

**Minutes for the TOPSS Committee Meeting  
March 13-14, 2026  
Grand Hyatt Washington Hotel, Washington, DC**

Participants: Kari Hall, MA (Chair); Natasha Alston, MPS; Emily Polacek, MA; Michael Berndt, MEd; Stephanie Franks, MA; Christina Luzzi; Joshua Viau, PhD, Katie Hope Grobman, PhD\*; Frank Worrell, PhD\*

Guests\*: Karen Brakke, PhD, APA Board of Educational Affairs; Todd Jenkins, PhD, APA acting Chief Diversity Officer; Debra Kawahara, PhD, APA President; Kenneth Polishchuk, Deputy Chief for Education and Training Policy, APA Advocacy Office; Hideko Sera, PhD, APA Board of Directors; Emily Whitcomb, Senior Director, Social Innovation; Wendi Williams, PhD, APA President; and Linda Woolf, PhD, APA President-Elect

APA Staff\*: Emily Leary Chesnes, MBA; Allison Garibaldi, PhD; and Beth Schwartz, PhD

\*Partial attendance

**1. Draft minutes of the February 23, 2026 TOPSS call**

The TOPSS Committee reviewed and approved the minutes of its February 23, 2026, call.

**2. TOPSS Call Schedule for 2026**

TOPSS discussed the monthly call schedule for the remainder of the year. TOPSS discussed various changes to the call format, such as holding 90-minute meetings versus 60-minute meetings and smaller subcommittee meetings between full committee meetings. Staff will distribute a survey to collect committee preferences after the March meeting.

Tentative dates for 2026 calls in April through August were identified:

- April 20, 2026
- May 18, 2026
- July 20, 2026
- August 24, 2026

TOPSS agreed to revisit the schedule for September 2026 onward later in the year.

**3. Association Rule 120-5.1**

TOPSS voted to recommend that the Board of Educational Affairs advance the following motion to Council (bracketed/strikethrough material to be deleted; underlined material to be added):

**120-5. COMMITTEE OF TEACHERS OF PSYCHOLOGY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

120-5.1 There shall be an American Psychological Association of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS) Committee whose mission shall be to (a) promote the highest standards in the teaching of Psychology both as a science and discipline; (b) promote professional development and other means

for lifelong learning for high school teachers of psychology; (c) increase professional identity and promote leadership for high school teachers of psychology; (d) facilitate networking, including the formation of both horizontal and vertical linkages, among teachers from all teaching levels of psychology; (e) encourage recruitment and retention of students[, particularly minorities, in the field of] in psychology; (f) enhance the visibility and legitimacy of high school psychology within the American Psychological Association; (g) enhance the visibility and legitimacy of high school psychology with other members of the psychological community and in the community at large; (h) recommend the appropriate response to advocacy, education policy, and certification issues that impact on the quality or viability of teaching of high school psychology.

The voting members of the TOPSS Committee shall consist of seven members, who serve staggered three-year terms. The other members of the TOPSS Committee, who shall serve ex-officio without a vote, shall be composed of two college faculty advisors who serve three-year terms and one liaison from the BEA. All voting members of the Committee must be high school teacher affiliates of the association.

Each year, a call for nominations for the three open positions that will become vacant in the following year shall be broadly disseminated. Following the call, the committee shall prepare a slate of candidates for each position and hold an election in which all TOPSS affiliates are eligible to vote. Following the election, the results of the election shall be forwarded to the Board of Educational Affairs and the Board of Directors for final approval.

The TOPSS Committee shall report to Council through the APA Board of Educational Affairs.

#### **4. TOPSS Resources**

The TOPSS Committee received an update from the Resources Subcommittee and discussed TOPSS resources as outlined in its 2026 work plan.

The subcommittee discussed Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP) resources, such as the ebook on laboratory exercises for high school teachers, noting interest in connecting with STP to determine if they have plans to update these resources. The group also discussed APA's *Monitor on Psychology* and Speaking of Psychology podcast as potential sources for teaching materials (e.g., linking podcast episodes and *Monitor* articles to National Standards pillars, lesson plans tied to podcast episodes). TOPSS also discussed the idea of a one-page document containing all relevant APA resources for high school teachers.

The subcommittee raised concerns with the APA website, noting that it is difficult to locate TOPSS resources from the main APA.org website. APA staff will meet with the web team to explore solutions, including checking on the status of a pending revision of the TOPSS website.

