

Newsletter for Educational Psychologists (NEP)

Spring 2026 Edition



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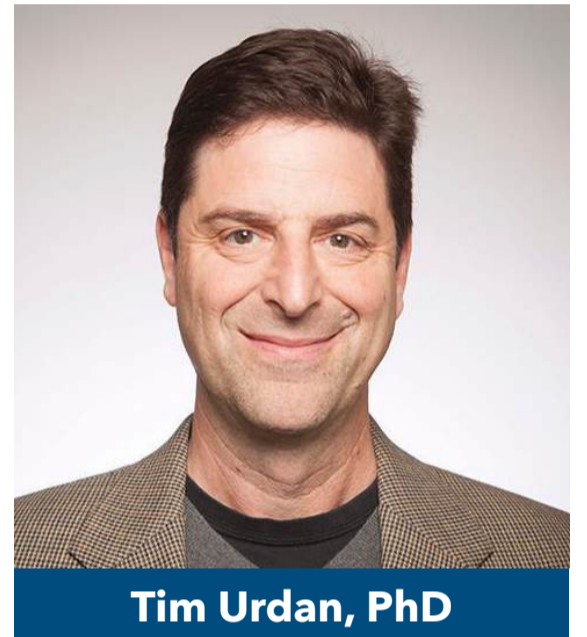
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Editor: Serena Shim, PhD

Spreading the Word About Educational Psychology

by President Tim Urdan

Division 15 has been busy with a flurry of activities so far this year. Our two fabulous Program Committee co-chairs, Yin Chen and Kori Nicolai, have put together a fantastic program for the APA Convention in Washington D.C. in August. The new co-editors of *Educational Psychologist*, Jason Chen and Krisa Muis, are settling into their roles and receiving a record number of submissions. And our new journal, [**Educational Psychology for Policy and Practice**](#), co-edited by Sharon Nichols and Francesca Lopez, is launching this year.



The Division is also engaged in a number of activities to spread the word as broadly as possible about what educational psychologists do and why it matters. In this era of cuts to scientific research funding, not to mention the Department of Education, it is more important than ever to let people both inside and outside of the research community know what we do. To accomplish this goal, we have several key initiatives and projects in place:

- Our popular [**podcast series**](#), hosted by Jeff Greene, puts a spotlight on research by featuring interviews with authors of articles published in [**Educational Psychologist**](#).
- Our Practice Committee continues to publish [**Practice Briefs**](#) that translate research into short, digestible recommendations for practice. The most recent series of briefs is focused on promoting teacher well-being.
- The Policy Committee continues to work on publishing [**Policy Briefs**](#) that are designed to inform policy using what we have learned from research. These briefs are designed to be short and readable for those in positions to influence and to form policy.
- The Social Justice and Equity in Education Committee is continuing their work producing [**webinars**](#) to educate researchers and practitioners about issues of equity in education and the research community.
- The educational psychology blog in [**Psychology Today**](#) is back up and running, publishing about one new piece every month.
- The Early Career Committee is producing and hosting a series of [**webinars**](#) to help all of us, but particularly those early in their careers, navigate the field and get their work out to a broad audience.

This is just a sampling of the Division's efforts to get information out to the public about what we do as educational psychologists, and how our work can benefit educators, researchers, and

children. I want to thank all of the volunteers in each of our committees for giving your time and expertise to benefit members of the Division and beyond.

As we continue to cope with a difficult landscape for researchers, I want to encourage you all to stay engaged with the division and look for opportunities to educate the public about the great work you are doing. I hope to see many of you in Washington, D.C. in August.



Editor's Corner, by Elise C. Allen

I am thrilled to share the first installment of our NEP Research Showcase in this issue. Our current piece highlights how pre-service teachers of color can be better supported in the current educational and legal landscape by a team of researchers from University of Tennessee – Knoxville and Indiana University (Bradley et al., 2026).

Importantly, this work features rigorous research practices, meaningful theoretical contributions, as well as immediate implications for future research and policymakers. Moreover, it clearly addresses the goal of identifying “educational impacts in the real world,” in alignment with Dr. Urdan’s goal to let others know what we do and why it matters.

