

APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS) 2020 Annual Report

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The APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS) promotes excellence in the teaching of psychological science at the high school level and meets the curricular, professional development and networking needs of high school psychology teachers. This report provides information on the major activities of TOPSS in 2020.

APF David and Carol Myers Fund to Support Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools

In 2020, the TOPSS Committee, through the APA Education Directorate, received its second grant from the APF David and Carol Myers Fund. The Committee requested a \$14,750 grant to support the following:

- Complimentary access to the APA PsycNet Gold Package databases for up to 200 TOPSS members
- Stipends to support four hour-long virtual conversations with TOPSS members and well-known psychologists over the summer and fall
- Stipends to support updating the APA TOPSS High School Psychology Course Template in the Canvas learning management system.
- Stipends to support the development of a new TOPSS unit lesson plan on *Cognition*.
- Stipends to support the development of a new TOPSS teaching module on *Gender Identity*.
- Stipends to support the revision of two TOPSS unit lesson plans, on *Positive Psychology* and *Stress and Health Promotion*.
- Stipends to support the revision of a TOPSS teaching module on the *Psychology of Sexual Orientation*.

TOPSS had originally requested a 2020 grant to support the three-day APA/APF/Oregon State University Psychological Science Workshop for High School Psychology Teachers, but the workshop was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Committee's request to reallocate funding was approved by the APF Board of Trustees in June 2020.

The purpose of this fund is to support and strengthen the teaching of psychological science in secondary schools. Therefore, these initiatives further the strategic priority to prepare the discipline of psychology for the future. This fund also strengthens APA's standing as an authoritative voice for psychology by allowing the TOPSS Committee, APA, and APF, to better serve the needs of high school psychology teachers.

Assistance to Teachers Dealing with the Coronavirus Pandemic

As schools across the United States shifted to online or hybrid teaching with the global spread of coronavirus in early 2020, TOPSS responded with the following opportunities:

- All TOPSS unit lesson plans were made available to the public free of charge, to allow more teachers to access and use these resources.
- Classroom activities posted to an online, searchable database linked to the TOPSS website were also made available to the public free of charge, to allow more teachers to access and use these resources. The database also contains laboratory activities from the STP e-book *Promoting Psychological Science: A Compendium of Laboratory Exercises for Teachers of High School Psychology* (Miller, 2018)
- TOPSS posted a series of video messages of hope and resilience for teachers during the spring of 2020 on its Facebook page.
- The TOPSS High School Psychology Course Template in Canvas continued to be made available to teachers and was updated in July 2020.
- TOPSS resources such as a webpage on Integrating Technology into the High School Psychology Classroom were shared with TOPSS members.

These opportunities supported the APA strategic priorities of preparing the discipline of psychology for the future and strengthening APA's standing as an authoritative voice for psychology.

Teas with TOPSS

The APA TOPSS Committee was excited to host five virtual conversations with TOPSS members and prominent psychologists in July through December of 2020. These hour-long conversations allowed TOPSS members to hear from psychologists and each Tea included time for questions and answers. The Tea with TOPSS speakers were:

- Brad J. Bushman, PhD, Professor of Communication, Ohio State University
- Elizabeth Loftus, PhD, Professor and Researcher, University of California, Irvine
- Beverly Daniel Tatum, PhD, President Emerita, Spelman College
- Philip Zimbardo, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Stanford University
- Sandy Shullman, PhD, 2020 APA President and Managing Partner, Columbus Office, Executive Development Group.

The first four Teas were supported by the APF David and Carol Myers Fund to Support Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools. These opportunities supported the APA strategic priorities of preparing the discipline of psychology for the future and strengthening APA's standing as an authoritative voice for psychology.

APA TOPSS Competition for High School Psychology Students

In the 2020 competition, students were invited to write an essay of no more than 3,000 words that addressed the topic of psychology in politics. The essays described the role and relevance of psychology in politics by referencing peer-reviewed research that could include, but was not limited to, topics such as cognition, data exploration techniques, and social psychology. Students were also asked to discuss identifiable psychological concepts that can help us understand political polarization and how psychological science can explain how different individuals and groups of like-minded people might look at identical information and draw different conclusions. Students were finally asked to describe ways in which applying psychological science to specific aspects of politics might improve the current political climate.

The APA Education Directorate and the TOPSS Committee recognized five high school students as winners of the 2020 competition: Richard Chen of Solon High School (Solon, Ohio); Stephanie Chung of Crean Lutheran High School (Irvine, California); Mary Goncharenko of Pine Crest School (Pompano Beach, Florida); Teresa Padilla of Pennsylvania Homeschoolers (Kittanning, Pennsylvania); and Roy Rao of Oaks Christian School (Thousand Oaks, California).

