TOPSS Celebrates 15 years

Laura Brandt
Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire, IL

The American Psychological Association (APA) has been committed to the teaching of high school psychology for several decades. Since the 1970s, high school teachers have joined APA as Teacher Affiliates. Within the APA governance structure, a Committee on Psychology in the Secondary Schools (CPSS) was established to address precollege psychology issues. However, by the late 1980s, as APA was experiencing some financial difficulties, this committee, among others, was sunset.

By the early 1990s, APA was on more stable footing and began reorganizing some of the Central Office and governance structure. APA established the Education Directorate and the APA Board of Educational Affairs (BEA). In addition, APA reaffirmed the importance of high school psychology through the formation of the APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS). The TOPSS Committee was set up as an APA continuing committee reporting through the APA Board of Educational Affairs to the APA Council of Representatives.

Fifteen years later, TOPSS is a vibrant committee of educators committed to ensuring that high school psychology teachers have the resources they need to accurately teach psychological science to high school students. This is important because the high school classroom is often the first, and possibly the only, time students have the opportunity to learn about psychology.

Now, 1,500 APA High School Teacher Affiliates are participating in APA as members of TOPSS. The mission of TOPSS includes promoting the scientific nature of introductory and advanced high school psychology, meeting the curricular needs of secondary school teachers, and providing opportunities for high school students to be recognized and rewarded for their academic excellence.

TOPSS offers numerous resources for instructors of psychology, including unit lesson plans, teaching materials, a Speakers Bureau, the Psychology Teachers Network newsletter, the National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula, awards for teachers and students of psychology, opportunities for networking, and professional development programs for those who teach psychology.

TOPSS has been fortunate to have the support of many individuals, including Charles Spielberger, PhD, APA past president, and Charles Brewer, PhD, of Furman University, who both played key roles in the establishment of the TOPSS Committee. Since then, more than 30 high school teachers and about 15 college advisors have served on the TOPSS Committee.

As TOPSS continues to grow, the benefits and opportunities for members will continue to expand. Please visit the TOPSS Web site at http://www.apa.org/ed/topss/homepage.html, for more information about the TOPSS 15-year celebration. PTN
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News From the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP)

The STP (APA Division 2) is pleased to announce the publication of its ninth electronic book, *The Teaching of Psychology in Autobiography: Perspectives From Exemplary Psychology Teachers* (Volume 2), edited by Jessica Irons, Caroline Burke, Barney Beins, Bill Buskist, Vinny Hevern, and John Williams.

This book contains 19 chapters (Volume 1 contains 53 chapters). The editors for both volumes selected authors who have (a) played prominent leadership roles in the teaching of psychology at the national level and/or (b) won national awards for their teaching.

All of the Society’s e-books are free and available through the Web by going to http://teachpsych.org under “Resources and Publications.” STP e-books are downloadable by book or by chapter and are available in multiple formats.

High School Psychology Enrollment: Noteworthy Data

From www.apa.org/ed/pcue/fastfacts.html

Advanced Placement Psychology

- 4,000 students took the AP Psychology exam in 1992
- 102,000 students took the AP Psychology exam in 2006
- 2,700 teachers taught AP Psychology in 2006
- 140,000 students enrolled in AP Psychology courses in 2006

AP Psychology was 8th in exam volume out of 35 AP subjects in the U.S. in 2006

International Baccalaureate Psychology

- 7,984 students took the IB Psychology exam in 2006 (5,798 in U.S.)
- 365-plus schools worldwide offered the IB Psychology exam in 2006 (210 in U.S.)

IB Psychology was 7th largest in exam volume out of 26* IB subjects in the U.S. in 2006

AP, IB, and Regular Psychology

- About 360,000 students enrolled in high school psychology courses in 2003
- About 6,150 teachers taught high school psychology in the United States

*This number is less than the actual number of IB subject exams in the United States.

Social Psychology Unit Lesson Plan

TOPSS is pleased to announce that a new unit lesson plan on Social Psychology has been published and posted to the TOPSS Web site at http://www.apa.org/ed/topss/unitlesson.html. Hard copies of the unit are available upon request. Please contact Emily Leary at eleary@apa.org or (202) 572-3013 if you would like a hard copy of the unit.
Teaching at the Virtual High School (VHS)

Janice Davenport
Flagow Middle School, Glasgow, KY, Virtual High School

Emily Leary
APA Education Directorate

The Virtual High School (VHS) is a unique online high school that offers credited courses to high school students across the country and internationally. VHS offers yearlong and semester-long courses, summer courses, and advanced placement (AP) courses. There are more than 200 regular yearlong courses and 15 yearlong AP courses, including psychology. The school also offers courses for gifted middle school students. VHS was begun in 1996 through a Department of Education grant.

Janice Davenport is the AP psychology instructor of VHS; she also teaches science at Glasgow Middle School in Glasgow, KY. In early 2007, she answered the following questions about teaching at VHS.

How does the Virtual High School work?
All classes are set with weekly lessons, which run from Wednesday through Tuesday each week. Students are expected to be online during the week; the lessons are divided into sections, with 6 to 10 sublessons during any given week. Students have textbooks and are assigned textbook readings in addition to online readings. The online readings are linked to supplemental material, and students can answer questions online or make comments to other students. As the instructor, I can tell their depth of knowledge because the students submit answers to questions. It is exciting when students are asked to draw in personal experiences to something they’ve heard, and they make that association. Students are encouraged to respond to their classmates online; they will read what others have submitted and respond to others’ work. The communication between and with the students is great; it really does foster a community of learners.

Students go online according to their own schedules; some students take VHS courses in addition to a full course load at their own school. Another positive about VHS is that a site coordinator is based at each remote high school with whom I can talk directly. They can let me know about problems (or positives) going on at the school or with any given student. Participation in VHS, limited to schools that have site coordinators, has been very successful. To me, this is pure education, with so much communication between individual students and teachers.

How many students are enrolled at the VHS? Where do the students come from? Are there any prerequisites for enrolling?
More than 3,700 students are enrolled at VHS per semester. The students participate from nearly 30 different states and 20 different countries. In my psychology class, two students are from Peru, and one student is from Dubai. The rest of the class comes from five different states. It is great to have opinions from different cultures and different parts of country. I have 15 students, all high school juniors and seniors. There are no prerequisites for enrolling. For psychology, we suggest that students have had one biology class and one chemistry class.

How do you teach the class? How do you prepare your classes?
For every sublesson, there are places online for students to post discussion and responses. I look through the postings and make remarks that the entire class can read. If a student is wrong, I never correct them in front of the others, but I will go into a private area to share information one on one with the student. There are different discussion threads and topics; in every topic, I try to provide the students with thought-provoking questions and information that is not in their textbook. The students will share their thoughts, and they seem to enjoy the online discussion. I try to make connections to materials in other lessons.

All students are expected to take the AP test. Every lesson students submit is graded, and there is a posted rubric for each lesson. There are tests and papers, similar to a regular classroom. As the teacher, I can see when students post information.

Although the lessons are already created, to prepare for class, I will select questions to post online to promote discussion and interaction.

How often do you communicate with your students? With the other teachers? With the administrators?
I am online each day, and often during weekends. If a student submits a private question to me, I must address it within 24 hours, and, although I am not required to answer questions within 24 hours over weekends, I do. Sometimes, I cannot be online, such as during the late December holiday break or when I am attending conferences.

All the communication is done online, even with other teachers. There are designated places online where teachers ask questions or share information. During the first semester I taught with VHS, a faculty advisor monitored me each week and submitted reports to me and the school administration. Now I teach on my own. Administrators respond quickly to questions I submit.

What are the challenges you face teaching online?
During the periods when I cannot go online, it is difficult. Also, teaching through VHS has been very time consuming.

