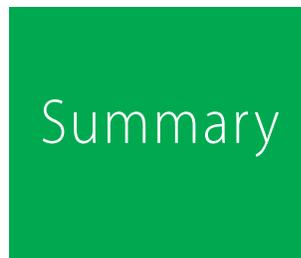




Registering students from language backgrounds other than English



Institute of Education Sciences
U.S. Department of Education



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Summary

August 2007

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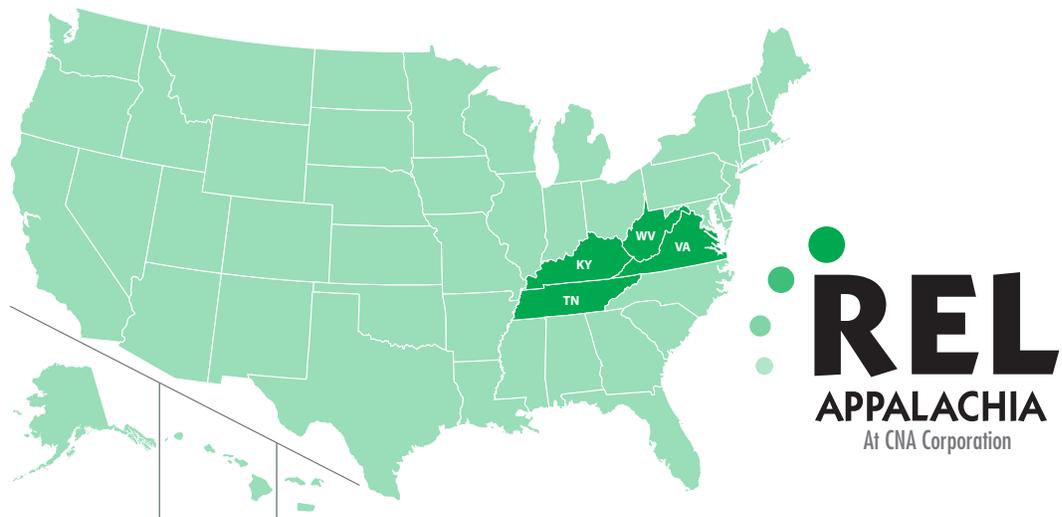
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Summary

Registering students from language backgrounds other than English

This report seeks to alert administrators, school staff, and database managers to variations in the naming systems of other cultures; to help these groups accommodate other cultures and identify students consistently in school databases; and to provide knowledge of other cultures' naming conventions and forms of address to assist in interacting with students and their family members.

As a result of the No Child Left Behind Act, education systems are finding it important to track students across grades and are realizing the complications in such tracking. Students might move to different schools throughout their academic career, and with multiple variants of non-Anglo-American names, students' academic history might be easily lost. To facilitate tracking within and across schools, states in the Appalachia Region have created identification (ID) numbers. They have also established procedures for ensuring that two students with the same name do not have the same ID number and that a student who moves does not get a different ID number.

But systems that depend on ID numbers are not infallible. When ID numbers must be validated, the name that accompanies the number must be consulted. So the tracking system still

heavily relies on names. Because some students come from cultures with differently structured names, it is essential to recognize whether two names are truly different or whether they are predictable variants of the same name. A tracking system must uniformly record students' names so that records linked to those names can be retrieved reliably.

The parts of a name and the order in which they appear differ depending on language and culture. Many cultures do not follow the typical Anglo-American format: first name, middle name, last name. Problems arise when the student's name is Juan Carlos Hernandez González rather than John Robert Smith. And it is essential to be able to accommodate these types of format. When a student's name does not match the expected format of first name, middle name, last name, the person registering the student must decide how to fit the name into the name field provided. Subsequent recordings must be uniform.

The report provides an overview of naming conventions and ways to address parents for each of the eight languages other than English that are most common in the Appalachia Region.

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