

APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS) 2014 Annual Report

TOPSS Committee Members: Michael McLane, MA, Chair; Steve Jones, MA, Past Chair; Michael Hamilton, MA, Chair-Elect; Amy Ramponi, MA; Yadira Sanchez, PsyD; Maria Vita; Virginia Welle, MS; Janie Wilson, PhD; William Wozniak, PhD

Staff Liaisons: Emily Leary Chesnes, MBA; Robin Hailstorks, PhD; Maha Khalid

In 2014 the APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS) worked on several initiatives that were aligned to the APA strategic plan. Many TOPSS programs and initiatives align well to the goal to *Increase Recognition of Psychology as a Science* (Goal 3).

APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers

The tenth annual APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers was held June 30-July 2, 2014, at Clark University in Worcester, MA. Twenty-four high school teachers from around the country participated in the workshop. Presenters included Randy Ernst of Lincoln Public Schools (Lincoln, NE), and Nancy Fenton of Adlai E. Stevenson High School (Lincolnshire, IL). Clark University professors Michael Addis, PhD, Wendy Grolnick, PhD, and Katherine Bielaczyc, PhD, presented on men's well-being, motivation, and learning environments, respectively. Mary Kite, PhD, of Ball State University, delivered a keynote address entitled *Developing Students' Multicultural Competence: Practical Advice for Difficult Dialogues*. This workshop is co-sponsored by APA, Clark University, and the American Psychological Foundation (APF), and has been made possible through generous gifts from Lee Gurel, PhD, a Clark University alumnus, APA member, and longtime APF donor, to both Clark and APF.

APA Briefing on High School Psychology

A second "APA Briefing on High School Psychology" was held September 18, 2014 in the APA headquarters, following an initial briefing in March 2013. The purpose of the meeting was to share information on the teaching of high school psychology and APA policy documents and resources for high school psychology, and to discuss possible collaborations with participating groups. Representatives from the following groups attended the briefing: American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Federation of Teachers, ASCD, District of Columbia Public Schools, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Council for the Social Studies, National Research Council, National PTA, and the Society for Neuroscience. Board of Educational Affairs member and former TOPSS Chair Amy Fineburg, PhD, chaired the briefing, and TOPSS Chair Michael McLane participated in the briefing via conference call.

Forum on High School Education in Psychology

At its fall meeting, the TOPSS Committee recommended that APA hold a national/international conference (or "forum") on high school education in psychology, similar to past conferences held on undergraduate psychology education. A forum could address topics such as administrative issues, including teacher certification, professional development, and course credit options for high school students; curricular issues, including the format and use of the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula*, the availability and quality of lesson plans and activities, and the inclusion of new and emerging topics in the field; and instructional

issues, including best practices for teaching high school psychology and the use of technology in instruction. Upon recommendation from TOPSS, the APA Board of Educational Affairs approved in principle the need for a forum, as well as a request to establish a Steering Committee to plan a forum, which will be held in 2016.

Unit Lesson Plans

The TOPSS unit lesson plans are a signature product of the TOPSS Committee. The unit lesson plans provide guidance for teaching specific content areas in psychology. In 2014 three revised unit plans were published, one on *Perspectives in Psychological*, one on *Psychological Disorders*, and one on *Personality*. Funding from APF, generously provided through a gift from Lee Gurel, PhD, supported the revision of these TOPSS unit lesson plans.

Additionally, a new problem-based unit lesson plan on *Childhood Obesity* was published in 2014. A “problem-focused” unit is one that takes a common problem facing society and uses the problem as a way to teach psychological content. All TOPSS lesson plans are available online at <http://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/topss/lessons/index.aspx>.

Revisions of other unit lesson plans continued this year.

Recognizing High School Teachers and Students of Psychology

The APA Education Directorate and the APA TOPSS Committee were pleased to recognize three teachers with the APA TOPSS Excellence in Teaching Award. The 2014 recipients were: Lara Bruner, MA, of Desert Vista High School in Phoenix, AZ; William Elmhurst, MS, of Marshfield High School in Marshfield, WI, and Joseph Swope, PhD, of Northwest High School in Germantown, MD. The awards recognize outstanding teaching.

The APA Education Directorate and the TOPSS Committee recognized Miriam Hauptman of Ladue Horton Watkins High School (St. Louis, MO), Rebecca Jordan of Rye High School (Rye, NY), Emory Nager of North Salem High School (North Salem, NY), and Milena Pirman of Kimberly High School (Appleton, WI) as the winners of the 2014 APA TOPSS Competition for High School Psychology Students. Each student received a \$250 scholarship. Funding is provided by the APA Education Directorate. The 2014 competition question asked students to submit an essay describing the biopsychosocial factors that contribute to obesity; students were also asked to offer a solution to the obesity epidemic using psychological science.