Virtual High School, continued on page 4
APAs Psychology Department Program gives departments access to APAs many teaching and advising publications and subscriptions to APA magazines and newsletters for $300 per year. The 2007-2008 program includes the new editions of Career Paths in Psychology: Where Your Degree Can Take You; Getting In: A Step-by-Step Plan for Gaining Admission to Graduate School in Psychology, Graduate Study in Psychology: 2008, the Careers in Psychology video, three complimentary student affiliate memberships, and subscriptions to the Monitor, gradPSYCH, the Psychology Teacher Network, and The Educator. Your department will also receive PDP-NEWS, an online news source for psychology faculty and students, and have access to the APA Web site link of participating psychology departments. For more information, visit http://www.apa.org/ed/pcue/psydeptprog.html.

The biggest challenge for students enrolled in the online class is keeping up with all the reading and following directions. These are bright students, but that still have some difficulty doing what is asked of them.

What do you enjoy the most about teaching through the VHS?
I enjoy the discussions and communication with the students and the course content. The students are all very interested and enthusiastic about psychology; most enrolled in the class because of their interest in the field.

Have you learned anything interesting about teaching or technology through teaching at VHS?
I have learned a lot about Blackboard; I had used it some before, but not as much in-depth as teaching the online course requires. The sense of community is great, I spent the first 2 weeks of the semester doing activities to help the students learn the technology and become a classroom. During that time, I had a lot of success and developed ideas that I’ve incorporated in my regular classroom.

What motivates your students to learn and achieve in virtual environment?
The psychology content itself is interesting. Because it is an advanced placement class, the students want to learn and are self-motivated. Due to the way VHS is designed, the students are accountable to each other and to the teacher.

What would you share with other teachers about online courses?
I’d encourage teachers to be open minded about online programs. Although it is easy to assume that it is better to teach and learn in a physical classroom, not all students have that opportunity, as not all classes are offered at any given school. I have found many benefits to learning online. Many undergraduate students now have taken online courses. Also, not all online courses are easy. We need to prepare high school students for college, and introducing them to online courses in high school gives them an advantage in their future education.

For more information, visit the VHS Web site at http://www.govhs.org.
Teaching Introductory Psychology in a Study-Abroad Program

Janice H. Kennedy, PhD
Georgia Southern University

Undergraduate study-abroad programs have proliferated recently beyond language arts, history, literature, and art. Academic disciplines such as business and theatre with an applied emphasis have grown in popularity, with both students and faculty recognizing the benefits of application of their discipline beyond American borders. In comparison, psychology programs have been relatively slow in developing courses that take advantage of different cultural settings. However, study-abroad programs are particularly well suited for the study of human behavior. I had the opportunity to teach summer semesters in a study-abroad program through the European Council of Georgia, which offers both lower- and upper-level undergraduate courses. This paper describes the unique opportunities for teaching and learning psychology in a culture different from that in which most American students have grown up.

The 5-week program in London in which I taught classes met for 5 hours in the classroom and included a full-day field trip each week to reinforce classroom learning. I was able to plan my courses from conception, including classroom activities, readings, and field trips.

Why Studying Psychology Abroad Is Important for Students

Undergraduate psychology textbooks generally emphasize research and theory by American researchers studying American participants. For example, in developmental psychology, students learn that most infants become securely attached to caregivers and that infants typically sleep in their own beds. They learn that adolescents listen to their peers more so than to their parents and generally experience an identity crisis. It is easy for students (and faculty) to assume that these are universal principles that apply to all or most cultures. Living even briefly in another culture provides opportunities to test these assumptions, and when differences are found, to speculate about what environmental or psychological variables may account for differences.

Introductory psychology students also learn about personal space and self-disclosure issues in social interactions; experiencing violations of our expectations in these areas makes us realize how important these issues are and that they are culture-dependent. Health issues, such as obesity and smoking, become more relevant as we see those in other cultures who weigh less, maintain more physical activity in daily life, and perhaps smoke cigarettes more than Americans do. Realizing that our social scripts for dining in a restaurant and even passing someone on the street (right side or left?) are regionally determined encourages us to question our assumptions of the “right” way to do things. These experiential and (often) incidental learning experiences make studying psychology in a different culture unique to what we can offer in the classroom at home.

Course Planning

Study-abroad courses present new challenges and opportunities, requiring modification of typical content and methods used in teaching courses. Because of shorter terms, longer classes and greater emphasis on experiential learning than in usual courses may be organized around relevant field trip opportunities, and alternative approaches to measuring learning outcomes may be devised, such as the use of personal journals.

Learning Outside the Classroom

The majority of learning opportunities take place on field trips. These may involve a planned activity, such as a naturalistic observation of children in a park or adults in a busy shopping area or the rapid transit station. Much of the learning is unplanned, but offers rich opportunities for discussing psychology back in the classroom during the next session—e.g., race, ethnic-group, and social class relations, perceptions of and accommodations for those with physical handicaps, and attitudes toward Americans. Truly, the world becomes the classroom.

Planning and preparation are especially necessary for field trips. Initially, I assumed that because I found a place exciting, students would, too. I discovered that most students could walk through a museum in much less time than it took me to go through it and often missed some of the things I wanted them to see. I learned to plan specific activities to encourage their active engagement to meet objectives for the field trip. For example, one trip involved visiting the National Portrait Gallery to examine depictions of children in art from 1450 to the present. On the day before the field trip, I distributed a list of questions for students to explore across various time periods: “What are children wearing?” “Are there social class differences in what children are doing?” “Are children pictured with their pets? Toys? At play?” Students kept notebooks of their responses and completed a field trip report along with other comments about interesting materials they may have found. Once I was specific as to what information to look for, students reported their observations at a more thoughtful level.
Beginnings & Endings: Best Practices for Introducing and Bringing Closure to the Undergraduate Psychology Major

Friday & Saturday, October 12-13, 2007
Crowne Plaza Atlanta-Perimeter NW Hotel
6345 Powers Ferry Road
Atlanta, GA 30339

The Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP, Division 2 of APA), the Society for the History of Psychology (Division 26 of APA), the National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology (NITOP), and the Kennesaw State University Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) are excited to announce the sixth conference in the popular “Best Practices in Teaching Psychology” series, which started in 2002. The 2007 conference will focus on innovative and effective strategies for both starting off majors (e.g., the introductory course, a careers course) and bringing closure to the major (e.g., a specially designed capstone course or experience; a senior seminar; a history and systems course; research or applied internships/practicum). Modeled after the format of the previous conferences, the conference will include keynote speakers, concurrent symposia and workshops, and poster sessions. Our target audience includes teachers from high school, 2-year, and 4-year college/university settings. For further information, please visit the conference Web site: http://www.kennesaw.edu/cetl/conference/bp6/bp6index.htm or contact STP program Director Bill Hill at bhill@kennesaw.edu.
Using Psychology National Standards in the High School Classroom

Robert Abel, Jr.
Corona Del Mar High School, Newport Beach, CA

Psychology has come a long way since I took it in high school some 16 years ago. As an elective class, psychology was considered by many students to be a “fun” class. At the time, much of what I believed psychology was about had to do with conducting laboratory experiments, participating in activities, and talking about “personal” things. As I have grown, both as a student and a teacher, I have seen how the development of the National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula has been instrumental in the growth of such a popular subject.

Use of Standards in the Classroom
Since its original publication in 1999, the American Psychological Association’s National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula has been used by teachers as a guide for teaching high school psychology. The document was first revised in 2005, to include updates from the field. Complementing the growing push by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to use standards in the classroom to identify performance, the high school psychology standards identify what should be taught in the psychology classroom. These standards, scientifically based objectives for teaching psychology, provide a solid foundation for teaching the course at the high school level.

How the National Standards Help
High school psychology courses vary in length, with some being yearlong courses, and others being only one semester in length. The National Standards can be used to help teachers select topics they will teach, regardless of the course length, and while maintaining consistency of what the students are expected to know and do after they have successfully completed the class. As outlined in the National Standards, all psychology courses should include one unit from each of the five content domains: Methods, Biopsychology, Developmental, Cognitive, and Variations in Individual and Group Behavior.

