

**APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS)
2021 Annual Report**

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Teacher Needs Survey

In support of the APA operating principles to “*build a stronger association*” and “*increase organizational effectiveness*,” in early spring 2021, the TOPSS Committee launched a teachers needs survey with support from the APA Strategy Office. The survey asked about current teaching and professional development needs and about the usefulness of a variety of TOPSS resources. Over 450 teachers took the survey, which helped inform TOPSS of areas of focus for 2021.

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

In support of the APA strategic plan goals to “*prepare the discipline and professional of psychology for the future*” and “*strengthen APA’s standing as an authoritative voice for psychology*,” the TOPSS Committee, through the APA Education Directorate, received its third grant from the American Psychological Foundation (APF) David and Carol Myers Fund. The Committee requested a \$21,250 grant to support the following:

- Stipends to support updating the APA TOPSS High School Psychology Course Template in the Canvas learning management system.
- Stipends to support the revision or development of TOPSS unit lesson plans on the *Psychology of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Health and Stress*
- Support of new regional teaching networks of high school psychology teachers
- Support of priority professional development or resources that promote quality teaching of high school psychology

New TOPSS Unit Lesson Plan on Cognition

In support of the APA strategic plan goal to “*prepare the discipline and professional of psychology for the future*,” a new TOPSS unit lesson plan on *Cognition* was published in February 2021. The lesson plan is available to all teachers on the TOPSS unit lesson plan webpage and contains three lessons, on Cognitive Processes Involved in Understanding Information, Problem Solving, and Judgement and Decision Making, along with eight activities, six critical thinking exercises, and resources for teachers. The lesson plan was written by Codey Fickes, MEd, of Palmyra Area High School, Pennsylvania, Dana Melone, MAT, of Kennedy High School, Iowa, and Cedar Riener, PhD, of Randolph-Macon College. This resource was supported by a 2020 APF David and Carol Myers Fund grant. A short video of the three authors describing the new resource was posted online in the spring of 2021.

Professional Development Opportunities for High School Psychology Teachers

In support of the APA strategic goals of “*preparing the discipline and profession of psychology for the future*” and “*strengthening APA’s standing as an authoritative voice for psychology*,” TOPSS offered the following professional development opportunities for teachers in 2021:

- A two-day virtual *TOPSS Workshop for High School Psychology Teachers: Teaching Psychological Science*, held July 27-28, 2021, featured two master teachers, three keynote talks, and two “research spotlights.” Held with support from the APF Lee Gurel Fund for the Professional Development of High School Psychology Teachers, the workshop was attended by over 110 high school psychology teachers from around the world. The master teacher presenters were Melissa Rogers of Cedar Falls High School, Iowa, and Steven Turner, MEd, of Albemarle High School, Virginia; the lead keynote talks were given by:
 - Michelle Miller, PhD, Arizona State University, on *Design for the Mind: Leveraging Psychology for Teaching Psychology*
 - Helen Neville, PhD, University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, on *Implications for Teaching About Racial Justice: The Public Psychology for Liberation Training Model*
 - Kristen Varjas, PhD, and Carrie Lorig, Georgia State University, on *Imagining Inclusive Classrooms with Sexual and Gender Diverse Students*

Regan Gurung, PhD, of Oregon State University, and Andrew Stewart, PhD, of Clark University, presented brief research updates during the workshop, which was chaired by TOPSS member Sejal Schullo, MA, of Glenbrook South High School, Illinois. Many of the workshop sessions were recorded and posted online for teachers to watch.

- A two-hour *TOPSS Workshop for High School Psychology Teachers* was held October 23 and featured TOPSS Committee members presenting on TOPSS resources, the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula*, integrating research into course units, and Cognition. The workshop was attended by over 40 teachers.
- A Tea with TOPSS conversation was held on December 14, with APA President Jennifer Kelly, PhD, and APA President-Elect Frank Worrell, PhD. The hour-long conversation let high school teachers hear about the APA resolutions on racism passed in October 2021 and ask questions of the two APA leaders. Over 30 teachers participated in the conversation.

APA TOPSS Competition for High School Psychology Students

In support of the APA strategic goals to “*elevate the public’s understanding of, regard for, and use of psychology*” and “*prepare the discipline and profession of psychology for the future*,” TOPSS provided high school students with an opportunity to be recognized for their outstanding academic effort in psychology. In the 2021 TOPSS essay competition, students were invited to write an essay of no more than 3,000 words that addressed the topic of resilience in relation to stress or trauma. The essays described the current psychological understanding of resilience and could use recent events to support student ideas. Students could draw upon any approach to psychology that could include, but was not limited to, topics such as cognition, personality, biopsychology, and health psychology. Students were asked to discuss identifiable psychological concepts that have contributed to the definition of resilience and discussed, using identifiable psychological concepts, how resilience can be developed. Students were also asked to describe ways in which applying psychological science’s understanding of resilience and the development of resilience can be made available to societies and individuals.

