

tests would be fairer for minorities if they were achievement tests directly based on the content of high school instruction. But the evidence is not encouraging, given the high correlations between standardized achievement and ability tests. For example, says Elliott, the mean of the best three achievement tests correlates 0.83 with the SAT.

Crouse and Christopher Jencks of Northwestern University have pressed the case for moving to achievement-based admissions tests, primarily as a spur to raising the quality of high school education. Jencks points out that schools that attempt to prepare students for admissions tests would then at least be prepping them in calculus rather than in "test-taking skills."

Crouse suggests that the lack of uniformity in high school preparation could be remedied by inaugurating a program along the lines of the College Board's Advanced Placement program, which is based on uniform course descriptions for participating high schools.

The chief argument against moving to standardized achievement tests is one of the main reasons the SAT was created in 1926—to reduce discrimination against students with poor academic preparation by offering a means of uncovering ability that is independent of high school curriculum. The argument that achievement tests would lead to better high schools is met with skepticism by those who point out that many other factors, like budgets, exert more influence.

In absence of standardized high school curricula, Elliot observes, "an achievement test that everybody can take is going to be the lowest level." Other objections are that schools would "teach to the tests," emphasize knowledge amenable to the multiple-choice format, and encourage cramming.

Very few observers, FairTest excepted, believe the cause of better education for minorities would be served by eliminating standardized tests. More moderate critics believe changes in tests can exert only an indirect influence, as leverage to compel improvements in high school education.

By this reasoning, lowering standards for applicants to athletic scholarships would have as its major effect the perpetuation of the discrepancy between black and white academic performance. Nonetheless, the NCAA, after a week-long furor over its vote, decided to back down—in late January it announced that it would shelve the new rule pending further study of test scores and academic performance.

Hostility to standardized tests is a classic case of "blaming the messenger" of bad news, but it is unlikely to abate as long as solutions to the problem remain elusive.

■ CONSTANCE HOLDEN

AIDS Panel Urges New Focus

Ever since the AIDS epidemic began, most of the research attention has gone to biomedical scientists and their attempts to find the cause and cure of the disease. Last week, an expert panel of the National Research Council called for a broad array of programs to focus on the social behaviors that spread the disease.

The panel issued a 589-page report outlining initiatives to better monitor the spread of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), to begin unprecedented efforts to collect data on intimate sexual behavior and drug abuse, and to support frank and aggressive educational programs designed to change risky behavior.

The AIDS virus promises to be around well into the next century, the report says, and improved information about its spread and about the effectiveness of programs to contain it are necessary to limit the crisis.

"AIDS is spread by social behavior. The only way to combat the spread of HIV is through changing behavior," Lincoln E. Moses, chairman of the Department of Statistics at Stanford University and the panel's chairman, told a news conference.

Efforts to monitor the epidemic should include anonymous surveys of all newborn infants and women treated in abortion clinics. These data are vital to establishing a baseline infection rate, the panel says. Although the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that 1 million Americans are now infected with HIV, "we really have no reliable incidence data," Moses said. CDC is already planning to test newborns, for example, in 30 metropolitan areas.

Data on Americans' sexual habits are equally lacking, the panel says in urging vastly expanded federal research efforts in this area. Much current knowledge of sexual behavior comes from the Kinsey studies of the 1930s and early 1940s, which were methodologically flawed. Little is known, for example, about how many men have sex with men, or about the prevalence of extramarital affairs, or the practice of anal sex among heterosexuals. The National Institutes of Health currently is planning just such a survey (*Science*, 20 January, p. 304).

The panel is especially concerned about data on teenage sexuality. Some recent studies suggest that sexual behavior is increasing among teenagers. One in particular indicates that three-fourths of all girls have had sex during their teenage years and that 15% have had four or more partners. Sex education programs should begin in early adolescence and should include explicit language about AIDS, the panel says. In Europe, where sex education generally is more frank, the rate of unwanted adolescent pregnancies and venereal diseases is lower, said Thomas J. Coates, of the University of California at San Francisco School of Medicine, and a panel member.

That view runs smack up against that of former Secretary of Education (and now Bush Administration "drug czar") William J. Bennett, who has long taken the high moral ground by arguing chastity and criticizing condom use. Moses said that the report "is in direct contradiction with that point of view."

A "Just Say No" approach to sexuality reflects "a kind of moral mean-spiritedness," said panel member Marshall Becker of the University of Michigan. "You're saying 'If you refuse to play the game, die!' That's a terrible attitude."

Public education programs should also include explicit language "in the idiom of the target audience" and should be designed for specific audiences. Television networks should air more public service spots about AIDS and accept commercial condom advertising, the panel says.

Because intravenous drug users, their sexual partners, and children are at high risk for contracting the virus, the panel says studies of their sexual behavior are a high priority. The panel also endorses wider use of needle-exchange and needle-sterilization programs and increased availability of drug treatment programs.

HIV antibody testing should be widely available, and laws are needed to prevent discrimination against those who test positive, the panel reports.

The number of behavioral and social scientists at federal agencies responsible for AIDS-related programs should be "substantially increased," the panel says.

The panel's report has a familiar ring. Many of its recommendations echo those of earlier reports by the National Academy of Sciences/Institute of Medicine and the Presidential Commission on the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. The Reagan Administration gave both reports the cold shoulder. It remains to be seen how the Bush Administration will react to this one.

■ GREGORY BYRNE