



Unit 1

Thinking like a Psychologist

Essential Question

How do I look at the world as a psychologist?

Unit Summary

Students will explore the biological foundations of behavior, ethical research principles, and brain function to understand how psychology explains human behavior and thought.

Guiding Questions

Content

- What is psychology? What comes to mind when we think about psychology?
- What are the primary psychological perspectives/approaches? How do perspectives shape the way we understand behavior? (e.g., Psychodynamic, Behavioral, Humanistic, Cognitive, Biological, Social-Cultural, Evolutionary)
- What are the goals of psychological research? (e.g., to describe, observe, explain, predict, and/or control human behavior)
- What are the primary psychological research methods? (e.g., descriptive methods, non-research methods, research methods, etc.)
- What are the parts and functions of the brain? (e.g., frontal lobe, neurotransmitters, limbic system, etc.)
- What are the ethical guidelines in psychological research? (e.g., informed consent, protection from harm, right to withdraw, confidentiality, debriefing, ethical treatment of animals)
- How do ethical and legal guidelines protect research participants and promote sound ethical practice? What kind of unethical experiments have been done that have altered psychological experimentation and thinking?

Process

(NCSS C3 Framework Standard indicated)

- How do I demonstrate a basic understanding of the scientific methods that are at the core of psychology? (D2.Psy.1.9–12.)
- How do I define psychology and apply the psychological perspectives to behavior and/or everyday life?
- How do I explain the interaction of biological factors and experiences?
- How do I compare and contrast the primary research methods in regards to purpose, strengths, and weaknesses? (e.g., descriptive methods, non-research methods, research methods)
- How do I adhere to and consider the impact of the American Psychological Association and federal guidelines for the ethical treatment of human and nonhuman research participants? (D2.Psy.4.9–12)
- How do I explain common themes across the field of psychological science, including ethical issues, and diversity?
- How do I use critical thinking skills to become better consumers of psychological knowledge? (D2.Psy.16.9–12)
- How do I apply psychological knowledge to daily life? (D2.Psy.18.9–12)
- How do I collect and analyze data designed to answer a psychological question using basic descriptive and inferential statistics? (D2.Psy.6.9–12)

Reflective

- Is there value in past unethical studies?
- How does my understanding of research as well as brain and body systems in psychology improve my ability to analyze and evaluate information?
- Why is it important to explore and consider different perspectives in social sciences to help us understand complexities of human behavior?

Power Standards

- The student will recognize and evaluate the rights and responsibilities of people living in societies. (2.1)
- The student will investigate and connect the rights and responsibilities of individuals with contemporary issues. (2.3)
- The student will investigate an example of continuity and change to a contemporary issue. (4.3)
- The student will use their understanding of continuity and change to make a claim or advance a thesis using evidence and argument. (4.4)

Supporting Standards

- The student will analyze the context and draw conclusions about rights and responsibilities (2.2)
- The student will analyze the context and draw conclusions about continuity and change. (4.2)
- The student will analyze the context and draw conclusions about dynamic relationships. (5.2)



Unit 2

The Criminal Mind

Essential Question

Are criminals born or made?

Unit Summary

Students will explore the field of psychology to understand the complex factors influencing human behavior. They will investigate the influence of genetics and environment, study criminal behavior using scientific research, and examine how biases can alter perceptions, gaining a deeper understanding of what drives human actions.

Guiding Questions

Content

- How is criminal behavior psychologically defined and or explained? (e.g., DSM-5 diagnosis of Antisocial Personality Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, and/or Oppositional Defiant Disorder)
- What are the biopsychosocial causes of criminal behavior? (e.g., nature vs. nurture, diathesis–stress model, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), MAOA – Warrior gene, traumatic brain injury, etc.)
- What are the basic tenets of forensic psychology? (e.g., criminal and behavioral profiling, psychological assessment, competency to stand trial, insanity defense evaluations, etc.)
- What is the relationship between clinically defined abnormal behavior and criminal behavior? (e.g., dangers of stigmatizing mental health as a causation for criminal behavior; importance of context, evidence, and avoiding stereotypes, etc.)
- What biases impact the criminal justice system and the criminal mind? (e.g., law enforcement, not guilty by reason of insanity, prison reform, competency to stand trial, overconfidence, hindsight bias, confirmation bias, eyewitness testimony, etc.)

