



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Allison Shaver receives a 2022 APA TOPSS Charles T. Blair-Broeker Excellence in Teaching Award

Plymouth South High School teacher recognized for commitment to psychology education.

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Allison Shaver, MA, a psychology teacher at Plymouth South High School in Plymouth, Massachusetts, has been named a national winner of a 2022 [APA TOPSS Charles T. Blair-Broeker Excellence in Teaching Award](/about/awards/teaching-excellence) (</about/awards/teaching-excellence>) by the American Psychological Association's Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS).

Shaver has been teaching for over two decades and has served as a dedicated and influential figure in the teaching of psychology at Plymouth South High School. Students and colleagues alike are amazed by her genuine love for teaching and psychology. “The positive support that she provides for her students ensures that they have all of the necessary tools in order to thrive as a psychology student.” Marie St. Germaine, a former student, notes.

Shaver developed the AP Psychology program at Plymouth South High School, tripling the number of students enrolled in AP Psychology in the years she has dedicated to the program. “Her passion for her subject area is what has made Psychology one of the

premiere courses at Plymouth South... more students elect this course annually than any other AP class, largely due to her reputation," Plymouth South Principal, Patricia Fry noted, describing Shaver's impact.

Shaver is dedicated to creating an environment of inclusivity and understanding of differences among all students at Plymouth South. Her proudest accomplishment has been creating a Human Behaviors class to introduce students with Autism to the topic of psychology. Through this class, students work together to create proposals aimed toward making locations around their school more inclusive and accessible.

St. Germaine, who went on to study psychology at the undergraduate level, recalls Shaver's passion for psychology as "contagious, and it didn't take long for my mind to be infected by her zeal. With each instance that I find myself connecting some psychological concept to something in my everyday life, I can picture my previous teacher's animated face and I reminisce about the days I spent in her classroom." Shaver has created the #psychologyisallaroundus twitter handle for her students to seek out psychological concepts in their everyday lives and link them back to class. There is a strong emphasis on making psychology applicable to each student and ensuring that every student enjoys their time in AP Psychology.

"Allison Shaver is one of the most dedicated and influential teachers I have ever met. Many students look up to her, and as a result, pursue psychology as a path upon graduation," Fry adds.

Dana Melone, MAT, chair of APA's TOPSS Committee, noted that Shaver "demonstrates all of the qualities of an excellent teacher of psychological science. She is dedicated to promoting the science of psychology, using empathy to build strong bonds in the classroom, and works tirelessly to help all teachers of psychology succeed."

In addition to her work with students at Plymouth South High School, Shaver served as Chair of the American Psychological Association's Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools for the 2019 year. As chair, Shaver strived to foster connections between members, and introduced a new Tea with TOPSS conversation series, which allowed TOPSS members to hear from, and interact with, distinguished guest speakers.

For her deep devotion to her students and the teaching of psychology, the APA TOPSS Committee is excited to present this award to Allison Shaver.

APA TOPSS Committee Member-at-Large Julie Gowans interviewed Allison Shaver, MA, about her experiences and advice as a teacher:

What do you enjoy most about teaching psychology?

I love seeing the connections students make to themselves and the world around them. In my class we are always saying #psychologyisallaroundus and when they start to see that that is in fact true, I know I have done my job!

What is your favorite lesson or topic to teach and why?

Honestly, I love the opening I do for Clinical Psych where students write anonymously how they are connected to mental health and then I read them aloud to the class. What students share and how we immediately understand that while it is often a topic that is not openly discussed, but is clearly a part of all our lives brings my class together in a very unique way. There are sometimes tears shed and it is always very powerful.

What advice would you give to new psychology teachers?

Join TOPSS — obviously! But in general — connect yourself. Psychology teachers are the most helpful and generous teachers I have ever

encountered. If you ask for help someone will step up and while you may feel like you are alone. You are not!

What does winning this award mean to you?

To be recognized by TOPSS for the work I have put into making psychology accessible to all students at my school feels amazing! I am so lucky to teach high school psychology. Many of my closest friends are psychology teachers and I would not have been able to accomplish everything I have without their guidance along the way!

Shaver will receive a framed certificate, engraved award, cash prize of \$500 and a complimentary TOPSS membership renewal for the 2023 membership year. Additionally, Bedford, Freeman & Worth Publishers is generously donating a \$500 credit to Bedford, Freeman & Worth Publishers to each of the winning teachers.

Now in its 30th year, TOPSS is the voice of high school psychology teachers within APA. Through APA's Education Directorate, TOPSS offers teaching materials, professional development, the Psychology Teacher Network quarterly newsletter and programs for high school psychology teachers and students. There are approximately 2,200 APA high school teacher affiliates in APA. High school psychology is a rapidly growing course option. In 2021, just over 289,000 students took the Advanced Placement psychology examination. Additionally, over 22,700 high school students worldwide took the International Baccalaureate psychology exam in psychology in May 2021. Other psychology courses are taught at the high school level, including on-level and dual credit psychology courses. Recent data from the Department of Education indicated that 29.96% of graduating students across the country had earned credit for taking a psychology course during high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

TOPSS's mission is to promote the highest standards in the teaching of psychology as a science and discipline; promote professional development and other means for lifelong learning for high school teachers of psychology; facilitate networking among teachers from all teaching levels of psychology; encourage recruitment and retention of students in the field of psychology; enhance the visibility and legitimacy of high school psychology; and recommend the appropriate advocacy, education policy and certification issues that impact the quality or visibility of teaching of high school psychology. Learn more about TOPSS on the [APA Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools \(/ed/precollege/topss\)](#) webpage and on its [Facebook page \(https://www.facebook.com/apatopss\)](#).

For more information, please contact [Emily Leary Chesnes \(mailto:eleary@apa.org\)](mailto:eleary@apa.org).

Reference

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) High School Transcript Study (HSTS)*, 2019. <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/hsts>
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