I am hopeful that this new section of our newsletter will offer timely insights than may inform our members’ own research and engagement with key policymakers and stakeholders within the present issue and beyond. I enthusiastically encourage you to read our inaugural piece and to consider submitting your own work for an upcoming issue!



Elise C. Allen, PhD

Research Showcase

Supporting Pre-Service Teachers of Color in the Age of Divisive Concepts Laws

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A diverse teaching workforce is vital for inclusive schools and student empowerment, yet recent legislative changes threaten this critical goal, particularly impacting pre-service teachers of color (pTOCs). Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives are instrumental in recruiting and supporting students of color, who often experience marginalization in teacher licensure programs. However, many states have recently passed divisive concepts laws (DCLs) that restrict discussions of race, gender, and systemic inequity and limit DEI efforts in training, hiring, and admissions (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2024). Contributing to emerging research on DCLs' effects in teacher preparation programs and framed by Self-Determination Theory, our study examined how DCLs impact basic psychological needs - autonomy (choice), competence (confidence), and relatedness (belonging) - that are essential for intrinsic motivation and commitment to the profession (Niemic & Ryan, 2009).

In our work, we interviewed seven students of color enrolled in a teacher licensure program at a predominantly white institution located in the Southeast region of the U.S. with active DCLs. Across two, one-hour individual interview sessions, we explored how DCLs shape students' experiences of autonomy, belonging, confidence, and motivation in their teacher licensure program. We then invited students to provide feedback on our initial interpretations of interview data to ensure accuracy on these sensitive topics (i.e., member-checking).

Results and Emergent Themes

From these interviews, our team identified eight interrelated themes demonstrating how DCLs impact psychological needs support, motivation, and commitment to teaching for pre-service teachers of color (pTOCs). Five themes directly addressed psychological needs:

1. *Exacerbated Isolation (Relatedness)*: pTOCs felt intensified feelings of isolation and being the 'only person of color,' as some universities reduced DEI support. Leah, a Salvadoran American student shared, "Being in a space where I don't see much of me or diversity can already be a little jarring. Seeing this type of legislation...I think that it gives [the university] more fuel to be that way."
2. *Climate of Uncertainty (Autonomy)*: pTOCs reported concerns about what they could and could not teach or say in the classroom. Rae, a Korean American student, shared, "I feel like I wouldn't know where I can, who I can, where I can talk, and how much I can talk about [gender]."
3. *Loss of Voice and Power (Autonomy)*: pTOCs shared concerns about the historical erasure of important cultural narratives. When asked about how DCLs might shape her teaching, Leah stated, "I'm afraid that what I believe could get sanitized because of the way that this legislation just doesn't want us to talk about [diversity]."
4. *Diverse Learner Support Concerns (Competence)*: pTOCs questioned how to best support diverse groups of learners in this climate. Sam, a Black student shared, "It makes me think there are certain things that are off-limits...I can't fully understand my students unless I take into account their gender and race."
5. *Compliance Concerns (Competence)*: pTOCs reported tension between legal compliance versus meeting students' needs. Chase, an African American student, called for more explicit instruction on DCL policies, noting, "None of my classes have had conversations about the legislation, but I feel like we all know what's going on... What does this look like for teacher educators?"

Regarding the influence of DCLs on motivation and commitment to teaching, we identified three major themes:

1. *Moral and Legal Tensions*: Students described tension between their personal values and legislation compliance, leading to self-censorship. Lavendar, a Latina student, explained, "I would like to encourage diversity. In light of the DEI legislation, it feels like it makes being that type of educator really hard."
2. *Career Uncertainty*: Students questioned the decision to enter the teaching profession at such an uncertain time or considered leaving. Dani, a Latino and queer student questioned, "Do I leave the state to preserve myself or do I stay for the children that need somebody?"

3. *Motivation as a Form of Resistance*: Students viewed their commitment to teaching as an act of resistance that is grounded in their own experiences with educational inequity. DCLs further strengthen their resolve to persist despite uncertainty. Leah shared, “Overall, I think the legislation sort of lights a fire under me or other people. We gotta get in there. If we don’t, then we’re doing exactly what some people would want.”

