

The Professional School Counselor and Censorship

(ASCA: Adopted 1985; revised 1993, 1999, 2002)

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Position

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is committed to the protection of the fundamental democratic rights guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution, including those provisions for free speech, free press and equal protection under the law, as well as those rights not enumerated but held by citizens in a democratic society. ASCA supports academic freedom in school counseling programs and supports the rights of students to receive services appropriate to their needs.

The Rationale

Censorship activities imposed on schools have created a climate threatening the students' basic rights to question, deal with differences and learn to make rational, well-informed decisions. Censorship is defined as the denial of a student's basic right to receive any of the commonly recognized school counseling services offered by school counseling programs.

It is important to have a school climate that fosters, rather than threatens, students' basic rights to question, deal with differences, gather information and learn to make rational decisions through intellectual analysis and sound scholarship. Students should be provided with opportunities within the school climate to learn to exercise basic constitutional rights guaranteed to citizens in our society so that as adults they will be able to make informed decisions and exercise the rights and duties of citizenship in a democratic society. Such a belief requires students to be exposed to a diversity of viewpoints and ideas, a fundamental democratic right guaranteed in our Constitution's provision for free speech, free press and equal protection under the law.

The Professional School Counselor's Role

Professional school counselors support academic freedom, access to information and the right to independent thought. Professional school counselors have an obligation to support the basic tenets of democracy. Professional school counselors also safeguard the students' rights to receive information and services appropriate to their needs as an integral part of the total school mission. ASCA encourages school counselors to take necessary actions to ensure students have access to appropriate services permitting maximum student achievement.

ASCA further recommends that counselors provide accessibility to a comprehensive collection of school counseling materials chosen in compliance with basic written selection criteria developed by the school district. ASCA recommends that counselors provide school counseling support for staff and activities for students that encourage growth and academic excellence as well as recognizing diversity among ideas and students, which contributes to the American heritage. ASCA supports providing data to the school staff and community regarding goals, objectives and evaluation of the counseling program to ensure implementation in accord with state and local school board policies.

Summary

In order for students to develop in a healthy manner and obtain the skills necessary for citizenship, they need to exist in a climate that fosters the ability to make informed decisions based upon independent inquiry and sound scholarship. Professional school counselors have a personal and professional obligation to support the basic tenets of democracy to help ensure information about -- and access to -- a range of developmentally appropriate school counseling programs for every student.