

Archived Information

American Psychological Association (APA)

The American Psychological Association: Increasing Public Understanding of Science

The American Psychological Association (APA) is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world's largest association of psychologists. APA's membership includes 155,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants, and students. Through its divisions in 53 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 59 state, territorial, and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance psychology as a science, as a profession, and as a means of promoting health, education, and human welfare.

Summary and Purpose: APA is committed to sharing the science of psychology to the broadest audiences. Currently, APA is involved in two specific initiatives that seek to engage the public at large as well as students interested in psychology.

Accomplishments: APA is active in promoting the importance of science learning to middle and high school students through Exploring Behavior Week, an outreach program on psychological science that seeks to transmit the excitement of doing research as a means of asking and answering questions about human behavior. With the help of outreach materials, graduate students and faculty talk to middle and high school students about what psychology is, who psychologists are, where psychologists work, and how psychological scientists ask questions about human behavior. More information about Exploring Behavior Week is available on the APA Web site: http://www.apa.org/science/ebw_brochure.html.

APA is also involved in the Decade of Behavior, a multidisciplinary initiative that focuses the talents, energy, and creativity of the behavioral and social sciences on meeting many of society's most significant challenges. These include improving education and health care; enhancing safety in homes and communities; actively addressing the needs of an aging population; and helping to curb drug abuse, crime, high risk behaviors, poverty, racism, and cynicism towards government. The Decade sponsors lectures for the public as well as congressional briefings to communicate behavioral and social science findings to policymakers.

The Decade of Behavior is also publishing a series of educational booklets for the public and students that highlight advances in behavioral and social sciences research. This newest publication, *Behavior Matters: How Research Improves Our Lives*, demonstrates how behavioral research has led to innovations in health, safety, education, and social interactions. *Behavior Matters* is an excellent resource to reach students as well as the general public. This booklet, which focuses on psychological research, is the first of a series of booklets that will highlight examples from various disciplines. More information on the Decade of Behavior and the Behavior Matters booklets can be found at: <http://www.decadeofbehavior.org/index.html>

Plans for the next 12 Months: In the coming year, APA will continue its efforts to educate the public at large, as well as students and teachers, about the contributions that psychological science has made to the public.

APA Past President Philip G. Zimbardo, Ph.D., is also compiling a Compendium of Psychology that will serve as an educational resource for the public on how advances in psychological research have helped people live longer, find health and happiness, learn better, save money and get along with others.