

APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS) 2017 Annual Report

TOPSS Committee Members: Kristin Whitlock, MEd, Chair; Scott Reed, MEd, Past Chair; Maria Vita, Chair-Elect; Chuck Schallhorn, MS; Jennifer Schlicht, MS; Allison Shaver, MA; Brad Wray; Sue Frantz, MA; Linda Woolf, PhD

Staff Liaisons: Emily Leary Chesnes, MBA; Robin Hailstorks, PhD; Yvonne Hill, MS

In 2017, 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 with the goals to *Maximize Organizational Effectiveness* (Goal 1) and *Increase Recognition of Psychology as a Science* (Goal 3).

APA Summit on High School Psychology Education

The APA Summit on High School Psychology Education was held July 9-14, 2017 at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah. Its mission was to plan for the best future for high school psychology education and its goals were to strengthen the value, delivery, assessment, and reach of the teaching of high school psychology. The summit was the first national conference to focus on high school psychology, and had been recommended by the TOPSS Committee in 2014. 72 psychology educators participated in the summit, representing high school and undergraduate psychology programs. The summit was sponsored by APA and Weber State University with the support of many contributing sponsors.

Eight of the nine TOPSS Committee members participated in the summit, each serving on one of eight working groups. These working groups produced a number of deliverables on topics such as psychology as science, skills that promote flourishing and well-being, the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula*, assessment, credentialing, professional development, diversity and access, and technology and online learning. Working groups also made recommendations to advance the mission of the summit. In 2017, the following summit deliverables were posted to the TOPSS website:

- A comprehensive list of professional development opportunities for high school psychology teachers
- A resource vetting rubric for high school psychology teachers to use in assessing the quality of classroom resources

Additionally, a blog post on social learning technology tools for psychology teachers was posted to the Psych Learning Curve blog. This was inspired by a forthcoming summit deliverable on technology tools for teachers. TOPSS Committee members met in October 2017 to discuss and review summit deliverables and plan for their broad dissemination. The summit deliverables and recommendations will influence the work of the TOPSS Committee for the foreseeable future.

TOPSS 25th Anniversary

In 2017, TOPSS celebrated its 25th anniversary. In 1992, the TOPSS Interim Steering Committee was formed and in 1993, the TOPSS Committee was officially established by the APA Council of Representatives. The following events and activities took place in 2017 to celebrate the anniversary:

- The TOPSS 25th Anniversary was recognized at the spring 2017 consolidated meetings; a flier on the anniversary distributed to all attending governance members and celebratory refreshments were provided for meeting attendees.

- An article by TOPSS Chair Kristin Whitlock, MEd, on the anniversary, appeared in the February 2017 *Psychology Teacher Network* newsletter.
- A limited number of TOPSS t-shirts were produced for distribution to TOPSS members. Shirts were available at the Advanced Placement Reading, the APA/Clark University Workshop, the APA Summit on High School Psychology Education, and the APA Convention, and shirts were sent to TOPSS members upon request.
- The anniversary was recognized at the Advanced Placement Reading in June 2017, the APA Summit on High School Psychology Education in July 2017, and the APA Annual Convention in August 2017.

APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers

The 13th annual APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers, was held June 28-30, 2017 at Clark University in Worcester, MA. Twenty-five high school teachers from around the country participated in the workshop. The 2017 workshop presenters were Nancy Diehl of Hong Kong International School and Southside Family Health Centre (Hong Kong), and Joe Swope, PhD, Northwest High School (Germantown, MD.) APA President, Dr. Antonio Puente (University of North Carolina, Wilmington) delivered the keynote address: *125 Years of Teaching of Psychology: Where Does High School Psychology Fit In?* APA President-elect Jessica Henderson Daniel, PhD, attended the opening workshop reception.

This workshop was made possible through generous gifts from Lee Gurel, PhD, a Clark University alumnus, APA member, and longtime American Psychological Foundation (APF) donor, to both Clark and APF.

Regional Networks for High School Psychology Teachers

The APF High School Psychology Outreach Grants supported five regional teaching networks and two teaching conferences in 2017, thanks to funding provided by APF. Networks were supported in Georgia; Indiana; Kansas; Michigan; and the Maryland, Virginia, Washington, DC region. A workshop for teachers at the Eastern Conference on the Teaching of Psychology (ETOP) and the 4th Annual Teaching Introductory Psychology (TIP) Northwest Conference, were also supported. The development of regional teaching networks has been a priority of the TOPSS Committee in recent years, as a way of promoting local professional development opportunities for teachers.

Unit Lesson Plans and Teaching Module

The TOPSS unit lesson plans are a signature product of the TOPSS Committee. Revisions of several unit lesson plans continued this year, and a revised lesson plan on *Research Methods, Measurement, and Statistics* was published in January. Additionally, a teaching module on *Careers, Education, and Vocational Applications in Psychology* was published in October. APF funding supported both resources.

A new webpage was added to the TOPSS website of teaching activities and two-day lesson plans, all publicly accessible online. The activities were selected from three of the existing TOPSS unit lesson plans, and the two-day lesson plans had been submitted from past winners of the APA TOPSS Charles T. Blair-Broeker Excellence in Teaching Award.

