

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #141 (2008-2009)

December 1, 2008

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: 2008-2009 ETHNICITY REPORT

ASD Goal: *Ensure public accountability through effective communication with students, staff, parents, community and government at all levels.*

PERTINENT FACTS:

Today 51% of the students in the Anchorage School District are ethnically diverse, compared to 13% in 1976. Of today's ethnic minority population, the multi-ethnic and Asian/Pacific Islander categories (13% each) are the largest, followed by the Hispanic (10%), Alaska Native/American Indian (9%), and African American/Black (6%) groups—see Chart 1 in the attached Ethnicity Report. Last year, the multi-ethnic category was the largest followed by Asian/Pacific Islander. The following table compares 2007-08 and 2008-09:

Race/Ethnicity Comparison: 2007-08 and 2008-09

Race/Ethnicity	2007-08	2008-09
White	50%	49%
African American or Black	6%	6%
Alaska Native or American Indian	9%	9%
Asian or Pacific Islander	12%	13%
Hispanic	10%	10%
Multi-Ethnic	13%	13%
Total Ethnic Minority	50%	51%

Last year all students and staff were asked to re-identify themselves, racially, using the new categories developed, and required, by the federal government. Students were asked to do two things: 1) identify whether or not they were Hispanic, and 2) to select the categories which described their race/ethnicity (more than one could be selected). This is very different from what was allowed in the past. Prior to last year, students were given a list of racial/ethnic

categories and allowed to choose the one which best described their race/ethnicity.

Guidance from the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development was used to interpret responses to the two questions. Students who indicated they were Hispanic were given that as their racial/ethnic category. Students who made more than one selection were placed in the multi-ethnic category. Students who selected one category were placed in that particular racial/ethnic category.

While the new method of identification is welcomed as a means of accurately describing ethnicity, the way it is reported can have some negative impacts. For instance, numbers in the new categories can show under-representation of some groups. Decisions based on numbers in the new categories can be flawed. In addition, numbers can be misinterpreted if compared with prior years.

Comparing 2006 to 2007 showed decreases in the Alaska Native/American Indian (2,312), White (2,109), and African American/Black (681) student categories. There were increases in the multi-ethnic (2,268), Hispanic (1,884), and Asian/Pacific Islander (384) categories. To verify the changes, each student's 2007 ethnicity was compared with what they reported in 2006. Nearly 8,000 students (7,918 - 16%) changed their ethnicity from what they reported in 2006. Those that changed were: Alaska Native/American Indian (2,096), multi-ethnic (1,757), Asian/Pacific Islander (1,672), White (1,655), African American/Black (649), and Hispanic (89). Most changes were made moving into, and out of, the multi-ethnic category (3,509 and 1,757, respectively).

Comparing 2007 and 2008, two years of data using the modified reporting, the ethnic minority student population has increased by 1% and the White student population has decreased by 1%. These changes are shown in the Historical Student Membership Composition graph (Chart 2). Looking at student numbers, the White student group decreased by 321 students this year when compared to last year, while the ethnic minority group increased by 317 students. The largest numerical gain in an ethnic minority category this year, over last year, was in Asian/Pacific Islander, which increased by 421 students.

Chart 3 shows student ethnicity or race by program type. At 59%, Special Services program has the largest population of ethnic minorities, followed by Elementary Education at 53%. Ethnic minorities make up 51% of students in the Middle School program. The High School and Other Secondary programs have the smallest ethnic minority populations at 47% and 41%, respectively. The ethnic minority populations at the secondary levels continue to increase as the more diverse elementary students move into these levels.

The attached Ethnicity Report lists student information in summary, by program type, and by school. The series of tables and graphs represent membership numbers as of October 31, 2008.

Attachments

CC/GV/RA/ODS

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