

Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS) 2008 Annual Report

TOPSS Committee Members: Hilary Rosenthal, Chair; Laura Brandt, Past Chair; William Elmhorst, Chair-Elect; Marie Smith, PhD; Amy House; R. Scott Reed; Viviana Mendoza; Diane Halpern, PhD; Regan Gurung, PhD.

Staff Liaison: Emily Leary / Martha Boenau

In 2008, TOPSS worked on several initiatives that included the continued development of unit lesson plans, planning for workshops and programs for high school psychology teachers, recognizing outstanding teachers and high school students of psychology, and sponsoring invited addresses at the APA Convention.

APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers

TOPSS, the APA Education Directorate, and Clark University held the fourth 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 21-23, 2008 at Clark University in Worcester, MA. Stephen Kosslyn, PhD, of Harvard University delivered the keynote address on *Imagery Engineering: Designing Presentations to Facilitate Subsequent Mental Imagery of the Material*. TOPSS members Jeanne Blakeslee (St. Paul's School for Girls, Brooklandville, MD) and Tack Chace (Shrewsbury High School, Shrewsbury, MA) participated as workshop presenters, along with Clark University faculty members, Nancy Budwig, PhD, Wendy Grolnick, PhD, and Jeffrey Arnett, PhD.

National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula

At its February 2008 meeting, the APA Council of Representatives approved a \$10,500 request to support a joint meeting of the National Standards Working Group and the National Standards Advisory Panel. The joint meeting was held on September 12, 2008. This meeting was followed by a two-day meeting of the Standards Working Group on September 13-14, 2008. The Standards Working Group is planning to disseminate the revised *National Standards* for review and comment beginning in 2009. 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. The revised *Standards* are expected to be published by 2012.

Unit Lesson Plans

The TOPSS unit lesson plans are a signature product of TOPSS. The unit lesson plans provide guidance for teaching specific content areas in psychology. This year, TOPSS published a new modular unit on the Psychology of *Sexual Orientation*. TOPSS also worked in collaboration with the American Psychoanalytic Association to publish a new unit lesson plan on *Psychoanalysis and Psychodynamic Psychology*.

There are currently 18 unit lesson plans: *Biological Bases of Behavior, Development, An Introduction to Cross-Cultural Psychology, An Introduction to the Field of Psychology, Learning, Memory, Motivation and Emotion, Personality, Positive Psychology, Psychological Disorders, Sensation and Perception, States of Consciousness, The Stats Pack: Statistics Without Fear, Treatment of Psychological Disorders, Stress and Health Promotion, Social Psychology, the Psychology of Sexual Orientation, and Psychoanalysis and Psychodynamic Psychology*.

Promoting high school student research in psychology

APA presented seven awards to students at the 2008 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, the world's largest pre-college science competition. During two days of judging, volunteer judges from local universities selected the top seven finishers from 86 projects in the areas of Behavioral and Social Sciences. Judges included Harold Braithwaite, PhD, of Morehouse College; Thomas Hancock, PhD, and Holly Haynes, PhD, of Georgia Gwinnett College; Andy Roach, PhD, of Georgia State University; and Christine Ziegler, PhD, of Kennesaw State University.

Recognizing High School Teachers and Students of Psychology

TOPSS recognized three outstanding teachers in 2008 with the Excellence in Teaching Award. Mary Jarvis of Wausau West High School (Wausau, WI), Katherine Minter of Westwood High School, Round Rock ISD (Austin, TX), and Allyson J. Weseley, EdD, of Roslyn High School (Roslyn, NY), received the 2008 awards.

In 2008, TOPSS recognized high school students and awarded scholarships to those who submitted outstanding essays through the APA TOPSS Scholars Essay Competition. Funding for these awards was provided by the APA Education Directorate. The 2008 winners were: Mira Vale of Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School (Sudbury, Massachusetts), Rebecca Joy of Arlington Catholic High School, (Arlington, Massachusetts), and Rohit Mehta of Colonia High School (Colonia, New Jersey). Each winner received a \$500 scholarship.

TOPSS offered Outstanding Student in Psychology Certificates to all TOPSS affiliates in 2008 so that teachers could recognize outstanding student achievement in their classrooms.

TOPSS Workshops and Sessions for High School Teachers

TOPSS sponsored teaching workshops or sessions at regional and national conferences, including a session at the AP Reading (Teachers' Night), the Eastern Psychological Association conference, and the APA Convention.

TOPSS sponsored five programs at the APA Convention in Boston, MA, that included an Invited Address on adulthood and aging, an Invited Address on pediatric psychology, a presentation on Exploring *G2C Online*—A Modern Neuroscience Network-based Internet site, a presentation on engaging students, and a panel discussion on the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula*. Presenters included Susan Krauss Whitbourne, PhD, University of Massachusetts, Amy Fineburg, Spain Park High School, Gerald Koocher, PhD, Simmons College, Peter Gray, PhD, Boston College, and Laura Maitland, MEd, MA, Commack, NY.

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 as well as Canada and Latin America. Regional Coordinators were encouraged to locate State Coordinators to facilitate communication on a state-by-state basis.

In 2008, for the fifth consecutive year, the Education Directorate participated as an exhibitor at the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Conference in Houston, TX. The NCSS booth provides APA and TOPSS with good visibility at NCSS.

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 other teaching-related concerns.

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, www.apa.org/ed/topss/homepage.html.

TOPSS communicated with its members through the distribution of two mass mailings this year, containing unit lesson plans and other teaching resources. TOPSS also communicated with affiliate members through postings to the TOPSS Web site and the TOPSS listserv.

The Education Directorate, in collaboration with TOPSS members, distributed four issues of the *Psychology Teacher Network* (PTN) newsletter. The *PTN* provides teachers with articles, activities, and book reviews to enhance psychology classroom teaching.

Update on TOPSS Diversity Action Plan

In March 2008, the TOPSS committee updated its Diversity Action Plan that was developed in 2006. TOPSS appointed a sub-committee to take the lead in this work. Hilary Rosenthal, Laura Brandt, Marie Smith, PhD, and Regan Gurung, PhD, offered to serve on the sub-committee. The sub-committee will go through the original Diversity Action Plan and provide updates to the document to include activities and steps that have been taken from 2006-2008.

TOPSS also proposed some new ideas that may need to be added to the Diversity Action Plan, including the following:

- Marie Smith, PhD, mentioned developing a resource on racism for teachers. One approach would be to include racism as a topic for a problem-solving unit, as suggested by Dr. Alan Kazdin, APA President, at the March 2008 meeting.
- TOPSS could sponsor a workshop on micro-aggressions. The workshop could be taped and posted online.
- Regan Gurung, PhD, mentioned that he is publishing a book on diversity that could be the topic for a *PTN* book review. The book includes activities and focuses on incorporating diversity across the curriculum.

The TOPSS Committee consists of seven high school teachers and two college faculty representatives. In 2008, the TOPSS Committee demonstrated gender diversity (six females and three males) and ethnic diversity (one ethnic minority member).