Course Proposal: Introduction to Psychology

Education Committee Meeting
December 12, 2024

Course Proposal

Course Name: Introduction to Psychology

Location: Rahway High School

Proposed Start of Course: 2025-2026 School Year

Course Length: Semester Course or Full Year Course

Grade Levels: 10-12

Course Rationale

Purpose of the Course:

- Provides a comprehensive understanding of the many facets of psychology.
- Emphasizes the importance of mental health and its impact on daily life.
- Promotes social-emotional well-being and mental health awareness.
- Equips students with tools to navigate their own emotional health and understand others.
- Addresses the rising prevalence of mental health challenges among teenagers.

Course Rationale

The following CDC statistics highlight the significant challenges teenagers face with mental health today, underscoring the critical need for a course like *Introduction to Psychology* to support and educate our students.

- In 2021, more than 4 in 10 (42%) students felt persistently sad or hopeless and nearly one-third (29%) experienced poor mental health.
- In 2021, more than 1 in 5 (22%) students seriously considered attempting suicide and 1 in 10 (10%) attempted suicide.
- Nearly half (45%) of LGBQ+ students in 2021 seriously considered attempting suicide—far more than heterosexual students.
- Black students were more likely to attempt suicide than students of other races and ethnicities.

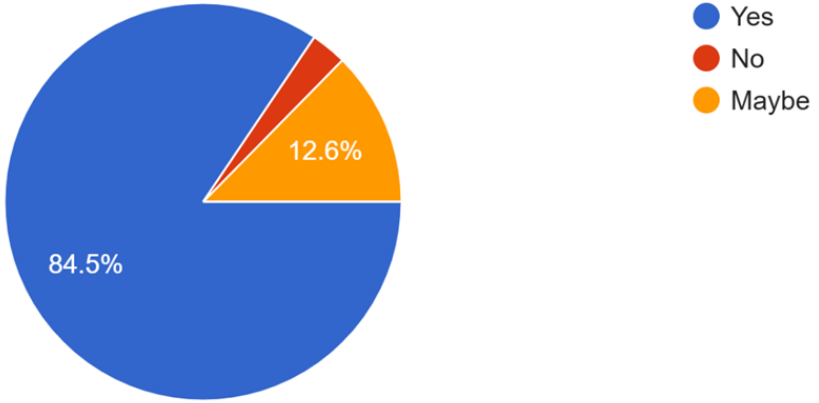
Resource: https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/mental-health/index.htm

Alignment with District Goals

- This course fosters a community built on diversity, learning, and leadership by introducing students to diverse psychological perspectives and the study of human behavior across cultures.
- It equips students with critical thinking and interpersonal skills necessary to become informed leaders and global citizens, embodying the ideals of #RahwayRocks and the #RahwayRenaissance.
- Psychology inherently promotes an understanding of individual differences, cultural influences, and the value of inclusive practices, aligning directly with the mission to address the unique needs of all students.
- The course encourages ownership of learning through interactive activities like case studies, research projects, and reflective discussions, enabling students to achieve their highest potential.
- By examining global psychological studies and their real-world applications, students are prepared to engage with a diverse and interconnected world.

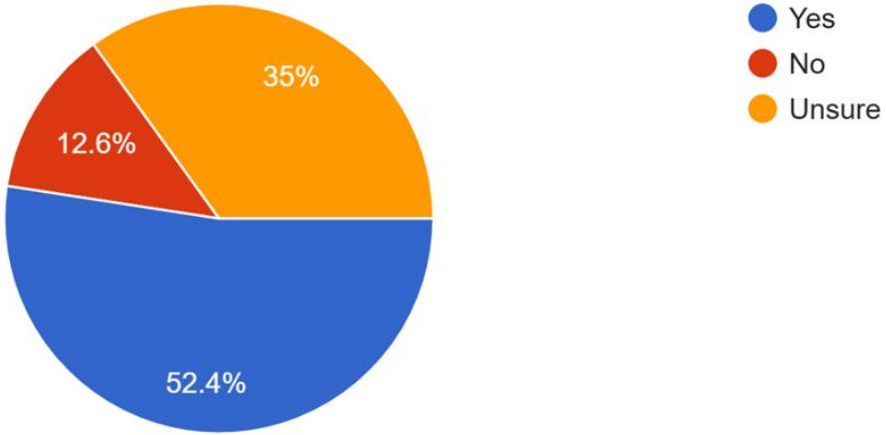
Demand and Student Interest

If an introduction to psychology course was offered at RHS, would you select that course as an elective?



