



CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

**JACK O'CONNELL**  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

December 5, 2008

Dear County and District Superintendents and Charter School Administrators:

**NEW FEDERAL RACE AND ETHNICITY DATA  
COLLECTION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

I am writing to alert you to upcoming changes to the way in which schools and districts collect student and staff race and ethnicity information. These changes are a result of the U.S. Department of Education's decision in October 2007 to comply with federal Office of Management and Budget race and ethnicity guidelines. An initial letter was sent to you on February 5, 2008, explaining how the California Department of Education (CDE) is incorporating the federal requirements regarding race and ethnicity into the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System. (See Attachment 2.)

Schools and districts will be required to collect race and ethnicity data using a two-part question. The first part of the question asks if the student or staff member responding to the question is Hispanic or Latino. The second part of the question asks the race(s) of the respondent. Schools and districts must be prepared to report data to the CDE using this format beginning in the 2009-2010 school year.

I have enclosed a fact sheet that provides more detailed guidance on the reporting format and other key components of the new federal requirements. (See Attachment 1.) Also included are some sample collection forms. The CDE will continue to provide information and training for district staff and vendors regarding these changes. I urge you to familiarize yourself with the new requirements and encourage your staff to participate in the informational opportunities as they arise.

Please note that the federal guidelines require that the race and ethnicity for all respondents must be collected, and that states are not allowed to include "Unknown" or "Decline to State" in federal reports. Schools and districts should do everything possible to encourage respondents to identify themselves according to the new format, and to follow up with those who are reluctant to respond for themselves. While federal guidelines state that a third-party is to identify non-respondents by observation, the CDE does not advocate third party identification of race/ethnicity by observation. If an LEA submits missing data for race, the CDE will make a third-party identification using a consistent methodology that will report such respondents in the "Two or More Races" category. If missing data for race or ethnicity become significant in a school or district, the CDE will be contacting the LEA.

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Accurate and reliable data are cornerstones in the systems that we have built to support instruction and measure student learning. The application of strict and consistent standards when collecting demographic information is essential to accurately monitor and evaluate achievement across the student racial and ethnic groups represented in our diverse state. Please make every effort to make the changes necessary to fully implement these new federal requirements.

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact Marsha Devine, Consultant, Data Management Division, at 916-319-0260 or by e-mail at [mdevine@cde.ca.gov](mailto:mdevine@cde.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

/s/

Deb V.H. Sigman, Deputy Superintendent  
Assessment and Accountability Branch

DS:md  
Attachments