

**APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS)  
2024 Annual Report**

**Committee Members:** Virginia Welle, MS (chair); Natasha Alston, MPS; Michael Berndt, MEd; Stephanie Franks, MS, MEd; Terri Lindenberg, MA; Emily Polacek, MEd; Melissa Rogers, MEd; Jennifer Thompson, PhD; Frank Worrell, PhD

**Staff Liaison(s):** Emily Leary Chesnes, MBA, and Sue Orsillo, PhD

The TOPSS Committee set four goals for 2024:

- To ensure high school students have access to accurate, science-based psychology courses that promote issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion
- To increase awareness of the value of high school psychology
- To strengthen the teaching of high school psychology to benefit students, teachers, and society
- To work to dismantle racism through high school psychology education

These goals were advanced through the initiatives below.

**ENSURE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO ACCURATE, SCIENCE-BASED PSYCHOLOGY COURSES THAT PROMOTE ISSUES OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION**

***National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula***

In support of the APA strategic plan goals to “*prepare the field of psychology for current and future opportunities and challenges*” and “*strengthen APA’s role as a leading voice for psychology*,” two separate eblasts to (1) high school social studies department chairs across the United States and (2) school district social studies curriculum chairs across the United States were sent by the TOPSS Committee chair in 2024, promoting the *National Standards* as a teaching resource. The *National Standards* promotes issues of equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI) through both cross-cutting integrative themes and specific learning targets.

**Learning Opportunities for High School Psychology Teachers**

In support of the APA strategic goals to “*prepare the field of psychology for current and future opportunities and challenges*” and “*strengthen APA’s role as a leading voice for psychology voice for psychology*,” TOPSS provided learning opportunities for high school psychology teachers. The following opportunities were held in 2024; issues related to social justice and anti-racism topics were included or considered for each opportunity<sup>1</sup>:

- The Oregon State University High School Teacher’s Workshop
- Three sessions at APA 2024:

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<sup>1</sup>The Oregon State Workshop was held with generous support from the American Psychological Foundation (APF) David and Carol Myers Fund to Support Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools and from support from the Oregon State University School of Psychological Science. The TOPSS webinars on (1) Scientific Thinking and (2) Infusing Diversity were held with generous support from the APF David and Carol Myers Fund. The August workshop was held with support from the APF Lee Gurel Fund for Professional Development of High School Teachers of Psychology.

- *Lee Gurel Lecture: See No Evil: Fostering Optimal Study Strategies in a World of Technological Distractions* (Regan A.R. Gurung, PhD, Oregon State University)
- *Randal M. Ernst Lecture: Disability as a DEI Concern for Teaching: Informing Your Students and Peers* (Dana S. Dunn, PhD, Moravian University)
- *Empowering Youth of Color: Applying the School Trauma and Racial Stress Blueprint* (Erlanger A. Turner, PhD, Pepperdine University)
- A full-day workshop for high school psychology teachers was held in Seattle, Washington, before APA 2024
- Webinars on:
  - *TOPSS Resources*
  - *Go-to Lessons to Promote Scientific Thinking*
  - *Infusing Diversity and Representation into the Psychology Course*

Over 180 teachers attended TOPSS live webinars or in-person workshops this year.

### **New Request for Proposals to Support Teaching Workshops**

In support of the APA strategic goals to “*prepare the field of psychology for current and future opportunities and challenges*” and “*strengthen APA’s role as a leading voice for psychology voice for psychology*,” TOPSS offered a new Request for Proposals program to support teaching workshops<sup>2</sup>. The goals of the program were to promote high-impact opportunities professional development for high school psychology teachers and increase the pool of psychologist educators who are aware of, and engaged in helping to meet, the needs of high school psychology teachers. A workshop at Clayton State University in Morrow, Georgia was supported in 2024; 15 teachers registered for the workshop but fewer attended due to an unexpected scheduling conflict. In late 2024, a second round of funding was announced, and three workshops were selected for support, each to be held in 2025.

### **New TOPSS Unit Lesson Plan**

In support of the APA strategic plan goal to “*prepare the field of psychology for current and future opportunities and challenges*,” a new TOPSS unit lesson plan on *Social Psychology: Social Cognition and Social Influence* was published in October 2024<sup>3</sup>. The lesson plan was downloaded over 1,170 times in 2024.

### **American Psychological Foundation (APF) Grant Support for High School Psychology Teachers<sup>4</sup>**

In support of the APA strategic goal to “*prepare the field of psychology for current and future opportunities and challenges*,” TOPSS, through APF funding, continued to support the development and maintenance of regional teaching networks as a way of promoting local professional development opportunities for teachers. This year 10 proposals were submitted and 10 APF grants were awarded to support regional teaching networks, including five that were new networks.

