AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS)
2013 Annual Report

TOPSS Committee Members: Steve Jones, MA, Chair; Jann Longman, MS, Past Chair; Michael McLane, MA, Chair-Elect; Tonya Hinton, MA; Yadira Sanchez, PsyD; Maria Vita; Katie Clark, MA; Kenneth Keith, PhD; Janie Wilson, PhD

Staff Liaisons: Emily Leary Chesnes, MBA; Robin Hailstorks, PhD; Caitlin Crowley

In 2013, the APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS) worked on several initiatives that were aligned to the APA strategic plan. Many TOPSS programs and initiatives align well to the goal to *Increase Recognition of Psychology as a Science* (Goal 3).

TOPSS 20th Anniversary

From 2012-2013, TOPSS celebrated its 20th anniversary. In 1992 the TOPSS Interim Steering Committee was formed and in 1993 the TOPSS Committee was officially established by the APA Council of Representatives.

APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers

The ninth annual APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers was held July 22-24, 2013, at Clark University in Worcester, MA. Twenty-five high school teachers from around the country participated in the workshop. Presenters included TOPSS members Laura Brandt, MA, of Adlai E. Stevenson High School (Lincolnshire, IL) and Pete Masciopinto, MA, of Glenbrook South High School (Glenview, IL). Presenters also included Jeffrey Arnett, PhD, and Marianne Wiser, PhD, both of Clark University, and Champika Soysa, PhD, of Worcester State College, presenting on emerging adolescence, sensation and perception, and abnormal psychology, respectively. Victor Benassi, PhD, of the University of New Hampshire, delivered the keynote address, titled *Applying the Science of Learning in the High School Psychology Course*. The workshop, which is co-sponsored by APA, Clark University, and the American Psychological Foundation (APF), has been made possible through generous gifts to both Clark University and APF from Lee Gurel, PhD, a Clark University alumnus, APA member and longtime APF donor.

Policy Documents that support High School Psychology

Two spring mailings were sent to aid in the dissemination and promotion of the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* (APA, 2011) and *Guidelines for Preparing High School Psychology Teachers: Course-Based and Standards-Based Approaches* (APA, 2012). One mailing went to all 60 State, Provincial, and Territorial Psychological Associations and a second letter, sent under APA CEO Norman Anderson, PhD's, signature, was sent to all 50 (plus DC) state boards and departments of education. In April, TOPSS Member Kay Minter, MA, presented on the *National Standards* at the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) conference in San Antonio, TX, supported by a grant from APF.

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 2013 two revised unit plans were published, one on *Learning* and one on *Memory.* Funding from APF, generously provided through a gift from Lee Gurel, PhD, supported the revision of these TOPSS unit lesson plans.

Revision of the following unit lesson plans continued this year: *Perspectives in Psychological Science; Research Methods, Measurement, and Statistics; Vocational Applications; Personality;* and *Psychological Disorders.* A problem-focused unit lesson plan on *Childhood Obesity* was also developed in 2013 and will be published in 2014.

Recognizing High School Teachers and Students of Psychology

TOPSS recognized three outstanding teachers in 2013 with APA TOPSS Excellence in Teaching Awards. Nancy D. Fenton, MA, of Adlai E. Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, IL; Kathleen K. Gavura, EdM, of Colonia High School in Colonia, NJ; and Michael J. Hamilton, MA, of Hopkinton High School in Hopkinton, MA, received the 2013 awards.

In 2013, TOPSS recognized high school students and awarded scholarships to those who submitted outstanding submissions through the APA TOPSS Competition for High School Students. Sarah Giuffrida of Penn Manor High School (Lancaster, PA), Katie Shen of Solon High School (Solon, OH), Sarah Whyler of Penn Manor High School (Lancaster, PA), and Aliya Zaidi of Solon High School (Solon, OH) each received $250 scholarships for their winning projects. The 2013 competition question asked students to write a short composition exploring the role psychological science can play in both explaining and informing solutions for social injustices and inequities. Students were also asked to design an original visual poster on the theme “Psychology Addressing Injustice” to accompany their written component.

