

Series 2002-2003

Circular Letter: C-30

TO: Superintendents of Schools
FROM: Theodore S. Sergi, Commissioner of Education
DATE: May 12, 2003
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.

Districts should use this information to analyze the disparity in racial and ethnic diversity 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 district-wide 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 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. This does not mean that you should not be concerned about racial diversity and isolation. Our world is a diverse one in which your students will come into frequent contact with people from other cultures and ways of life. It is critical that we do not isolate our students from the rest of society when they are in our schools.

Connecticut law requires all school districts to take action to provide opportunities for its 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. It is a critical part of educating all of our students.

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.