- How do American prison systems meet goals and norms made by society but also alter human behavior in the process?

Process

(NCSS C3 Framework Standards indicated)

- How do I investigate human behavior from biological, cognitive, behavioral, and sociocultural perspective? (D2.Psy.2.9–12)
- How do I describe biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors that influence individuals' cognition, perception, and behavior? (D2.Psy.9.9–12)
- How do I explain the interaction of biology and experience (i.e., nature and nurture) and its influence on behavior? (D2.Psy.10.9–12)
- How do I analyze and evaluate the relationship between clinically defined abnormal behavior and criminal behavior? (e.g., dangers of stigmatizing mental health as a causation for criminal behavior; importance of context, evidence, and avoiding stereotypes, etc.)
- How do I use existing evidence and formulate conclusions about psychological phenomena? (D2.Psy.15.9–12)
- How do I use critical thinking skills to become better consumers of psychological knowledge? (D2.Psy.16.9–12)
- How do I analyze the goals and outcomes of the criminal justice system?
- How do I apply psychological knowledge to daily life? (D2.Psy.18.9–12)
- How do I collect and analyze data designed to answer a psychological question using basic descriptive and inferential statistics? (D2.Psy.6.9–12)

Reflective

- How does implicit bias influence our investigation/fascination of the criminal mind?
- Why is there not a formula to predict human behavior?
- How do we protect both the general public and provide ethical care for those incarcerated?

Power Standards

- The student will investigate and connect examples of choices and consequences with contemporary issues. (1.3)
- The student will recognize and evaluate how societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups. (3.1)
- The student will use their understanding of how societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups to make a claim or

advance a thesis using evidence and argument. (3.4)

Supporting Standards

- The student will recognize and evaluate significant choices and consequences that have impacted our lives and futures. (1.1)
- The student will analyze the context and draw conclusions about choices and consequences.(1.2)
- The student will analyze and draw conclusions about how societies are shaped by their identities, beliefs and practices of individuals and groups with contemporary issues. (3.2)
- The student will investigate and connect how societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups. (3.3)



Unit 3

Science of Well-being

Essential Question

What's right with me?

Unit Summary

Students will be introduced to key concepts in psychology, focusing on understanding the factors that shape human behavior and wellbeing. Students will explore the principles of Positive Psychology, learn to assess and manage stress, and analyze how stigma, demographic, and cultural differences influence mental health.

Guiding Questions

Content

- What are the causes and characteristics of well-being? (e.g., stress, General Adaptation Syndrome, psychological disorders – anxiety disorder, stress-related disorders, depressive disorders, or external factors, etc.)
- What habits can improve mental health and well-being? (e.g., meditation, gratitude, exercise, savoring, sleep, play, mindfulness, signature strengths, flow, random acts of kindness, social connection, and/or other stress management techniques)
- What are healthy ways to respond to stress? (e.g., problem-focused versus emotion-focused strategies)
- What are the causes and consequences of well-being? (e.g., money, self-actualization, technology, culture, relative deprivation, etc.)
- What is Positive Psychology? (e.g., Dr. Martin Seligman, learned helplessness, flourishing, flow, Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, humanism, Maslow, etc.)
- What are the biopsychosocial mechanisms that drive well-being? (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, culture, post-traumatic growth, limbic system, frontal lobe, neurotransmitters, neuroplasticity, serotonin and dopamine, hormones, nature vs. nurture, hedonic adaptation, etc.)

