

Minutes for the TOPSS Committee Meeting
March 14-15, 2025
Grand Hyatt Washington Hotel, Washington, DC

Participants: Natasha Alston, MPS (Chair); Virginia Welle, MS; Kari Hall, MA; Michael Berndt, MEd; Stephanie Franks, MA; Melissa Rogers, MEd; Joshua Viau, PhD, Jennifer Thompson, PhD; Frank Worrell, PhD

Guests*: Maysa Akbar, PhD, ABPP, APA Chief Diversity Officer and Chief of Psychology in the Public Interest; Cynthia de las Fuentes, PhD, APA Past President; Aliza Epstein, Director, Elections and Volunteer Leadership; Arthur Evans, Jr., PhD, APA CEO and Executive Vice President; Amy Fineburg, PhD, Committee for the Advancement of General Applied Psychology; Dominique Haywood, Senior Director, Social Innovation, APA Public Interest Directorate; Debra Kawahara, PhD, APA President; Susan Opatow, PhD, APA Policy and Planning Board; Kenneth Polishchuk, Deputy Chief for Education and Training Policy, APA Advocacy Office; Hideko Sera, PhD, APA Board of Directors; and Wendi Williams, PhD, APA President-Elect

APA Staff: Emily Leary Chesnes, MBA and Beth Schwartz, PhD*

*Partial attendance

1. Draft minutes of the TOPSS February 24, 2025, Call

TOPSS Committee reviewed and approved draft minutes of its February 24, 2025, call.

MOTION: That the TOPSS Committee approve draft minutes of its February 24, 2025, call.

ACTION: Approved.

2. Association Rule 120-5.1

The TOPSS Committee was asked to consider and recommend any critical edits to APA Association Rule 120-5.1, which established the TOPSS Committee and its mission statement. The following edits were recommended, with text to be added underlined and text to be removed in brackets:

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 in psychology, particularly [minorities,] those from groups that are underrepresented in the field [of 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. ...

These edits will be sent to the APA Board of Educational Affairs, the APA Board of Directors, and APA Council of Representatives for approval.

MOTION: That the TOPSS Committee recommend the edits to Association Rule 120-5.1 as described above.

ACTION: Approved.

3. Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct

The Ethics Code Task Force ("ECTF") requested review and comment on a new draft Ethics Code: *Ethical*

Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. On behalf of TOPSS, Virginia Welle, MS, and Natasha Alston, MPS, reviewed the draft Code and provided a summary of their recommendations for feedback specific to high school education in psychology and issues of particular relevance to teachers and students. Committee members reviewed and discussed the draft response and noted that lesson plans related to ethics might be useful to teachers.

ACTION: TOPSS feedback will be submitted by the March 19, 2025, deadline.

4. Psi Alpha

The TOPSS Committee received an informational update on Psi Alpha, a national honor society for high school students who plan to major or minor in psychology or who simply have an interest in psychology. Committee members were asked to appoint a new representative from TOPSS to serve on the Psi Alpha advisory board. Joshua Viau, PhD, will serve as the new TOPSS liaison to the Psi Alpha advisory board, following approval by APA's Board of Directors.

MOTION: That Joshua Viau, PhD, serve as the next TOPSS representative on the Psi Alpha advisory board.

ACTION: Approved.

5. TOPSS Call Schedule for 2025

The TOPSS Committee was asked to consider a schedule for holding committee calls over Zoom for the rest of the year.

ACTION: The Committee agreed to continue to hold monthly calls on the third Monday of each month, at 7:30 PM eastern. There will be no meeting in June.

6. TOPSS Work Plan

The TOPSS Committee was asked to review and reflect on its 2025 work plan and consider if any changes or edits were needed to better reflect its planned work for this year. In particular, TOPSS was asked to consider how it will measure its goals this year and make recommendations if needed to better improve measurement. The Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) psychology program was mentioned as a potential group of teachers to collaborate with, reach, and/or include regarding TOPSS work plan goal on outreach to teachers. The Committee also considered the metrics outlined in its work plan and discussed ways to measure the actual impact of TOPSS resources.

ACTION: TOPSS can revisit this discussion on a Committee call by early summer to determine if any edits are needed to the TOPSS 2025 work plan.

7. TOPSS Resources

The TOPSS Committee, and in particular the TOPSS subcommittee looking at resources, was asked to discuss TOPSS resources as outlined in the 2025 TOPSS work plan. The subcommittee recommended revising the Teaching Psychology: Where can I find help? resource this year and promoting top resources they selected that most highly align with APA mission and strategic plan and that are not available elsewhere to teachers. The Committee also discussed the TOPSS website and how resources are organized on the website and considered a possible draft revision of the website. Melissa Rogers, MEd, Stephanie Franks, MS, MEd, Natasha Alston, MPS, Kari Hall, MA, and Joshua Viau, PhD, offered to work together to draft a template for new landing pages for the National Standards resources webpage. Mid-June was recommended as a deadline for their draft templates, with website updates online by August 1. The Committee also discussed the searchable online database for the lesson plan activities and considered ways to review the posted activities to ensure they are all current.

