

Series 2003-2004
Circular Letter: C-21

TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Dr. Betty J. Sternberg, Commissioner of Education

DATE: April 16, 2004

SUBJECT: Racial Statistics

Enclosed please find a summary of the racial statistics for each school under the jurisdiction of your local or regional board of education. We think this information is important for a number of reasons.

Each district should use this information to analyze any disparity in racial and ethnic diversity that may exist among its schools. Failure to manage significant disparity could result in a school district being found to be racially imbalanced. Racial imbalance exists when the proportion of minority students for any school exceeds 25 percentage points more than the comparable proportion for the school district. The comparable proportion for the school district is determined by comparing the total number of racial minorities in a school to the districtwide total pupil enrollment in the same grades. Impending racial imbalance exists when the proportion for a school falls outside a range from 15 percentage points less to 15 percentage points more than the comparable proportion for the school district. A statistic showing that a school is racially imbalanced requires the filing of a plan to correct the imbalance, which may include the creation of a "unique" school. A school is diverse and exempt from the requirement of filing a plan to correct racial imbalance if the town in which it is located has a minority population of more than 50 percent and the school has a minority population of between 25 and 75 percent. Boards of education should strive to maintain balanced schools so that each child has the advantage of attending a school that is as diverse as possible.

Many districts have only one school, one school per grade configuration, or very small minority populations in all schools. In these cases, it is unlikely that the racial imbalance laws and regulations will apply to you. However, this does not mean that racial diversity and isolation are not matters for concern. Our world is a diverse one in which our students will come into frequent contact with people from other cultures and ways of life. It is critical that we provide our students with such opportunities when they are in our schools.

Connecticut law requires all school districts to take action to provide opportunities for their students to interact with students and teachers from other racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds. These opportunities may include participation in interdistrict magnet schools, charter schools, after-school, Saturday and summer programs and sister-school projects; interdistrict and intradistrict public school choice programs; and many other experiences to increase awareness of the diversity of individuals and cultures. This is particularly important for districts with small minority populations where interaction might otherwise not take place. Currently, approximately 55,000 students (roughly 10% of the total student population) take part in interdistrict activities across the state. We started with only a few hundred students and have experienced great growth.

I hope this information is helpful to you. If you have any questions, please contact Attorney Karen M. Flanagan, Office of Legal and Governmental Affairs, at (860) 713-6517.

Enclosure
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