



MILITARY OUT
OF OUR SCHOOLS

ASVAB: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing?

The ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery), an "aptitude" test designed and administered by the U.S. military, is taken by 1.25 million students in over 14,000 schools each year. The test scores derived from the ASVAB are useful to military recruiters for two reasons: (1) the U.S. Armed Forces extracts the information needed to recruit students who take the test, and (2) once a recruit who has taken the ASVAB in high school is in the recruiting office, she or he need not be tested further for placement purposes. The testing has already been done by the ASVAB!

The ASVAB is Deceptive

According to Joe Flanagan, Army Education Service Officer, "The ASVAB is the 'wolf in sheep's clothing' that encourages students to join the military." The ASVAB claims to be a "free" career interest test that the military markets to schools in place of more expensive interest tests. No correlation has been established between ASVAB scores and civilian career skills. After carefully examining the ASVAB, a U.S. Congressperson said, "The ASVAB testing program has no proven value to anyone except the Armed Forces. I believe each community should make a conscious, careful decision whether it is willing to accept covert military recruiting activity carried out with the official sanction of the school as the price it must pay for this 'free' testing service."

Know The Options

When a student takes the ASVAB, they must first sign a document, which states that the student's test scores may not be processed unless they sign this form. This releases her or his personal information (i.e., name, home address, telephone number, social security number, test score, etc.) for use as part of a computer listing for recruitment purposes. Recruiters often use this personal information to mount a high-pressure sales pitch, calling incessantly even after students and their families indicate that they are not interested. Although most students taking the ASVAB are minors, and by law their signature is not considered legal, the military considers this document legally binding. If a school or individual decides to use the ASVAB, they should utilize Option 8. This option prevents the students' names from being added to the military's recruiting list. Be aware however, the military regularly makes absolutely no mention of this very important option, and often it is purposely left out.

ASVAB is supposed to be a voluntary test that students can refuse to take!

Resistance Works

At James Monroe High School, Bronx, NY an assistant principal "guaranteed" the military that at least 2,000 of the school's 2,200 students would take the test. After being confronted by more than half of the school's faculty members on the morning of the test, the assistant principal backed away from her "guarantee," and the students were informed that they could choose to take the test or engage in an alternative activity. Only about 100 students were administered the test, and the recruiters left disappointed.

Balance the Picture

Military recruiters who administer the ASVAB have a quota to meet, much like salespeople. As educators, counselors, and activists, our responsibility is to provide a balanced view of career alternatives for youth. Too often, military recruiters are allowed to present a one-sided picture of military life, thereby depriving students of the balanced view they need to make informed decisions.



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Are Your Students Getting A Balanced Education About the Military?

The Military is Controversial

The military portrays itself as a benign entity that offers opportunities to students eager for options. But the reality is more complex. The military provokes controversy among conservatives who are skeptical of the U.S. becoming the world's police force; civil rights groups who protest patterns of bias and harassment in the military; liberals who oppose some wars; civil libertarians who are critical of the denial of rights to military personnel; and pacifists who oppose killing. The military trains all recruits to employ deadly force, yet recruiters rarely discuss the dehumanizing process of basic training, the horrors of war, or the psychological costs of killing. They never mention the debilitating illnesses suffered by atomic veterans, veterans exposed to Agent Orange, and those suffering from Gulf War mystery illnesses.

The Military is Not an Effective Training Program

The advertised economic benefits of joining the military are largely a myth. According to the Veterans Administration, veterans from recent eras are two to five times more likely to be homeless than non-veterans. On average, veterans earn less than non-veterans (Crane & Wise, 1987; Bryant and Wilhite, 1990). As Secretary of Defense Cheney admitted, "The reason to have a military is to be prepared to fight and win wars.... it's not a jobs program." Even the GI Bill is misleadingly advertised. To become eligible for GI Bill benefits, enlistees have to pay a non-refundable \$1200 fee — yet only 43% of all GIs have received any benefits at all. The new GI bill is not an effective education benefits program, but that doesn't stop military recruiters from selling it to students and parents. (See *Joining the Military is Hazardous to Your Education* at objector.org/before-you-enlist.html.)

Equal Access is Required by Law

Federal district and appellate courts have repeatedly upheld the principle of equal access, which enables students to get information on both sides of controversial issues. In *San Diego Committee v. Governing Board of Grossmont Union High School District* [790 F.2d 1471 (9th Cir. 1986)] the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled, "The Board cannot allow the presentation of one side of an issue, but prohibit the presentation of the other side.... Here, the Board permitted mixed political and commercial speech advocating military service, but attempted to bar the same type of speech opposing such service. Accordingly, the Board violated the First Amendment." (See also *Searcey v. Crim* [815 F.2d 1389 (11th Cir. 1987)]). (For texts of these lawsuits, see CCCO's website: www.objector.org)

As the 9th Circuit Court stated: "It has long been recognized that the subject of military service is controversial." When schools create a forum for the proponents of the military, they must, under the First and Fourteenth Amendments, provide equal access for those with opposing points of view. Simply put: if you allow military recruiters and/or military literature in your school, the law requires you to provide equal access to critics of the military. If you fail to provide equal access, your district is subject to expensive and controversial lawsuits. To find out how you can make sure the students in your school get balanced information on these important issues, please contact us. We'll be glad to send you free sample literature.