

Template for districts in collecting student ethnicity and race.

NOTE This is an example letter that districts may use when communicating with parents/guardians. Delete this textbox after updating.

Dear [Recipient Name]:

I am writing to let you know about the collection of race and ethnicity information about your student.

All K-12 schools in Washington and across the country are required to collect and report the race and ethnicity of every student to the school district annually. Accurately identifying groups of students currently underserved by the education system is the first step in creating positive changes at the local, state, and national level. In Washington, school districts report these data to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). OSPI summarizes this and uses it to understand trends and to improve teaching and learning. The data will not be reported in a way that identifies individual students. For more on family privacy rights in education, see: [A Parent Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#).

When completing this collection, you may be as detailed as you would like. You may select more than one option. If you do not see your identity on the list, you may select “write in”. By law, you are not required to identify the race or ethnicity of your child on school forms. However, if you choose not to provide us with this information, the school will fill it out. When school staff fills out the race and ethnicity questions, it is called ‘observer identification’. This is done as a last resort and does not permit any representative of the school or district to tell someone how they should classify himself or herself. We prefer that parents/guardians fill this form out, as this ensures that the data is accurate.

If you decide not to fill this out by [date], the school will take steps to complete ‘observer identification’. To do this, we will collect background information about your student by:

- Reviewing student records, documenting the race and ethnicity of the student in previous years.
- If the student has siblings: reviewing their student records and documenting previous race and ethnicity data.
- Talking with counselors and teachers of the student.
- Using responses to the home language survey to identify the student’s home language.

If this is done, we will inform you of the categories selected.

As a parent/guardian, you always have the option of changing the race and ethnicity records kept at the school. To do this, you can contact [school or district leader] or come into school and ask to change it at the front office. If you have any questions at all, please feel free to contact me at [phone number]. We can talk over the phone or arrange a time to meet. Additionally, if you are more comfortable speaking in a language other than English, we can arrange to have an interpreter.

Sincerely,

Your Name