

# APA National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula

<http://www.apa.org/ed/natlstandards.html>

## I. METHODS DOMAIN

### **Standard Area IA: Introduction and Research Methods**

**CONTENT STANDARD IA-1:** Contemporary perspectives used by psychologists to understand behavior and mental processes in context. Students are able to:

IA-1.1 Describe and compare the biological, behavioral, cognitive, socio-cultural, humanistic, and psychodynamic perspectives

**CONTENT STANDARD IA-2:** Major subfields and career opportunities that comprise psychology. Students are able to:

IA-2.1 List and explain the major subfields of psychology.

**CONTENT STANDARD IA-3:** Research strategies used by psychologists to explore behavior and mental processes. Students are able to:

IA-3.1 Describe the elements of an experiment.

IA-3.2 Explain the importance of sampling and random assignment in psychological research.

IA-3.3 Describe and compare quantitative and qualitative research strategies.

**CONTENT STANDARD IA-4:** Purposes and basic concepts of statistics. Students are able to:

IA-4.1 Define descriptive statistics and explain how they are used by behavioral scientists.

IA-4.2 Explain and describe measures of central tendency and variability.

IA-4.3 Describe the concept of correlation and explain how it is used in psychology.

IA-4.4 Recognize how inferential statistics are used in psychological research.

**CONTENT STANDARD IA-5:** Ethical issues in research with human and other animals that are important to psychologists. Students are able to:

IA-5.1 Identify ethical issues in psychological research.

**CONTENT STANDARD IA-6:** Development of psychology as an empirical science  
Students are able to:

IA-6.1 Discuss psychology's roots in philosophy and natural science.

IA-6.2 Describe the emergence of experimental psychology.

IA-6.3 Recognize the diversity of psychological theories in the 20th and 21st centuries.

IA-6.4 Describe psychology's increasing inclusiveness of diverse interests and constituents.

## **II. BIOPSYCHOLOGICAL DOMAIN**

### **Standard Area IIA: Biological Bases of Behavior**

#### **CONTENT STANDARD IIA-1: Structure and function of the neuron**

Students are able to:

- IIA-1.1 Identify the neuron as the basis for neural communication.
- IIA-1.2 Describe how information is transmitted and integrated in the nervous system.
- IIA-1.3 Analyze how the process of neurotransmission can be modified by heredity and environment.

#### **CONTENT STANDARD IIA-2: Organization of the nervous system**

Students are able to:

- IIA-2.1 Classify the major divisions and subdivisions of the nervous system.
- IIA-2.2 Differentiate the functions of the various subdivisions of the nervous system.

#### **CONTENT STANDARD IIA-3: Hierarchical organization of the structure and function of the brain.** Students are able to:

- IIA-3.1 Identify the structure and function of the major regions of the brain.
- IIA-3.2 Recognize that specific functions are centered in specific lobes of the cerebral cortex.
- IIA-3.3 Describe lateralization of brain functions

#### **CONTENT STANDARD IIA-4: Technologies and clinical methods for studying the brain.** Students are able to:

- IIA-4.1 Explain how research and technology have provided methods to analyze brain behavior and disease.

#### **CONTENT STANDARD IIA-5: Structure and function of the endocrine system.**

Students are able to:

- IIA-5.1 Describe how the endocrine glands are linked to the nervous system.

#### **CONTENT STANDARD IIA-6: How heredity interacts with environment to influence behavior.** Students are able to:

- IIA-6.1 Assess the effects of heredity and environment on behavior.

#### **CONTENT STANDARD IIA-7: How psychological mechanisms are explained by evolution.** Students are able to:

- IIA-7.1 Explain how evolved tendencies interact with the present environment and culture to determine behavior.

### **Standard Area IIB: Sensation and Perception**

**CONTENT STANDARD IIB-1: Basic concepts explaining the capabilities and limitations of sensory processes.** Students are able to:

- IIB-1.1 Explain the concepts of threshold, adaptation, and constancy.
- IIB-1.2 Describe the operation of sensory systems.
- IIB-1.3 List forms of energy for which we do and do not have sensory receptors.
- IIB-1.4 Relate knowledge of sensory processes to applications in areas such as engineering psychology, advertising, music, architecture, and so on.

**CONTENT STANDARD IIB-2: Interaction of the person and the environment in determining perception.** Students are able to:

- IIB-2.1 Explain Gestalt concepts and principles, such as figure-ground, continuity, similarity, proximity, closure, and so on.
- IIB-2.2 Describe binocular and monocular depth cues.
- IIB-2.3 Describe the influence on perception of environmental variables, motivation, past experiences, culture, and expectations.