TOPSS offered Academic Achievement in Psychology Certificates to all TOPSS affiliates in 2013 so that teachers could recognize outstanding student achievement in their classrooms. Student award recipient names were posted to the TOPSS website.

The College, Career, and Civil Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

Three current TOPSS members and two APA members participated in an informal APA working group that developed a companion document on psychology skills and content that was included in *The College, Career, and Civil Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: State guidance for enhancing the rigor of K-12 civics, economics, geography and history* (NCSS, 2013). The “C3 Framework” provides a framework for social studies in K-12 schools, and APA staff and TOPSS members participated in multiple discussions on psychology and other behavioral and social sciences as related to the C3 Framework. The C3 Framework joins the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) as national guidelines for social studies, math, English language, and science education in our nation’s schools.

APA Briefing on High School Psychology

In March 2013, TOPSS Chair Steve Jones, MA, participated in an “APA Briefing on High School Psychology” in the APA headquarters, facilitated by the APA Education Directorate. Representatives from the following organizations attended the briefing: National Association of Secondary School Principals, James Hubert Blake High School (Silver Spring, MD), National Science Teachers Association, National Council for the Social Studies, National Association of State Boards of Education, District of Columbia Public Schools, National Research Council, American Federation of Teachers, and the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification. The purpose of the meeting was to share information on the

teaching of high school psychology and APA policy documents and resources for high school psychology, and to discuss possible collaborations with participating groups.

Outreach to Washington, DC, High School Psychology Teachers

At its September 2013 meeting, the TOPSS Committee invited high school psychology teachers from Washington, DC, to join the Committee for lunch on Saturday, September 21. The goal of the meeting was to share information and resources with local teachers and hear from the teachers how TOPSS can better serve them. The meeting was intended to inform further outreach the Committee hopes to do with teachers in urban areas. Four teachers attended the September lunch, representing School Without Walls, Eastern High School, Ellington School for the Arts, and Phelps High School.

National Board Certification

In October 2013, the TOPSS Chair participated in a discussion with APA Education Directorate staff and two representatives from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) to discuss national board certification and the teaching of high school psychology. Currently, a national board certification does not exist for high school psychology teachers, and APA has been in communication with NBPTS about this since 2003. While there are not currently immediate plans to develop a separate certification, APA and NBPTS will continue to discuss the topic with the ultimate goal of developing a certificate in the future.

TOPSS Webcast

On December 3, 2013, TOPSS held its first live webcast for psychology teachers. Rob McEntarffer, PhD, of Lincoln Public Schools (Lincoln, NE) presented *Does That Psychology Demonstration Really Work?,* on formative assessment. Approximately sixty teachers registered to participate in the webcast, which was an hour long and included time for questions and answers. TOPSS members were given a discount code to watch the webcast for free.

TOPSS-Sponsored Sessions for High School Teachers

TOPSS and the Education Directorate sponsored a "Professional Speaker Night" at the Advanced Placement Reading in June. TOPSS Chair Steve Jones, MA, presented at the AP National Conference in July 2013 in Las Vegas, NV, on online resources on biopsychology.

TOPSS and the Education Directorate sponsored receptions for high school psychology teachers at the APA Convention (August 2013, Honolulu, HI) and the NCSS Conference (November 2013, St. Louis, MO).