TOPSS offered Academic Achievement in Psychology Certificates to all TOPSS affiliates in 2014 so that teachers could recognize outstanding student achievement in their classrooms. Student award recipient names were posted to the TOPSS website.

Work on National Standards Performance Indicators

During the fall of 2014, six high school psychology teachers met in the APA building to finish revisions to Performance Indicators for the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* (APA, 2011). Performance Indicators were meant to be examples of how students could demonstrate mastery of course content as outlined in the *National Standards*, and had been removed from the 2011 version of the policy document. The group finished revisions to three of the seven domains and developed a plan to finish the remaining domains by early 2015. The finished indicators were posted online in December 2014.

TOPSS Webcast

The APA Education Directorate and TOPSS sponsored a second TOPSS webinar on Tuesday,

September 23, 2014, on the topic *Neuroethics and Neurotechnology*. The webinar featured Eric Chudler, PhD, Research Associate Professor, Department of Bioengineering, University of Washington, and Executive Director of the Center for Sensorimotor Neural Engineering. The webinar was free to TOPSS members with a discount code and a video of the webinar is now available online free of charge. Details are available through <http://apatopss.bizvision.com/>.

TOPSS-Sponsored Sessions for High School Teachers

TOPSS and the Education Directorate sponsored a “Professional Speaker Night” at the Advanced Placement Reading in June. TOPSS members Rob McEntarffer, PhD, and Maria Vita presented at the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Annual Conference in November 2014 in Boston, MA, on the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula*.

TOPSS sponsored three programs at the APA Convention in Washington, DC. The TOPSS Invited Addresses were:

- C. Nathan DeWall, PhD, University of Kentucky: *Self-Control: Teaching Students About Their Greatest Inner Strength*
- Sue Frantz, MA, Highline Community College, and J. Noland White, PhD, Georgia College: *Classroom technologies you will actually use: Descriptions and applications*
- Stephen Chew, PhD, Samford University: *The Lee Gurel Lecture: The Challenge of Translating Learning Research into Effective Pedagogical Practice*

Invited speaker Annie Murphy Paul was unable to attend Convention. TOPSS and the Education Directorate sponsored a reception for high school psychology teachers at the APA Convention.

APA Convention Award Program for Teachers and Students

TOPSS members were encouraged to participate in the APA Convention Award Program for High School Psychology Teachers and Students, sponsored by the APA Education Directorate with funding from the APA Board of Directors. This program was designed to encourage attendance and increase representation of high school psychology teachers and students at the 2014 APA convention. Ten teachers received awards of \$200 to attend Convention, and five teachers received awards of up to \$500 to attend Convention with between two and four of their psychology students. A total of sixteen students attended the APA Convention through this program.

Membership Outreach and Services

Membership outreach and retention remained a high priority for TOPSS. In 2014, the TOPSS Committee, through the Education Directorate, continued to support a Facebook fan page, to enhance member engagement and communication. A new webpage was added to the TOPSS website to list local or state groups of or workshops for high school psychology teachers; this page also includes a map of these groups in the United States. Several articles appeared in the *Psychology Teacher Network* newsletter on these local groups.

In 2014, the APA Education Directorate participated as an exhibitor at the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Conference in Boston, MA. NCSS is the largest association for social studies educators in the country. The NCSS booth provided APA and TOPSS with good visibility at NCSS. TOPSS and the Education Directorate sponsored a reception for high school

psychology teachers at the conference.

TOPSS communicated with its members through the distribution of a spring mass mailing and several e-blasts throughout the year. TOPSS also communicated with affiliate members through postings to the TOPSS website and the TOPSS listserv.

The Education Directorate, in collaboration with TOPSS members and members of the APA Committee of Psychology Teachers at Community Colleges, 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.

American Psychological Foundation/Education Directorate Lee Gurel Fund for the Professional Development of High School Psychology Teachers

The TOPSS Committee greatly appreciated American Psychological Foundation (APF) funding to the Education Directorate in 2014 that supported the following initiatives:

- The revision of unit lesson plans (outlined above)
- *APF High School Psychology Teacher Network Grants* to support local or regional networks of psychology teachers
- *APF Professional Development Awards for High School Psychology Teachers* to help high school psychology teachers travel to and attend the APA Convention in August 2014
- Additional travel support for participants for the 2014 APA/Clark University Workshop
- A Pre-Convention Workshop for Introductory Psychology Teachers, held in Washington, DC, on August 6, 2014
- Video support for the Pre-Convention Workshop for Introductory Psychology Teachers (six new videos were posted online for teachers to view)

Other Collaborations and Discussions

A TOPSS liaison attended the December 2014 meeting of the Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education.

The TOPSS Committee also participated in discussions on the APA public education campaign.