



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HIGH SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY CURRICULA MESSAGING DOCUMENT

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Use these messages to advocate for the adoption of the updated National Standards for Teaching High School Psychology Curricula with colleagues, school leadership, school boards, and state and local government officials.

MESSAGE 1: INTRODUCING THE STANDARDS

These messages provide background on the Standards to audiences who are unfamiliar with them and emphasize the expertise that goes into developing the standards.

- APA's *National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula*, which guides curriculum decisions and instruction for high school psychology classes, have been in use by high school psychology teachers for more than 20 years.
- In 2022, APA released a revision to the standards. The updated Standards include an increased focus on the scientific underpinnings of the field and align with a set of integrative themes that cut across high school and undergraduate psychology courses.
- The standards are developed by a working group of experienced teachers, school leaders, and psychology faculty members convened by the American Psychological Association.
- There is a companion website with free, vetted teaching resources (lesson plans, activities, videos, etc.) that teachers can use to bring the standards into their classroom.
- These standards are a resource to help high school psychology teachers from all backgrounds teach a quality course based in science.

MESSAGE 2: MEETING THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS

These messages highlight how quality psychology education can equip students with the skills they need to succeed in high school, college, and in their careers.

- High quality psychology education will help students enhance needed life skills. Understanding the science of human behavior can help students improve their academic skills, work effectively and collaboratively with others, and

successfully navigate daily life challenges. Students can also apply what they learn in psychology directly to their daily lives.

- A high-quality high school psychology course can help prepare students for several growing career fields. Psychology is a hub science that connects to, and can be an entryway into, other STEM disciplines (including statistics, neuroscience, life sciences, and the social sciences). Psychology is also broadly applicable to business, medicine, education, health, and criminal justice.
- As the youth mental health crisis progresses and mental health education becomes a priority in schools, the updated standards will help ensure that high school psychology courses provide accurate, science-based information about mental health to students.

MESSAGE 3: BUILDING THE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

These messages emphasize how high school psychology education can help students pursue in-demand careers.

- Given its popularity and real-world applicability, high school psychology education is a great way to excite students about science and prepare them for careers in psychology, other STEM fields, and healthcare.

High school psychology can be the beginning of the pathway into future study in psychology, encouraging students to consider and/or pursue a psychology major in college. The skills students develop in undergraduate psychology programs are valuable to employers across many sectors.

- Mental health is a growing career field, and skilled mental health care providers are in high demand in our area. Furthermore, there is currently a shortage of mental health care providers across the country. Quality high school psychology education can help introduce students to this growing career field.

MESSAGE 4: SPOTLIGHTING SCIENCE

These messages highlight the emphasis on teaching high school psychology as a course grounded in science and supporting teachers from all backgrounds in teaching a quality, science-based course.

- The revised standards promote the scientific nature of psychology by making scientific inquiry and research methods the foundation for content across all units in high school psychology courses, including biology, cognition, development and learning, social psychology and personality, and physical and mental health.
- High school psychology courses can introduce students to scientific inquiry and engage them in the learning process. The revised standards emphasize the empirical nature of psychological science.
- Psychology courses are a popular offering in high schools. These courses provide an ideal platform for teaching not only scientific content that is relevant to the daily lives of students and of intrinsic interest to them, but also the scientific

principles that underlie psychological knowledge. The revised standards help teachers from all backgrounds teach a quality, science-based course.

- For teachers less experience teaching psychology as a science, there is a companion website with free, vetted teaching resources (lesson plans, activities, videos, etc.) that teachers can use in course planning.