**CONTENT STANDARD IIB-3: Nature of attention.** Students are able:

- IIB-3.1 Explain what is meant by attention.
- IIB-3.2 Describe how attention differs for demanding versus simple tasks.

**Standard Area IIC: Motivation and Emotion**

**CONTENT STANDARD IIC-1: Motivational concepts** Students are able to:

- IIC-1.1 Apply motivational concepts to the behavior of humans and other animals.

**CONTENT STANDARD IIC-2: The role of biology and learning in motivation and emotion** Students are able to:

- IIC-2.1 Describe the interaction of internal cues and learning on basic drives.
- IIC-2.2 Describe the situational cues giving rise to anger and fear.
- IIC-2.3 Describe the situational cues and individual characteristics giving rise to curiosity and anxiety.

**CONTENT STANDARD IIC-3: Major theories of motivation.** Students are able to:

- IIC-3.1 Describe one or more theories of motivation, such as expectancy value, cognitive dissonance, arousal, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and drive reduction.

**CONTENT STANDARD IIC-4: Interaction of biological and cultural factors in emotions and motivations.** Students are able to:

- IIC-4.1 Explain how common motives and emotions develop.

**CONTENT STANDARD IIC-5: Role of values and expectancies in determining choice and strength of motivation** Students are able to:

- IIC-5.1 Use expectancy-value theory to explain their own and others' behavior.

**CONTENT STANDARD IIC-6: Physiological, affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of emotions and the interactions among these aspects.** Students are able to:

IIC-6.1 Describe theories of emotion, such as James-Lange, Cannon-Bard, or cognitive theories.

IIC-6.2 Explaining how emotions and behaviors are related

**CONTENT STANDARD IIC-7: Effects of motivation and emotion on perception, cognition, and behavior**

Students are able to:

IIC-7.1 Describe differences in perception between individuals differing in motivation.

IIC-7.2 Explain how learning, memory, problem solving, and decision-making strategies are influenced by motivation and emotion.

**Standard Area IID: Stress, Coping, and Health**

**CONTENT STANDARD IID-1: Sources of stress.** Students are able to:

IID-1.1 Identify and explain major sources of stress.

**CONTENT STANDARD IID-2: Physiological reactions to stress.** Students are able to:

IID-2.1 List and explain possible physiological reactions to stress.

**CONTENT STANDARD IID-3: Psychological reactions to stress.** Students are able to:

IID-3.1 List and explain possible psychological reactions to stress.

**CONTENT STANDARD IID-4: Cognitive and behavioral strategies for dealing with stress and promoting health** Students are able to:

IID-4.1 Identify and explain cognitive strategies to deal with stress and promote health.

IID-4.2 Identify and explain behavioral strategies to deal with stress and promote health.

### **III. DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN**

#### **Standard Area IIIA: Lifespan Development**

**CONTENT STANDARD IIIA-1: Development as a lifelong process.** Students are able to:

IIIA-1.1 Describe physical, social, and cognitive changes from the prenatal period throughout the lifespan.

IIIA-1.2 Examine the nature of change over the lifespan.

IIIA-1.3 Identify the complex cognitive structures found in the early development of infants and young children.

IIIA-1.4 Apply lifespan principles to personal experience.

**CONTENT STANDARD IIIA-2: Research techniques used to gather data on the developmental process.** Students are able to:

IIIA-2.1 Explain the distinguishing characteristics of the longitudinal and cross-sectional methods of study.

**CONTENT STANDARD IIIA-3: Theories of development.** Students are able to:

IIIA-3.1 Explain various developmental models.

IIIA-3.2 Recognize how biological and cultural notions of gender shape the experiences of men and women.

IIIA-3.3 Examine the development of ethnic identity.

IIIA-3.4 Explore developmental theories as they relate to cultural bias.

**CONTENT STANDARD IIIA-4: Issues surrounding the developmental process (nature/nurture, continuity/discontinuity, stability/instability, critical periods).**

Students are able to:

IIIA-4.1 Describe the role of critical periods in development.

IIIA-4.2 Explain the issues of continuity/discontinuity and stability/instability in development.

#### **Standard Area IIIB: Personality and Assessment**

**CONTENT STANDARD IIIB-1: Distinguish between personality and personality constructs.** Students are able to:

IIIB-1.1 Define personality as the individual's unique way of thinking, feeling, and acting.

IIIB-1.2 Explain the role of personality constructs as a framework for organizing behavioral phenomena.

**CONTENT STANDARD IIIB-2: Personality approaches and theories.** Students are able to:

IIIB-2.1 Explain the characteristics of the psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, humanistic, and trait approaches.

