



Collection of Family Background Characteristics – Frequently Asked Questions

The collection of family information arises from agreements made by all Australian Education Ministers to improve the quality and national consistency of public reporting on student achievement.

What are the requirements for the collection of information on student background characteristics?

- All government and non-government schools in Australia will need to comply with the national data collection and reporting arrangements.
- The purpose is to have a common set of questions that are asked of all parents across Australia no matter which school their child attends.

What are the benefits for schools and students?

- Linking student background characteristics with students' test results will allow schools to identify individual students' strengths and weaknesses; evaluate the influence of particular factors on student performance; judge the effectiveness of policies aimed at reducing the impact of such factors; and, as necessary, take appropriate steps to improve students' performance.
- The arrangements will also provide parents with accurate and timely information on their child's progress compared with other Australian students of the same age and a measure of the child's achievement against national benchmarks or standards.

Why are schools now required to collect information on the educational and occupational background of parents?

- The main purpose of collecting this information is to promote an education system which is fair for all Australian students regardless of their background.
- The data collected will be used to evaluate the influence of socio-economic background on students' educational outcomes. This will allow critical analysis of the effectiveness of policies aimed at reducing the impact of social or economic disadvantage on a student's performance.

Do I have to answer the questions?

- Whilst the provision of the information is voluntary, providing all the information requested will assist in reporting and monitoring performance for different groups of students.

What is the purpose of national reporting?

- The primary purpose of national reporting is to improve the educational outcomes of our young people by informing the Australian public, and especially the education community and parents, about progress towards achieving the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century.
- The Goals reflect the principle that it is the right of all young Australians to aspire to success in learning, and to have the knowledge, skills and understanding essential to effective participation in civic life.



What is the current situation with the collection and reporting of information on students' performance?

- All school authorities must collect certain information from parents/guardians/carers and/or students to fulfil their functions and obligations under State, Territory and Australian Government legislation, including accountability for spending public money.
- Governments must provide the community with information about school performance and the steps they are taking to improve student outcomes.