

H A N D B O O K

for

Local Sections of the American Association of Physics Teachers

PREAMBLE

The Objectives of the American Association of Physics Teachers are the advancement of the teaching of physics and the furtherance of the appreciation of physics in our culture. Local sections represent a vital ex-tension of the fulfillment of AAPT objectives at regional and local levels. This document is provided by AAPT to officers of local sections to assist them in furthering their relationships with AAPT, with other local sections and with the membership of their local section.

INTRODUCTION

Local sections vary considerably in their many aspects. All, however, are recognized by AAPT through the joint use of the name American Association of Physics Teachers, through the provision that the Council of AAPT shall have Section Representatives determined by local sections and these representatives shall participate in the governance and constitutionally mandated activities of AAPT, and through pursuit of the common objectives.

RELATIONSHIPS OF LOCAL SECTIONS TO AAPT

Sections of AAPT are recognized formally by the Council of AAPT through the Secretary of AAPT. Recognized local sections shall have boundaries clearly defined in appropriate documents. Members of AAPT are assigned to sections on the basis of the member's geographical location with respect to section boundaries. Such assignment does not imply membership in the local section. Moreover, local sections can and do have as members both those who are members and some who are not members of national AAPT. And, sections may have other special memberships not available through AAPT. For example, although "assigned" to a specific local section on the basis of address, an AAPT member may belong to two or more local sections by meeting the several local sections' requirements for membership. In local membership matters and other respects local sections retain or hold considerable independence and autonomy with respect to AAPT.

There are some special, responsible relationships with AAPT which local sections are generally recognized as having. Among these are participation in AAPT funding or membership drives, noting to members the availability of AAPT publications, selection of section liaison representative to national committees such as the Committee on Physics in Two-Year Colleges and the Committee on Physics in Pre-College Education, and responses to AAPT surveys and studies. Of course the local section is encouraged to participate in the selection of local students and teachers for AAPT recognition through awards, certificates and other special recognitions which AAPT offers. Many local sections actively support and assist other organizations affiliated with AAPT such as the Society of Physics Students and Sigma Pi Sigma.

The most important activity of the local section that establishes clearly its role in AAPT governance is the selection of the Section Representative. The representative is a "key" officer of the section and must be an able and willing participant in the AAPT Council and AAPT Section Representatives Committee. This requires attendance at the annual Winter AAPT Meeting in late January and at the Summer AAPT Meeting in June, if possible. The representative is a voting member of both the Council and Committee and must, therefore, prepare for active participation in AAPT affairs. It is recommended that the local section designate its Section Representative for a term of three or four years. Of course a representative may notify the AAPT Secretary of pending absence from a national meeting and have someone else from the local section attend the meeting in his/her place. For those Section Representatives who require it, there is a limited amount of travel money, paid as a percentage of actual expense, available from AAPT to attend the annual meeting in late January each year. The Section Representative should provide regular reports to the local section and serve as a special liaison between AAPT and the local section.

LOCAL SECTION CHARACTERISTICS

Sections of AAPT vary greatly in many respects, but each should manage to come together regularly. Geographically some sections must attract their membership from large, multi-state areas of the western part of the nation while others must attract their membership from a single, urban county. Most sections, however, comprise the entirety of one state or territory. Section officers should give much consideration to the characteristics within the section when planning meetings so as to attract members from the entire region. Of special concern should be regular communication with contiguous local sections regarding meeting times and locations.

The mailing lists of sections are usually much larger than the number of active section members in any year. There are section participants who are not AAPT members and vice versa because membership in one does not automatically include the other. In any event, participation in local section activities is not restricted by local sections to members only. Each section should establish an up-to-date membership list and mailing list to be passed from one set of officers to the next. Some sections have non-profit mailing permits.

Section officers should regularly review the local section's constitution and by-laws. The constitutions provide for continuity of section operations, leadership, membership participation, interaction with AAPT, transfer of assets and local matters. In general, the constitution must not be in conflict with the AAPT constitution. A copy of revised constitutions should be made available to the AAPT Executive Office. Generally, the local section secretary should be made responsible for annually reviewing the section constitution and for reporting suggested amendments to the membership.

Every local section should provide that the duties of their officers be carried out in a complete and timely manner through constitutional provision and encouragement. Continuity of leadership and orderly transfer of authority should be an integral part of the section constitution. It is particularly recommended that the Section Representative be recognized as an officer of the section with special reporting responsibilities to the section. At least one section office, perhaps

the secretary, should have a term spanning several years to provide some continuity of records of past activities. Sections should plan to develop a structure that allows them to take on a variety of public activities including interactions with state and local agencies of government.

LOCAL SECTION ACTIVITIES

Meetings will be the central rallying point for active sections. Members and guests come to meetings to contribute and to learn something of value to them as physicists and physics teachers. This may be both in the program and the chance to exchange ideas. Meetings must offer things of diverse interest to the section members and must include a forum for exchange of ideas.

Good meetings do not necessarily imply that a few people give worthwhile things. A large segment of the section membership needs to be involved by contributing papers or serving on a panel, or participating in work-shops or other activities. To get participation requires an aggressive program chairman who will give considerable encouragement in the form of mailings and telephone calls.