ACTION: Melissa Rogers, MEd, Stephanie Franks, MS, MEd, Natasha Alston, MPS, Kari Hall, MA, and Joshua Viau, PhD, will work together to draft a template for new landing pages for the National Standards resources webpage by mid-June.

The TOPSS resources subcommittee must determine next steps and a timeline for updating Teaching Psychology: Where can I find help?

8. Professional Development for Psychology Teachers

This item was provided to the TOPSS Committee, and in particular the TOPSS subcommittee looking at this issue, for discussion on professional development opportunities for high school psychology teachers. The Committee discussed plans to hold webinars for teachers from April 2025 to April 2026. An April 2025 webinar will focus on the regional teaching networks; additional 2025 webinars on positive psychology (August) and artificial intelligence (October) were also recommended. The Committee discussed ideas for promoting TOPSS as the Advanced Placement (AP) Psychology examination reading, both in person and online.

The Committee also discussed the recommendation in its 2025 work plan to develop guidelines that reflect best practices for TOPSS sponsored professional development programming. The criteria in the Request for Proposals to Support Teaching Workshops might be relevant to this goal.

ACTION: Subcommittee members will plan for the webinars as described at the meeting and work with APA staff to broadly announce the opportunities. The TOPSS Committee should revisit the discussion about professional development guidelines to determine next steps.

9. Regional Teaching Networks

The TOPSS Committee, and in particular the TOPSS subcommittee looking at this topic, was asked to discuss and consider regional teaching networks. The Committee reiterated that these networks are high impact and a valuable way to reach both TOPSS members and nonmembers.

Stephanie Franks, MS, MEd, offered to update the online listing of regional networks on the TOPSS website. The April 28, 2025, TOPSS webinar on the regional networks will reach those interested in starting a regional network and recent American Psychological Foundation (APF) High School Psychology Outreach grant recipients.

The Committee recommended following up with APF grantees after their first year of funding to support grantees and debrief from their grant. The Committee noted that providing new regional network contacts with mentors is valuable and that grantees should be encouraged to attend annual TOPSS webinars to offer support and guidance. The Committee also recommended offering two separate funding tracks through the APF Outreach grant program, one for starting a network and a second for previously funded networks. The Committee also noted that having two grant deadlines each year is helpful. Finally, the Committee recommended preparing and sending a PowerPoint slide to all regional networks to highlight APF funding and/or TOPSS resources during network conferences or workshops.

ACTION: Stephanie Franks, MS, MEd, will update the online listing of regional networks on the TOPSS website by early summer. Staff will include language about the separate tracks of funding through the APF High School Psychology Outreach grant program when funding is requested from APF this spring. The TOPSS subcommittee should revisit the suggestion to develop a PowerPoint slide to share with regional networks this spring to determine who will develop this slide and by what date.

10. TOPSS Elections

The TOPSS Committee was asked to discuss the TOPSS elections process. The Committee recommended having a slate for a teacher early in their teaching career on years when two members-at-large are elected. This recommendation would mean that one of the two members-at-large elected in such years would be a teacher early in their teaching career, so that the Committee would always have a newer teacher represented on TOPSS.

The Committee reviewed its 2024 elections call and recommended keeping the text encouraging teachers who are within their first 10 years of teaching, those who teach on-level psychology, and those who teach outside of the United States to run for office in 2025.

ACTION: Committee members were encouraged to consider potential election candidates and to share names with Kari Hall, MA, or to contact potential candidates directly.

11. Membership

The TOPSS Committee was asked to reflect on the current TOPSS membership and consider potential actions the committee could take to increase TOPSS member involvement and engagement. Committee members recommended doing two surveys this year, one of lapsed members to ask why they did not renew their memberships, and a more general teachers need survey to ask teachers about current needs and challenges. Staff will share questions from a 2021 teachers' needs survey conducted by TOPSS and the APA strategy office with the Committee for review.

ACTION: Staff will ask colleagues in APA's membership and strategic insights offices about next steps regarding the two surveys mentioned on the call and keep Committee members informed of these next steps.

