APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS)
2010 Annual Report

TOPSS Committee Members: Katherine Minter, Chair; William Elmhorst, Past Chair; Jeanne Blakeslee, Chair-Elect; Nancy Fenton; Steve Jones; Jann Longman; Kimberly Patterson; Barney Beins, PhD; Diane Halpern, PhD.

Staff Liaisons: Robin Hailstorks, PhD, Emily Leary

In 2010, TOPSS worked on several initiatives that furthered its mission of promoting introductory and advanced high school psychology, meeting the curricular and professional needs of secondary school teachers, and providing opportunities for high school students to be recognized and rewarded for their academic excellence.

APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers

The sixth annual APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers was held July 26-28, 2010, at Clark University in Worcester, MA. Twenty-four high school teachers from around the country participated in the workshop, which is sponsored by APA, Clark University, and the American Psychological Foundation. Nancy Budwig, PhD, Associate Provost, Dean of Research, and Professor of Psychology at Clark presented on the history of psychology; Clark psychology faculty Lene Jensen, PhD, and Abbie Goldberg, PhD, presented research on cultural and developmental psychology, and gay and lesbian parent families, respectively. Department chair Marianne Wiser, PhD, presented on teaching sensation and perception. TOPSS members and high school psychology teachers Charlie Blair-Broeker of Cedar Falls High School in Cedar Falls, IA, and Michael Hamilton of Hopkinton High School in Hopkinton, MA, presented a variety of teaching demonstrations and techniques, including ones on memory, development, abnormal psychology, clinical psychology, and critical thinking. Additionally, Dana Dunn, PhD, of Moravian College, delivered a keynote address entitled *The Social Psychology of Disability: A Medium for Broadening Students' Horizons Regarding Attitudes, Prejudice, and Intergroup Relations.* New in 2010, five $250 travel scholarships were available for teachers in need of additional travel support.

The workshop has been made possible through generous gifts to both Clark and APF from Lee Gurel, PhD, Clark University alumnus, APA member and longtime APF donor.

National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula

The *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* continued to be revised in 2010. The National Standards Working Group disseminated a draft of the revised *National Standards* for public review and comment in early 2010, and collected and responded to feedback with input from the National Standards Advisory Panel. The purpose of the *National Standards* is to provide guidance for high school psychology teachers and others responsible for development of psychology curriculum at the secondary school level. The *National Standards* promote quality instruction of psychology as a scientific discipline. The revised *National Standards* are expected to be forwarded to the Council of Representatives for approval in August 2011.

Working Group on the Certification and Training of High School Psychology Teachers

TOPSS provided input to the Board of Educational Affairs (BEA) Working Group on the Certification and Training of High School Psychology Teachers on a new draft policy document that will outline the recommended education and training for psychology teachers. The draft policy, titled *Guidelines for Preparing High School Psychology Teachers: Course-Based and Standards-Based Approaches*, was forwarded to APA Boards and Committees in 2010 for review and comment. The document is expected to be forwarded to the Council of Representatives for approval by 2012.

Unit Lesson Plans

The TOPSS unit lesson plans are a signature product of TOPSS. The unit lesson plans provide guidance for teaching specific content areas in psychology. In 2010, two unit plans were published: *Motivation* and *Emotion.* Both units were announced to TOPSS members via a Spring mass mailing. There are currently

19 unit lesson plans: *Biological Bases of Behavior*, *Development*, *Emotion, An Introduction to Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *An Introduction to the Field of Psychology*, *Learning*, *Memory*, *Motivation, Personality*, *Positive Psychology*, *Psychoanalysis and Psychodynamic Psychology*, *Psychological Disorders*, *The Psychology of Sexual Orientation*, *Sensation and Perception*, *States of Consciousness*, *The Stats Pack: Statistics Without Fear*, *Treatment of Psychological Disorders*, *Stress and Health Promotion*, and *Social Psychology.*

TOPSS continued to revise outdated unit lesson plans in 2010. Revision of five unit lesson plans continued: *Biological Bases of Behavior, Sensation and Perception, Development*, *History and Perspectives in Psychology,* and *Research Methods and Statistics.* Starting in 2011, funding from the American Psychological Foundation, generously provided by Lee Gurel, PhD, will support the revision of the TOPSS unit lesson plans.

Promoting high school student research in psychology

APA presented seven awards to students at the 2010 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) held in San Jose, CA. During two days of judging, volunteer judges selected the top seven finalists from projects promoting psychological science. Over 1,600 students from 59 countries competed at the 2010 ISEF. APA also provides certificates of achievement to be awarded at approximately 600 ISEF-affiliated regional fairs.

Recognizing High School Teachers and Students of Psychology

TOPSS recognized two outstanding teachers in 2010 with the APA TOPSS Excellence in Teaching Award. Scott Reed of Hamilton High School in Chandler, AZ, and William James of Milford High School in Highland, MI, received the 2010 awards.