Some ideas and special functions which have been used successfully by AAPT sections are:

1. Schedule meetings in advance (some sections have their meetings scheduled two and three years in advance). Meeting dates and places should be published regularly in the ANNOUNCER, in TPT, and in PHYSICS TODAY.
2. Arrange the meeting calendar for the convenience of a maximum number of participants.
3. Make the meeting long enough to avoid rushing. Leave room in the program for informal discussion. Many times the ideas ex-changed over a meal or a cup of coffee are the most fruitful. It is a good idea to have at least one social function during the meeting.
4. Actively solicit papers from all segments within the section boundaries. It is impossible to over advertise. Mailing lists of all AAPT members within section boundaries are available from the AAPT Executive Office. The more people you make aware of the programs, the better the participation should be.
5. Arrange for an occasional tutorial paper. Often times it is possible to get experts to give papers of current interest at very little expense.
6. Consider sponsoring workshops at all levels. The National office has materials for some very interesting workshops.
7. Provide interesting programs for spouses, especially where there is a two-day meeting. If both people enjoy the meetings, involvement will improve.
8. At least a synopsis of the program should be in the hands of the members in advance of

the meeting. Special highlights should be emphasized to attract the membership to come.

9. Consider holding meetings, either regularly or occasionally, with other organizations such as the appropriate state Academy of Science. Sometimes local sections meet jointly.
10. Consider inviting AAPT officers to section meetings. AAPT has some funds for this kind of travel so that the services of these leaders can frequently be obtained without cost to the sections.
11. Consider inviting book publishers and scientific companies to exhibit at meetings. Some sections have allowed exhibitors to exhibit without cost with good success.
12. When a new program effort is successful, share it with other sections.

INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

In general the relationship between AAPT sections and institutions within the section's boundaries should be the same as that institution's relationship with any other teaching association. If the section is strongly supported by its members the institutions will recognize the sections as important contributors to physics instruction at their institutions. Most sections hold their meetings on junior college, college or university campuses. This gives these institutions a chance to contribute to the health of the sections while gaining valuable publicity and recognition.

Some institutions have found that in addition to providing both space and manpower they can assist the sections by financially supporting the meetings. This has involved paying mailing costs for the meetings, travel, honorariums for invited speakers and small incidental expenses. For example, if a physics department has funds for one invited speaker for the academic year they can have the invited speaker as a part of the holding of a program for the local section of AAPT.

LOCAL SECTION GOVERNANCE

Requirements:

The AAPT Constitution provides for authorization and recognition of sections. In addition, the section boundaries must be defined and no new section may be formed to include an area of an existing section without release of such territory. Moreover, membership is not restricted to one section except that voting for Section Representative by a member of more than one section is restricted to one section only.

All section meetings shall be open to any member of the AAPT.

Authorization for establishment of a section may be withdrawn by AAPT for cause.

Section membership should include anyone who can further the objectives of the section.

This would include teachers and administrators in universities, colleges, two-year colleges and high schools. Professional memberships among manufacturers, publishers and the professions are encouraged.

Officers:

Officers are probably the most important component of an active section. Sections usually point to leadership as the most important factor in their success. A three-person advancing officer "chain" like that of AAPT is very successful. Two-person advancing chains work well. The advancing chain has the advantages of apprenticeship and continuity. The officers have the advantage of assisting and observing their predecessors, thus knowing what is coming and how it has been done instead of having duties without warning.

Most sections will have one officer (usually the Secretary-Treasurer) serve for an extended period of time. This provides for continuity and good record keeping.

Each active section that is recognized by AAPT is entitled to designate a Section Representative. On re-election the Section Representative becomes a voting member of the National AAPT Council, the governing body of the AAPT. This individual should be carefully selected (appointed or elected) for he/she is expected to go to all AAPT National Meetings and be an active participant in AAPT governance. In particular this individual should promote his/her section at the national level and promote AAPT at the section level.

It is appropriate to quote goal number three from the AAPT GOALS AND ROLES TASK FORCE OF 1975-76: "For all sections to have officers who make certain that the duties of their offices are carried out in a complete and timely manner, including: maintaining effective communications with their members and other interested persons in their region, with the Executive Office, and with officers of other sections as may be appropriate: assuring active section representation at the annual Winter and Summer Meetings: and ensuring that succeeding sets of section officers are elected on the basis of willingness and ability to perform."

Finances:

Generally, sections finance their activities through membership dues and registration fees at section meetings. Most sections have found it very helpful to maintain a bank account for incidental costs that arise such as paying honorariums or expenses of invited speakers. Some unallocated funds will also give a section a lot of flexibility to initiate special projects which cannot be done otherwise. Sections have been able to accumulate funds since the host institutions for their meetings often pay most of the meeting expenses. Sections do not regularly meet in rented space as in hotels or convention centers. Section budgets are intentionally kept small and worthy projects are preferred to an accumulation of funds.

The financial status of the section should be reported at every meeting. Records should be maintained in good order and a simple audit conducted periodically - particularly if the treasurer's responsibility is transferred regularly. The local section is solely responsible,

through its officers, for its assets, debts and contracts.

SPECIAL ENCOURAGEMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

A positive way in which the local sections can encourage broader member participation with AAPT is to provide sample AAPT publications at its meetings. Most effective of these is the ANNOUNCER. Extra copies of re-cent issues are usually available on request from the AAPT Executive Office (allow sufficient time). Space is available in the ANNOUNCER for Section News. Visits by AAPT officers also provide special emphasis on the many facets of AAPT activities.

Every section should give recognition in some way to the aims or philosophy of the section and AAPT. Such information, usually clearly stated in written constitutions, is enhanced when woven into the program of the section meetings. This recognition can often be achieved through guest speakers under AAPT sponsorship making presentations for a more general audience. Of course a speakers' list could also be developed and made available to schools or groups in the area. Public recognition of student and teacher excellence in science - particularly physics - is also an excellent way to make known the aims of AAPT.