IIIB-2.2 Identify important contributions to the understanding of personality.

**CONTENT STANDARD IIIB-3: Assessment tools used in personality.** Students are able to:

IIIB-3.1 Distinguish between objective and projective techniques of personality assessment.

IIIB-3.2 Describe tests used in personality assessment.

## **IV. COGNITIVE DOMAIN**

### **Standard Area IVA: Learning**

**CONTENT STANDARD IVA-1: Characteristics of learning .** Students are able to:

IVA-1.1 Discuss learning from a psychological viewpoint.

IVA-1.2 Recognize learning as a vehicle to promote adaptation through experience.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVA-2: Principles of classical conditioning.** Students are able to:

IVA-2.1 Describe the classical conditioning paradigm.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVA-3: Principles of operant conditioning.** Students are able to:

IVA-3.1 Describe the operant conditioning paradigm.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVA-4: Components of cognitive learning.** Students are able to:

IVA-4.1 Explain how observational learning works.

IVA-4.2 Describe cognitive learning approaches.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVA-5: Roles of biology and culture in determining learning.** Students are able to:

IVA-5.1 Identify biological contributions to learning.

IVA-5.2 Speculate on the role of culture in determining what behaviors will be learned.

IVA-5.3 Explore how biological and cultural factors interact to impede or enhance learning.

IVA-5.4 Describe the collaborative nature of some forms of learning within cultures.

### **Standard Area IVB: Memory**

**CONTENT STANDARD IVB-1: Encoding, or getting information into memory.**

Students are able to:

IVB-1.1 Characterize the difference between surface and deep (elaborate) processing.

IVB-1.2 Identify other factors that influence encoding.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVB-2: Sensory, working or short-term, and long-term memory systems.** Students are able to:

IVB-2.1 Describe the operation of sensory memory

IVB-2.2 Describe the operation of short-term memory and working memory.

IVB-2.3 Describe the operation of long-term memory.



**CONTENT STANDARD IVB-3: Retrieval, or getting information out of memory.**

students are able to:

IVB-3.1 Analyze the importance of retrieval cues in memory.

IVB-3.2 Explain the role that interference plays in retrieval.

IVB-3.3 Relate difficulties created by reconstructive memory processes.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVB-4: Biological bases of memory.** Students are able to:

IVB-4.1 Identify the brain structures most important to memory.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVB-5: Methods for improving memory.** Students are able

to:

IVB-5.1 Identify factors that interfere with memory.

IVB-5.2 Describe strategies for improving memory based on our understanding of memory.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVB-6: Memory Constructions.** Students are able to:

IVB-6.1 Describe the processes that lead to inaccuracies in memory.

**Standard Area IVC: Thinking and Language**

**CONTENT STANDARD IVC-1: Basic elements comprising thought** .Students are able to:

IVC-1.1 Define thinking as a mental process involved in the manipulation and understanding of information.

IVC-1.2 Recognize that information is classified into categories containing similar properties known as concepts

**CONTENT STANDARD IVC-2: Strategies and obstacles involved in problem solving and decision-making.** Students are able to:

IVC-2.1 Identify problem solving as a directed and productive example of thinking.

IVC-2.2 Explain the use of creative thinking in problem solving.

IVC-2.3 Analyze the obstacles that inhibit problem solving and decision-making.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVC-3: Structural features of language.** Students are able to:

IVC-3.1 Define language as symbols and sounds that convey meaning and facilitate communication.

IVC-3.2 Recognize that language is organized in a hierarchical structure.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVC-4: Theories and developmental stages of language acquisition.** Students are able to:

IVC-4.1 Discuss the effects of development on language acquisition.

IVC-4.2 Evaluate the theories of language acquisition.

IVC-4.3 Speculate on whether animals acquire and use language.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVC-5: Links between thinking and language.** Students are able to:

IVC-5.1 Examine the influence of language on thought and behavior.

### **Standard Area IVD: States of Consciousness**

**CONTENT STANDARD IVD-1: Understand the nature of consciousness.** Students are able to (performance standards)

IVD-1.1 Define states of consciousness

IVD-1.2 Describe levels of consciousness

**CONTENT STANDARD IVD-2: Characteristics of sleep and theories that explain why we sleep.** Students are able to:

IVD-2.1 Describe the sleep cycle.

IVD-2.2 Compare theories that explain why we sleep.

IVD-2.3 Assess types of sleep disorders.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVD-3: Theories used to explain and interpret dreams.**

Students are able to:

IVD-3.1 Demonstrate an understanding of individual differences in dream content and recall.