In 2010, TOPSS recognized high school students and awarded scholarships to those who submitted outstanding essays through the APA TOPSS Scholars Essay Competition. Funding for these awards was provided by the APA Education Directorate. The 2010 winners were: Sabina Babar of Colonia High School (Colonia, New Jersey), Rachael J. Erickson of Sutton Memorial High School (Sutton, Massachusetts), Allison Gutworth of Colonia High School (Colonia, New Jersey), and Alexis Suskey of Grandville High School (Grandville, Michigan). The 2010 essay question asked students to focus on the effects human behavior has had on the current environmental crisis.

TOPSS offered Academic Achievement in Psychology Certificates to all TOPSS affiliates in 2010 so that teachers could recognize outstanding student achievement in their classrooms.

In 2010, TOPSS also developed a new poster competition for high school psychology students, to be held in 2011. The competition was designed to engage a larger population of students in psychology.

TOPSS also initiated the recognition of TOPSS Committee members by developing letters to recognize election to the Committee as well as voluntary service on the Committee, by recommending that letters be sent to each Committee member's department chair, school principal, district superintendent, and state Commissioner of Education.

TOPSS Workshops and Sessions for High School Teachers

TOPSS sponsored teaching workshops or sessions at regional and national conferences, including sessions at the Eastern Psychological Association conference and at the AP Reading (Teachers Night). TOPSS and the Education Directorate sponsored receptions for high school psychology teachers at the Advanced Placement Annual Conference (July, Washington, DC) and at the National Council for Social Studies Conference (November, Denver, CO).

TOPSS sponsored five programs at the APA Convention in San Diego, CA. The TOPSS Invited Addresses were: *The Transition from High School to College: Challenges and Solutions* by Bill Addison, PhD (Eastern Illinois University) and Pat Puccio, EdD (College of DuPage); *Addressing Psychological Misconceptions among Beginning Students* by Scott O. Lilienfeld, PhD (Emory University); *Operation ARIES! Applying the Principles of Serious Games and the Science of Learning to Enhance Critical Thinking* by Diane Halpern, PhD (Claremont McKenna College); and *Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces*

in Psychology: Maintaining a Disciplinary Balance by Frank Worrell, PhD (University of California Berkley). Kenneth D. Keith, PhD (University of San Diego), delivered the first Lee Gurel Lecture on *The Last Word: What Should Students Take Away from Our Classes?*

Membership Outreach and Services

Membership outreach and retention remained a high priority for TOPSS. TOPSS continued its network of Regional Coordinators to strengthen communication with TOPSS members in various regions of the country as well as Canada and Latin America. A new flier outlining benefits of TOPSS membership was developed for outreach. TOPSS also made recommendations to the APA Membership Board regarding affiliate membership options for teachers.

In 2010, the Education Directorate participated as an exhibitor at the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Conference in Denver, CO. NCSS is the largest association for social studies educators in the country; there were approximately 2,500 educators at the conference. The NCSS booth provides APA and TOPSS with good visibility at NCSS. TOPSS and the Education Directorate sponsored a reception for high school psychology teachers at the conference.

TOPSS continued several other programs as a means of providing service to new high school psychology teachers, including a mentor program and the TOPSS Speakers Bureau. Development of a new Handbook for New High School Psychology Teachers also continued in 2010.

TOPSS communicated with its members through the distribution of one mass mailing this year, containing announcements and teaching resources. TOPSS also communicated with affiliate members through postings to the TOPSS Web site and the TOPSS listserv.

The Education Directorate, in collaboration with TOPSS members, distributed four issues of the *Psychology Teacher Network* newsletter. The *PTN* provides teachers with articles, activities, and book reviews to enhance psychology classroom teaching.

In 2010, a new Internet Toolbar for high school psychology teachers was created by the APA ITS department. The toolbar includes links to the most relevant and practical content, tools and feeds from the APA web pages, and can be easily downloaded to web browsers. Additionally, the format of the TOPSS website was updated to be more visually appealing and user-friendly.

TOPSS also continued supporting several diversity initiatives in 2010. Information on the TOPSS Ethnic Minority Recruiting Project continued to be available on the TOPSS website, encouraging local collaborations to encourage minority high school students to consider careers in psychology. TOPSS unit lesson plans continue to be reviewed for diversity issues before they are published.

Other Collaborations and Discussions

TOPSS continued to invite APA Divisions to develop PowerPoint presentations for teachers. In 2010, two new PowerPoint demonstrations were added to the TOPSS website: one on School Psychology and one on Peace Psychology.

A TOPSS liaison attended the Education Leadership Conference in September 2010. The TOPSS chair attended the Science Leadership Conference in November 2010, providing input on ways in which high school psychology courses can be a venue for promoting psychology as a science. A TOPSS liaison also attended the December 2010 meeting of the Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education.

TOPSS also continued conversations in 2010 regarding the feasibility of starting a National Honor Society in Psychology for high school students, and regarding National Board certification for high school psychology teachers.