

Frequently Asked Questions

Notice about Collecting Private Information

The information on the Ethnic and Racial Demographic Designation Form is considered private information about students. These Frequently Asked Questions explain why the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) is collecting this information; if you are required to provide the information; how we will use it; and who else may have access to it.

Why is this information being collected?

In 2017, the Minnesota State Legislature required districts and charters to collect more detailed student information on four of the six race and ethnicity categories set by the U.S. Department of Education for specific groups. For more information, refer to [Minnesota Statutes 2019, 120B.35, subdivision 3](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/120B.35) (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/120B.35>).

The goal of collecting more detailed ancestry or ethnic origin information is to better understand and identify educational needs of all students in Minnesota. These most populous more detailed groups were identified by the Minnesota State Demographer based on the [U.S. Census Bureau's classification/coding system](https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html) (<https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html>). Information to determine the most populous groups represented come from the American Community Survey in either the one-year or five-year rolling average dataset. For more information, refer to the [American Community Survey](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/) page (<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>).

When will this information be collected?

2018-2019 school year: The initial collection of more detailed ancestry or ethnic information will first be deployed in five partner districts: Community of Peace Academy, Minnetonka Public Schools, Schoolcraft Learning Community, St. Paul Public Schools, and Worthington Public Schools. These partner districts will likely send the information collection form home in the summer/fall of the 2018-19 school year in conjunction with registration forms for the 2018-19 school year. The five partner districts or charters will report this detailed student ancestry or ethnic origin information to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) during the 2018-19 school year.

Based on lessons learned with the five partner districts or charters, all other districts and charters will likely send an expanded version of the information collection form home in the fall/winter of the 2018-19 school year with enrollment forms for the 2019-20 school year.

2019-2020 school year: All districts will then be asked to report this detailed student ancestry or ethnic origin information to the department during the 2019-20 school year.

This information will be reviewed and updated every five years from the date of statewide implementation for all districts, including the five initial partner districts, beginning in school year 2024-25.

Is every family asked to answer these questions?

Yes. For the 2018-2019 school year, every family with a student in one of the partner districts attending grades K-12 is being asked to answer these questions. A parent in one of the partner districts may also be asked to fill out a revised form next year, as the department will continue to incorporate feedback from the public into the form.

For school year 2019-2020 all Minnesota districts will be asking all families to complete the collection form with the detailed groups.

What if families do not complete this form?

Schools are required to report some race and ethnicity information to the state and to the U.S. Department of Education. You are not required to provide this information yourself but if you do not, federal law requires the school to choose for you. If families do not fill out the form, *districts are required to decide the federal race/ethnicity questions, in bold*, based on the best information they have and to submit the information to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE).

The optional sections of the form are not required to be collected from you, and *districts are not required to decide the more detailed ancestry/ethnicity codes*. If you do not provide this information, schools and MDE will not know about specific groups of students and may not be able to identify and serve the educational needs of these specific student groups.

Bolded questions

The bolded questions are federal questions asking about race/ethnicity. We appreciate the feedback that race and ethnicity are social constructs and that definitions vary. We are following the federal guidance in the labeling of each.

Six federal race/ethnicity codes appear as the “Yes/No” questions on the form and include the ethnicity question at the top as well as Questions 1-6. The federal collection of race/ethnic information requires a two-part question. The question at the top asks if the student is Hispanic/Latino. The federal government considers Hispanic/Latino to be an ethnicity. The remaining questions (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) request at least one of the following be selected: American Indian, Asian, black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or white. The federal government considers these groups to be races.

Families do not have to select one of these categories. If they do not, districts are required by federal law to identify and report this information for students based on the best information they have available. Districts are instructed to collect the required information for all students by using one of the following procedures in the following order:

- A. parent or guardian identification;
- B. age-appropriate student self-identification, when parent or guardian identification is not an option;
- C. if parent, guardian, or student self-identification methods are not possible, sight counts administered by the principal or designee, pursuant to written guidelines developed by the district.