#### **5. Professional Development for Psychology Teachers**

The TOPSS Committee received an update from the Professional Development Subcommittee and discussed issues related to professional development opportunities for high school psychology teachers. The subcommittee noted that going forward, a TOPSS committee member from one year's subcommittee should always be on the subcommittee the subsequent year to help ensure continuity of the work.

The subcommittee noted that a partnership with CABE should be a priority for professional development webinars. Additionally, the subcommittee noted that speaker selection should focus on dynamic, well-respected speakers to increase attendance. TOPSS generated a list of potential speakers for future webinars.

TOPSS also discussed the idea of a TOPSS book club but noted that books should be published by APA to avoid conflicts of interest. *Teaching Like a Champ* was suggested as the first book.

## **6. Regional Teaching Networks**

The TOPSS Committee discussed regional teaching networks and how TOPSS can best support these networks this year. TOPSS highlighted the July and November 2026 deadlines for the APF High School Psychology Outreach grants. Members recommended gathering information from newly established regional networks to gain insights on what is going well and what could be improved. TOPSS also discussed doing more targeted outreach to increase engagement in regional networks. Members suggested making a planned informational webinar about regional networks required for APF Outreach grant awardees and using the webinar as an opportunity for mentorship and continued dialogue.

## **7. TOPSS Elections**

The TOPSS Committee was asked to consider its 2026 work plan priority regarding increasing representation among TOPSS leadership. The Committee discussed using organizations or opportunities such as the regional teaching networks, Advanced Placement Summer Institutes (APSI), and the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), as well as the AP Reading, to recruit election candidates. The PowerPoint slides about TOPSS could be shared with the regional networks and APSI consultants. Emily Polacek offered to draft a *Psychology Teacher Network* (PTN) newsletter article on why members should consider running for office and the benefits of serving on TOPSS leadership.

TOPSS also confirmed the language in a draft call for nominations. In 2026, TOPSS will recruit one chair-elect and two members-at-large for the elections slate; one of the member-at-large positions will be limited to teachers within their first ten years of teaching.

## **8. TOPSS Membership**

The TOPSS Committee was asked to consider how to increase TOPSS member involvement and engagement, as outlined in its 2026 work plan. Members engaged in a discussion about having more limited content for members only, incentives for members to join, the value of membership in TOPSS, and the value of teacher access to the PsycInfo database. Committee members were concerned that TOPSS members may not all be receiving emails from APA, especially the monthly TOPSS chair eblasts.

## **9. Increasing High School Teacher Attendance at APA 2026**

TOPSS was asked to discuss strategies for increasing the number of high school teachers who attend APA 2026, being held August 6-8, 2026, in Washington, DC. Natasha Alston is writing a PTN article about the value of attending APA. Outreach to teachers in the DC metro region was encouraged. Staff shared that contact will be made with local school district curriculum and professional development leads. Other groups or platforms to consider reaching about APA 2026 included school counselors, past APA

attendees, NCSS, College Board, social media sites, and the AP Psychology Digest. Virtual APA attendance should be promoted as well.

#### **10. Open Discussion on how TOPSS can Have Impact**

The TOPSS Committee was asked to reflect on its 2026 initiatives to begin the process of brainstorming possible future areas of focus/initiatives where TOPSS can have the most impact on the teaching of high school psychology. The Committee discussion included the following:

- The new collaborative relationship with CABA will help TOPSS have more reach and impact.
- TOPSS should consider ways to encourage more collaboration between high school and college educators.
- There are communication concerns involving APA emails that staff were encouraged to address and fix.
- Outreach to new psychology teachers through contacts to schools and email outreach was mentioned; it might be possible to reach teachers through the NCSS Psychology Community and College Board.

#### **11. New Modules for High School Psychology Teachers**

The TOPSS Committee was asked to discuss a new initiative to develop modules for high school psychology teachers, funded by the American Psychological Foundation (APF) David and Carol Myers Fund to Support Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools. TOPSS made the following recommendations about this project:

Intended goal and general scope of the modules:

- The priority is to help new teachers learn how to teach the high school psychology course.

Audience:

- The first modules should focus on new psychology teachers.
- There was interest in making a course that is relevant for both on-level (general, high school level) and AP teachers as well, possibly highlighting which content is either more advanced or more relevant to the on-level teacher.

Focus:

- The first module should focus on research methods The module should address the do's and don'ts of teaching.
- The module should be asynchronous; TOPSS could recommend teachers complete it in 1-2 weeks.
- After first module, modules could focus on the five National Standards pillars (i.e., Biology, Cognitive, Development and Learning, Social and Personality, Mental and Physical Health).