TOPSS sponsored four programs at the APA Convention in Honolulu, HI. The TOPSS Invited Addresses were:

- *The Lee Gurel Lecture: Teaching Disability as a Diversity Variable in the Classroom*, presented by Julie Williams, PsyD, Wright State University; Erin E. Andrews, PsyD, ABPP, Central Texas VA Health Care System; and Linda Mona, PhD, VA Long Beach Healthcare System.
- *Semper Gumby: Survival in the Ever Flexible Military Family*, presented by Matthew Clark, PhD, Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army, Military Officers Association of America.
- *Psychologists as Change Agents: Challenges of Leadership, Ambiguity and Uncertainty*, presented by Sandra L. Shullman, PhD, Executive Development Group

TOPSS also collaborated with Psi Beta on the *TOPSS/Psi Beta Teaching and Learning*

Excellence Symposium — Part II, featuring Kris Leppien-Christensen, Saddleback College ("Psi Beta's version of the Heroic Imagination Project"); Jann Longman, Liberty High School (retired) ("How TOPSS is Participating in the Heroic Imagination Project"); Clint Wilkins and Bryan Dickerson, Heroic Imagination Project ("Nuts and bolts of Having Your Students Participate in the Heroic Imagination Project").

Membership Outreach and Services

Membership outreach and retention remained a high priority for TOPSS. In 2013, the TOPSS Committee, through the Education Directorate, continued to support a Facebook fan page, to enhance member engagement and communication. This year, with consultation from APA legal counsel, TOPSS also developed language for various state groups such as ChiTOPSS and UTOPSS to sign onto, to clarify the relationship between these outside groups and APA/TOPSS.

In 2013, the APA Education Directorate participated as an exhibitor at the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Conference in St. Louis, MO. NCSS is the largest association for social studies educators in the country. The NCSS booth provided 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 a spring mass mailing. 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* (PTN) newsletter. The *PTN* provides teachers with articles, activities, and book reviews to enhance psychology classroom teaching.

American Psychological Foundation/Education Directorate Lee Gurel Fund for the Professional Development of High School Psychology Teachers

The TOPSS Committee greatly appreciated American Psychological Foundation (APF) funding to the Education Directorate in 2013 that supported the following initiatives:

- The revision of unit lesson plans (outlined above)
- *APF High School Psychology Teacher Network Grants* to support local or regional networks of psychology teachers
- *APF Professional Development Awards for High School Psychology Teachers* to help high school psychology teachers travel to and attend regional or national conferences
- Additional travel support for participants for the 2013 APA/Clark University Workshop
- Dissemination of the *National Standards for High School Psychology Teachers* through a mailing to over 5,000 high school psychology teachers in all 50 states plus DC and a presentation at the NSTA conference

Additionally, the APF funding allowed the Education Directorate to post the following videotaped sessions from the 2012 APA/Clark University Workshop online via the TOPSS website for psychology teachers to view:

- *Scientific Inquiry and the National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula*, by Michael Sullivan and Debra Park
- *Teaching Sensation and Perception*, by Marianne Wiser, PhD
- *Presentations on Biological Bases of Behavior*, by Michael Sullivan and Debra Park

- *The Importance of Research Methods in Introductory Psychology*, by Randy Smith, PhD
- *Learning Science Research and High School Psychology*, by Nancy Budwig, PhD
- *Presentations on Life Span Development*, by Michael Sullivan and Debra Park
- *Presentation on Individual Variations and Cognition*, by Michael Sullivan
- *Adolescent Sleep*, by Amy Wolfson, PhD
- *Presentations on Social Psychology and New Research*, by Michael Sullivan and Debra Park

Seven sessions from the 2012 APA Convention were also posted online in 2012 thanks to APF funding.

Other Collaborations and Discussions

TOPSS continued to invite APA Divisions to develop PowerPoint presentations and other resources (e.g., videos, websites) for teachers. In 2013, new PowerPoint demonstrations on Police and Public Safety Psychology, Clinical Neuropsychology, Counseling Psychology, Group Therapy and Psychotherapy, Rehabilitation Psychology, Careers in Aging, Careers in Professional Geropsychology, Family Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Child and Adolescent Clinical Psychology, and Psychoanalysis were added to the website.

A TOPSS liaison attended the December 2013 meetings of the Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education.

The TOPSS Committee also participated in discussions on the APA public education campaign.