

INDIAN HILL EXEMPTED VILLAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Social Studies Curriculum - May 2009

Psychology – Semester Course

History and Methods of Psychology

Big Idea:

- Psychology is the study of human behavior. Before it was as a science, psychology originates in the Stone Age. Since then, it has evolved into a scientific field that contains a number of perspectives.
- Psychologists today use several methods to conduct research and are able to follow a diverse set of career paths.

Essential Questions:

- What are the goals of psychology, and how is it a science?
- How has the core beliefs of psychology evolved since the Stone Age?
- What are the major contemporary approaches to psychology?
- How do psychologists conduct research?
- What careers are available to psychologists?

Main Idea:

- Psychology attempts to describe and explain human behavior. It does this through an examination of the human brain itself as well as determining intangible motives through scientific observation.
- Psychology begins with the practice of trephination during the Stone Age. Since then, major periods of thought include the classical period, Galen's Four Humors, medieval period, and the Enlightenment focus of reason and logic. In the 19th century, psychology emerges as a credible science under the leadership of Wilhelm Wundt and William James.
- Today six major perspectives dominate psychology: biological, cognitive, humanistic, psychoanalytic, behavioral, and socio-cultural.
- Psychologists conduct research by following the 5 steps of the scientific method. Research methods include observation, survey, and experiment.
- Career paths for psychologists include clinical, counseling, school, educational, developmental, personality, social, and experimental. Psychiatrists also possess a medical degree and can prescribe medicine.

Skills & Objectives:

- Students will comprehend the advantages and disadvantages of, and apply concepts, principles, and procedures for conducting, monitoring, applying, and interpreting sound psychology research activities.
- Students will consider the various codes of ethics accepted by psychologists regarding the conduct of research on human and animal subjects and the reporting of research findings.

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Biology and Behavior

Big Idea: Psychologists study the ways in which the nervous system, the brain, the endocrine system, and heredity affect human behavior, thought, and emotions.

Essential Questions:

- How are messages transmitted by neurons?
- What are the components and functions of the autonomic and peripheral nervous systems?
- What are the major structures of the brain? What are their functions?
- What hormones are secreted by glands in the endocrine system and what role do they play?
- What is the "nature versus nurture" debate? What evidence helps us solve this major issue?

Main Ideas:

- The nervous system transmits messages across synapses throughout our bodies through chemicals called neurotransmitters. The peripheral nervous system transmits messages between the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) and all parts of the body.
- The human brain consists of three sections: hindbrain regulates vital functions, midbrain controls vision and hearing, forebrain is responsible for complex functions unique to human beings such as rational thought and emotion.
- The endocrine system contains the pituitary (growth), thyroid (metabolism), adrenal (stress), and reproductive glands.
- The "nature versus nurture" debate is a long-standing controversy within psychology. Genetic and twin studies have shown the significance of heredity ("nature") on human behavior and personality. At the same time, the cases of feral children are a testimony of the limitations of human nature in the areas of cognitive and social development.

Skills & Objectives:

- Students will map the brain and consider the purposes of various sections, while also evaluating how these sections interplay with other parts of the nervous system.
- Students will evaluate evidence on both sides of the "nature versus nurture" debate, including studies of feral children and adopted sibling.

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Human Development and Personality

Big Idea: The human life span brings about significant changes as the individual experiences physical, cognitive, social, and moral development. Sigmund Freud and trait theorists help explain the unique personality of the human individual.

Essential Questions:

- What are the major theories of human development?
- How do infants and children develop physically and socially? What role do parents play in this development?
- According to Piaget and Kohlberg, what are the stages of cognitive and moral development?
- What are the major developmental tasks of adolescence and adulthood?
- According to Erikson, how do humans experience psychosocial development? What accounts for the differences in human personality?

Main Ideas:

- Developmental psychologists disagree about whether development occurs in stages or in a continuous progression.
- Although endowed with instincts, infants also experience a set of first year physical milestones that include rolling, crawling, walking, and visual depth perception.
- During their first months, infants begin their social development by attaching themselves to their mothers. The acquisition of a secure attachment and the attainment of contact comfort are essential for children to develop into balanced and self-sufficient individuals.
- Jean Piaget theorized that children's thinking develops in four stages: sensorimotor (learning coordination and cause/effect), preoperational (first use of language), concrete-operational (begin logical reasoning), and formal-operational (abstract thought).
- Lawrence Kohlberg argued that moral development follows a three-level sequence that begins with a focus on avoiding punishment and ends with a focus on universal moral laws.
- Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory argues that personality is the result of unconscious drives that are shaped during the early developmental years. Behaviorists reject Freud's view and argue for the importance of learning through experience and observation. Trait theory argues that there are five basic personality dimensions that define humans as individuals.