Implications and Recommendations

Based on our findings, we propose four key recommendations for educational researchers and policy leaders. First, institutions should evaluate how these laws affect teacher recruitment and retention, especially for students of color, as our findings demonstrate DCLs shape institutional climate and influence their decisions to persist in the profession. Second, educational leaders must provide clear guidance on navigating DCLs, including coursework and training that corrects common misconceptions and reduces reliance on informal or fear-driven interpretations.

Third, institutions should clarify teachers’ legal rights and protections to reduce overcompliance and alleviate professional burdens, ideally integrating this information into preparation programs. Fourth, institutions must remain vigilant in supporting pTOCs as DCLs continue to evolve, providing mental health resources and career guidance to sustain their motivation.

While divisive concepts laws aim to regulate classroom content, their implications extend far beyond instruction by shaping who feels able to enter the profession, who feels supported once there, and whose voices are sustained or silenced along the way. Addressing these dynamics is key to building a diverse, motivated, and resilient teaching workforce. Importantly, our findings not only help us consider how to support preservice teachers of color in restrictive sociopolitical contexts but also highlight the harmful nature of these laws and point to the need for legislative reform.

References

- Chronicle of Higher Education. (2024, November 22). *DEI legislation tracker: Explore where college diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts are under attack*. Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/article/here-are-the-states-where-lawmakers-are-seeking-to-ban-colleges-dei-efforts?bc_nonce=r2vke92vw19ujuq4ileln&cid=reg_wall_signup&sra=true
- Niemiec, C. P., & Ryan, R. M. (2009). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the classroom: Applying self-determination theory to educational practice. *Theory and Research in Education*, 7(2), 133-144.

Call for Proposals: Division 15 Early Career Research Grants

Proposal Deadline: June 1, 2026 (11:59 PM) Applicant Local Time

Division 15 is pleased to invite proposals for its 2026 Early Career Research Grants! These grants are intended for early career professionals or researchers working in educational psychology who are members of our division. The award provides financial support for educational psychologists in the early phase of their careers as they undertake valuable research activities.

Division 15 has \$30,000 available to fund multiple grants ranging from \$1,000–\$10,000, with funding decisions based on the quality, potential impact, and overall number of submissions.

Those with questions may email Committee Co-Chairs [Ji Hong](#) and [Martin Jones](#).



[Read the full call here.](#)

Save The Date for Our Biggest Social Event of the Year!

Friday, August 7th | 6:00 PM Eastern Time | Planet Word Museum | Washington, D.C.



We're so excited for the 2026 APA Convention in Washington, D.C. this August! This year, Division 15 has decided to host one large social event rather than two smaller ones, allowing us to concentrate resources into a tremendously special night. We hope you'll join us for fun, drinks, and terrific food (enough food for a full meal is planned for each attendee—come hungry!).

New Division 15 Practice Briefs

Briefs are curated to provide evidence-based guidance for educators, principals, superintendents, and other education stakeholders. Educational psychologists can address topics requested by the National Education Association (NEA) as well as other timely issues that arise. If you have any suggestions for topics to be addressed in future briefs, please contact Alysia Roehrig at aroehrig@fsu.edu.

STRATEGIES TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS IN EDUCATORS


Suggested Audience: K-12 School Leaders and Consultants

Authors: Jerica Knox, PhD; Tamara K. Lawson, PhD; & Mayra Gaona, PhD

This brief outlines how school and district leaders can use educational psychology practices to develop more effective programming and mental health supports for educators.

WHAT IS SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS?

Secondary traumatic stress is the emotional, cognitive, and physical reactions that arise from learning about or witnessing the traumatic experiences of others.¹ Secondary traumatic stress is common in helping professions where people routinely engage with others' adversity and distress.² Common symptoms include intrusive thoughts or images, hypervigilance or emotional numbing, difficulty concentrating or sleeping, irritability, and avoidance of reminders related to others' trauma.¹



WHY ADDRESS SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS IN SCHOOLS?