- How does research help psychologists understand well-being? (e.g., Dr. Santos' evidence-based research, etc.)
- How does physiology impact well-being? (e.g., understanding nervous system stress responses, Polyvagal theory by Dr. Stephen Porges, homeostasis, adolescent physiological differences, etc.)

Process

(NCSS C3 Framework Standards indicated)

- How do I explain the complexities of human thought and behavior, as well as the factors related to the individual differences among people? (D2.Psy.8.9-12)
- How do I describe biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors that influence individuals' cognition, perception, and behavior? (D2.Psy.9.9-12)
- How do I explain how social, cultural, gender, economic factors influence behavior and human interactions in societies around the world? (D2.Psy.12.9-12)
- How do I use critical thinking skills to become better consumers of psychological knowledge? (D2.Psy.16.9-12)
- How do I apply psychological knowledge to daily life? (D2.Psy.18.9-12)
- How do I discuss ways in which the applications of psychological science can address domestic and global issues? (D2.Psy.21.9-12)
- How do I use psychological knowledge to promote healthy lifestyle choices? (D2.Psy.22.9-12)
- How do I use psychological knowledge to promote well-being?
- How do I collect and analyze data designed to answer a psychological question using basic descriptive and inferential statistics? (D2.Psy.6.9-12)

Reflective

- How do I promote adolescent wellbeing in my community?
- How does the stigma of mental illness impact my community?
- How do I break down the stigma of mental illness?
- How do I plan for my well-being now and in the future? (e.g., college, career, major life events)

Power Standards

- The student will investigate and connect how societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups. (3.2)
- The student will use their understanding of how societies are shaped by the

identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups to make a claim or advance a thesis using evidence and argument. (3.4)

- The student will recognize and evaluate continuity and change over time (4.1)
- The student will investigate and connect continuity and change to a contemporary issue. (4.3)

Supporting Standards

- The student will analyze context and draw conclusions of how societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups. (3.2)
- The student will analyze the context and draw conclusions about continuity and change. (4.2)



Unit 4

States of Consciousness: Sleep, Dreams & Psychoactive Drugs

Essential Questions

Is sleep your superpower? Why do we alter our consciousness?

Unit Summary

Students will explore the psychological and biological aspects of sleep and consciousness, focusing on their impact on behavior and mental processes. They will examine the importance of sleep for health, assess their own sleep habits, and investigate how altered states of consciousness—such as dreaming, hypnosis, and substance use—affect behavior and cognition.

Guiding Questions

Content

- Why does sleep matter? What are different sleep theories? (e.g., evolutionary, restorative, memory consolidation, etc.)
- How does biology impact sleep? (e.g., melatonin, jet-lag, circadian rhythms, infradian rhythms, ultradian rhythms, etc.)
- What is the anatomy of sleep? (e.g., electroencephalogram (EEG), hypothalamus, pineal gland, reticular formation, pons, frontal lobe)
- What are physical and cognitive effects of sleep deprivation? (e.g., impact on teen behavior, health, and well-being, school start time research, etc.)
- What are different sleep disorders? (e.g., narcolepsy, night terrors, restless leg syndrome, insomnia, sleep walking, sleep apnea, REM sleep behavior disorder, etc.)
- What are the stages of sleep? (e.g., NREM 1, NREM 2, NREM 3, REM Sleep)
- What are the different dream theories? (e.g., activation synthesis theory, consolidation theory, Freud's wish fulfillment theory, etc.)
- What is consciousness? (e.g., 3 levels of consciousness: conscious, preconscious, unconscious)

- What are altered states of consciousness? (e.g., psychologically induced, physiologically induced, spontaneously induced)
- What are different categories of psychoactive drugs? (e.g., stimulants, depressants, opioids, hallucinogens)
- What are the psychological and physiological effects of psychoactive different drugs? (e.g., withdrawal, addiction, tolerance, expectancy effect, substance use disorder, excitatory/inhibitory neurotransmitters)

