APA National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula


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 verses 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:
IVA-1.1 Characterize the difference between surface and deep (elaborate) processing.
IVA-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:
IVA-2.1 Describe the operation of sensory memory
IVA-2.2 Describe the operation of short-term memory and working memory.
IVA-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