APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS)
2011 Annual Report

TOPSS Committee Members: Jeanne Blakeslee, MA, MLE, Chair; Katherine Minter, MA, Past Chair; Jann Longman, MA, Chair-Elect; Michael Hamilton, MA; Steve Jones, MA, NBCT; Michael McLane, MA; Kimberly Patterson, MS, EdS; Barney Beins, PhD; Kenneth Keith, PhD

Staff Liaisons: Robin Hailstorks, PhD; Emily Leary, MBA

In 2011, the APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS) worked on several initiatives that were aligned to the new APA strategic plan. TOPSS programs and initiatives align well to the goal to *Increase Recognition of Psychology as a Science* (Goal 3), notably with the newly revised *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* (APA, 2011), the TOPSS unit lesson plans, and opportunities for professional development. Several TOPSS initiatives also align to the seven new APA strategic initiatives, including the initiative to analyze the current and future demand for the psychology workforce to meet national needs and the initiative to expand the public education campaign.

APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers

The seventh annual APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers was held July 11-13, 2011, at Clark University in Worcester, MA. Twenty-five high school teachers participated in the workshop, which is sponsored by APA, Clark University, and the American Psychological Foundation. Clark psychology faculty Jeffrey Arnett, PhD, and Michael Bamberg, PhD, presented research on emerging adulthood and research methods, respectively. Department chair Marianne Wiser, PhD, presented on teaching sensation and perception. TOPSS members and high school psychology teachers Steve Jones, MA, NBCT, of City of Medicine Academy (Durham, NC) and Kristin Whitlock, MEd, of Viewmont High School (Bountiful, UT) also presented a variety of teaching demonstrations and techniques. Additionally, Scott Plous, PhD, Professor of Psychology at Wesleyan University and founder and Executive Director of Social Psychology Network, delivered a keynote address entitled *Action Teaching: An Exciting New Way to Teach High School Psychology.* For the second year, five $250 travel scholarships were available for teachers in need of additional travel support; all other participants received up to $100 in travel support.

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

National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula

The second revision of the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* was approved by the APA Council of Representatives in August 2011. 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 document also promotes quality instruction in psychology as a scientific discipline. The revised *National Standards* is available through the APA website and in hard copy. With input from the National Standards Working Group, APA staff began to broadly disseminate the document in the fall of 2011. Copies of the *National Standards* were mailed to all TOPSS members in December 2011.

Guidelines for High School Psychology Teachers: Course-Based and Standards-Based Approaches

The TOPSS Committee supported the continued development of the draft *Guidelines for High School Psychology Teachers: Course-Based and Standards-Based Approaches* (draft, 2011), developed by the Board of Educational Affairs (BEA) Working Group on the Certification and Training of High School Psychology Teachers. The *Guidelines* was available for public comment in the spring of 2011, and is expected to become APA policy in 2012. The call for public comment was disseminated to all TOPSS members, and two TOPSS members served on the BEA Working Group.

Unit Lesson Plans

The TOPSS unit lesson plans are a signature product of the TOPSS Committee. The unit lesson plans

provide guidance for teaching specific content areas in psychology. In 2011, a unit plan on *Sensation and Perception* was published. 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.* This year the TOPSS Committee also continued discussions on plans to develop problem-focused unit lesson plans.

TOPSS continued to revise outdated unit lesson plans in 2011. Revision of the following unit lesson plans continued: *Biological Bases of Behavior, Life Span Development*, *Perspectives in Psychological Science,* and *Research Methods, Measurement, and Statistics.* New funding from the American Psychological Foundation, generously provided through a gift from Lee Gurel, PhD, supported the revision of the TOPSS unit lesson plans in 2011.

National Survey of High School Psychology Teachers

With funding through the American Psychological Foundation, the APA Education Directorate and the TOPSS Committee planned and launched a national survey of high school psychology teachers in late 2011. The survey will collect information regarding teachers' educational background, preparation and training, and information on resources and opportunities, classroom issues, future trends, and professional development needs. This survey fits well with the APA strategic initiative to analyze the current and future demand for the psychology workforce to meet national needs.

