

APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS) 2007 Annual Report

TOPSS Members: Laura Brandt, Chair; Mary Jean Voigt, Past Chair; Hilary Rosenthal, Chair-Elect; Marie Smith, PhD; Amy House; R. Scott Reed; William Elmhorst; Loretta Neal McGregor, PhD; Regan Gurung, PhD

Staff Liaison: Emily Leary

In 2007, TOPSS worked with Education Directorate staff to sponsor a pilot institute for high school psychology teachers on biopsychology. TOPSS also continued several initiatives that included the development of unit lesson plans, recognizing outstanding high school teachers and students of psychology, and sponsoring invited addresses at the APA Convention. TOPSS also celebrated its fifteenth-year anniversary in 2007.

Institute for High School Psychology Teachers

- APA sponsored a pilot institute for high school psychology teachers at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, July 22-27, 2007. The five-day institute focused on biopsychology, and was supported by discretionary funds from the Council of Representatives. Thirty-one high school psychology teachers from across the country participated in the institute. During the week, participants participated in sessions and attended lectures by experts in the field and faculty from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. Master teachers presented on activities and pedagogy for the teaching of biopsychology. In addition to lectures, keynotes, and activity sharing, the institute allowed for small groups of teachers to work together to update some of the TOPSS unit lesson plans for high school psychology teachers. TOPSS unit lesson plans provide teachers with content, activities, and resources to be used in the high school classroom. During the 2007 Institute, the following four unit plans were updated: *Sensation and Perception*, *Development*, *Biological Bases of Behavior*, and *Motivation and Emotion*. The units are expected to be fully revised in 2008. Photographs and PowerPoint presentations from the institute were posted to the TOPSS Web site for teachers to access.
- The Education Directorate, with direction from TOPSS, received a \$10,000 grant from the American Psychological Foundation to support a second teaching institute in 2009. In 2008, APA staff will continue efforts to procure additional funding and a host institution for the 2009 institute.

APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers

- TOPSS, the APA Education Directorate, and Clark University held the third annual APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers, sponsored by the American Psychological Foundation (APF) Lee Gurel Fund and Clark University. The three-day workshop was held July 9-11, 2007 at Clark University in Worcester, MA and featured sessions on the history of psychology, masculinities and human well-being, and qualitative methodology, as well as sessions on involving active learning and teaching with technology. Clark University psychology professors, TOPSS Past-Chair Mary Jean Voigt (Boylan High School, Rockford, IL) and TOPSS member Amy House (Astronaut High School, Titusville, FL) were presenters. Charles Brewer, PhD, of Furman University, delivered keynote addresses on John B. Watson and the joys of teaching. The workshop was attended by twenty-one high school psychology teachers.

National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula

- The second revision of the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* began in 2007. Feedback on the document was collected from APA Boards, Committees, Divisions, Members, and Affiliates, and a National Standards Working Group was selected to facilitate the revision process. An Advisory Panel of ten expert psychologists (two per each of five Domains: Methods, Biopsychological, Developmental, Cognitive, and Variations in Individual and Group Behavior) was also selected to assist with the revision process. The National Standards Working Group met in November 2007 to review submitted feedback and begin the revision process; the revised Standards are expected to be published by 2012. The *National Standards* are in print and online via the TOPSS Web site. The purpose of the *National Standards* is to provide guidance for high school psychology teachers and others responsible for development of psychology curriculum at the secondary school level. The *National Standards* promote quality instruction of psychology as a scientific discipline.

TOPSS Fifteen-Year Anniversary

- In 1992, the TOPSS Interim Steering Committee was approved by the APA Council of Representatives; the TOPSS Committee was approved by Council in early 1993. To celebrate the Committee's fifteen-year anniversary in 2007, articles about the anniversary were published in the *Monitor* and the *Psychology Teacher Network* newsletter, lapel pins honoring the anniversary were available at the 2007 Consolidated Meetings, and a session on the anniversary was held during the APA Annual Convention, as described above. The anniversary was also celebrated through receptions held during the Spring Consolidated Meeting, at the 2007 Convention, and at the Advanced Placement Psychology Reading.

Unit Lesson Plans

- A signature product of TOPSS, unit lesson plans provide guidance for teaching specific content areas in psychology. A new unit lesson plan on *Social Psychology* was published in 2007. The unit plan was posted to the TOPSS Web site and made available in print.
- Development of new lesson plans continued throughout the year, including units on the *Psychology of Sexual Orientation*, *I/O Psychology*, and *Psychoanalysis*. The *Psychology of Sexual Orientation* unit continued to be developed in collaboration with the APA Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns.
- Another TOPSS priority is updating outdated unit lesson plans. The TOPSS Committee suggested that units be revised on an on-going basis so no units are over 5-7 years old. As mentioned above, units on *Sensation and Perception*, *Development*, *Biological Bases of Behavior*, and *Motivation and Emotion* were revised during the July 2007 summer institute on Biopsychology.
- TOPSS unit lesson plans are available to all TOPSS members on the TOPSS Web site.