1. Educators regularly support students experiencing adversity and trauma, placing them at elevated risk for emotional exhaustion and secondary traumatic stress.^{3,4}
2. High levels of secondary traumatic stress reduce instructional effectiveness, impair decision-making, and make it harder to maintain supportive classroom environments.⁴
3. Secondary traumatic stress contributes to educator turnover, disrupting stability, weakening school climate, and limiting access to experienced teachers.^{3,4}
4. Without intentional support, secondary traumatic stress widens existing inequities, with racially minoritized educators disproportionately affected by trauma exposure.⁵

WHICH EDUCATORS ARE MOST AT-RISK FOR SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS?

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic experiences that occur before the age of 18. ACEs shape stress vulnerability later in life. Educators fall into distinct ACEs profiles, reflecting different patterns of childhood adversity.
- High exposure to ACEs is linked to greater secondary traumatic stress in educators, highlighting the need for supports that promote emotional safety and reduce re-traumatization.
- Racially minoritized educators are disproportionately represented in higher adversity profiles, increasing vulnerability to secondary traumatic stress. This calls for practices that address systemic barriers and affirm minoritized identities.

Strategies to Prevent & Address Secondary Traumatic Stress in Educators

By Jerica Knox, PhD, Tamara K. Lawson, PhD, and Mayra Gaona, PhD

Educators often support students facing adversity and trauma, placing them at risk for secondary traumatic stress (STS)—emotional, cognitive, and physical responses to others' trauma. STS can impact well-being, effectiveness, and staff retention. This brief emphasizes addressing STS through trauma-informed, culturally responsive approaches, including supportive work environments, opportunities for stress processing, and practical tools for managing stress. It also highlights systemic inequities that may increase risk among racially minoritized educators. Prioritizing educator well-being helps strengthen resilience and sustain supportive learning environments.

[Read the full brief here.](#)

PROMOTING TEACHER WELL-BEING: AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH

Suggested Audience: Teachers and School Leaders

Authors: Amanda Wright Reschke, Ed.D. & Michele Gregoire Gill, Ph.D.

This practice brief addresses how educational psychology can inform practical strategies for promoting teacher well-being.

TEACHER WELL-BEING IS A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF A SUCCESSFUL EDUCATION SYSTEM

Chronic teacher stress and burnout negatively impact teachers' physical, mental, and emotional well-being and are associated with several negative consequences for teachers, students, and schools such as:^{1,2}

- Lower self-efficacy
- Decreased job satisfaction
- Emotional exhaustion
- Clinical depression
- Fatigue
- Reduced immunity
- Cognitive aging
- Multiple cancers
- Decreased student motivation, engagement, and achievement
- Reduced productivity
- Higher rates of absenteeism and turnover

Research shows that low-cost, low-entry practices can make a significant difference in teachers' lives.³ The purpose of this brief is to review these approaches at two systemic levels—the teacher level and the school level, and provide practical, low-cost ways to promote teacher well-being at both levels.

THE IMPACT OF MINDFULNESS INTERVENTIONS ON TEACHER WELL-BEING

- Mindfulness practices have been consistently found to reduce stress, positively impact teacher wellness, promote greater levels of well-being, and are associated with reduced levels of stress and burnout.⁴
- A meta-analysis of 44 intervention studies to promote K-12 teacher well-being found that only mindfulness interventions were significant in reducing teacher stress and improving well-being.⁵
- Mindfulness interventions consistently show positive effects on teacher well-being.⁶
- Teachers who participate in mindfulness training experience reduced stress, improved teacher-student relationships, and decreased burnout.⁹

TEACHER BURNOUT STATISTICS

- K-12 employees are the most burnt out workers in the U.S. with 52% of teachers reporting feeling burned out "always" or "very often," outpacing all other industries nationally by nearly 20%.⁷
- Results from a 2022 NEA survey showed that as many as 90% of teachers consider burnout a serious issue.⁸
- More than half of female teachers report experiencing burnout compared to 44% of male teachers, although burn out among male teachers outpaces male workers in all other industries by 35%.¹⁰



SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS TO PROMOTE WELL-BEING

Teachers can consider participating in intentional mindfulness practices to reduce stress and improve personal well-being, and advocate for school policies that allow for consistent breaks throughout the day.¹¹

- Establishing a regular meditation practice, even just 10 minutes per day, improves well-being.¹²
- Other beneficial mindful practices include walking in nature, breath work, or lying down and doing a body scan meditation.²²
- Some wellness apps offer free subscriptions for educators to provide access to dozens of mindfulness exercises and additional resources to support wellbeing. Teachers should consider using free online resources to support their wellness.

