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June 26, 2014

Commissioner for the Florida Department of Education  
Ms. Pam Stewart  
Turlington Building, Suite 1514  
325 West Gaines Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Commissioner Stewart:

As leaders in the Florida School Counselor Association (FSCA), we are writing to you about the recent end-of-course exams results. We wanted to share how pleased we are to learn about the good strides made this year for students in the critically important courses - algebra, biology, geometry and U.S. history. And, we echo your praise for the work in classrooms that influenced these results.

We also wanted to share how school counselors have a role in supporting the curriculum and instructional team in every school. As you know from your work as a former school counselor, counselors can be vital to work with teachers, administrators, families, and students, and support the academic achievements of every student.

In recent years, school counselors now can design and deliver comprehensive, data driven school counseling programs that promote student achievement and work in collaboration with classroom teachers and students' families to promote and enhance the learning process for every student. The ASCA National Model provides school counselors with the means to be preventive and developmental in working with students and do so much to help students succeed.

Key efforts of school counselors, such as setting up tutoring programs and referring/recommending students to these programs, connecting students and parents to resources to improve test scores, helping students overcome social/emotional barriers to learning, and offering encouragement, motivation, and skills to students to help them focus on improving test scores, are just a few of many actions of school counselors.


There are many possibilities for school counselors to do much more in their work with students. The American School Counselor Association recommends a school counselor to student ratio of 1:250 and that school counselors spend 80 percent or more of their time in direct and indirect services to students. However, FSCA has found that schools across our state have double, or triple, or unfortunately ratios as high as 1:1000. Too frequently, counselors are strapped with test

coordinator duties and, clerical and paper work that removes them from much needed direct face-to-face time with students.


As we close our letter to you, we ask for you to support the work of school counselors and promote the recommended ratio and percentage of direct services to students. We share with you the commitment to help each of our students in Florida achieve at high levels, and succeed in their education. We need your help to reach each student.

Thank you for your attention, and our best wishes for your work as Commissioner.

Sincerely,

  
Rebecca A. Schumacher, Ed.D.  
President, Florida School Counselor Association

  
Carolyn Berger, Ph.D.  
President-Elect, Florida School Counselor Association

  
Russell A. Sabella, Ph.D.  
Past President, Florida School Counselor Association