Recognizing High School Teachers and Students of Psychology

The APA Education Directorate and the APA TOPSS Committee were pleased to recognize two teachers with the 2017 APA TOPSS Charles T. Blair-Broeker Excellence in Teaching Award. The 2017 recipients

were: Daria Schaffeld, MA, of Prospect High School in Mt. Prospect, IL, and Tiffany Karns, of Rowlett High School in Rowlett, TX. The annual Excellence in Teaching Awards recognize outstanding psychology teachers.

The APA Education Directorate and the TOPSS Committee also recognized four high school students as winners of the 2017 APA TOPSS Essay Competition for High School Psychology Students. Poorvi Dua, Xavier College Preparatory (Phoenix, AZ), Wendi Ji, Shen Zhen College of International Education (Guangdong, China), Grace Rhine of Penn Manor High School (Millersville, PA), and Sophia Song of Seoul International School (Seoul, South Korea), each received a \$250 scholarship for their winning essays. Funding was provided by the APA Education Directorate. The 2017 competition asked students to submit an essay that addressed the topic of aging, and provided information concerning physical, psychological, and social factors that influenced the aging process. In addition, each essay was required to use existing psychological research to examine how individuals and society can promote healthy aging. The 2017 essay question was developed in collaboration with the APA Committee on Aging.

TOPSS offered Academic Achievement in Psychology Certificates to all TOPSS affiliates in 2017 so that teachers could recognize outstanding student achievement in their classrooms. Student award recipient names were posted on the TOPSS website.

APA Convention Programming

The TOPSS Committee sponsored three invited addresses at the 2017 APA Convention, held August 3-7 in Washington, DC:

- Robert Cialdini, PhD, Arizona State University: *The Lee Gurel Lecture: The Power of Persuasion*
- Randal M. Ernst, EdD, Nebraska Wesleyan University; Amy Fineburg, PhD, Jefferson Public Schools, AL; various summit participants: *Randal M. Ernst Lecture: High School Psychology: A Discussion on the 2017 APA Summit*
- James T. Lamiell, PhD, Georgetown University: *In the Light of a Star: An Introduction to the Life and Works of William Stern (1871-1938)*

TOPSS also sponsored a reception for psychology teachers during the Convention.

A full-day Pre-Convention Workshop for Introductory Psychology Teachers was held on August 2, 2017. Presenters were Dana S. Dunn, PhD, of Moravian College in Bethlehem, PA, Nancy Fenton, MA, of Adlai E. Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, IL, and Jessica Flitter, MA, of West Bend High School in West Bend, WI. Twenty-five introductory psychology teachers participated in the workshop. The workshop was supported by a grant from APF.

Membership Outreach and Services

Membership outreach and retention remained a high priority for TOPSS. In 2017, the TOPSS Committee, through the APA Education Directorate, continued to support a Facebook page, to enhance member engagement and communication. The TOPSS Committee also planned and held a “TOPSS night” at the Advanced Placement Reading in June, in Tampa, Florida, to share information about TOPSS with participating teachers. TOPSS continued to send regular email correspondence to the membership to inform members of resources and opportunities from APA and TOPSS.

In 2017, the APA Education Directorate participated as an exhibitor at the National Council for the Social

Studies (NCSS) Conference in San Francisco, CA. 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 co-sponsored a reception with Worth Publishers and the NCSS Psychology Community, for high school psychology teachers at the conference.

TOPSS also communicated with its members through the distribution of a spring mass mailing, which shared news from APA and TOPSS, and provided members with academic achievement in psychology certificates to present to their students, and through postings on the TOPSS website and the TOPSS listserv. For the first time, the mass mailing was sent electronically in 2017.

The APA Education Directorate, in collaboration with TOPSS Committee members and members of the APA Committee of Associate and Baccalaureate Education, 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. The December 2017 *PTN* was a special issue on the APA Summit on High School Psychology Education.

American Psychological Foundation Lee Gurel Funds for High School Psychology Teachers

The TOPSS Committee greatly appreciated funding from the American Psychological Foundation (APF) in 2017, through the following two funds:

- The American Psychological Foundation/Education Directorate Lee Gurel Fund for Professional Development of High School Teachers of Psychology, which supported travel support for participants attending the APA Summit on High School Psychology Education in July 2017.
- The APF Lee Gurel Fund for High School Psychology, which supported, (1) APF High School Psychology Teacher Outreach Grants to support local or regional networks of psychology; (2) support for the Pre-Convention Workshop for High School Psychology Teachers, and; (3) additional travel support for participants for the 2017 APA/Clark University Workshop.

Other Collaborations and Discussions

Kristin Whitlock, MEd, the 2017 TOPSS Chair, represented the TOPSS Committee on the Steering Committee for the APA Summit on High School Psychology Education.

The TOPSS Committee worked with members of the APA Committee on Aging (CONA) to develop the question for the 2017 APA TOPSS Competition for High School Psychology Students. The 2017 essay theme was “An Aging World.” CONA members helped review and score essays in 2017.

A TOPSS liaison attended two meetings of the Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education in 2017.