Review of the Ethical Guidelines for the Teaching of Psychology in the Secondary Schools

- The TOPSS Committee continued its work on a new teaching resource on ethics, to replace the *Ethical Guidelines for the Teaching of Psychology in the Secondary Schools*, originally developed as APA Policy in 1991. APA Ethics Director Stephen

Behnke, JD, PhD, has provided guidance for this new resource, which will provide high school teachers with examples of various ethical dilemmas in teaching, to be aligned with the APA Ethics Code.

Promoting high school student research in psychology

- The TOPSS Committee continued supporting high school student research. *Conducting Psychological Research for Science Fairs: A Teacher's Guide and Resource Manual*, a manual designed in 2004 to assist teachers in guiding their students to conduct psychological research, is available to teachers on the TOPSS Web site.

Collaborations internal and external to APA

- TOPSS collaborated with the American Psychological Foundation (APF) on the APA/Clark University Workshop.
- TOPSS had a liaison to the APA Coalition on Psychology in Schools and Education.

TOPSS Workshops or Sessions for High School Teachers

- TOPSS sponsored teaching workshops or sessions at regional and national conferences, including: AP Reading (Teachers Night), the Eastern Psychological Association conference, the Northeast Conference for Teachers of Psychology conference, and the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) annual conference. The annual APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers and the first Institute on Biopsychology were held in 2007, as described above. Workshop participants were high school teachers of psychology.
- The APA Education Directorate and TOPSS purchased an exhibit booth at the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) conference in San Diego, CA. The booth offered APA and TOPSS great visibility to the teachers attending the conference and reinforced the importance of psychology programming at NCSS. TOPSS hosted a reception for psychology teachers during the conference.

Recognizing High School Teachers and Students of Psychology

- TOPSS recognized three outstanding teachers in 2007 with the Excellence in Teaching Award. Michael McLane of Sterling Heights High School (Sterling Heights, MI); Jacquelynn Norman of San Marcos High School (San Marcos, TX); and Susan Spencer of Arthur L. Johnson High School (Clark, NJ) received the 2007 awards.
- In 2007, TOPSS recognized high school students and awarded scholarships to those who submitted outstanding essays papers through the APA TOPSS Scholars Essay Competition. Funding for these awards was provided by the APA Education Directorate. The 2007 winners were: Rahul Goli from The Altamont School (Birmingham, AL), Bethany Corbin from The Cannon School (Concord, NC), and Lauren Braytenbah from Shawnee High School (Medford, NJ). Each winner received a \$500 scholarship.
- TOPSS offered Outstanding Student in Psychology Certificates to all TOPSS affiliates in the Spring of 2007, so that teachers could recognize outstanding student achievement in their classrooms. Certificates were also placed on the TOPSS Web site for the convenience of teachers.

TOPSS Invited Addresses at the APA Convention in San Francisco, CA

- TOPSS sponsored five invited addresses at convention. Presentations were given by Leona Aiken, PhD, Maureen McCarthy, PhD, Elizabeth Yost Hammer, PhD, Elliott D. Hammer, PhD, Stacy Overstreet, PhD, Nathan Grant Smith, PhD, and Debra Mollen, PhD. TOPSS also co-sponsored a workshop on Industrial/Organizational Psychology with APA's Division 14.
- In addition, a session celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of TOPSS was sponsored by the APA Board of Educational Affairs. Charles Spielberger, PhD, Amy Fineburg, Randy Ernst, and Mary Jean Voigt participated in the session, which was chaired by Charles Brewer, PhD.

Membership Outreach and Services

- Membership outreach and retention remained a high priority for TOPSS. TOPSS continued its network of Regional Coordinators to strengthen communication with TOPSS members in various regions of the country, including Canada and Latin America. Funding was available to the ten Regional Coordinators to support outreach in various regions. Regional Coordinators were encouraged to locate State Coordinators to facilitate communication on a state-by-state basis.
- In May 2007, letters were sent to approximately 500 high school psychology teachers in California announcing the APA Convention in San Francisco and encouraging teachers to join TOPSS.
- TOPSS continued its Minority Recruitment Project, which aims to expose minority high school students to career options in psychology and to encourage and motivate these students to consider pursuing psychology as a career. The project was designed to facilitate meetings with minority high school students, minority two- and four-year college students and faculty, and with local minority psychologists. A webpage detailing the project and pilot projects is linked to the TOPSS Web site, encouraging teachers to initiate programs at their schools.
- TOPSS continued its mentor program as a means of providing service to new high school psychology teachers. Experienced psychology teachers have volunteered to serve as mentors to new teachers, who often need advice on lessons, textbooks, and so on. The program is maintained through the TOPSS Regional Coordinators network.
- TOPSS continued its Speakers Bureau to enable high school teachers to locate and contact psychologists to speak to their psychology classes. Information about the TOPSS Speakers Bureau listing is available on the TOPSS Web site.
- TOPSS encouraged APA Divisions to develop PowerPoint presentations for high school psychology teachers to use in the classroom. Several PowerPoint presentations, including demonstrations on aging and sports psychology, were posted to the TOPSS Web site in 2007.
- TOPSS also collected sample pacing calendars from teachers and posted these calendars to the TOPSS Web site. The calendars represented several different class schedules (full-year, one semester, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and block schedule).

- The *Psychology Teacher Network* quarterly newsletter was distributed to all TOPSS members. The PTN provides teachers with articles, activities, and book reviews to enhance psychology classroom teaching.