Many students are taking psychology classes because they have an interest in psychology and may continue their study of psychology in college. The high school course will provide students with an introduction to the field that may help them later in their college career. Prior to the standards being developed, I can remember teachers developing their courses simply by picking topics that would interest the students, with no learning objectives specific to psychology. Students in each course would therefore be learning something different from other courses. The National Standards provides for consistency across courses and schools by providing every high school psychology teacher with a guide as to what students should know by the end of the term.

Effectiveness of the Standards on Teaching Advanced Placement (AP) and Regular Psychology
As a teacher of both AP and regular psychology, I have found that using the National Standards has helped me deliver my classes consistently, as outlined by the document. This, in turn, has helped me better prepare my students, enabling them to be more successful. I distribute copies of the National Standards to my AP students, which they find to be a helpful study guide as they prepare for the national AP exam in May. My regular class is only a one-semester course, so I have limited time to cover the same content I cover in my AP class. However, by selecting specific topics of interest and using the National Standards as a guide, I have been able to develop my Psychology I and Psychology II courses to include appropriate content across the five content domains. The students are comfortable with the subject and with the subject matter they are learning.

The use of the standards is especially effective in the classroom when one considers that some psychology teachers have limited psychology backgrounds, and many are typically social studies or social science teachers. Using the National Standards provides untrained teachers with guidance on what needs to be taught to be successful at the high school level. Using the National Standards will benefit your psychology program and may even provide legitimacy to it in the eyes of your principal and others who may see psychology as “just an elective.” I encourage you to use the National Standards in your own classroom. The document is available online at http://www.apa.org/ed/natlstandards.html. PTN
Study Abroad, continued from page 5

Experiential Learning

Application of psychological principles to self also becomes more salient in study-abroad psychology classes (Shatz, 2000). Some students in our program had never flown in an airplane; about two-thirds had never traveled abroad. Many had never lived in a residence hall, experienced serious homesickness, or faced the physical challenges of public transportation and limited access to elevators. Students reported an increased appreciation for difficulties of others whose first language is not English after trying to obtain a band-aid or order from a restaurant menu (“What are courgettes?”), etc. Experiences like these provided opportunities to see psychological principles in action. Although I had never used student journals in courses at my home institution, they became quite valuable in the study-abroad course, because student experiences outside of class were so relevant to what we were covering in personality, social, health, and developmental psychology, especially.

Pedagogical Resources

Because American programs are typically guests on campuses in the host countries, teaching resources may be scarce. In my case, computer and library facilities were limited for our students. Availability of audiovisual equipment was somewhat variable; some classrooms were well equipped, while others were not. Copying handouts and tests was also unreliable; I took printed copies with me, as well as a floppy disk with all files on it. (I never had a USB port on a computer available for my use.)

Personal Benefits to Students

Students found studying abroad was harder than originally anticipated, but much more rewarding than expected as well. They were often surprised that Europeans seem to feel quite comfortable with gun control, socialized medicine, laws against corporal and capital punishment, environmental protections, and a lower percentage of young adults attending college than in America. These issues provided great opportunities to discuss individualistic versus collectivistic societies. It was also humbling to find that many of those in other countries know more about our history, politics, and geography than sometimes we do ourselves.

Benefits to Faculty

Teaching psychology in a study-abroad program has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my career. Students were enthusiastic about applying what we were reading and discussing in class to what they were experiencing first hand. I recalled the planning and coaxing of class discussions on my home campus and was amazed as how easily my goals for class discussion were met in the study-abroad course.

A second benefit for faculty is that teaching abroad makes a person a better teacher back home. As someone who has taught for more than 20 years, planning classes—even new ones—had become fairly routine. Teaching in another culture requires a teacher to take the course apart and start over, beginning with resources that are available and building a viable course around these resources (Sommer & Sommer, 1991). I discovered new ways to accomplish academic goals by incorporating experiential, applied, and cross-cultural themes more frequently than before. My objective has shifted from an emphasis on learning the material to making the material meaningful to a much greater extent.

Students consistently reported in end-of-term qualitative evaluations of the courses that field trips were by far the most influential and valuable parts of the course. Seeing “the couch” at the Freud Museum in London, for example, is an experience that students will not easily forget. Another common theme on evaluations is how much they have learned about themselves and about their own culture, from a psychological perspective.

I look forward to teaching in other cultures as well. How exciting it would be to teach about Freud in Austria, Montessori in Italy, Pavlov and Vygotsky in Russia, and Wundt in Germany. Teaching psychology in a different culture provides a fresh look at psychology for instructors and students alike.

References


Announcing the 13th Northeast Conference for Teachers of Psychology

Friday, October 19, 2007

Make plans now to attend the Northeast Conference for Teachers of Psychology (NECTOP) this fall at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury, CT. Sponsored by the New England Psychological Association (NEPA), the American Psychological Association (APA) Education Directorate, the APA Board of Educational Affairs, Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools, and Psychology Teachers at Community Colleges, the NECTOP Conference features programs for teachers of psychology at all levels to enhance their teaching skills through sessions on successful teaching strategies and techniques.

Registration fees include all NECTOP conference sessions, continental breakfast, lunch, and the poster reception. Fees are $65 for NEPA members and high school teachers. Fees for all others are $80. Registration for NECTOP must be received by September 28th.

Visit http://www.nepa-info.org/index.html for more details and registration forms.
Team Teaching AP Psychology

Will Elmhorst
Marshfield High School, Marshfield, WI

For the past 4 years, I have team taught AP psychology at Marshfield High School (MHS). MHS is located in the city of Marshfield, WI, a rural setting near the center of Wisconsin with a population of just under 20,000. MHS is a high school (grades 9-12) with about 1,400 students.

The psychology classroom is a large-group classroom set up to facilitate a maximum of 60 students. The AP psychology class is made up of juniors and seniors. The class is scheduled for the spring semester only, providing only school days from the last week in January until the first week of May to teach the content. The building schedule is based on 43-minute periods, and the class meets 5 days a week.

The MHS team-teaching model is called co-teaching. As described by Lawton (1999), co-teaching is a model in which one teacher delivers the curriculum content, while the other clarifies, paraphrases, adds information, or uses visual aids to try to enhance understanding of a new concept. Using this model of instruction, the teachers reverse roles so that each teacher leads instruction for an equal amount of time.

According to Shafer (2000), professor of philosophy and religion at the University of Science and Art of Oklahoma, the five important characteristics of team teaching are:

- Team teaching should not be left up to chance;
- Students in a team-taught course should be carefully and continuously reminded of the purpose of the experience;
- Faculty should avoid competing for student approval and applause;
- Sufficient time must be allowed for planning team teaching and division of responsibilities, and
- Administrative support is essential for successful team teaching.

Schaffer’s suggestions are the focus of this article, and I will elaborate on each point with examples from my experiences as a member of a teaching team.

First: Be prepared. The key to success is to have multiple levels of preparation in place. At the first level of preparation, we have a semester-long calendar for the class. Every day is scheduled with the various classroom tasks. Assessments, lessons, activities, and school events are documented for the entire semester. The next level of preparation is our weekly lesson plans, where we go into more detail with our lesson content, tasks, and outcomes. The third level of preparation is our daily communication. My partner and I discuss our order of events and constantly make adjustments to keep on track with the calendar. The fourth level of preparation is to have a back-up lesson plan. Our back-up plan is usually structured around the use of hands-on activities that illustrate a content topic.

Second: Remind students of the purpose of team teaching. Students are reminded of the purpose of team teaching when teachers defer to each other for elaboration. I tend to field questions on biology of the brain and research methods. My partner fields questions on disorders and therapy. We also share from our different perspectives. Male and female perspectives are available to the students and are often the focus of much debate.

