



Race/Ethnicity Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Introduction:

The race and ethnicity of students and staff in Colorado public schools will be collected in a new way beginning in 2010. Schools will begin using a two-part question to collect racial and ethnic data. These changes are based on an adjustment in federal requirements, finalized in October 2007 and will affect students and staff in Colorado schools.

General Topic

1. Q: What is race and ethnicity?

A: The definition used in “Readings for Diversity and Social Justice: An anthology of racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and classism” defines an **ethnic group** as: socially distinguishable from other groups and has developed its own subculture—which can include nationality, religion, and language—and has a shared feeling of peoplehood. Sometime people see ethnicity aligned with national origin.

The concept of **race** is often problematic, in that it has been defined as a distinct human type based on inherited physical characteristics. For many social scientists, (anthropologists & sociologists), race is considered a social construct and all races are simply a variation of a single human species of common prehistoric ancestry.

District Topics

1. Q: How is the collection changing?

A: Schools will begin using a two-part question to collect racial and ethnic data. Everyone needs to answer **both** questions. The first question is, “Do you consider yourself to be of Hispanic/Latino Origin?” The second question is, “Which of the following groups describe your race?” This question asks if students including pre-K and K students/staff identify with one or more of the following five racial groups: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, black or African American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, white.

2. Q: How are ethnicity and racial groups defined in CDE collections?

Note:

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A: Definitions are:

- *Hispanic or Latino* means a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The term "Spanish origin" can be used in addition to "Hispanic/Latino or Latino."
- *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 a 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 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.

3. Q: When is it required?

A: Collection will begin in the 2010-2011 Student October collection (STUOCT). During that school year, changes will be implemented in all of the impacted CDE collections, including Colorado English Language Acquisition (CELA), Student Biographical Data for Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP)/American College Test (ACT), Migrant Education, Basic Early Assessment in Reading (BEAR), Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), End of Year (EOY), special education and regular human resources, Safety and Discipline Indicators (SDI), etc.

4. Q: What is the first step?

A: Districts will initially need to obtain race and ethnicity data from staff and parents/guardians for students. This information will then be reported to CDE in the various data collections.

5. Q: How were these changes determined?

A: The U.S. Department of Education determined how educational racial ethnic data should be collected. They based their guidance on the work of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

6. Q: Why is the data collection changing?

A: The new system was designed to obtain information on the general school population, especially students and staff that identify with more than one race.

7. Q: Are districts required to use the new categories on all of their reporting?

A: Districts are not required to use the new race and ethnicity categories for all of their reports (other than those that are sent to CDE). However, it is highly recommended that all data sets be updated for consistency in your district and schools.

8. Q: How does this impact Charter Schools or State Operated Programs (SOPs)?

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- A:** This impacts all students and staff, including those in a charter school or in a SOP.

Collecting Data from staff, parents/guardians or students

1. Q: When should staff, parents/guardians or students be asked for information?

- A:** Parents should be asked during enrollment for the 2010-2011 school year. Districts have the opportunity to implement this change within their schools earlier than the 2010-2011 school year, provided the district is able to report the data to CDE in the current format. CDE is providing sample letters that may be used or modified for use with parents/guardians and district employees.

2. Q: Where are the sample letters located?

- A:** The staff and parent/guardian letter templates are available at:
[Http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rvRace-Ethnicity.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rvRace-Ethnicity.htm)

3. Q: How do we handle individuals who refuse to provide the information?

- A:** You have two options. First, if the individual was reported in a previous year with a race other than Hispanic, you can report the same race. If the individual was reported as Hispanic, then the district will also need to provide a race. For new students/staff for whom the race is unknown, observer identification will need to be done.

4. Q: Why should staff, parents/guardians or students report multiple categories?

- A:** To provide a more accurate representation of their ethnicity and race and for more accurate data reports and studies.

Identifying by Observation

1. Q: Is identifying a student who has refused to provide information by observation the district's only choice?

- A:** It depends. If a student has identified race/ethnicity in previous reports, then the district can report the previously reported category. However, previously reported Hispanics and Asians will require some additional information. Observer identification is the only other option for both ethnicity and race if the individual refuses to identify.

2. Q: Who should perform the observation for identification?

- A:** This will depend on the policies within a district.

3. Q: Can the district default to the majority race in the school?

- A:** This is not recommended and does not meet the requirements made by the U.S. Department of Education.

4. Q: How do we determine the race and ethnicity by observation?

- A:** Each district will need to determine their consistent best practices. CDE has provided practical ideas within "How to Maximize Participation in

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Submitting Data to CDE

1. Q: How will the data formats be changed at CDE?

A: CDE will have an ethnicity field that will be coded as '04' for 'Hispanic' or '00' for 'Not Hispanic'. In addition to this field, each student will need to complete one or more of the race fields in similar formats.

2. Q: Will the district have the option to provide data in the old reporting format?

A: No, once the changes have been implemented in 2010-11, all districts must submit the data in the new format.

3. Q: Why are districts reporting student race and ethnicity twice (once in the ethnicity and race fields and also in the reported race/ethnicity category)?

A: The reported race/ethnicity category field will represent how the student and staff data is aggregated for federal and state reports. Districts responded in favor of reporting the race/ethnicity category as well as the detailed information for their own reports and comparing the district reports to those CDE presents. The more detailed information in the ethnicity and race fields are needed to meet any requests made by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) regarding student or staff information.

4. Q: If the race or ethnicity for a student is updated/changed during the school year, can it be updated in the CDE collections as well?

A: Yes. For example, if a student was reported as only white and not Hispanic in the Student October data collection, the student can be updated in later collections (i.e. the End-of-Year) as white and black.

5. Q: How can I change my software to report this?

A: Your district will need to contact the appropriate vendor(s) to have this changed in any data reporting system used for student and staff data.

Response to Parents

1. Q: Are there any additional documents to provide to parents, in addition to the letter, that will explain observer identification?

A: A handout detailing this requirement is available at:
[Http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rvRace-Ethnicity.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rvRace-Ethnicity.htm)

2. Q: How should we inform parents who may not speak or understand English?

A: CDE will provide documents in Colorado's five most prevalent languages: Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, Korean and Hmong. If the parent speaks a language that is not one of those, districts/schools should have the documents translated for those parents.

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Training Topics General

1. Q: Will there be trainings?

A: Yes, multiple trainings will be provided throughout the year.

2. Q: What topics will be covered in the trainings?

A: It will depend on the time of year:

- i. At the beginning of the school year, the training will cover the new changes, requirements and the necessary steps.
- ii. Throughout the year, each CDE data collection will provide information on the race/ethnicity changes and implementation for that specific collection during the regular scheduled training session.

3. Q: Who should attend a training session?

A: All district and school personnel that will either be: answering questions, collecting the data, entering the data, submitting the data to CDE and others that may be impacted by this change.

4. Q: Can a person attend multiple trainings?

A: A person can attend as many training sessions as needed.

5. Q: Where can I find information on the dates and times for the training sessions?

A: More information on the trainings will be available at:

[Http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rvRace-Ethnicity.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/rvRace-Ethnicity.htm)

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