This competition elevates the public's understanding of psychology by engaging high school students to research and write a 3,000-word essay. The competition also helps prepare the discipline of psychology for the future by providing high school students with an opportunity to be recognized for their outstanding academic effort in psychology.

Regional Networks for High School Psychology Teachers

The development of regional teaching networks has been a priority for the TOPSS Committee in recent years, as a way of promoting local professional development opportunities for teachers.

The APF High School Psychology Outreach Grants support these regional networks and other innovative programs for teachers and students. In 2020, two APF grants were awarded to support (1) a regional network of high school instructors of psychology to increase the enrollment and retention of ethnic and linguistic minorities in a new Associate in Science degree program in Psychology at the Queenborough Community College, City University of New York, and (2) a Psych Bowl in southeastern Wisconsin. A panel of TOPSS Committee members reviewed the applications and recommended the grant recipients.

The regional teaching networks help prepare the discipline of psychology for the future by providing high school psychology teachers with low-cost and accessible professional development opportunities that support quality teaching. The APF grant funding to support these networks increases funding for educational opportunities as well.

APA TOPSS Charles T. Blair-Broeker Excellence in Teaching Awards

The APA Education Directorate and the TOPSS Committee were pleased to recognize three teachers with the 2020 APA TOPSS Charles T. Blair-Broeker Excellence in Teaching Award. The 2020 recipients were Wayne Ha, MA, of West Aurora High School, Aurora, Illinois; Terry Wick, MEd, of Hartford Union High School, Hartford, Wisconsin; and Brad Wray, of Pikesville High School, Baltimore, Maryland. The annual Excellence in Teaching Awards recognize outstanding psychology teachers.

These awards are APA's highest recognition for outstanding high school psychology teachers. The award winners are broadly publicized to local, state, and national outlets, applauding their teaching excellence and recognizing the importance of high school psychology courses. These awards support the strategic initiative of elevating the public's understanding of, and regard for, psychology.

Academic Achievement in Psychology Certificates

TOPSS offered Academic Achievement in Psychology Certificates to all TOPSS affiliates in 2020, so that teachers could recognize outstanding student achievement in their classrooms. Certificates were sent electronically to members. Student award recipients were added to the TOPSS website. These certificates help to prepare the discipline of psychology for the future by attracting talented students to psychology.

APA 2020 Programming and Watch Party

The TOPSS Committee sponsored two invited addresses at APA 2020, held virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic. The TOPSS speakers were:

- Mathew F. Thompson, MA, Uniformed Services University, *Suicide: A Biopsychosocial Perspective*
- Stephen L. Chew, PhD, Samford University, *Lee Gurel Lecture: What We Need to Teach Students About Effective Study Skills (and Why They Won't Believe Us)*

TOPSS held a watch party in October 2020 for TOPSS members to engage with both of the TOPSS-invited speakers from APA 2020. APA 2020 provided high school psychology teachers with access to hundreds of sessions on psychological knowledge and content at a discounted rate, strengthening APA's standing as an authoritative voice for psychology and preparing the discipline of psychology for the future.

Membership Outreach and Services

Membership outreach and retention remained a high priority for TOPSS. In 2020, the TOPSS Committee, through the APA Education Directorate, continued to support a Facebook page to enhance member engagement and communication. TOPSS continued to send regular email correspondence to the membership, to inform members of its resources and opportunities from APA and TOPSS. TOPSS also communicated with its members through postings on the TOPSS website and the TOPSS listserv.

The 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.

By supporting and communicating with current TOPSS members and potential members, these services support the APA strategic priorities of preparing the discipline of psychology for the future, and strengthening APA's standing as an authoritative voice for psychology.

APF Lee Gurel Funds for High School Psychology Teachers

The TOPSS Committee greatly appreciated funding from the American Psychological Foundation (APF) through the APF Lee Gurel Fund for High School Psychology, which in 2020 supported:

- (1) APF High School Psychology Teacher Outreach Grants
- (2) Stipends to support a TOPSS teaching module on the *Psychology of Sexual Orientation*
- (3) Online learning opportunities for high school psychology teachers

This APF fund was designed to directly reinforce and enrich both the teaching and the teachers of high school psychology. It therefore supports the APA strategic priorities of preparing the discipline of psychology for the future and strengthening APA's standing as an authoritative voice for psychology.