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<sup>2</sup>The RFP program was supported by generous funding from the APF David and Carol Myers Fund to Support Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools.

<sup>3</sup>The lesson plan was supported by the APF David and Carol Myers Fund to Support Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools.

<sup>4</sup> The APF High School Psychology Outreach grants were supported by funding from the APF Lee Gurel Fund for High School Psychology and the APF Professional Development Awards were supported by the APF David and Carol Myers Fund to Support Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools.

TOPSS also recommended travel awards that were awarded to four high school psychology teachers to attend either APA 2024 or the Society for the Teaching of Psychology's Annual Conference on Teaching. Six teachers applied for these awards.

### **Membership Outreach and Services**

In support of the APA strategic goals to *"prepare the field of psychology for current and future opportunities and challenges"* and *"strengthen APA's role as a leading voice for psychology voice for psychology,"* the TOPSS Committee, through the APA Education Directorate, continued to support a Facebook page, distributed monthly e-blasts from the TOPSS chair to all TOPSS members, and maintained a listserv. TOPSS Committee members also contributed to the *Psychology Teacher Network* news digest.

## **INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE VALUE OF HIGH SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY**

### **Recognition of High School Psychology Students**

In support of the APA strategic goals to *"prepare the field of psychology for current and future opportunities and challenges"* and *"strengthen APA's role as a leading voice for psychology voice for psychology,"* TOPSS held a competition in which students were invited to create a video not longer than three minutes that demonstrated their understanding of how a topic in psychological science has the potential to benefit their school and/or local community and improve people's lives. The APA Education Directorate and the TOPSS Committee recognized three high school students as winners of the 2024 competition, out of over 220 students from 26 countries who participated.

TOPSS also offered Recognition of Academic Achievement in Psychology Certificates to all TOPSS affiliates in 2024, so that teachers could recognize outstanding student achievement in their classrooms. This provided the opportunity for recognition of academic achievement in psychology at high school wide awards ceremonies and other school-based events.

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

In support of the APA strategic goal to *"elevate the public's understanding, appreciation, and utilization of psychology,"* the APA Education Directorate and the TOPSS Committee recognized two teachers with the APA TOPSS Charles T. Blair-Broeker Excellence in Teaching Award. There were five nominees for these awards in 2024.

### **Other Collaborations**

In support of the APA operating principle to *"increase organizational effectiveness,"* TOPSS had a liaison on an advisory board to Psi Alpha, the High School National Honor Society in Psychology, as well as a representative on the APA Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education in 2024.

## **TO STRENGTHEN THE TEACHING OF HIGH SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY TO BENEFIT STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND SOCIETY**

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

In support of the APA strategic goals to *"prepare the field of psychology for current and future opportunities and challenges"* and *"strengthen APA's role as a leading voice for psychology voice for psychology,"* the TOPSS Committee, through the APA Education Directorate, facilitated projects supported through its APF David and Carol Myers Fund grant and received its sixth grant from the APF Myers Fund. The Committee requested a \$41,000 grant in early 2024 to support the three-day

summer workshop at Oregon State University, the project on broadening representation and diversity in the high school curriculum, the Request for Proposals to Support Teaching Workshops, travel awards for high school teachers, and efforts to positively impact the teaching of high school psychology, as detailed separately in this report.

## **TO WORK TO DISMANTLE RACISM THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY EDUCATION**

### **Broadening Representation and Diversity in the High School Psychology Curriculum**

In support of the APA strategic goals to “*prepare the field of psychology for current and future opportunities and challenges*” and “*strengthen APA’s role as a leading voice for psychology voice for psychology,*”<sup>5</sup> TOPSS facilitated the development of a second comprehensive set of resources<sup>5</sup> on disability and neurodiversity aligned to the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* pillars. The resources, which included psychologist profiles, research summaries, and additional resources, were posted to the TOPSS website and shared with over 5,000 teachers in 2024. The project website had over 17,000 page views in 2024.

### **Increasing Diversity Among TOPSS Leadership**

In support of the APA strategic goal to “*prepare the field of psychology for current and future opportunities and challenges,*” in 2024 TOPSS tailored its election call to encourage those with experience teaching on-level (high school level) psychology, those who had taught less than 10 years, and those who teach outside of the United States to run for office. The 2024 TOPSS election candidates represented greater diversity compared to 2023 candidates. There were five candidates for the TOPSS elections in 2024.

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<sup>5</sup> These resources were created with support from the APF David and Carol Myers Fund to Support Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools.