**Your Brain: Don’t Leave Home Without It**

**Subject area/course**: Social Sciences/Introduction to Psychology

**Grade level/band:** 11–12

**INSTRUCTOR PROCEDURES**

1. **Task overview**:

Students read a scenario about a fictional student taking a test. They are asked to analyze that scenario to identify the areas of the brain that would be more active than usual for someone in that situation. Students will research the physical and cognitive processes that are mentioned in the scenario and localize those processes to different areas of the brain. As part of their research, students should also consider ways to mitigate the adverse affects of test taking. In a 2- to 3-page paper, students present this information along with their justifications for their conclusions.

1. **Prior knowledge required:**

Students should be able to:

* Identify the functions of different brain areas.
* Write an informational/explanatory paper that illustrates their comprehension of brain structure and function.

1. **Common Core State Standards aligned to this task**:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/4/) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/2/) Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.6](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/11-12/6/) Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/WHST/11-12/1/) Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.9](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/WHST/11-12/9/) Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/11-12/7/) Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

1. **Time requirements**:

This performance task would be most appropriately timed after a unit on the functions of the brain. Students would most likely complete this assignment outside of class. After giving the assignment, allow approximately one week for completion of the paper. Depending on the needs of the class, you may give more or less time to complete the assignment.

1. **Instructor materials to use during administration**:

* Introductory psychology textbook
* The instructor may also have some ancillary materials included with the textbook that are useful.
* A useful web site is <http://psychology.about.com/od/biopsychology/ss/brainstructure.htm>

1. **Instructor procedures during administration**:

* Students work independently to identify the processes and brain structures/functions.
* Students should complete the brief paper outside of class.
* The biggest challenge for students will be to avoid the temptation of listing every brain structure and function as being relevant to the scenario. The instructor could control this by having students include only the top 8 to 10 processes and structures/functions.
* The instructor could go over the task in class in order to clarify any misconceptions or misunderstandings.
* The instructor should keep in mind that a student’s rationale/justification is an important aspect in assessing a student’s performance. A student may identify the correct area of the brain but not provide a good rationale for his/her choice.

1. **Student support:**

* The following suggestions are examples of scaffolding that can be used to meet the diverse student needs within the classroom.
* Provide class time for research on students’ topics.
* Provide students with the rubric to be used to score their final product.
* Provide definitions of new vocabulary words ahead of time.
* For the final product, all learners will benefit from peer assistance while brainstorming their topics, as well as a peer- or teacher-edit of their papers before final submission.
* Some students will have good research skills, but some will need guidance in the determination of appropriate sources and where to look for them. It is important to spend class time in review of what constitutes an appropriate source in advance of students’ independent work time.

1. **Extensions or variations:**

* Students could present the results of their research to the class via an oral or multi-media presentation.
* If there is a particularly interesting and/or controversial topic, a debate could be organized where students choose sides on the topic and defend their views.

1. **Scoring and assessment considerations:**

EPIC developed the *College and Career Ready (CCR) Task Bank Scoring Rubric* to accompany this task. If your school or department uses a standardized rubric that would fit the content and requirements of this task, you may choose to use your existing rubric. The following notes and suggestions are meant to clarify the intent of the rubric and include considerations for the assessment of student work.

* When assigning the task, provide students with the rubric that will be used to score their final product and discuss it as a class.
* Unlike some rubrics, the *CCR Task Bank Rubric* does not predetermine “point values” for the scoring criteria. The rubric thus allows for flexibility with different instructors’ scoring systems and individual determination of the “weight” of each criterion.
* Student work that scores at the *Accomplished* level is considered to be entry-level college work.
* The *Exceeds* category on the rubric provides an example of how a student can go above and beyond the *Accomplished* level. These examples are intended to be only ONE way a work product can exceed expectations, thus allowing room for your professional judgment.
* If needed, consider including task-specific criteria as an additional scoring category to the rubric or providing a checklist of requirements for the task.