Process

(NCSS C3 Framework Standards indicated)

- How do I apply psychological knowledge to daily life? (D2.Psy.18.9–12)
- How do I collect and analyze data designed to answer a psychological question using basic descriptive and inferential statistics? (D2.Psy.6.9–12)
- How do I use existing evidence and formulate conclusions about psychological phenomena? (D2.Psy.15.9–12)
- How do I use critical thinking skills to become better consumers of psychological knowledge? (D2.Psy.16.9–12)
- How do I use psychological knowledge to promote healthy lifestyle choices? (D2.Psy.22.9–12)
- How do I collect and analyze data designed to answer a psychological question using basic descriptive and inferential statistics? (D2.Psy.6.9–12)

Reflective

- Should Blue Valley change school start time?
- Am I getting enough sleep?
- Why do individuals engage in drug use?
- Is your smart phone/time on social media/technology addictive?

Power Standards

- The student will analyze the context and draw conclusions about choices and consequences. (1.2)
- The student will use their understanding of choices and consequences to make a claim or advance a thesis using evidence and argument. (1.4)
- The student will analyze context and draw conclusions of how societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups. (3.2)
- The student will investigate and connect how societies are shaped by the

identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups with contemporary issues. (3.3)

- The student will use their understanding of how societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups to make a claim or advance a thesis using evidence and argument. (3.4)

Supporting Standards

- The student will investigate and connect examples of choices and consequences with contemporary issues. (1.3)



Unit 5

Performance Psychology

Essential Question

How do I unlock my full potential?

Unit Summary

Students will explore how psychology influences performance, examining factors like stress, motivation, and confidence. They will analyze the impact of nature versus nurture on skill development and apply strategies such as goal-setting, imagery, and attentional focus to improve performance.

Guiding Questions

Content

- What is the relationship between psychology and performance? (e.g. sports, liberal arts, education, work, performing arts, career, etc.)
- What is the science of performance? (e.g., deliberate practice; fight/flight - Polyvagal Theory; Daniel Pink - autonomy, purpose, mastery; Petlet Model - Physical, Environment, Task, Timing, Learning, Emotion, Perspective; SMART Goals)
- What factors impact performance? (e.g., stress, anxiety, emotion, confidence, focus, grit, motivation levels, social facilitation, perfectionism, etc.)
- What strategies improve performance? (e.g., imagery, intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, attentional focus, physiological exercises, etc.)
- How does “nature vs nurture” play a role in our understanding of skills-based behavior and performance? (e.g., biological advantages, resource advantages, etc.)

Process

(NCSS C3 Framework Standards indicated)

- How do I use critical thinking skills to become better consumers of psychological knowledge? (D2.Psy.16.9–12)
- How do I apply psychological knowledge to daily life? (D2.Psy.18.9–12)

- How do I apply the major theoretical approaches in psychology to education, emotional, political, ethical, motivational, organizational, personal and social issues? (D2.Psy.19.9–12)
- How do I use psychological knowledge to promote healthy lifestyle choices? (D2.Psy.22.9–12)
- How do I collect and analyze data designed to answer a psychological question using basic descriptive and inferential statistics? (D2.Psy.6.9–12)

Reflective

- What happens when athletes/performers/achievers “choke”?
- How can I improve my performance?

Power Standards

- The student will investigate and connect examples of choices and consequences with contemporary issues. (1.3)
- The student will use their understanding of choices and consequences to make a claim or advance a thesis using evidence and argument. (1.4)
- The student will recognize and evaluate dynamic relationships that impact lives in communities, states, and nations. (5.1)
- The student will investigate and connect dynamic relationships to contemporary issues. (5.3)

Supporting Standards

- The student will analyze the context and draw conclusions about choices and consequences. (1.2)
- The student will analyze the context and draw conclusions about dynamic relationships. (5.2)