Promoting high school student research in psychology

APA presented seven awards to students at the 2011 Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) held in Los Angeles, CA. During two days of judging, volunteer judges selected the top seven finalists from projects promoting psychological science. Over 1,500 students from 65 countries, regions, and territories competed at the 2011 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 three outstanding teachers in 2011 with the APA TOPSS Excellence in Teaching Award. Nancy Diehl, PhD, of Hong Kong International School in Tai Tam, Hong Kong, Sheryl Freedman, MA, of Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, MD, and Melissa J. Kennedy, PhD, of Holy Names Academy in Seattle, WA, received the 2011 awards. The TOPSS Committee had revised the application criteria for the Teaching Award for the 2011 awards.

In 2011, TOPSS recognized high school students and awarded scholarships to those who submitted outstanding posters and essays through the APA TOPSS Poster Competition for High School Students. Corie Schwabenland of Central West High School (Fresno, CA), Zackery Perkins of Oscar F. Smith High School (Chesapeake, VA) , Andrew Branstetter of Solon High School (Solon, OH), and Laura Wetzel of Stevens Point Area High School (Stevens Point, WI) each received $250 scholarships for their winning posters and 500-word essays. The 2011 poster question asked students to focus on the theme "Psychology is a Science."

TOPSS offered Academic Achievement in Psychology Certificates to all TOPSS affiliates in 2011 so that teachers could recognize outstanding student achievement in their classrooms. Student award recipient names were posted to the TOPSS website in December 2011.

The Education Directorate continued to recognize TOPSS Committee members by developing letters to recognize election to the Committee as well as voluntary service on the Committee, by sending letters 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 and the Education Directorate sponsored sessions at regional and national conferences,

including sessions at the Advanced Placement Reading "Professional Speaker Night," and the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) Conference. TOPSS and the Education Directorate sponsored receptions for high school psychology teachers at the APA Convention (August 2011, Washington, DC) and the NCSS Conference (December 2011, Washington, DC).

TOPSS sponsored five programs at the APA Convention in Washington, DC. The TOPSS Invited Addresses were: Barney Beins, PhD, of Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY (*Psychology: Gateway to Critical Thinking and Scientific Literacy);* Gil Einstein, PhD, of Furman University, Greenville, SC *(Remembering to Perform Actions in the Future: Can Intentions Pop into Mind?);* and Jessica Henderson Daniel, PhD, of Boston Children's Hospital, Cambridge, MA (*Teaching Adolescents about Adolescents: Using Mirrors that Focus on Race, Ethnicity and Gender).* April Bleske-Rechek, PhD, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Eau Claire, WI, delivered the second annual Lee Gurel Lecture, titled *A Primer on Evolutionary Psychology: Foundational Ideas, Exemplary Research, and Criticisms.* Additionally, TOPSS sponsored a symposium titled *Ethical Issues in the Introductory Psychology Course* featuring Maureen McCarthy, PhD, of Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA; Lillian McMaster, PhD, of Mohawk Valley Community College, Utica, NY; and Katherine Minter, MA, of Westwood High School, Austin, TX. Steve Behnke, PhD, JD, APA Ethics Office, served as a discussant.

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. In late 2011, the TOPSS Committee recommended revising the Regional Coordinators network structure. The Committee also continued revising a draft resource for new high school psychology teachers.

In 2011, the Education Directorate participated as an exhibitor at the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Conference in Washington, DC. NCSS is the largest association for social studies educators in the country. 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 communicated with its members through the distribution of two mass mailings in 2011, 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 and members of the APA Committee of Psychology Teachers at Community Colleges, distributed four issues of the *Psychology Teacher Network* newsletter. The *PTN* provides teachers with articles, activities, and book reviews to enhance psychology classroom teaching.

The TOPSS Committee developed a new Diversity Statement and Action Plan in 2011, and approved this statement at their fall meeting. This new action plan underscores the Committee's commitment to inclusion and respect for all and outlines a series of action steps to take place in future years. 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 2011, two new PowerPoint demonstrations were added to the TOPSS website: one on Media Psychology (Division 46) and one on Consumer Psychology (Division 23).

A TOPSS liaison attended the June 2012 meeting of the Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education.

The TOPSS Committee also participated in the Good Governance Project through the APA Consolidated Meetings.