12. APA 2025

The TOPSS Committee was asked to discuss APA 2025, being held August 7-9, 2025, in Denver, Colorado. The Committee also considered the American Psychological Foundation (APF) Professional Development Awards for High School Psychology Teachers and how to encourage teachers to apply for these awards. Outreach to high school teacher contacts in Colorado and general outreach to contact teachers throughout the country was discussed.

ACTION: Staff will announce the APF Professional Development Awards for High School Psychology Teachers and APA 2025 opportunity with teachers in Colorado and nationwide. Committee members are encouraged to do outreach to their colleagues and on social media as well.

13. Preparation of High School Psychology Teachers

The TOPSS Committee was asked to discuss the preparation of high school psychology teachers. The "Focused Four" ideation process TOPSS engaged in with agenda item 14 suggested that a course or series of courses that could provide continuing education units on how to teach the course might be worth revisiting this year as a 2026 initiative. The Committee also considered if APA could become an approved provider of professional development in up to all 50 states and the District of Columbia. APA could provide professional development offerings to high school psychology teachers and also to K-12 teachers in general.

ACTION: TOPSS will revisit these discussions as it plans for its 2026 work plan and 2026 APF David and Carol Myers Fund grant request.

14. Open Discussion on How TOPSS can Have Impact

The TOPSS Committee was asked to reflect on its 2025 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. Dominique Haywood, Senior Director, Social Innovation, APA Public Interest Directorate, joined the Committee to engage in a "Focused Four" ideation session that asked Committee members to generate diverse problems related to TOPSS goals and propose potential solutions to address each problem. After individual reflection, the committee members shared, discussed, and synthesized ideas. These ideas were recorded and will be used this year to inform the Committee's 2026 work plan and 2026 APF David and Carol Myers Fund request.

ACTION: Committee members will use the "Focused Four" discussion to inform Committee plans for its 2026 work plan and 2026 APF David and Carol Myers Fund grant request.

15. TOPSS 2024 Annual Report

The TOPSS Committee received its 2024 Annual Report.

ACTION: None.

16. CABE Annual Report

The TOPSS Committee received the APA Committee of Associate and Baccalaureate Education's (CABE) 2024 annual report.

ACTION: None.

17. Policy and Planning Board (P&P) Request for Committee Self-Study in 2025

In preparation for its 5-year policy review, the Policy and Planning Board (P&P) has reached out to APA boards and committees to begin a self-study process for committees in 2025. Susan Opatow, PhD, from P&P, met with TOPSS to discuss the process.

ACTION: The Committee recommended completing the self-study survey in June 2025, with a June 30 deadline for completion.

18. APA Presidential Initiative on Engaging Psychology's Future

The TOPSS Committee received an update on APA President Dr. Debra Kawahara's 2025 APA Presidential Initiative on Engaging Psychology's Future. Through this initiative, teachers, educators, and psychology professionals are encouraged to host events that are intended to excite high school and community college students about the field of psychology, inspire career exploration, and encourage further study. Funding is available.

ACTION: Committee members are encouraged to consider applying to participate in the presidential initiative and consider how to encourage colleagues to do the same.

Visitor Reports

Visit with Kenneth Polishchuk, Deputy Chief for Education and Training Policy, APA Advocacy Office; and Hideko Sera, PsyD, APA Board of Directors

- Kenneth Polishchuk and Hideko Sera, PsyD, met with TOPSS to discuss recent federal policy changes.

Visit with the APA Board of Educational Affairs

- TOPSS chair Natasha Alston, MPS, gave an overview of TOPSS goals and priorities for 2025. Committee members and APA Board of Educational Affairs (BEA) members also discussed issues of mutual interest.

Visit with the APA Committee of Associate and Baccalaureate Education's (CABE)

- The TOPSS Committee had a working lunch with the APA Committee of Associate and Baccalaureate Education's (CABE) to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Visit with Debra Kawahara, PhD, APA President; Cynthia de las Fuentes, PhD, APA Past President; Wendi Williams, PhD, APA President-Elect; and Arthur Evans, Jr., PhD, APA CEO and Executive Vice President

- TOPSS chair Natasha Alston, MPS, gave an overview of TOPSS goals and priorities for 2025. The Committee discussed Dr. Kawahara's presidential initiative and how high school psychology teachers can help better educate the public about what psychology is.

Visit with Amy Fineburg, PhD, APA Committee for the Advancement of General Applied Psychology

- The TOPSS Committee discussed issues regarding teacher preparation, professional development, and potential contacts in Alabama to restart a regional teaching network in the state with Amy Fineburg, PhD.

Visit with Maysa Akbar, PhD, ABPP, APA Chief Diversity Officer and Chief of Psychology in the Public Interest

- The TOPSS Committee met with Maysa Akbar, PhD, to introduce themselves and engage in brief discussion of issues of mutual interest.