

Guidelines for preparing high school psychology teachers approved

April 5 2012

The American Psychological Association Council of Representatives has approved a new set of national guidelines that outline models for preparing high school teachers to teach psychology effectively. The guidelines will be distributed to all state and the District of Columbia boards of education for review and consideration for implementation.

"These guidelines are the foundation for preparing professionals for the teaching and learning of psychological science at the high school level," said Kenneth A. Weaver, PhD, chair of APA's Board of Educational Affairs Working Group for the Certification and Training of High School Psychology Teachers. "They are designed to be read and used by state departments of education regardless of whether they choose to officially implement them."

The guidelines replace an expired 1978 APA policy that recommended courses for the certification of secondary school psychology teachers. Although APA has significantly supported and promoted the teaching of high school psychology over the past three decades, the 2012 guidelines are APA's first official statement on psychology teacher preparation since the previous policy.

The new guidelines were developed to align to APA's National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula (APA, 2011), a document that provides learning benchmarks for students taking the high school psychology course. APA expects high school psychology teachers to have the preparation necessary to teach the course as specified in the

National Standards.

APA advocates two strategies, a course-based model or a standards-based model, to prepare new psychology teachers. Across the nation, states use these two approaches to prepare new teachers. The course-based approach requires completion of at least 30 credit hours of [psychological science](#) course work to meet the federal definition of a highly qualified teacher. The course-based models consist of categories of required or elective courses and a semester-long student teaching experience.

The new guidelines also contain the following standards-based model to strengthen effective teaching:

- Standard 1. The teacher of psychology knows and can explain the major theoretical approaches, research findings and historical and contemporary trends in the science of psychology.
- Standard 2. The teacher of psychology demonstrates how psychologists use major research methods including design, data analysis and interpretation.
- Standard 3. The teacher of psychology applies the major theoretical approaches in psychology to reality-based educational, emotional, ethical, motivational, organizational, personal and social issues.

"An effective teacher enables students to see the relevance of psychology in their lives," Weaver said.

For both approaches, indicators are provided as suggestions for how preservice teachers can demonstrate mastery of the content. The guidelines also provide recommendations for current high school psychology teachers who do not have credentials in psychology.

APA advocates the development of a teaching credential endorsement for psychology in all states, and recommends that preservice teachers complete a second teaching field or endorsement for their teaching credential. The APA Education Directorate will periodically review and revise the [guidelines](#), which will expire in February 2019.

Psychology is a popular and growing high school course. Nearly 30 percent of graduating students in 2009 earned psychology course credit during [high school](#), according to the National Center for Education Statistics. In 2011, nearly 198,000 students took the Advanced Placement Psychology Exam and more than 16,000 students took the International Baccalaureate [Psychology](#) Exam.

Provided by American Psychological Association

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