The APA Education Directorate and the TOPSS Committee recognized four high school students as winners of the 2021 competition: Grace Hu of Ladue Horton Watkins High School (St. Louis, Missouri); Ivani Shantilal, Carlucci American International School of Lisbon (Sintra, Portugal); Eshwar

Venkataswamy, Phillips Academy (Andover, Massachusetts); and Abigail Yang, PA Homeschoolers (Kittanning, Pennsylvania). Each received a \$250 award.

Regional Networks for High School Psychology Teachers

In support of the APA strategic goal to “*prepare the discipline and profession of psychology for the future*,” TOPSS, through APF funding, continued to support the development of regional teaching networks as a way of promoting local professional development opportunities for teachers. The APF High School Psychology Outreach Grants continued to support these regional networks; in 2021, \$25,000 was made available for teachers. Twelve APF grants were awarded this year to support (1) Archdiocese of St. Louis Psychology Teachers, (2) Arizona Teaching of Psychology Conference, (3) Excellence in Psychology Instructional Consortium (EPIC) in Wisconsin, (4) Idaho Teachers of Psychology, (5) Minnesota Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (MNTOPSS) (6) Nebraska Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (NEBTOPSS), (7) New England Teachers of Psychology (NETOP), (8) Nevada Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools, (9) Psych Friday in Alabama, (10) Rhode Island High School Psychology Teachers Network (RIHPTN), (11) St. Louis Area Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (SLATOPSS), and (12) Teaching Introductory Psychology (TIP) Northwest in Washington State. The two St. Louis networks were encouraged to collaborate with one another.

These grants were supported by funding from the APF Lee Gurel Fund for High School Psychology and the APF David and Carol Myers Fund to Support Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools, with support for new teaching networks coming from the latter.

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

In support of the APA strategic goal to “*elevate the public’s understanding of, regard for, and use of psychology*,” the APA Education Directorate and the TOPSS Committee were pleased to recognize three teachers with the APA TOPSS Charles T. Blair-Broeker Excellence in Teaching Award. The 2021 recipients were Lindsey N. Herting, MA, Lincoln High School, Lincoln, Nebraska; Sarah E. Rhine, MAT, Sylvania Northview High School, Sylvania, Ohio; and Melissa Rogers, Cedar Falls High School, Cedar Falls, Iowa. 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 and state outlets, applauding their teaching excellence and recognizing the importance of high school psychology courses.

Academic Achievement in Psychology Certificates

In support of the APA strategic goal to “*prepare the discipline and profession of psychology for the future*,” TOPSS offered Academic Achievement in Psychology Certificates to all TOPSS affiliates in 2021, so that teachers could recognize outstanding student achievement in their classrooms. Certificates were sent electronically to members.

APA 2021 Programming

In support of the APA strategic goals to “*prepare the discipline and profession of psychology for the future*” and “*strengthen APA’s standing as an authoritative voice for psychology*,” the TOPSS Committee sponsored two invited addresses at APA 2021, held virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic. The TOPSS speakers were:

- Leslie Bernstein, PhD, University of Southern California, *Lee Gurel Lecture: I Know What You Did(n’t) Learn in Your DEI Book Club) Last Summer: Practical Tips for Anti-Racist Pedagogy*

- Susan Opotow, PhD, John Jay College of Criminal Justice and The Graduate Center, City University of New York, *Conflict as Opportunity: The Psychology of Conflict as a Resource for Teaching and Learning*

Membership Outreach and Services

In support of the APA strategic goals to “*prepare the discipline and profession of psychology for the future*” and to “*strengthen APA’s standing as an authoritative voice for psychology*,” membership outreach and retention remained a high priority for TOPSS. In March 2021, with support from a 2020 APF Lee Gurel Fund for High School Psychology grant, the TOPSS Committee worked with the APA Education Directorate and Membership Department on an outreach campaign that promoted TOPSS as a professional learning community for teachers and highlighted online resources available through TOPSS. The campaign reached over 10,000 high school psychology teachers by email.

In 2021, 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.

TOPSS Self Study and Development of a 2022 Work Plan

In support of the APA operating principles to “*build a stronger association*” and “*increase organizational effectiveness*,” TOPSS participated in a Self-Study process for the Policy and Planning Board. TOPSS also met to discuss and identify a set of priorities for 2022. Through this process, TOPSS created a 2022 work plan that includes the following major priorities:

- Ensure high school students have access to accurate, science-based psychology courses that follow learning benchmarks recommended by APA
- Use, adoption, or adaptation of the National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula by state boards of education
- Promote high-quality psychology education by providing learning opportunities in psychology for high school psychology teachers
- Ensure high school students have access to quality psychology classes by promoting the value of high impact TOPSS resources