

World and Nation

Test results called narrow, biased

By JENNIFER BLACKWELL
Staff Writer

The president of the American Federation of Teachers, Albert Shanker, called Saturday for an end to the present system of standardized testing because he feels results are misleading. His statement for the 50th Educational Testing Service (ETS) Invitational Conference is aimed primarily at six commercialized tests administered at the elementary and secondary school levels that represent the overwhelming share of the market for standardized, multiple-choice tests. It did not include the Scholastic Aptitude Test because it is voluntary and not related to school curriculum.

Shanker objects to the tests because they are narrow and only "test your

ability to identify the one best answer," said Bella Rosenberg, assistant to the president. Teachers and school systems are measured on their ability to raise their students' scores, so many times their curriculum is focused only on teaching the material for these tests, she said.

Kathy Travers, director of the Atlantic Center for Research in Education (ACRE), agreed.

"(The standardized tests) are not an adequate way of assessing kids' learning." Under the present system of education, the "tests are shaping the curriculum" and not the other way around, she said. Most of the time, the short-answer questions are not the most important things that should be tested. In addition, the standardized tests

can be unfair towards certain groups of children, she said. They tend to be biased towards someone who designs the tests, or white, middle-class children.

Shanker recommends introducing a learning assessment program into the school systems.

The assessments should be directed more towards writing essays, critical reading, computing or history, Rosenberg said. The schools need to develop more of a performance assessment which allows for different interpretations and can assess a student's capabilities in different areas, she said.

One of Shanker's goals is to raise public awareness about the current system of testing. The public tends to look primarily at percentages and scores without considering what they mean, she said.

The trend from the current system to the performance assessments will not be an easy one, Rosenberg said.

Travers said the performance assessments are very practical and efficient.

"The assessment should be based on child development (and) what we want kids to learn." Children develop at different paces, so the assessments should primarily focus on the teacher's observations of the children's progress throughout the year in real-life situations, she said.

North Carolina abolished standardized testing for first- and second-grade students this year and is using an assessment program for the first time.

"It's an exciting possibility (since) it's a new way to find out if kids are learning what we want them to learn," Travers said. They also give teachers a chance to find out how well they are teaching.

More people across the country are beginning to realize the limitations of standardized testing and are becoming more interested in developing other ways of assessment, she said.

"(The new program) requires different ways of thinking and learning how to do it, ... but that's what we expect of teachers," Travers said.

"It's a big change in thinking ... but it's not harder."

The National Education Association (NEA) also advocates a shift in the testing programs.

"The lesson for students is that becoming educated is no more than a matter of learning to regurgitate the pabulum they've been force-fed," said Sharon Robinson, the director of instruction and professional development for the NEA at a speech for the Conference. Schools need to design programs that will measure a child's creativity, and encourage them to learn, she said.

North Carolina is among the states that are pioneering this new way of thinking and assessing, according to Vanessa Williams, media consultant for the N.C. Department of Education. In addition to the program for the first- and second-graders, North Carolina is also phasing in end-of-course tests which measure a student's progress in comparison to the state-taught curriculum, she said.

Sen. Marvin Ward (D-Forsyth), vice-chairman of the Senate Education Committee, does not think the N.C. General Assembly will abolish standardized testing as a result of Shanker's recommendation.

"We won't abandon it (standardized testing) without thinking what we would use in place of it," he said.

Administration continues rhetorical attack on Ortega

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration kept up its rhetorical attack on Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega on Monday while "waiting and watching" to see if he will call off a 19-month truce with U.S.-backed rebels.

Presidential press secretary Marlin Fitzwater said Ortega was a target of mounting pressure from his Latin American neighbors not to follow through on his threat to end the cease-fire between his Marxist Sandinista forces and the Contra rebels.

"The issue pretty much goes back to President Ortega and the Sandinistas in the sense of he's changed his position a little bit," Fitzwater said. "We, obviously, are urging that the cease-fire be maintained."

After startling a hemispheric conference on democracy in Costa Rica by announcing Friday that he would cancel the cease-fire, Ortega modified his position to say he would decide the matter Tuesday.

300,000 rally for democracy

BERLIN — East Germans demonstrated for democracy Monday night, filling Leipzig streets before a trip to Moscow by new leader Egon Krenz for talks with the Soviet bloc's champion of reform, Mikhail S. Gorbachev.

East German television said about 300,000 people rallied in Leipzig, a city of 650,000.