Third: Be flexible. Your teammate may find teachable moments when you are ready to move on to the next topic. The points that teachers stress will differ, and that is part of the beauty of the team-teaching model. Teaching partners in a classroom can make connections with students beyond the experience of one teacher. For example, my teaching partner happens to be female and reminds me, on occasion, if I have used an example to elaborate upon a content point that is biased toward a male perspective; she then goes on to expand the students’ understanding of the point with another example. Moreover, unanticipated events can easily foil the most detailed lesson plan. The effects of a fire drill on a lesson are magnified because two teachers need to apply their combined efforts to try and salvage a lesson. Unanticipated absences happen, and it is not always possible to communicate with your teammate. So, when a substitute teacher shows up without the lesson you thought your partner was to deliver, have a back-up plan.

Fourth: Respect each other. In a team-teaching environment, the potential exists for students to try and play one teacher against the other. It is very important to consult your teammate before making decisions that affect other parties. Don’t grand stand or try to outdo your partner. For example, you should avoid constantly correcting on minor content points, criticizing, dominating class time, and making power plays by overruling your partner’s decisions.

Fifth: Clearly define responsibilities. Partners on a team will naturally gravitate toward their areas of expertise. My partner is a very organized person and is the lead person with recordkeeping and communicating grades with students. My strengths are grading written work and research methods; therefore, I do most of the grading of written responses and take a lead role in helping students with their research projects. We take turns leading instruc-
At first glance, it might seem odd to do a book review on a dictionary, but the *APA Dictionary of Psychology* is no ordinary dictionary. The book contains more than 25,000 terms and definitions from the diverse world of psychology. The entries are written in an easy-to-understand format, and include, where possible, synonyms, antonyms, acronyms, abbreviations, and related words. Also included in the publication are four appendices, which contain categorizations of material such as institutions, associations, organizations, interventions, therapies, assessments, and biographies. It is often difficult for individuals outside the psychology profession to understand the language of the discipline. This book assists us by familiarizing readers with the jargon of the profession, because of its easy-to-understand format and language. It is used and set up like any standard dictionary, including thumb-tabs to help a reader find words and definitions rapidly and without difficulty. For example, a student could look up the word “dromomania,” which is not included in the standard dictionary, and find that it is “an abnormal drive or desire to travel that involves spending beyond one’s means and sacrificing job, partner, or security in the lust for new experiences” (p. 302). The dictionary also has selected biographical information on key figures in the history of psychology, organizations related to specialty areas in psychology, scales and instruments used in the practice and research in psychology, and listings of therapeutic approaches. The dictionary does not discriminate between schools of thought, fields of specialty, and topical areas, with entries from 90 subject areas, such as cognitive neurosciences, culture and social issues, geropsychology, tactile perception and disorders, intelligence testing, and animal behavior.

For the instructor of introductory courses in psychology, the *APA Dictionary of Psychology* can be a valuable resource as a reference tool for class discussions. It is not uncommon to be asked questions by students where an answer is not readily available. This book can help guide the instructor to the appropriate answer and provide related words for further search. The dictionary can be a source for topics that are not found in most introductory textbooks, but might be closely related to research in a particular area. For example, an instructor can talk about “REM behavior disorder,” which is a sleep disorder that causes an individual “an actual physical enactment of dream sequences” (p. 787). This could be presented during a section on consciousness, sleep, or psychological disorders. Some psychology instructors require students to seek out research in areas related to the field. In this type of exercise, the dictionary can be used as a source for terms to guide the search. For example, I prepare index cards with terms from the dictionary for students to look up and report back to the rest of the class. I also use the dictionary in my research methods class to help students conduct literature searches and refine operational definitions of variables being tested.

The *APA Dictionary of Psychology* is a ground-breaking source for the lexicon in the field, and an innovative tool for anyone who teaches, conducts research, and practices in psychology. The dictionary does an excellent job of capturing all of psychology’s diversity, including historical and cultural issues, different perspectives, and practices. It is a book that is well worth the investment and one I would recommend highly.
I wrote this column after reading two important—yet contrasting—reports related to preparing students for the 21st century. The first report, published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), is titled “College Learning for New Global Century,” and the second report, published by the Educational Testing Service, is titled “America’s Perfect Storm—Three Forces Changing Our Nation’s Future.”

The first report describes the essential learning outcomes that should serve as a framework to guide students’ cumulative progress from K-12 through college. It also describes seven principles of excellence for achieving student success and for preparing students for a global era. While the first report is aspirational and provides a new framework for meeting the needs of students in the 21st century, the second report paints a bleak picture of the challenges ahead should we continue down our current path with our present educational policies. The second report also makes the argument that if our country does not address the educational disparities that exist among American citizens, we will not be able to embrace the future with the brightness and security we want for future generations. In this column I will explain how our discipline prepares students for the new global century.

The essential learning outcomes were proposed by the Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) National Leadership Council, a group formed by AAC&U in 2005 to expand public and student awareness of what really matters in college and to espouse what is needed to be successful in the 21st century. The National Leadership Council is composed of educational, business, community, and policy leaders who are strong leaders in their own right and who advocate for liberal education for all students. The essential learning outcomes are based on a new consensus emerging among leaders in many fields about what America needs in order to be competitive: a highly skilled and talented workforce. These essential learning outcomes address knowledge that students should gain while in school and at higher levels of education across college studies.

While the essential learning outcomes and the seven principles of learning provide a blueprint for all educators to use as we prepare students for the 21st century, the report on America’s Perfect Storm is a call to action because it implies that our current policies are not working. According to the report, the three forces that will result in a perfect storm if we remain on our current course are (a) wide disparities in literacy and numeracy skills among school-age and adult populations; (b) continuation of seismic changes in our economy that have resulted in new sources of wealth, novel patterns of international trade, and a shift in balance between capital and labor; and (c) the sweeping demographic changes that will occur between now and 2030. The report states that each of these forces is powerful in its own right and that if the three forces are played out together, they will result in the perfect storm with no end in sight.

The report points out that the high school graduation rates peaked at 77% in 1969, fell back to 70% in 1995, and are thought to be close to 50% for disadvantaged minorities today. Data cited from national surveys indicate that our adult population does not demonstrate sufficient literacy and numeracy skills needed to fully participate in our increasingly competitive job market. The report makes historical reference to earlier reports that indicate a decline in academic proficiency among America’s youth and how our nation is at risk if we don’t address the disparities in education among...
tion and are free to chime in or elaborate on content points during lectures. By clearly defining responsibilities, both members of the team know their tasks.

One piece of data that I can share regarding the effectiveness of team teaching is that since the beginning of our team teaching experience, the percentage of students scoring 3, 4, or 5 on the AP exam went up by 10 points. The gains in student performance have been sustained over 4 years and suggest that students benefit from having two teachers in the classroom. Teachers benefit from team teaching as well. The process of team teaching does require more work, and some teacher autonomy is lost, however, the chance to work with a colleague in the classroom can help address some of the difficulties that teachers face, such as feeling isolated, getting stuck in a rut, and burning out. Team teaching can also reinvigorate a teacher’s zest for teaching. Team teaching can be as effective as non-team teaching approaches, and there are some correlational and/or case studies suggesting a benefit for students (Spraker, 2003). For future study, I suggest researching student attitudes toward team teaching and using a co-teaching model for larger-group instruction.

References

Marshfield Clinic


A Little Friendly Competition—The Annual Psychbowl

Tina Athanasopoulos
John Hersey High School, Arlington Heights, IL

Laura Brandt
Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire, IL

Terri Lindenberg
Lake Park High School, Roselle, IL

The Advanced Placement (AP) Reading is a fantastic opportunity for teachers to share various teaching methods and ideas. During a dinner at the 2003 AP Reading, Chuck Schira (Portage Central High School, Portage, MI), Allyson Weseley (Roslyn High School, Roslyn, NY), Terri Lindenberg (Lake Park High School, Lake Park, IL), and Tina Athanasopoulos (John Hersey High School, Arlington Heights, IL) were exchanging ideas and bragging about the success and intelligence of their respective psychology students. Each of the teachers was confident that their students would win a competition testing knowledge of psychology. At this dinner and through this conversation the “Psychbowl” was born.