Demand and Student Interest

Does Psychology relate to your future field of study in any way?



Demand and Student Interest - Student Comments

- Other AP courses, such as AP Chemistry or AP Computer Science, provide introductory courses. Due to this, AP Psychology must be taught to students with no or little understanding of psychology by the exam in May. This is an added inhibitor that other courses do not have.
- Students should be allowed to have more classes that may fit some students interests
- I would love a Psychology course here at RHS. As someone who loves studying human behaviors/the way our minds work and wants to pursue it as a career, it would be amazing to have that course here. I think it would even might help our student body by being more educated in these things.
- I would take it because it can help me understand emotions.
- Yes, we just need more interesting classes overall :]
- Yes I would take it, I would like to learn about psychology and decide whether I would like to have it as an optional career. Psychology is very interesting and has many aspects for one to learn.
- Yes, lots of kids would be interested due to it being an introduction to any college course they may be interested in. I totally think this is a great option! Please consider it before the year ends!!!
- I have always been interested in human behavior, and think it would be nice to have the course for people who are also interested but don't want to take an AP class.

Course Objectives

Learning Goals:

- Develop an understanding of foundational psychological theories and concepts.
- Explore research methods used in psychology, including experimental design and data interpretation.
- Apply psychological principles to real-world scenarios, enhancing self-awareness and social understanding.
- Strengthen Social Emotional Learning (SEL) skills, including self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship building.

Standards Alignment:

- Aligns with New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) for Social Emotional Learning. (NJ Social & Emotional Competencies & Sub Competencies)
- Aligns with the National Standards for High School Psychology Curricula
- Prepares students for potential AP Psychology coursework or related advanced studies.

College Readiness:

- Provides foundational knowledge for college-level psychology courses.
- Offers a stepping stone for students exploring psychology as a college major or career path.
- Supports dual-enrollment opportunities and encourages early exploration of career interests.

Course Structure and Content

Based on student interest, this course will be offered as either a full-year or half-year program. The curriculum will include the following key topics:

- Mental and Physical Health
- Biological Bases of Behavior
- Cognition
- Development and Learning
- Social Psychology and Personality
- Scientific Practices in Psychology

Staffing & Scheduling

Prerequisite: Since this is an introductory course, there would be no prerequisite coursework for students.

Two Proposed Staffing/scheduling Options:

OPTION 1

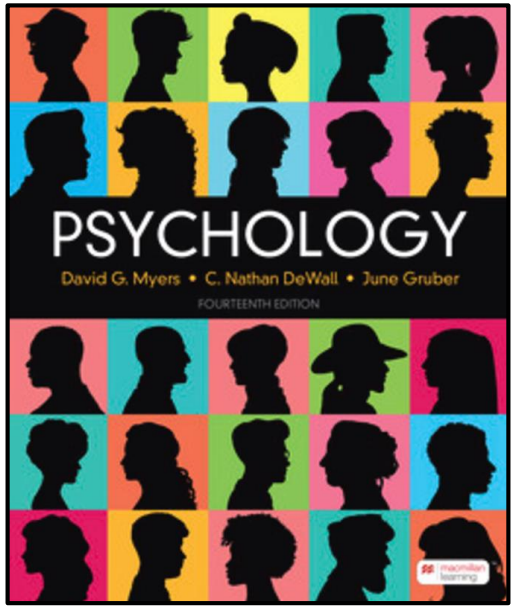
The scheduling of a 6th period to accommodate the physical education/health classes.

OPTION 2

The hiring of a physical education/health teacher to support the expanded curriculum and maintain class sizes.

Resources Needed

Textbook: Myer's Edition Psychology Textbook, 14th Edition, 2024



Empowering students with knowledge, self-awareness, and mental health literacy, *Introduction to Psychology* meets a critical need for diverse, engaging electives while supporting their social-emotional well-being and future success.

Thank you!