Activists at the scene told The Associated Press by telephone many of the marchers demanded that the Communist Party give up its monopoly on power.

They said the protesters demanded free elections, freedom to travel and legalization of opposition groups. Recognized political parties must be aligned with the Communist Party under East Germany's constitution.

Protesting approved by officials
JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Government-run broadcasting said Tuesday that peaceful demonstrations

News in Brief

such as the huge anti-apartheid rally over the weekend have helped ease political tensions and assisted reforms.

"We thank the people for behaving within the norms of democratic society," Maj. Gen. Herman Stadler, the police public relations chief, said of the 70,000-member rally Sunday at a soccer stadium on the edge of Johannesburg.

It was the largest ever anti-government event, and virtually every aspect violated security laws.

Court to decide pension's fate

WASHINGTON — Federal protection for 30 million American workers' pensions could be at stake in a dispute the Supreme Court agreed to resolve Monday.

The justices said they would decide what authority the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, a federal agency, had to order employers to revive scrapped pension plans.

A federal appeals court limited such authority by setting aside the agency's order that LTV Corp. and its subsidiary, LTV Steel Co., restore three pension plans with unfunded liabilities of \$2.3 billion.

Government lawyers say the ruling, if not overturned, could make the agency "an open-ended source of industry bailouts" and spark a financial crisis similar to the one facing the government's insurance program for the savings and loan industry.

The justices' decision is expected by July.

The pensions case focuses on the power of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, the agency that protects the pension benefits of the 30 million Americans.

When a pension plan is ended with insufficient money to satisfy promised benefits, the federal agency becomes the pension plan's trustee, taking over its assets and liabilities.

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WMST 95	Women and Gender in Latin America	Schmuckler, B
MW 2:00-3:30	(also Poli Sci 95, ILAS 70)	
WMST 190	Practicum In Women's Studies	By Arrangement
WMST 199	Independent Study	By Arrangement
CROSS-LISTED COURSES		
ANTH 141/WMST 141	Anthropology of Gender, Health, and Illness	Finkler, K
TTH 12:30-1:45		
ECON 91/WMST 91	Gender and Economic Decision-Making	Willis, R.
MWF 11:00-11:50		
ENGL 86/WMST 86	American Women Authors	Davis, T.
TTH 3:30-4:45		
HIST 62/WMST 62	Women in United States History	Dehart, J.
TTH 12:30-1:45		
HIST 168/WMST 168	Women in the South	Hall, J.
TTH 12:30-1:45		
LSRA 101/WMST 101	Women, Work & Leisure	Henderson, K.
TTH 8:00-9:15	(fulfills B.A. level Social Science perspective)	
MHCH 118/WMST 118	Women, Health, and Development Policy	Bender, D.
M 11:00-12:30		
NURS 176/WMST 176	Women Over 50 in Contemporary Society	Taggart, E.
TTH 3:30-4:15		
NURS 184/WMST 184	Women, Science and Technology	Sandelowski, M.
W 6:30-9:00 am	(fulfills B.A. level Social Science perspective)	
PHIL 46/WMST 46	Philosophical Issues in Feminism	Boxill, J.
TTH 3:30-4:45	(fulfills B.A. level Philosophical perspective & Gen. College requirements)	
PLSCI 164/WMST 164	Feminism & Political Theory	Curtis, K.
TTH 11:00-12:15		
RELI 178/WMST 178	Gender in the History of Religion	Waghorne, J.
TTH 2:00-3:15		
SOC 24/WMST 24	Sex and Gender in Society	Udry, R.
TTH 3:30-4:45		
SOC 129H/WMST 129H	Gender, Race & Class	Kleifman, S.
TTH 9:30-10:45		

DEPARTMENTAL COURSES

AMST 63	"In A Different Voice": Women in 19th Century Literature, Art and Popular Culture	Kasson, J.
TTH 11:00-12:15		
HIST 90 (8)	Women in the Moslem World	Bodman, H.
W 2:00-4:30		
MHCH 140	Issues in Family Violence and their Impact on Research, Practice & Policy Making	Browne, D.
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SOWO 387/47Afr.	-Amer. Women's Health Issues	Johnson, A.
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from page 1

ing around the world."

The CIAAC will conduct a mock debate about CIA issues in front of Davis Library Friday, McKinley said. "The CIA has refused to debate us. Something will happen Monday if the CIA comes."

J.T. Dove, juggler
Photograph by J.E. Pasonault, 1902

Ongoing silliness



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