Our goal was to get our students excited about psychology, provide a fun way to review for the AP exam, and, selfishly, engage in a little friendly competition among colleagues. In spring 2004, we held the first Psychbowl at the College of DuPage (COD) in Glen Ellyn, IL. COD is the largest single campus community college in the Midwest and has become the host of the annual Psychbowl.

This event is made possible by Drs. Kenneth Gray, Ada Wainwright, Naheed Hasan, each of whom is a psychology professor at COD, and the COD Psi Beta students. The professors work out the logistics, such as providing the appropriate space for the event and organizing the lunch. Meanwhile, the Psi Beta students help not only as scorers but also with any other organizational needs throughout the day.

Each year, the number of schools participating at the Psychbowl has increased. We hope that this trend will continue in the future. In spring 2006, 10 high schools competed. The schools came from various areas ranging from Portage, MI, to Lincolnshire, IL. Each team consisted of 10 players, sometimes escorted by a student or teacher helper. Students often dressed the part of a competition by sporting their psychology class t-shirts. In some extreme cases students have painted their faces with school colors! It is a day full of psychology fun and competition.

The schedule for the Psychbowl remains relatively constant each year. The day is scheduled as follows:

8:30-9:00 a.m. Breakfast
9:00-9:15 a.m. Greetings and Rules
9:15-9:45 a.m. Round 1—Board Competition
9:45-10:00 a.m. 15-Minute Break
10:00-10:45 a.m. Round 2—Buzzer Competition
10:45-11:00 a.m. 15-Minute Break
11:00-11:45 a.m. Round 3—Buzzer Competition
12:00 noon-12:45 p.m. Lunch (Pizza and Pop)
12:45-1:30 p.m. Championship Round
1:30 p.m. Awards and Thank You

Teams compete in two different formats. The first format is a fast-paced whiteboard “write in” format. This format involves all 10 members of each team taking turns answering questions. Students are lined up in a single-file line in numerical order. Students write their answers on white boards and rotate after each question. Each team scores 5 points for each correct answer.

Following this round, the teams compete in two rounds of a “buzz in” format that involves team questioning that is much like the Scholastic Bowl. The teams answer toss-up questions. If a team gets a question correct, it has the opportunity to answer three follow-up questions. If the team misses any part of the follow-up questions, the other teams have an opportunity to answer the remaining portions of the question. After these rounds are completed, the total points are added, and the top two teams compete in the championship round.

Each year there is a Quiz Master, who is in charge of reading the questions for the Board and Championship rounds. We have also recruited different high school psychology teachers to read questions during the “buzz in” format rounds. We have recruited various high school teachers across the nation to write psychology questions.

The significance of the Psychbowl is threefold. First, as students prepare to compete, they are also preparing for the AP exam by enhancing their overall understanding of psychology. Second, students enjoy the experience of visiting a college campus and interacting with psychology professors and Psi Beta students. Finally, allowing students to interact and compete against their peers in a friendly setting allows them to see the national scope and significance of psychology.

We hope that the Psychbowl will continue to be an annual event. Students are always excited at the opportunity to participate, and the excitement of these students is contagious for everyone involved. We have found that we often have as much fun and learn as much as the students. It is important for each of us to evaluate how our students measure up to their peers. If our students seem deficient in one area, we go back to the classroom

A Little Friendly Competition, continued on page 15
How could a cow made of play dough be a window to understanding stress? During every semester, there are moments that become potential invitations to divert from the lesson plan.

I jumped at the opportunity to teach Stress Management during the summer session. I smile fondly as I remember one very dark-skinned face among a sea of light-skinned faces. I was to learn that James was from the Sudan, had been in the United States for 3 years, and was part of a group known as the “Lost Boys of Sudan,” so named for their extraordinary walk to find refuge while fleeing violence in their native country.

The realization of my perception of his experiences haunted me. What could I possibly say about stress to a young man who had experienced starvation, deprivation, death, and refugee camps in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya?

One day as part of a stress-reducing activity, the students were given play dough. During the class discussion, James proudly held up his meticulously created cow, announcing that cows were the currency of his country. “It’s been a long time since I thought of playing in the mud with my family. Thanks for the memory!” he said in a matter-a-fact tone.

At that moment, I realized that a profound learning experience awaited us. Later that semester during a special presentation, James touched our hearts with tales of being chased by lions and men with machetes, walking with no shoes, the sounds of thousands drowning at the river, years of tent dwelling, and other stories of his extraordinary journey. For James, it was only a cow; for the class and me, it was a profound life lesson in the stressors of another human being.

Note. In 2001, the United States welcomed more than 3,000 of the Lost Boys of the Sudan for permanent resettlement. This group of young people fled Sudan on foot to Ethiopia, back to Sudan, to Kakuma refugee camps in Kenya, and finally to the United States. The Church World Service resettled more than 300 of these Sudanese young people at 10 sites around the country.

Dr. Aurora Hill teaches at Bucks County Community College, Newtown, PA, and can be reached at aurora@heartstonepub.com.

How many lives have you touched? Do you recall an important moment in the classroom that reminded you why you teach? Share your story about a significant moment in teaching! If you have a story to share (250 to 300 words), we would like to include it in the Psychology Teacher Network. Please send your submissions to Martha Boenau (Mboenau@apa.org). We look forward to hearing from you!
Utah Plays the Psychology Bowl

Pamala A. F. Coburn
Davis High School, Kaysville, UT

This article offers a second version of the Psychbowl described on page 13.

The Utah version of the Psychology Bowl started as a method of reviewing course material just before the AP exam. Teams from six high schools in the Davis School District meet at the centrally located Davis High School for our Psychology Bowl at the end of April. The intent is to include as many students as possible not only to compete, but to review the test material in a formal setting (and to show off what they have learned during the year!).

Before the students arrive, the stage is set with separate tables, microphones, buzzers, a scoreboard, an announcer’s podium, a clock for the timekeeper, and a central desk area in the audience for the Question Master. Each school brings a team of eight members dressed in team shirts and a school sign for display on the stage. The teams line up on stage facing the audience, with the members moving in turn at appropriate times, depending on the round.

To manage the competition, teachers from outside the district and graduates have been hired to announce, moderate/judge, and keep score. We have been able to go “high tech” the last 2 years, projecting the questions and answers on a screen above the contestants using a PowerPoint program. While the moderator reads the question to the contestants, the question (followed by the answer after the question is out of play) is revealed on the screen to the audience.

The Psychology Bowl begins with introductions of those managing the competition, followed by team/team member introductions. Just before the question rounds begin, we review the rules for the two 30-minute rounds. There is a 20-minute intermission between the two rounds. The rounds are conducted as follows.

Round One
Using white boards, members, one at a time, from each team simultaneously write the answer to the question and cover the answer until the 30-second buzzer. Then, each contestant reveals the answer. All of the six teams seat one player at the buzzer to answer questions, then after the question is read— the first to press the buzzer and be recognized by the announcer can either earn a point for the school with a correct answer, or if incorrect the school loses a point. After five questions each school team rotates to a new player until the time expires.

Round Two
“The Lighting Round” uses a buzzer/microphone set for each school. After the question is read, the first team (school) to buzz in is called on and, if it answers correctly, is awarded a point. If it answers incorrectly, it loses a point. Each contestant has the opportunity to answer five questions, then the team rotates to the next player until the 30 minutes expires.