Delivery

- The module could be hosted through a membership platform or an outside learning management system.
- TOPSS had budgeted \$6,000 to develop one or two modules in 2026.
- TOPSS does not want this to be zoom recording with PowerPoint slides.

#### User volume

- TOPSS suggested 40 people may do each of the first 1-2 modules in 2026.
- However, they hope this might grow to reach more teachers.
- 200 teachers might complete a module in any one year, potentially.
- Use might peak over the summer.

#### Price point

- TOPSS suggested providing these modules as a member benefit, free to members who have paid their \$50/year membership fee.
- Non-members could pay to take the course; a price point is pending.
- Full members and/or college faculty might take these modules as well.

TOPSS also recommended subject matter experts for this project.

Bernadette Han, PhD, Head of Learning & Development Operations and Continuing Education, Business Innovation & Growth, joined TOPSS during the March 2026 meeting to answer questions and discuss these modules with TOPSS.

### **12. Engaging with High School Students**

TOPSS was asked to discuss and/or identify future ways TOPSS can support student success and engagement in the high school psychology course (e.g., through psychology clubs or other means), as listed on its 2026 work plan. Emily Whitcomb, Senior Director, Social Innovation, joined TOPSS to lead members through an ideation process to consider this topic.

TOPSS members agreed that TOPSS plays a critical role in defining and supporting “student success” in high school psychology, especially given inconsistent teacher preparation, lack of state and national standards, and uneven course availability. Members discussed key challenges and promoting opportunities and made suggestions for teacher support and outreach (e.g., reaching teachers in underrepresented regions, helping teaching with limited psychology training feel more confident, and providing ready-to-use resources and modules), ideas for engaging with students (e.g., the Psyched for Success model, Psi Alpha, psychology clubs and after-school activities, and competitions and incentives), and potential innovative new programs (e.g., online summer course or modules, career-relevant learning, and marketing and messaging).

TOPSS will revisit the recommendations from this discussion as it plans its 2027 work plan.

### **13. Psychology Teacher Network news digest**

TOPSS was invited to consider article topics for the *Psychology Teacher Network* news digest. Members will revisit this item on a call later in 2026.

### **14. 2025 TOPSS Workplan Metrics**

TOPSS was provided with information about the impact of the priorities identified on the TOPSS 2025 work plan.

### **15. 2025 TOPSS Annual Report**

The TOPSS Committee received an update on the TOPSS Annual Report from 2025.

## **16. 2025 CABA Annual Report**

The TOPSS Committee received an update on the CABA Annual Report from 2025. TOPSS members agreed that CABA's work on the Value of the Psychology Degree is something they would like to collaborate on. TOPSS also requested copies of recent CABA journal publications mentioned in the annual report.

## **Visitor Reports**

### **Visit with Todd Jenkins, PhD, APA Acting Chief Diversity Officer**

Todd Jenkins shared an overview of APA's priorities regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion, with the TOPSS Committee.

### **Visit with Kenneth Polishchuk, Deputy Chief for Education and Training Policy, APA Advocacy Office**

Kenneth Polishchuk visited TOPSS to discuss advocacy issues affecting secondary school education.

### **Visit with Wendi Williams, PhD, APA President; Linda Woolf, PhD, APA president-elect; and Debra Kawahara, PhD, APA past president**

Kari Hall provided an update to the presidential trio on TOPSS priorities for 2026. TOPSS discussed the planned teaching modules and how TOPSS can expand its impact to rural and/or Indigenous high school teachers.

### **Ideation strategy discussion with Emily Whitcomb, Senior Director, Social Innovation**

TOPSS participated in an ideation strategy discussion led by Emily Whitcomb. TOPSS engaged in brainstorming to discuss and/or identify future ways TOPSS can support student success and engagement in the high school psychology course (e.g., through psychology clubs or other means). TOPSS will follow up on this discussion as part of its plans for the 2027 work plan.

### **Meeting with the APA Board of Educational Affairs (BEA)**

Kari Hall provided an update to BEA on TOPSS priorities for 2026 and TOPSS engaged in discussion with BEA over areas of shared interest (e.g., dual enrollment courses and National Standards dissemination).

### **Meeting with APA Committee on Associate and Baccalaureate Education (CABA)**

TOPSS and CABA held a joint meeting to discuss mutual areas of interest. Topics discussed included webinar collaboration, professional development modules, high school and college teacher networking, outreach and communication strategies, the APA Convention and the STP Annual Conference on Teaching (ACT), and the APA Website. Both committees agreed that a meeting between the TOPSS and CABA chairs would be a good starting point for planning future initiatives.