



BACKGROUND: The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) targets youth by violating their privacy and subverting parental authority.

Several hundred high schools in at least 34 states across the country require all juniors to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, or ASVAB, as it is commonly known. The ASVAB is the military's entrance exam that is given to fresh recruits to determine their aptitude for various military occupations. The test is given to high school students because school administrators are convinced it assists children in identifying a wide range of appropriate career paths. The ASVAB is also used to recruit students into the military.

The ASVAB "Career Exploration Program", as the military prefers to call it, provides the military with access to high school children through an obscure privacy loophole. The testing program circumvents the opt-out provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Section 9528 of the No Child Left Behind Act. The ASVAB contains no requirement of an opt-out notification. Unless a high school takes measures to protect student privacy, the data from the test is forwarded to recruiters and to the military's Joint Advertising Market Research and Studies (JAMRS) Program, a massive database that has compiled 4.5 million records of 16-18 year-olds.

Although military regulations allow schools to preclude test information from reaching recruiting services, school administrators are often unaware of the option and few elect to protect student privacy. According to data released by the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM) in November, 2007, only 5.7% of the 573,504 students who were given the ASVAB in fiscal year 2007 were tested on condition that their data not be released for recruitment purposes.

Without parental consent, children who sit for the four-hour ASVAB sign a "Privacy Statement" that gives permission to the military to use social security numbers, sensitive demographic information, and test results for recruiting purposes. This practice runs counter to state laws that protect the privacy rights of minors, according to a brief by the National Lawyers Guild, Los Angeles Chapter.

According to the US Army Recruiting Command's School Recruiting Program Handbook, the ASVAB is specifically designed to provide recruiters with pre-qualified leads on which students to target. At the same time, the handbook encourages recruiters to market the test as a "comprehensive career exploration program" and "a good practice test" for students to take in preparation for the SATs and ACTs. The [ASVAB's cheerful, youth-oriented website](#) barely mentions



any connection between the ASVAB and the military, even though the test is expressly designed to assist in military recruiting.

After the test is administered, recruiters make calls to youngsters using individualized profiles gathered from test data. Scores from the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) portion of the ASVAB are valid for two years and determine eligibility to enlist.

The Army's Recruiter Handbook instructs recruiters to encourage schools to test class-wide and hundreds of high schools have obliged, integrating the program into their curriculum. The army has developed a point system to rate high schools, based on their cooperation with recruiters. High schools with mandatory ASVAB testing are highly rated and specifically targeted. In schools where the ASVAB is not mandatory, students are often coerced into taking the test

The ASVAB is a crucial component of the military's recruiting program. In January of 2007, the Memphis school board was to vote on a resolution that would have prevented the military from obtaining test results from students who were required to take the test. A group of soldiers dressed in combat fatigues marched into the hearing room. Board members backed down and no vote was taken. The resolution was never reintroduced. Later, however, the school district halted mandatory testing.

The National Guard, hard pressed for new recruits, often proctors the test. The morning announcements at Adams-Edmore High School in Edmore, North Dakota, contained the following, "The ASVAB for ALL juniors will be tomorrow at 8:30. Bobby Buzick from the National Guard will be proctoring this test."

All juniors at Kodiak High School on Kodiak Island, Alaska must take the ASVAB. A flyer sent to parents explains, "Each year the federal government, the state of Alaska and our local assessment schedule require us to test our students..."

In February three high school students were sent to an in-school suspension classroom after refusing to take the ASVAB at Cedar Ridge High School in Hillsborough, North Carolina. Principal Gary Thornburg said he didn't "have a lot of patience with people who are refusing to take the assessment -- or refusing anything that their entire grade level is participating in," according to the Raleigh News & Observer.

ASVAB testing is so firmly entrenched in some areas of the country that several governors have issued proclamations urging students to be tested. Idaho has an official ASVAB testing week. The governors of Alaska, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Michigan have issued proclamations announcing ASVAB awareness



months. Alabama has an "ASVAB Awareness Year". The proclamations extol the virtues of the "Career Exploration Program" but none mention to the tie-in to military recruiting.

Shortly after taking office in 1995, Texas Governor George W. Bush proclaimed an official Texas ASVAB Day when all high school juniors were encouraged to take the military test.

At Broad Ripple High School in Indianapolis, all sophomores are tested. Indiana school officials consider Broad Ripple to be a "dropout factory," according to local press reports. The military tests students in the tenth grade due to the large numbers of teens who don't make it to their junior year.

Testing a captive audience of sophomores in Indianapolis is not surprising, considering the testimony by military recruiting commanders to the Senate Armed Services Committee on January 31, 2008.

Citing statistics that the percent of military recruits with high school diplomas had fallen to a low of 79%, General Thomas Bostick, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command spoke of the value of "other skill sets within the ASVAB". The ASVAB contains sections for auto and shop information and mechanical comprehension. Admiral Joseph Kilkeny, Commander of the Navy Recruiting explained, "The Navy has been very keen on the high school diploma; however, we're always looking at opportunities to open the aperture."