Winners
After both rounds, the total points are tallied and the winners are announced:

• First-place team members win $25 each
• Second-place team members win $15 each
• Third-placed team members win $10 each

The first-place team wins the traveling trophy, and the name of the winning team's school is engraved on a small plaque. And, most importantly, they win bragging rights for the next school year.

Participants for 2007
Bountiful High School: Amy Jones
Davis High School: Pamala Coburn
Layton High School: Marilyn Greer
Northridge High School: Cynthia Davis
Viewmont High School: Kristin Whitlock
Woods Cross High School: Annette Jordon
Question Master: Dan Rozanas (Alta High)
Scorekeeper: Sally Lewis (Bonneville High) PTN

A Little Friendly Competition, continued for page 13

and review this subject. Thus, what started as friendly banter at a dinner has evolved into an essential teaching tool. Besides continuing the Psychbowl, we hope to expand the number of high schools competing to spread the excitement of psychology. PTN
PT@CC Convention Programs

Dates, times, and locations are tentative.
Check for details on the PT@CC Web pages: www.apa.org/ed/pcue/ptatcchome.html.

Saturday, August 18, 2007
Symposium: Creating an Inclusive Classroom
10:00-10:50 a.m.
Moscone Center, Room 220
Chair: Ladonna Lewis, Glendale Community College
Participants
Disability and Community College Life: Effective Strategies for Working With Disabled Students
Donald W. Daughtry, Texas A&M University Kingsville
Generation Gap or Generation Clash? Cohort Effects in the Classroom
Ellen Pastorino, Valencia Community College
Successful Strategies for Accommodating Students With “Invisible” Disabilities in the College Classroom
Patricia Puccio, College of DuPage
Conversation Hour: The Nature of Psychological Science—Confronting and Dispelling Students’ Misconceptions
11:00-11:50 a.m.
Moscone Center, Room 222
Chair: Susan K. Pollock, Mesa Community College
Participants
Ann T. Ewing, Mesa Community College
Carolyn J St. Peter, Mesa Community College
Ly T. L. Tran-Nguyen, Mesa Community College
Innovative Teaching Techniques (PT&CC and Psi Beta Cosponsored Session)
12:00 noon–12:50 pm
Moscone Center, Room 224
Chair: Laura Bittner, Carroll Community College
Participants
Doing the “Family Dance:” Teaching Family Dynamics
Susan K. Pollock, Mesa Community College
The ABC’s of Clickers in the Classroom: Applications, Basics, and Considerations With using Student Response Systems
Heather LaCost, Waubonsee Community College
A Psychology Teachers Consortium: Meeting the Needs of High School Teachers
Salvador Macias, III, University of South Carolina Sumter

PT@CC Invited Address: The Diane Halpern Lecture
1:00-1:50 p.m.
Moscone Center, Rooms 306 and 308
Chair: Susan K. Pollock, Mesa Community College
Participant
Making Memory Memorable: Demos Doing It
Philip Zimbardo, Stanford University

PT@CC Committee/Psi Beta Awards Ceremony and Social Hour
4:00-5:50 p.m.
San Francisco Marriott Hotel, Pacific Conference Suite B

Sunday, August 19, 2007
Community College Curriculum: Nontraditional Offerings
2:00–2:50 p.m.
Moscone Center, Room 224
Chair: Vincent J. Granito, Lorain County Community College
Participants
Teaching Sport Psychology at Community Colleges
Diane L. Finley, Prince George’s Community College
Learning and Memory at the 2-Year Schools
Salvador Macias, III, University of South Carolina, Sumter
Teaching Industrial/Organizational Psychology at Community Colleges
Vincent J. Granito, Lorain County Community College
The Principles of Excellence

Principle One
*Aim High—and Make Excellence Inclusive

Make the Essential Learning Outcomes a Framework of the Entire Educational Experience

Principle Two
*Give Students A Compass

Focus Each Student’s Plan of Study on Achieving the Essential Learning Outcomes—and Assess Progress

Principle Three
*Teach the Arts of Inquiry and Innovation

Immerse All Students in Analysis, Discovery, Problem Solving, and Communication Beginning in School and Advancing in College

Principle Four
*Engage the Big Questions

Teach through the Curriculum to Far-Reaching Issues—Contemporary and Enduring—in Science and Society, Cultures and Values, Global Interdependence, the Changing Economy

Principle Five
*Connect Knowledge with Choices and Action

Prepare Students for Citizenship and Work through Engaged and Guided Learning on “Real-World” Problems

Principle Six
*Foster Civic, Intercultural, and Ethical Learning

Principle Seven
*Assess Students’ Ability to Apply Learning to Complex Problems

Use Assessment to Deepen Learning and to Establish a Culture of Shared Purpose and Continuous Improvement

As teachers of psychology, our goal is to advance the teaching of psychology as a science and to promote the philosophy of liberal education. We have benchmarks for teaching our discipline and assessment tools that make us accountable. Where we have to stretch a bit is in terms of meeting the needs of all secondary and undergraduate students who take psychology courses. Because introductory psychology is so popular at the secondary and lower-division levels at most community colleges, we have an opportunity to teach our students skills that will prepare them for the global market place. We need to be vigilant in making certain that our students gain the knowledge and develop the skills that are delineated in these two seminal reports. We want to pay particular attention to prose, documentation, and quantitative literacy because current data indicate a great discrepancy in distribution of these skill sets. We can use our discipline to close the gap in these areas in order to prepare future generations of students for the workforce. Our challenge is to find the right pedagogical techniques that will ensure that our students are prepared for the global century.

Psychology teachers are in the unique position of responding to the national imperative addressed in both of these reports. First of all, the undergraduate major in psychology provides students with a skill set that is transferable and that positions them to understand human behavior in a broad context. Our challenge is to make certain that we adhere to our guidelines and that we infuse the principles of excellence from the aforementioned report into our curriculum. This will require us to rethink how we teach our courses. We can no longer afford to teach our courses for the majors only. We must think about how our discipline can rise to the occasion and meet the challenges ahead for the 21st century.

Education and skills. Moreover, data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that our current population will continue to work. It is estimated that during the past 5 years, two-thirds of the nation’s civilian workforce and 86% of its employment growth occurred because of new immigrant arrivals. However, almost half of the projected job growth in the next 20 years will be concentrated in occupations that require higher education and skills.

These reports present interesting opportunities and challenges for our discipline and for the teaching of psychology. When you examine the Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major (see Guidelines at www.apa.org/ed/pcuematter.html), you can see how the 10 learning goals and outcomes of the undergraduate psychology major are aligned with the essential learning outcomes proposed by AAC&U’s National Leadership Council. You can also see how the guidelines can be used to promote the principles of excellence described in the AAC&U report as well. In addition, the seven principles of excellence are consistent with many of the principles outlined in APA’s Principles for Quality Undergraduate Psychology Programs. This document (http://www.apa.org/ed/stmary.html) is based on recommendations from the APA National Conference on Enhancing the Quality of Undergraduate Education in Psychology that was held in June 1991 at St. Mary’s College of Maryland.

Teaching 21st, continued from page 11
Undergraduate Psychology Learning Goals and Outcomes

I. Knowledge, Skills, and Values Consistent with the Science and Application of Psychology

Goal 1: Knowledge Base of Psychology

Students will demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.

Goal 2: Research Methods in Psychology

Students will understand and apply basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation.

Goal 3: Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology

Students will respect and use critical and creative thinking, skeptical inquiry, and, when possible, the scientific approach to solve problems related to behavior and mental processes.

Goal 4: Application of Psychology

Students will understand and apply psychological principles to personal, social, and organizational issues.

Goal 5: Values in Psychology

Students will be able to weigh evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and reflect other values that are the underpinnings of psychology as a discipline.

II. Knowledge, Skills, and Values Consistent With Liberal Education That Are Further Developed in Psychology

Goal 6: Information and Technological Literacy

Students will demonstrate information competence and the ability to use computers and other technology for many purposes.

