AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS)
2015 Annual Report

TOPSS Committee Members: Michael Hamilton, MA, Chair; Michael McLane, MA, Past Chair; R. Scott Reed, MEd, Chair-Elect; Isabel Morales, EdD; Amy Ramponi; Steven Turner, MEd; Virginia Welle, MS; Sue Frantz, MA; William Wozniak, PhD

Staff Liaisons: Emily Leary Chesnes, MBA; Robin Hailstorks, PhD; Yvonne Hill, MS

In 2015 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 goals to *Maximize Organizational Effectiveness* (Goal 1) and to *Increase Recognition of Psychology as a Science* (Goal 3).

APA Presidential Citation

At the March 2015 APA consolidated meeting, the APA TOPSS Committee received a presidential citation from APA President Barry Anton, PhD, recognizing the Committee's "steadfast commitment to promoting high quality teaching of introductory psychology and for advancing APA's strategic goal of promoting psychology as a science."

APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers

The eleventh annual APA/Clark University Workshop for High School Teachers was held July 20-22, 2015 at Clark University in Worcester, MA. Twenty-five high school teachers from around the country participated in the workshop. Presenters included two TOPSS members and Clark University professors. Susan Nolan, PhD, of Seton Hall University, delivered a keynote address entitled *Really?! The Key Role of Introductory Psychology in Creating Scientific Thinkers.* This workshop has been made possible through generous gifts from Lee Gurel, PhD, a Clark University alumnus, APA member, and longtime APF donor, to both Clark and the American Psychological Foundation (APF).

Regional Networks for High School Psychology Teachers

The APF High School Psychology Teacher Network Grants supported eight regional teaching networks in 2015, thanks to funding provided by APF. New networks were supported in Northern California, New York, Ohio, Philadelphia, and Rhode Island. Continuing networks were supported in Arizona, Chicago, and St. Louis. The development of regional teaching networks has been a priority of the TOPSS Committee in recent years, as a way of promoting local professional development opportunities for teachers.

Unit Lesson Plans

The TOPSS unit lesson plans are a signature product of the TOPSS Committee. Revisions of several unit lesson plans continued this year, and the TOPSS Committee spent time at its fall meeting reviewing revisions to lesson plans on *Research Methods and Statistics* and

Consciousness, both to be published in 2016. APF funding has supported unit lesson plan revisions from 2011-2015.

Recognizing High School Teachers and Students of Psychology

The APA Education Directorate and the APA TOPSS Committee were pleased to recognize three teachers with the 2015 APA TOPSS Charles T. Blair-Broeker Excellence in Teaching Award. The 2015 recipients were: Alan Feldman, MA, of Glen Rock High School in Glen Rock, NJ; Jessica Flitter, MA, of West Bend East High School in West Bend, WI, and Michael Sullivan, MA, of Hopkinton High School in Hopkinton, MA. The annual Excellence in Teaching Awards recognize outstanding psychology teachers.

The APA Education Directorate and the TOPSS Committee also recognized four high school students as winners of the 2015 APA TOPSS Competition for High School Psychology Students. Elma Adusei of Fredericksburg Academy (Fredericksburg, VA), Allison J. Gold of Laude Horton Watkins High School (St. Louis, MO), Lavinia Wing Lam Tse of Oundle School (Oundle Peterborough, UK), and Lucy R. Purnell of Oundle School (Oundle Peterborough, UK) each received a $250 scholarship for their winning essays. Funding was provided by the APA Education Directorate. The 2015 competition question asked students to submit an essay (3,000 words maximum) exploring the neurological, cognitive and social implications of substance abuse. Students were asked to write about one type of substance use (e.g., tobacco, alcohol, cannabinoids, opioids, stimulants, or hallucinogens) and a scientifically tested measure for prevention or intervention.

TOPSS offered Academic Achievement in Psychology Certificates to all TOPSS affiliates in 2015 so that teachers could recognize outstanding student achievement in their classrooms. Student award recipient names were posted to the TOPSS website.

APA Convention Programming

The TOPSS Committee sponsored three invited addresses at the APA Convention, held August 6-9, 2015, in Toronto, Ontario:

- Sue Frantz, MA, Highline College
  Technological Change: Everything That Is Old Is New Again

- Richard Seefeldt, EdD, University of Wisconsin River Falls
  The Lee Gurel Lecture: Unsimplifying Mental Disorders: Principles for understanding and teaching abnormal psychology

- R. Eric Landrum, PhD, Boise State University
  Psychology Education and the Importance of Skills: Our Collective Legacy at Risk

TOPSS also sponsored a reception for psychology teachers during the convention.

Membership Satisfaction Survey

The APA Office of Precollege and Undergraduate Education and the TOPSS Committee distributed an online survey to the TOPSS Members (APA High School Teacher Affiliates) in February to assess their membership satisfaction. The survey found that 86.7% of responding members indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with their APA/TOPSS membership. The TOPSS Committee discussed survey results at its March 27-29, 2015 meeting.

Membership Outreach and Services

Membership outreach and retention remained a high priority for TOPSS. In 2015, the TOPSS Committee, through the APA Education Directorate, continued to support a Facebook fan page, to enhance member engagement and communication. The TOPSS Committee also planned and held a "TOPSS night" at the Advanced Placement Reading in June in Louisville, KY, to share information about TOPSS with participating teachers.

In 2015, the APA Education Directorate participated as an exhibitor at the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Conference in New Orleans, LA. 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 co-sponsored a reception for high school psychology teachers at the conference.

At its March 2015 meeting, based upon feedback from the membership satisfaction survey, TOPSS recommended sending out regular email correspondence to the membership to inform members of resources and opportunities from APA and TOPSS. Seven mass emails were sent to TOPSS members in 2015. TOPSS also communicated with its members through the distribution of a spring mass mailing, which shared news from APA and TOPSS and provided members with academic achievement in psychology certificates to present to their students, and through postings to the TOPSS website and the TOPSS listserv.

The APA Education Directorate, in collaboration with TOPSS 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.

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 2015 that supported the following initiatives:

- The revision of unit lesson plans
- *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 the APA Convention in August 2015
- Additional travel support for participants for the 2015 APA/Clark University Workshop
- Presentations on psychology and the *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula* at the National Science Teachers Association STEM Forum in May in Minneapolis, MN, and at the Advanced Placement National Conference in July in Austin, TX

Additionally, APF funding supported a webcast for psychology teachers on December 1, 2015, featuring Regan Gurung, PhD, of the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay, on *Cultivating Learning: Capitalizing on the Science of Learning*. The webinar is now available for viewing free of charge through http://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/topss/webcasts-modules.aspx. TOPSS members were encouraged to participate in the webcast, which included time for questions and answers.

Other Collaborations and Discussions

Michael Hamilton, MA, the 2015 TOPSS Chair, served as a TOPSS Committee liaison on the Steering Committee for the APA Summit on High School Psychology Education. The nine person Steering Committee met in June 2015 to discuss goals, topics, participants, and other logistics for the first ever summit on high school psychology. The summit, to be held in July 2017 at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah, will address topics such as the teaching of high school psychology as a science, the initial certification to teach psychology, assessment, professional development, diversity and access, and technology and online learning. The TOPSS Committee provided input into summit planning during its spring and fall meetings.

A TOPSS liaison attended two meetings in 2015 of the Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education, and TOPSS liaisons also attended the APA Education Leadership Conference, held in September 2015, and the first APA Public Interest Leadership Conference, held in November 2015.