Optional Questions

The questions labeled as optional are asking for more detailed ancestry/ethnicity information. Collection of this information is not, however, a federal requirement. *Districts are not required to make a determination on the more detailed ancestry/ethnicity codes.* This information is being collected because of the details included in Minnesota Statutes 2017, 120B.35, subdivision 3 as discussed above in the “Why is this information being collected?” section. The optional categories are:

- Anishinaabe/Ojibwe; Cherokee; Dakota/Lakota; Other American Indian Tribal Affiliation
- Asian Indian; Burmese; Chinese; Filipino; Hmong; Karen; Korean; Vietnamese; Other Asian
- African-American; Ethiopian-Oromo; Ethiopian-Other; Liberian; Nigerian; Somali; Other black
- Colombian; Ecuadorian; Guatemalan; Mexican; Puerto Rican; Salvadoran; Spaniard/Spanish/Spanish-American; Other Hispanic/Latino

Reporting

The information in the first question and Questions 2-6 are not tied to state funding. If a family selects Hispanic or Latino, a student is reported as Hispanic or Latino to the federal level. For example, if a student is indicated as Hispanic or Latino and white, they would be reported as Hispanic or Latino in the accountability system. If a family selects more than one of the following: American Indian, Asian, black or African American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or white the student is reported to the federal level as “two or more races.” For example, if a student is indicated as both American Indian or Alaska Native and white, they would be reported as “two or more races” in the accountability system. This group is often referred to as the seventh federal race/ethnicity code and does not explicitly appear on the form.

Students are asked in Question 1 to indicate if they identify as American Indian or Alaska Native. This group of people are defined by the state of Minnesota as persons having lineage with any of the original peoples of North American and maintain cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition. This information is reported federally as well as used to calculate state aid.

Why are some groups given the option of having more detailed groups, but others are not?

The more detailed groups are dictated by [Minnesota Statutes 2019, Section 120B.35, subdivision 3](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/120B.35) (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/120B.35>).

Under this law, “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander” and “white” are not given the option of reporting more detailed groups. Under the state data practices law, [Minnesota Statutes 2019 Section 13.05, subdivision 3](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/13.05) (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/13.05>), MDE is also required to limit collection, use and sharing of private information only to what is necessary to administer and manage authorized programs mandated by the federal government.

How will this information be collected?

To give all families the opportunity to more specifically identify themselves, districts may choose to collect the information in ways they deem to be culturally and linguistically appropriate. Districts are encouraged to send the information collection form and parent letter home with every student.

What if families have already identified using the previous categories?

If families have already provided this information using previous forms, they are being asked to re-submit the form. This is because the Minnesota Department of Education is changing its information collection systems. All families should be given the opportunity to provide the more detailed ethnic and racial information either on paper or electronically.

How will this information be used at the state level?

Your student’s individual-level information is private and will only be used by MDE as required or authorized by law. If we report information we will report about groups, not individual students.

- The more detailed racial/ethnic information will be used for state information collection and reporting purposes.
- In accordance with state legislation, the Minnesota Department of Education plans to report this information at the group level for assessment and graduation information for the first year. Future reporting may include group level information for growth indicators, preparation for postsecondary academic and career opportunities, school safety, and students’ engagement and connection at school.
- A student’s racial/ethnic information will also be combined with that student’s special education status, English learner status, gender, and other demographic information. Future reports are likely to provide group reports that allow for multiple combinations or selections of this information. For example, collecting this information will allow for a comparison of graduation rates for Chinese male non-English learners to Somali female English learners.

- Consistent with MDE reporting practices, reporting will be suppressed for any group smaller than 10 students, including results where the remainder of the student body is smaller than 10 students. Any reporting based on this detailed racial/ethnic information will also utilize the secondary suppression rules MDE is developing and plans to deploy in December 2018.

How will this information be used at the district level?

For more information about how this information will be used at the district level please contact your district office(s).

Will this information be reported to the federal government?

Only federally required race/ethnicity information from the bolded questions (American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; black or African American; Hispanic/Latino; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; white) will be reported to the federal government. The more detailed ethnic information (labeled as optional) will not be reported to the federal government. This information will also be restricted in the following ways:

- This information will not be publicly reported at the individual student level.
- This information will not be tied to immigration status at the state or federal level and will not be checked elsewhere.
- This information will not impact whether or not your student can attend school.
- While the information is collected for individual students, it will only be publicly reported for groups of students. The reports provided by the department are required to protect every student's identity, and the group of students must be large enough so that no individual student can be identified.
- This information will not be tied to teacher performance or evaluation.
- This information will not impact college entrance.

Who will have access to this information locally?

This form and the information it contains will be entered into information systems by someone with proper information access and training at the administrative office of your student's school. School personnel responsible for facilitating completion of and collecting the information forms, may also view the completed form as it is transported to the administrative office.

Who else may have access to this information?

Schools and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) must limit access to the information provided on the form because it is private information. Those who might have access include:

- school and MDE staff who need to have access to the information to do their work;
- anyone you authorize to access the information; and
- anyone required or authorized by state or federal law to access the information.