Promoting Teacher Well-Being: An Ecological Approach

By Amanda Wright Reschke, EdD & Michele Gregoire Gill, PhD

Teachers in the U.S. are experiencing unprecedented levels of burnout and stress. Public schools are constrained by state and local accountability systems, but this does not mean that teachers have no autonomy or control. Research shows that low-cost, low-entry practices can make a significant difference in improving teachers' well-being. The purpose of this brief is to provide an ecological approach to ameliorating teacher burnout by addressing this issue at two systemic levels—the teacher level and the school level. In this brief, we provide research-driven, practical recommendations applicable to teachers and school leaders that have the power to positively impact teacher well-being.

[Read the full brief here.](#)

Becoming a Student of Educational Psychology in a Digitally Saturated, Inequitable World

*By Cedric Drake, MA; Doctoral Candidate, Ed.D.
The Chicago School of Professional Psychology*

Students entering educational psychology today are being prepared for a field that differs markedly from the contexts in which many foundational theories were developed. While classic frameworks continue to anchor the discipline, contemporary learning environments are increasingly digital, socially complex, and shaped by persistent inequities. For those of us training within APA Division 15's intellectual tradition, this reality raises pressing questions about how educational psychology can continue to inform research, policy, and practice with both rigor and relevance.



Cedric Drake, MA

My own preparation in educational psychology has been shaped by action research, Project-Based Learning (PBL), and student-centered inquiry—approaches that align closely with Division 15's emphasis on connecting theory to authentic educational contexts. These experiences suggest that current challenges in education require more than applying existing theories – they call for their systematic extension. Such theories must now account for hybrid instructional models, culturally and linguistically diverse learners, and the pervasive role of technology in shaping engagement, access, and opportunity.

From a research standpoint, action research offers one pathway for strengthening the connection between theory and contemporary classrooms. If educational psychology is to remain empirically grounded while responsive to real-world complexity, it must draw from methods that capture learning as it unfolds. By embedding inquiry within instructional contexts, action research generates context-sensitive evidence that complement more traditional research designs. This methodological pluralism supports Division 15's mission and enhances the field's ability to address questions about engagement, equity, and instructional effectiveness that are also becoming increasingly central to educational policy debates. Importantly, action research positions educators not merely as consumers of research but as contributors to the knowledge base, helping bridge the long-standing divide between research and practice.

From a policy perspective, experiences with Project-Based Learning also illuminate where existing engagement and motivation frameworks may require elaboration. Traditional



models have often emphasized individual cognition, goal orientation, and achievement outcomes. PBL, meanwhile, focuses more pointedly on relevance, collaboration, and authentic problem-solving. This shift is critical, particularly in today's educational and political landscape, where students are navigating social uncertainty, public health concerns, and intensified debates about equity and inclusion. Students often demonstrate sustained engagement when learning connects to real-world issues or community concerns that feel consequential. Engagement frameworks, therefore, may need to better account for how context, purpose, and social interaction shape motivation—not in place of cognitive processes, but alongside them.

Equity further demands attention at both theoretical and policy levels. Division 15 has articulated clear commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and contemporary classrooms make evident why these commitments must remain central. Students' experiences of learning are shaped by race, language, disability, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and other intersecting dimensions of identity, as well as by inequitable access to digital resources and supportive environments. Educational psychology need not abandon its foundational theories to address these realities. Rather, it can extend them — for example, by integrating sociocultural and ecological perspectives more explicitly into models of cognition and motivation so that systemic inequities are treated as fundamental explanatory factors rather than peripheral variables. Such theoretical

extensions strengthen the field's ability to inform instructional, institutional, and policy-level decision-making.

To be clear, extending theory does not imply that current models are deficient. Many scholars within Division 15 are already integrating culturally responsive pedagogy, emotional regulation, and digital engagement, and other key concepts into established literatures. The task ahead is to deepen and better coordinate these efforts so that theory more fully reflects contemporary learning ecologies. Division 15's education and practice briefs, including those focused on culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy, for example, demonstrate how research can inform practice in ways that are both rigorous and accessible. Building on these efforts ensures that theory not only remains responsive but becomes increasingly attuned to the realities shaping students' lives.