Goal 7: Communication Skills

Students will be able to communicate effectively in a variety of formats.

Goal 8: Sociocultural and International Awareness

Students will recognize, understand, and respect the complexity of sociocultural and international diversity.

Goal 9: Personal Development

Students will develop insight into their own and others’ behavior and mental processes and apply effective strategies for self-management and self-improvement.

Goal 10: Career Planning and Development

Students will emerge from the major with realistic ideas about how to implement their psychological knowledge, skills, and values in occupational pursuits in a variety of settings.

Call for Participants

National Conference on Undergraduate Education in Psychology: Blueprint for the Discipline’s Future

The National Conference on Undergraduate Education in Psychology will be held on the beautiful campus of University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, WA, from Sunday, June 22, through Friday, June 27, 2008. The goal of the conference is to examine critical issues and concerns in undergraduate education and the important changes that have occurred since our last conference on undergraduate education in June 1991.

The American Psychological Association’s Board of Educational Affairs (BEA) Steering Committee for the National Conference invites applications for participants. Most expenses for the conference will be covered by the University of Puget Sound, APA, and other sources. We will cover all room costs, most food expenses, and local transportation to and from the airport. We hope that each participant’s institution will pay travel costs, but limited funding is available to assist participants who cannot cover their own travel costs. We encourage applications from the wide range of institutions that offer undergraduate education or provide linkages to undergraduate education, such as high schools, graduate and professional schools, and employers.

Applicants are invited to complete the application process online at http://www.apa.org/ed, where you will find a place to describe your background or interests in undergraduate psychology, including high school and postgraduate linkages; your preferences for a topic of special interest to you; and other relevant information. We are planning for about 64 participants (plus consultants) who would represent the diversity in undergraduate education.

All applications must be received by November 15, 2007. If you have any questions about the conference or the application process, please contact Martha Boenau (MBoenau@apa.org), Education Directorate, American Psychological Association, 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002-4242.

References


Interteaching: A New Approach to Peer-Based Instruction

Tracy E. Zinn, PhD, and Bryan K. Saville, PhD
James Madison University

For several decades, instructors have used peer-based teaching methods as alternatives to traditional methods of classroom instruction. Although the majority of instructors still use lecture-based methods, peer-based methods such as jigsaw classrooms, reciprocal peer tutoring, and study teams tend to produce better outcomes (e.g., McKeachie, 2002).

Interteaching, a new method of classroom instruction, attempts to capitalize on the benefits of peer-based instruction. It does so by including as one of its primary components “a mutually probing, mutually informing conversation between two people” (Boyce & Hineline, 2002, p. 220). In the present paper, we will describe interteaching and explain how to implement it in the classroom. We will also discuss the results of several studies, which suggest that interteaching is an effective alternative to traditional teaching methods. Finally, we will discuss how interteaching capitalizes on Chickering and Gamson’s (1987) best teaching practices.

Components of Interteaching

Preparation guides. Before each class meeting, instructors distribute a preparation (prep) guide, which contains questions designed to guide students through their readings. Most often, the questions require students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate course material (e.g., Bloom, 1956). In addition, the prep guides clearly define learning objectives and serve as the basis for pair discussions and exam questions (see below).

Pair discussion. During each class session, students spend the majority of their time going over the prep guide questions with a classmate. They are told to focus on discussion and minimize their reliance on notes, which seems to keep them from simply reading the answers they may have written down. In addition, although you may be tempted to allow more than two students to work together, we strongly suggest using pairs, which minimizes the potential for social loafing (Boyce & Hineline, 2002). During this time, the instructor moves around the room, facilitating discussion and answering questions.

To provide incentive for participating in the pair discussions, students earn a small number of points for each discussion they complete. Although this number may vary somewhat depending on your course objectives, participation should account for approximately 10% of a student’s overall course grade (Boyce & Hineline, 2002).

Record Sheets. After completing a pair discussion, students submit a record sheet on which they report (a) the name of their partner, (b) how their discussion went, (c) topics that were difficult to understand, and (d) any additional comments. Not only do the record sheets provide immediate feedback to the instructor, they also serve as the source for a clarifying lecture that begins the next class period.

Lecture. After reviewing the record sheets, the instructor prepares a brief lecture that covers only those topics for which students requested additional clarification. By focusing only on information that students requested, valuable class time is reserved for discussion. Moreover, because the lectures are brief and cover information that is of interest to students, they follow, and thus serve to reinforce, those behaviors we wish to promote (e.g., discussing). In contrast, traditional lectures function as antecedents and, consequently, may or may not evoke these behaviors.

Exams. Exams typically contain two essay questions, taken directly from the prep guides, along with a number of objective questions based on prep-guide material. Because the exams contain material that is based on the prep-guide questions, students typically experience less anxiety beforehand and are more likely to persevere in the class; they understand that if they prepare for class, what they discuss in class will be reflected on the exams. In addition, because exams are given frequently (i.e., at least five per semester; Boyce & Hineline, 2002), both students and instructors receive frequent feedback on how the course is going.

Quality Points. To encourage pair discussions that are of high quality, students have the opportunity to earn quality points toward their course grades. Imagine that two students discussed a prep guide question that subsequently showed up as an essay question on an exam. If both students perform well on that question (e.g., each earns an A or B), both earn additional points toward their course grades. However, if one or both of the students do not answer the question correctly (e.g., less than a B), neither receives quality points. As with the participation points, quality points should account for about 10% of a student’s course grade.
Is Interteaching Effective?

We have conducted several investigations on the efficacy of interteaching (and are in the process of conducting several more). In our first study (Saville, Zinn, & Elliott, 2005), we examined in a controlled laboratory setting the effectiveness of interteaching relative to other, traditional methods by randomly assigning participants to one of four conditions: interteaching, lecture, reading, or control. We found that participants in the interteaching group performed significantly better on a short, multiple-choice quiz than participants in the other groups.

We then compared interteaching to lecture within the confines of a traditional university classroom (Saville, Zinn, Neef, Van Norman, & Ferreri, 2006). In the first experiment, we alternated between interteaching and lecture several times. We found that graduate students performed better on quizzes following interteaching and that most preferred interteaching. In our second experiment, we again alternated between interteaching and lecture and counterbalanced the teaching method across two sections of an undergraduate research methods course. We found that students performed better on exams following interteaching, enjoyed interteaching more, and felt they learned more from interteaching.

In a subsequent study, we examined the effects of quality points on exam performance in two sections of an introductory psychology course (Zinn & Saville, 2005). Both sections participated in interteaching, but we alternated between quality points and no quality points, again counterbalancing the order across sections. We found that exam performance was not affected by our manipulation. Because students did not receive quality points until well after the pair discussions, we believe that the quality point contingency was too delayed to have an impact on the discussions. However, we feel that additional research is needed to determine the extent to which quality points contribute to the efficacy of interteaching.

Interteaching as Best Practice

Both empirical and anecdotal data suggest that interteaching seems to be an effective alternative to traditional teaching methods. Although additional data are needed to determine exactly what makes it effective, an examination of best teaching practices may provide useful insight.

Chickering and Gamson (1987) identified seven best teaching practices that help facilitate student learning: (a) encouraging contact between students and instructor, (b) promoting cooperation among students, (c) incorporating active learning, (d) providing timely feedback, (e) emphasizing time-on-task, (f) establishing high expectations, and (g) appreciating diversity in learning. Below we discuss how interteaching seems to support these practices.

Contact Between Students and Instructor. With interteaching, instructors interact considerably with students during the pair discussions. Because of this increased interaction, instructors and students become more comfortable with one another. Furthermore, the record sheets allow students to “talk” to the instructor in a format that is private. This increased contact is likely to facilitate teacher immediacy, which has been linked to positive student evaluations (Wilson & Taylor) and has been found to have an impact on motivation and learning (Christophel, 1990).

