

The Professional School Counselor and High-Stakes Testing

(Adopted 2002, Revised 2007)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

Professional school counselors recognize that standardized test results are one of many measures that can be used to assess student performance and learning. Professional school counselors advocate for the use of multiple criteria when educational decisions are made about student performance and oppose the use of a single test to make important educational decisions affecting students and their schools.

The Rationale

High-stakes testing refers to the use of test scores to determine levels of student achievement. Test results are often used as a method to determine: academic placement, promotion and retention, graduation and intervention services. Other decisions made using standardized test results for schools and districts include:

- increased or reduced funding at the state or local level
- revision of curriculum
- revision of teacher certification standards
- appropriate accommodations for students with exceptional learning needs and English language learners
- evaluation of instructional personnel

When results from standardized tests are the only factors used to make educational decisions, these decisions may not be fully informed as other factors can provide additional information related to student achievement.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors recognize that standardized test results provide valuable information related to student achievement. However, these results only provide a partial picture of student learning. When important educational decisions are being made, professional school counselors advocate for the use of multiple criteria in the decision-making process. These criteria may include:

- standardized tests results
- portfolios
- projects
- work samples
- classroom performance

Professional school counselors, in collaboration with other educators, also advocate for:

- appropriate testing conditions and administration of standardized tests
- opportunities to retake a test when a student is unsuccessful in one administration
- opportunities to take comparable tests when a student is unsuccessful in one administration
- the use of standardized tests norm referenced with all student populations
- discontinuation of standardized tests that show socioeconomic or cultural bias

Professional school counselors recognize that standardized tests may create anxiety for students that may be developmentally inappropriate. Through the comprehensive school counseling program, professional school counselors may work with students and staff on issues such as test-taking skills, time-management skills and stress management when appropriate.

Summary

Professional school counselors recognize the use of standardized test results as one of many measures of student achievement and success. Professional school counselors reject the use of high-stakes tests or the use of any other single measurement instrument as the only indicator of student success. The professional school counselor encourages multiple measures when life-influencing decisions are being made.