Finally, from both policy and practice perspectives, the future of educational psychology depends on its willingness to incorporate practitioner knowledge and student perspectives into theory development. Listening to those directly involved in learning environments enhances the field's ability to inform educational reform, teacher preparation, and equitable instructional design. Practitioner insights, when examined systematically, should be understood as a source of theoretical pressure revealing where existing models succeed and where refinement is needed.

As an emerging educational psychologist, I view my role as contributing to Division 15's mission by advancing research that is theoretically grounded, methodologically diverse, and responsive to contemporary educational challenges. Preparing the next generation of scholars requires not only preserving the field's intellectual legacy but also ensuring its continued relevance in a rapidly changing educational landscape.

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes ***Fall Retreat, 2025 (Digital)***

- Budget reviewed and fund reinvestment was slated for end of 2025
- Committee budget requests were reviewed and approved with minor revisions
- Funding for lost grant funding extended to include projects that may no longer have relevant funding avenues available
- Committee members needed for Membership Committee, Public Outreach Committee (previously Webinar Committee)
- New Editor needed for *Psych Today* blog
- Budget for 2026 approved

[Find the full minutes here.](#)

Graduate Students: Apply for the 2026 Claire Ellen Weinstein Graduate Student Seminar!

APA Division 15 invites doctoral students who are Division 15 members to apply to the Claire Ellen Weinstein Annual Graduate Student Seminar, held August 4th and 5th in-person before the 2026 APA Annual Convention in Washington, DC.

What do seminar attendees do? How long is the seminar? Students will hear from experts in education and psychology about developing a program of research, fostering productive collaborative relationships, establishing effective and personalized working habits and strategies, conducting translational and interdisciplinary research, and pursuing job opportunities within and beyond academia. Students will also participate in 1-on-1 mentoring with an established scholar for individualized feedback on their research as well as on their professional identity. Importantly, students will have multiple opportunities to network with other graduate students, junior and senior scholars, and other potential colleagues.

Accepted students will be reimbursed for expenses related to seminar and conference attendance, up to \$2,000. If financial considerations are a factor in your decision to apply, please reach out to a member of the committee. Participants are expected to attend all Graduate Seminar-related Division 15 events on August 4th and 5th, 2026.

Who is eligible to apply to the seminar? Applicants must be full-time doctoral students who have passed their comprehensive exam (or their university's equivalent). Students from institutions large and small and from all domains relevant to educational psychology are encouraged to apply, including domains not commonly represented in the field of educational psychology (e.g., Educational and Developmental Psychology, Special Education, School Psychology, STEM Education, Medical Education, Early Childhood Education). Applicants must be members or student affiliates of Division 15 at the time of the convention. Please note that we welcome and encourage *all* graduate students meeting the above-mentioned eligibility criteria to apply, even if you have not previously been involved in APA Division 15.

The application deadline is 5pm PST on Friday, April 10th, 2026. You can find the application [HERE](#).

Advisor's Recommendation: Please note, we are not requiring advisors/mentors to write letters of recommendation. However, please ask your advisor/mentor to complete the following form to certify their support for your participation, linked [HERE](#).

Evaluation Criteria: Selections will be based on the quality of the submitted work, demonstrated need for additional mentorship, readiness for the seminar, and fit with the mission of Division 15. The Graduate Student Affairs Committee will use these criteria to select a group with diverse and complementary research interests and experiences for participation. Decisions will be announced by early May 2026.

Incomplete applications will not be considered. All submitted documents must reflect original work done by the applicant and should conform to ethical guidelines for research and reporting set forth by APA.

One Tip Is Back!