Skills & Objectives:

- Students will gain an understanding of the factors associated with human adjustment and coping behaviors in various situations, during different stages of life, and in respect to particular personal and environmental situations.
- Students will consider how such factors as memory, thinking, beliefs, emotions, personality, perceptions, attitude, and abilities affect people's decisions and actions at any particular moment.

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- Students will examine factors that may have contributed to their own self-concepts and identity, including how their family, groups, peers, and communities may have been among these factors.
- Students will examine and comprehend factors associated with personality and individual differences and how personality and individual differences may be described, classified, assessed, and interpreted.

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Sensation, Perception, and Consciousness

Big Idea: Humans understand and organize their environment through sensation and perception. There are several forms of consciousness that affect human behavior.

Essential Questions:

- What is the difference between sensation and perception, and how do they contribute to the understanding of our environment?
- What are the laws of sensory perception?
- What are the different types and levels of consciousness?
- Why do we sleep? What are the stages of sleep? What disorders prevent healthy sleep patterns?

Main Ideas:

- Sensation is the information which our five human senses receive, whereas perception is how we interpret the information.
- Absolute threshold is the weakest amount of stimulus that can be sensed, whereas difference threshold is the minimum amount of difference that can be detected between two stimuli.
- Visual perception is influenced by the principles of closure, figure-ground, proximity, similarity, continuity, and common fate. Monocular and binocular cues allow us to perceive depth.
- Consciousness has several different meanings: sensory awareness, direct-inner awareness, and sense of self.
- Sleep is a level of consciousness which helps humans revive their tired bodies (although it is disputed whether this need was acquired through evolution). Dreams occur during REM sleep and have been interpreted differently by psychologists. Sleep disorders include insomnia, nightmares, night terrors, and narcolepsy.

Skills & Objectives:

- Students will discuss the purpose of sleep and the causes of various sleep patterns/disorders.
- Students will experiment with sensory deprivation and complete tests which illuminate ways in which human sensation can be manipulated to alter perception.

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Learning and Memory

Big Idea: Humans learn through conditioning, both classical and operational, and observation. Memory follows a three-stage process and is subject to the limitations of interference.

Essential Questions:

- What are the principles of classical and operation conditioning?
- How do latent and observational learning occur?
- What are the three stages of memory and how are they related?
- Why do we forget and how can one improve his or her memory?

Main Ideas:

- In classical conditioning, a previously neutral stimulus acquires the ability to produce a response originally produced by another stimulus. Operant condition is a type of learning based on the consequences of actions. People and animals learn as a result of the reinforcement they receive following a behavior.
- Albert Bandura has shown that people acquire knowledge and skill by observing and imitating others. In latent learning, learning remains hidden until it is needed (such as cognitive maps).
- Sensory memory consists of the initial recording of information through the senses.
- Short-term memory is the bridge between sensory and long-term memory. Rehearsal allows a person to keep information in short-term memory. Long-term memory contains a vast amount of information (there is no known limit for humans) which was well-rehearsed in the short-term stage.
- Normal forgetting is the cause of interference and decay. Abnormal memory loss is the result of repression and amnesia.

Skills & Objectives:

- Students will apply the various learning principles of conditioning to daily activities and interactions.
- Students will complete memory experiments which illustrate the limits and tendencies of human memory.

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Abnormal Behavior, Disorders, and Treatment

Big Idea:

- Psychological disorders cause distress and interfere with normal functioning.
- They are classified into many types based on their symptoms.
- Although psychologists have attempted to explain disorders, not all can be adequately treated.
- There are diverse schools of treatment, which based their therapies on their psychological perspective.

Essential Questions:

- On what basis does society determine the existence of disorders?
- What are the major psychological disorders? What are their known causes?
- What are the goals of each school of treatment? What methods does each school apply?

Main Ideas:

- Disorders have four patterns in common: the behavior is not typical, it is maladaptive, it creates emotional discomfort, and it is considered socially unacceptable in a particular culture.
- The major disorders include anxiety, dissociative, somatoform, mood, schizophrenia, and personality.
- Therapy can be conducted in individual or group settings, each of which have significant advantages and disadvantages.
- The most popular schools of treatment include psychoanalytical, humanistic, cognitive, and behavioral. Medical treatment attempts to correct the biological causes of disorders, but often has drawbacks and limitations.

Skills & Objectives:

- Students will examine, comprehend, and apply ideas associated with mental and emotional health as well as psychological disorders, including factors contributing to and the treatment of such disorders