



Bedford County Public Schools

Office of the Superintendent
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Dear Parents and Guardians:

I am writing to inform you about new guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education regarding the collection of data on race and ethnicity for public school students. The federal government, which requires all states to collect this information, has developed a new way to report ethnicity and race that includes new categories.


The federal government has developed these new categories in order to provide a more accurate picture of the nation's ethnic and racial diversity. This will enable individuals to be identified in ethnic and racial classifications and in more than one racial category. In the past, forms allowed individuals to be identified in only one racial category.

Currently, Bedford County Public Schools (BCPS) asks families to provide information on students' race and ethnicity at the time of enrollment. Beginning in spring 2010, we will ask the families of newly enrolled student AND of all current students to complete a brief form to update information on their children's ethnicity and race.

The data with the new ethnicity and race categories will be used in the same manner that such information is currently used. For example, the federal government uses racial and ethnic data in reporting and analyzing test results, such as the Virginia Standards of Learning. The new categories will replace all existing categories for use in state and federal data collections that include data on ethnicity or race.

The enclosed Question-and-Answer Sheet and Re-identification Form provides additional information about these changes. Please fill out the Re-identification Form and return it to your child's school by June 1, 2010.

Sincerely,



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The Mission of the Bedford County School Board system is to ensure that all children of school age in Bedford County receive the highest quality education appropriate to their individual needs and abilities.

Exhibit 3.4 Questions and Answers about the New Changes from the Public

Q: Why do you need this information?

A: The demographics of our society have changed significantly in the last few decades. These changes will allow our students and staff to more accurately describe who they are. We (school district or state) are required by the Federal government to use the new categories. All states and school districts are required to do the same. There are good reasons in addition to meeting federal requirements, though. We routinely report aggregate information to the federal government for funding and evaluation purposes, as well as civil rights compliance. We also use racial and ethnic data to evaluate our placement and program needs, providing the best services for all students. The U.S. Census in 2000 used the new categories. This is a trend that education and human service agencies will follow.

Q: Is the federal government checking my immigration status?

A: No. This information will be maintained in your child's student records. It will not be reported to any federal agency in a way that identifies you or your child. No one will check for immigration status from the information you give here.

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 nondirectory information in a student's education record.

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

A: This is indeed a major effort, but it would be more beneficial to ask everyone again and at the same time with the new format. This way no one will miss the opportunity to identify himself or herself in a more accurate way.

Q: I am Hispanic. Why do I 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. So yes, you will be asked to select one or more races, even if you have indicated that you are Hispanic/Latino.

Q: How do I know I won't be discriminated against after I've told you I belong to a minority group?

A: This is exactly why we need to maintain better racial and ethnic data about our students and staff. We are required to maintain this information about each individual in his or her record, in case a civil right investigation surfaces. Again, state and local guidelines are in place to ensure that racial and ethnic data will not be reported elsewhere in a way that you may be identified. The state and districts follow FERPA rules and regulations to safeguard the privacy of student records (see question above). For employment records, none of the equal employment opportunity rules has changed. Your race and ethnicity will not be used to determine your employment status or condition.

Q: You can't make me do it, can you?

A: No, we can't; but providing the information would be beneficial for you or your child. We are required to provide an answer on your behalf, if you choose 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, then having missing data.

Bedford County Public Schools
Re-Identification Form

Please enter the school your child will attend for the 2010-2011 school year: _____

STUDENT _____			Grade _____	Sex _____
Last Name	First Name	Middle Name		
Mailing Address _____			City _____	Zip _____
Street			City	Zip
Residence Address _____			City _____	Zip _____
(If different from mailing address) Street			City	Zip
Phone (circle one) listed not listed (____) _____ - _____			Date of Birth ____/____/____	
Are you Hispanic? Yes _____ No _____				
Please choose your race (you may select more than one) American Indian or Alaskan Native _____				
Asian _____		Black or African American _____		White _____
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander _____				
Are you a Bedford City or Bedford County resident? (circle one)			Bedford City	or Bedford County

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____