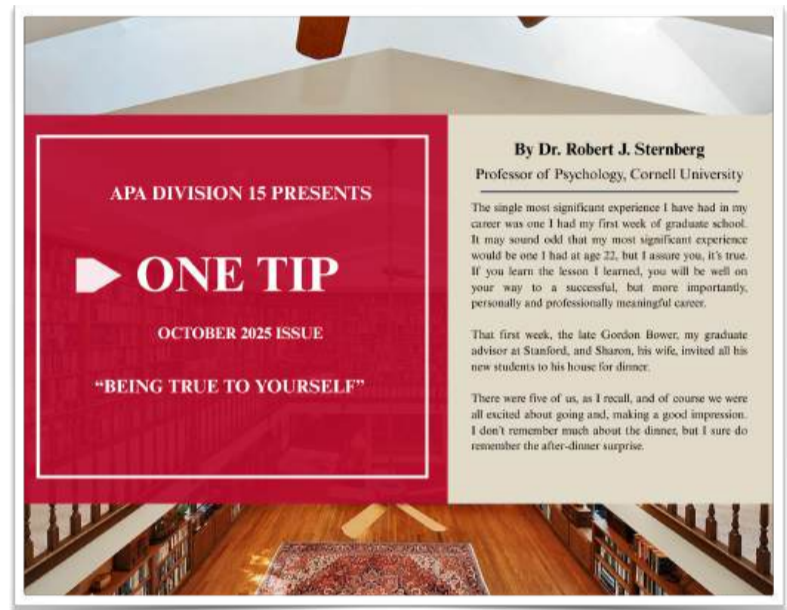
Editor: Serena Shim | Associate Editor: Linda Sultana

One Tip is a short essay in which distinguished scholars are invited to share their stories and insights with junior researchers. If you would like to share tips through this personal, informal, and often humorous essay, please contact Editor Serena Shim at sshim@bsu.edu.

Dr. Robert J. Sternberg "Being True to Yourself"

Dr. Sternberg reflects on a pivotal moment from his first week of grad school—a lesson in authenticity. His advice to early-career scholars is clear: resist the urge to follow the crowd and instead pursue personally meaningful work that can make a real difference.

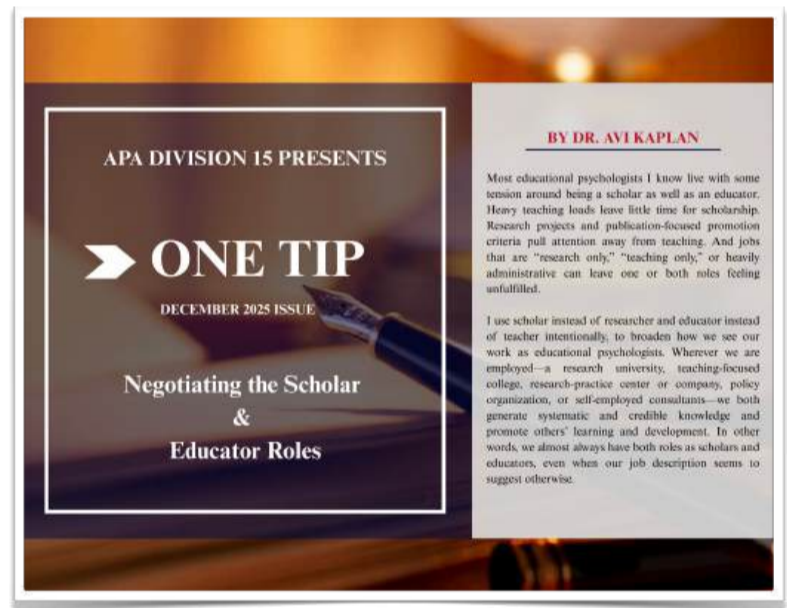
[Read this tip here.](#)



Dr. Avi Kaplan "Negotiating the Scholar & Educator Roles"

Dr. Kaplan explores the tension many educational psychologists face as they navigate dual roles as scholars and educators. Drawing from an early career moment, he shows how reframing these responsibilities as mutually enriching (not competing) can support deeper professional growth.

[Read this tip here.](#)



Dr. Theresa A. Thorkildsen "Pithy Phrases Compel Action!"

Dr. Thorkildsen explores how "pithy phrases" help scholars distill complex goals into memorable guiding principles. Drawing on her career as a researcher, educator, and former Division 15 President, she shows how concise phrases can guide direction, sustain motivation, and turn ambitions into daily habits that support long-term impact.

[Read this tip here.](#)