Cooperation. Through pair discussions (and possibly quality points), interteaching capitalizes on the benefits of cooperation. The inclusion of such cooperative contingencies likely has a positive effect on student learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2003).

Active Learning. Quite possibly the best way to learn something is to teach it to someone else. Because students have the opportunity to practice this and other important skills that will serve them later (e.g., cooperating with others, synthesizing and analyzing information), they experience the positive effects of active learning (e.g., Mathie et al., 1993).

Timely Feedback. With interteaching, students receive frequent performance feedback—from their partners during the pair discussions and from the instructor during the discussions and the subsequent clarifying lecture. Finally, with frequent exams, students receive feedback on their retention of course material. Similarly, instructors benefit from student feedback and, consequently, can monitor students’ progress and improve their own teaching performance.

Time on Task. The structure of interteaching encourages students to spend more quality time focused on the course material—both in and out of class. Furthermore, the clear link between explicit objectives and exam material encourages focused study.

Establishing High Expectations. Because instructors compose the prep-guide questions, which typically require high-level comprehension and synthesis, they convey to students what level of understanding they expect. By appropriately elevating the difficulty of the prep-guide questions, instructors can convey to students that they are capable of performing at a high level.

Diversity in Learning. Interteaching requires students to engage in diverse behaviors—reading, writing, discussing, and listening. This accomplishes two primary goals. First, it acknowledges that different students might learn best in different ways. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it encourages students to improve their learning. If a student feels uncomfortable explaining his or her position on a topic at the beginning of class, he or she can work on developing these important skills.

Conclusion

Interteaching builds on well-established behavioral principles and incorporates these principles into a collaborative learning paradigm. Our empirical data, along with our own anecdotal evidence, suggests that interteaching may produce outcomes superior
What Is the ACT Against Violence Program?

Julia da Silva
APA Public Interest Directorate

One of a few violence prevention strategies that focus on early childhood, ACT—Adults and Children Together—Against Violence (ACT) is a national anti-violence initiative developed by the APA Public Interest Directorate and the APA Public and Member Communications Directorate in collaboration with the National Association for the Education of Young Children. ACT emphasizes early prevention, community involvement, strengthening of families, and positive parenting as critical ways to create safe and healthy environments that protect children and youth from violence and other behavior problems.

The ACT program accomplishes its goals through partnerships with community-based organizations, coalitions, and agencies and through training of professionals and others who work with families. Trained professionals and their organizations disseminate to adults research-based information on child development, the influence of numerous risk factors for developing patterns of aggressive behaviors, the importance of developing protective factors and skills for nonviolent behaviors, and the effectiveness of community participation.

ACT was launched in 2000. In order to increase fidelity of replication and meet the increasing demand for violence prevention programs in Latino communities, in 2005, APA created Parents Raising Safe Kids, an 8-week program in Spanish and English that focuses primarily on educating parents and other caregivers of young children.

The program is culturally sensitive and designed to increase professionals’ sensitivity to cultural differences. All the training and educational materials come in Spanish and English and are available for downloading or purchasing through the program Web site: www.actagainstviolence.org. The program also reaches millions of adults through a TV ad, radio and print ads that are available online, billboards, and posters.

Formative evaluation studies conducted at some of the local sites and a national study funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and conducted by the Battelle Centers for Public Health Research and Evaluation in 2002-2003 demonstrated that the ACT program offers a successful model for disseminating and teaching early violence prevention and skills to adults. Currently, efforts are being made to conduct outcome evaluation at some of the parent program sites to assess the impact of the program on parents’ behaviors and attitudes.

As of today, the ACT program is implemented in 35 communities in 18 states, including Latino communities, and has already trained more than 20,000 professionals and reached more than 30,000 parents and other caregivers. The program has established partnerships with community-based social service and mental health providers, colleges, local government agencies, local coalitions, churches, and hospitals. Parents in general, teen parents, incarcerated parents, and foster parents are among those recruited to attend the 8-week program conducted at child care centers, prisons, shelters, hospitals, public libraries, adult education centers, churches, and schools. The ACT national staff provides technical assistance to local site teams through e-mails, conference calls, annual leadership seminars, a LISTSERV, Web-based seminars, and site visits.

For more information, contact Julia Silva, Program Director, at jsilva@apa.org or at 202-336-5817. Visit the ACT Against Violence Web site at www.actagainstviolence.org. PTN
to those seen with traditional lectures. In addition, interteaching supports established best-teaching practices. We believe that interteaching is an effective, interesting, and challenging alternative to traditional classroom methods. We encourage others to give this method a try.

References


Zinn, T., & Saville, B. (under review). Interteaching: The effects of quality points on exam scores. Submitted to Teaching of Psychology.

The Society for Teaching of Psychology (STP) Teaching Awards Committee is pleased to announce the 2007 recipients of STP’s Teaching Excellence Awards:

Robert S. Daniel Teaching Excellence Award (4-year college or university): Bette Bottoms, University of Illinois at Chicago

Wayne Weiten Teaching Excellence Award (2-year college): Kim O’Donnell, Naugatuck Valley Community College

Mary Margaret Moffett Memorial Teaching Excellence Award (high school): Debra Park, West Deptford High School

Early Career Teaching Excellence Award (first 5 years of full-time teaching): Tracy Zinn, James Madison University

Wilbert J. McKeachie Teaching Excellence Award (graduate student): Jessica Irons, Auburn University

Come Play “Games to Explain Human Factors”

Would you like to have a portfolio of games and activities to help you explain thinking, learning, problem solving, and information processing to your students? Would this understanding help your students learn and communicate more effectively? APA’s Division 21 is offering the program “Games to Explain Human Factors: Come, Participate, Learn and Have Fun!!” at the 2007 APA Convention. The session will be offered on Friday, August 17, from 1:00 to 2:50 p.m., in room 3018 of the Moscone Center. The room capacity is 265. The session will be led by Dr. Ronald G. Shapiro, Dana Nelson, a high school teacher, Dr. Margarita Posada, an applied developmental psychologist, and Sharon Mintz, a PhD candidate in clinical psychology.
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| Saturday, Aug 18  | Application of Psychological Science to Teaching and Learning: A Web-based resource | 10:00-10:50 a.m. | Moscone Center, Room 238 | Mary Brabeck, New York University | Carol Dwyer, Educational Testing Service  
Sandra Graham, University of California, Los Angeles  
Thomas Kratochwill, University of Wisconsin, Madison  
Joan Lucariello, Boston College  
Barbara McCombs, University of Denver  
Robert Pianta and Sara Rimm-Kaufman, University of Virginia  
Margaret Semrud-Clikeman, Michigan State University |
|                   | No Child Left Behind: Legislative Recommendations from the Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education | 12:00 noon-12:50 p.m. | Moscone Center, Room 200 | Scott Solberg, University of Wisconsin, Madison | Jeff Braden, North Carolina State University  
Sam Ortiz, St. Johns University  
Stephen Rollin, Florida State University  
Jenny Smulson, APA PPO  
Gary Stoner, University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
And other representatives of the Coalition, to be determined |
|                   | Aiming for Excellence: Celebrating 15 Years of TOPSS                  | 1:00-1:50 p.m. | Moscone Center, Room 200 | Charles Brewer, PhD, Furman University | Charles Spielberger, University of South Florida  
Amy Fineburg, Spain Park High School  
Randy Ernst, Lincoln Schools  
Mary Jean Voigt, Boylan High School |
| Sunday, Aug 19    | Student Learning Outcomes Across Educational Contexts: Impacts and Predictions | 2:00-3:50 p.m. | Moscone Center, Room 236 | Jane S. Halonen, University of West Florida | Amy Fineburg, Spain Park High School  
Patricia Puccio, College of DuPage  
Bill Hill, Kennesaw State University  
Nadine Kaslow, Emory School of Medicine |