IVD-3.2 Compare different theories about the use and meaning of dreams.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVD-4: Basic phenomena and uses of hypnosis.** Students are able to:

IVD-4.1 Describe several hypnotic phenomena.

IVD-4.2 Explain possible uses of hypnosis in psychology.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVD-5: Categories of psychoactive drugs and their effects.**

Students are able to:

IVD-5.1 Characterize the major categories of psychoactive drugs and their effects.

IVD-5.2 Evaluate the effects of narcotic, depressant, stimulant, and hallucinogenic drugs.

### **Standard Area IVE: Individual Differences**

**CONTENT STANDARD IVE-1: Concepts related to measurement of individual differences.** Students are able to:

IVE-1.1 Define and understand the nature of test constructs, such as intelligence, personality, and creativity.

IVE-1.2 Describe basic statistical concepts in testing

**CONTENT STANDARD IVE-2: Influence and interaction of heredity and environment on individual differences.** Students are able to:

IVE-2.1 Explain how intelligence and personality may be influenced by heredity and environment.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVE-3: Nature of intelligence.** Students are able to:

IVE-3.1 Link intelligence to the use of cognitive skills and strategies.

IVE-3.2 Describe theories of intelligence.

**CONTENT STANDARD IVE-4: Nature of intelligence testing.** Students are able to:

IVE-4.1 Explain why intelligence tests predict achievement.

IVE-4.2 Explain issues of using conventional intelligence tests.

## **V. VARIATIONS IN INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP BEHAVIOR DOMAIN**

### **Standard Area VA: Psychological Disorders**

#### **CONTENT STANDARD VA-1: Characteristics and origins of abnormal behavior.**

Students are able to:

- VA-1.1 Distinguish the common characteristics of abnormal behavior.
- VA-1.2 Cite examples of abnormal behavior.
- VA-1.3 Relate judgments of abnormality to contexts in which those judgments occur.
- VA-1.4 Describe major explanations for the origins of abnormality.

#### **CONTENT STANDARD VA-2: Methods used in exploring abnormal behavior.**

Students are able to:

- VA-2.1 Identify the purpose of different research methods.
- VA-2.2 Characterize the advantages and limitations of different research methods for studying abnormal behavior.

#### **CONTENT STANDARD VA-3: Major categories of abnormal behavior .** Students are able to:

- VA-3.1 Discuss major categories of abnormal behavior.
- VA-3.2 Explore the challenges associated with accurate diagnosis.

#### **CONTENT STANDARD VA-4: Impact of mental disorders.** Students are able to:

- VA-4.1 Consider factors that influence vulnerability to abnormal behavior.
- VA-4.2 Discuss the stigma associated with abnormal behavior.
- VA-4.3 Speculate about means for promoting greater understanding of abnormal behavior.

### **Standard Area VB: Treatment of Psychological Disorders**

#### **CONTENT STANDARD VB-1: Prominent methods used to treat individuals with disorders.** Students are able to:

- VB-1.1 Describe availability and appropriateness of various modes of treatment for individuals (e.g., children, adolescents, and adults) with psychological disorders.
- VB-1.2 Describe characteristics of effective treatment and prevention.

#### **CONTENT STANDARD VB-2: Types of practitioners who implement treatment.**

Students are able to:

- VB-2.1 Identify therapists according to training.
- VB-2.2 Describing strategies for locating appropriate therapists.

**CONTENT STANDARD VB-3: Legal and ethical challenges involved in delivery of treatment.** Students are able to:

- VB-3.1 Describe the intersection between mental health and law.
- VB-3.2 Examine the influence of ethics and professional practice.

**Standard Area VC: Social and Cultural Dimensions of Behavior**

**CONTENT STANDARD VC-1: Social judgment and attitudes.** Students are able to:

- VC-1.1 Demonstrate an understanding of person perception.
- VC-1.2 Describe how attributions affect our explanations of behavior.
- VC-1.3 Identify sources of attitude formation.
- VC-1.4 Assess some methods used to change attitudes.

**CONTENT STANDARD VC-2: Social and cultural categories.** Students are able to:

- VC-2.1 Identify basic social and cultural categories.
- VC-2.2 Discuss how social and cultural categories affect behavior.

**CONTENT STANDARD VC-3: Social influence and relationships.** Students are able to:

- VC-3.1 Describe effects of the presence of others on individual behavior.
- VC-3.2 Describe how social structure can affect intergroup relations.
- VC-3.3 Explore the nature and effects of bias and discrimination.
- VC-3.4 Describe circumstances under which conformity and obedience are likely to occur.
- VC-3.5 Discuss the nature of altruism in society.
- VC-3.6 Discuss the significance of aggression.
- VC-3.7 Discuss factors influencing attraction