New Federal Race and Ethnicity Categories."

Q: Why the change in the way racial and ethnic data is collected?

A: The demographics of society have changed significantly in the last few decades. These changes will allow students and staff to more accurately describe who they are.

Q: Is the federal government checking immigration status?

A: No. The provided information will be maintained in a student record. It will not be reported to any federal agency in a way that identifies a child or a parent.

Q: Will the school release a 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.

Q: Why do Hispanic populations have to answer more questions?

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: How do students know they won't be discriminated against after marking they belong to a minority group?

A: This is exactly why better racial and ethnic data about our students and staff needs to be collected. The district maintains this information about each individual in his or her record, in case a civil rights investigation surfaces.

Q: *You can't make students answer the questions, can you?*

A: No, we can't; but providing the information is beneficial for the parent and child. The school district is required to provide an answer on the child's behalf, if the child/parent chooses not to provide such information. The federal government believes that in getting aggregate numbers from states and districts, it would be more preferable to have complete data this way, than having missing data.

For more information, contact Mark Stevens, 303-866-3898, or Megan McDermott, 303-866-2334, in the CDE Office of Communications. To sign up for the CDE e-mail news service, please visit <http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/index.html>.

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