

I am pleased to have your son or daughter in Advanced Placement Psychology this year. Experience has taught me that some parents want to be actively involved in their student's coursework while others prefer to allow more independent functioning. Experience has also taught that some kids share much more information about their classes than others.

So, I want to tell you a few things about this course that I think every parent should know. I approach the A.P. course with certain assumptions. One is that students who enroll are *capable, motivated* individuals who are *willing to devote a considerable amount of out-of-class time* to preparation. If your son or daughter isn't studying for class on an almost daily basis, success is much less likely. Given the nature of a fast-paced, college-level class it is simply very difficult to excel by putting in an hour or two the night before chapter tests (a strategy, by the way, that often works quite well for bright students in less demanding courses). Your assistance in encouraging daily preparation and review is greatly appreciated and will pay huge benefits throughout the year. An e-book version is also being provided with our textbook for your student to use. It and other online resources like practice quizzes, demos and flashcards can be found at: <https://www.macmillanlearning.com/studentresources/highschool/hsbridgepage/myersap2e.html>.

Students will have nightly required reading and note taking and can expect to be studying for at least one quiz a week and one test every other week. Look at your student's schedule and past upper level course grades to be certain they will have the time and study skills necessary for them to be successful in this class. If they have a strenuous schedule, many time commitments that would interfere with studying and nightly reading or have a history of struggling with studying and test taking, you may want to have them take this course at another time when your student will have the increased time and necessary study skills and strategies to give them the best opportunity for success.

A second assumption is that almost everyone who takes the class will sit for the Advanced Placement Examination in Psychology in May. Tests certainly have their weaknesses, but I'm convinced that students who do well on the A.P. Exam know a great deal of psychology. In a sense, it becomes our "Super Bowl"--most of our efforts throughout the year are directed toward making sure we are ready for test day. To go through all the preparation and not take the test seems somehow anticlimactic. Why do all the work and not get college credit? Students do however have the option to not take the exam. In this case, all students electing to not take the College Board AP Psych Exam (including seniors) will take an older version of the exam as their final exam.

Grades are an area of interest to both parents and students. In my class, grades are weighted and determined by tests/projects (60%) in-class quizzes (20%), in-class work (5%) and homework/note taking (15%). Former students tell me my grading system is tough but fair. "A"s, particularly on tests, are difficult to come by, so your son or daughter should feel justifiably proud to earn them. "B"s indicate to me that a student is making excellent progress and will be ready for the A.P. Exam in May. Grades of "C" are certainly acceptable and show the student is learning quite a bit of psychology, but in the past "C" level students have at times struggled with the national exam. My goal is always that every student earn grades of "B-" or higher. Student grades are updated each week in class and are available online on ParentVUE at <http://pvue.ghaps.org/pxp/>.

Finally, please read the course syllabus. It is available online at <http://portengaclass.com>. Simply click on Mr. Portenga to access my classes and then choose the AP Psychology button underneath the banner. The syllabus along with the course objectives can be found under the *About this Class* drop down menu on the top left portion of the AP Psych page. To review our specific classroom rules and procedures simply click on the link for the Rules & Procedures page near the top of every page on the site. Reading these will provide you with most of the information necessary for success in A.P. Psychology. Hopefully, you've already viewed these with your student as they took their course objectives quiz using the website and have had a tour by me. A tutorial of how to best use this site is available through a link at the top of the AP Psych page. Please take a moment to watch the video to see what the site has to offer your student in preparing for this class and their tests.

If you have questions about any aspect of the course, please do not hesitate to contact me. The easiest way to reach me is e-mail ([portengaa@ghaps.org](mailto:portengaa@ghaps.org)). You are also welcome to phone me at school (850-6172). My planning period is from 1:45-2:42 PM. Daily assignments and topics are regularly updated on the website at [www.ghaps.org/portengaa](http://www.ghaps.org/portengaa). Just click on the A.P. Psychology tab.

I believe psychology is an ideal subject for a first college course. It teaches scientific reasoning, critical thinking, and study skills by covering information that many find inherently interesting. I still find it fascinating and intellectually stimulating. I hope that I can convey my excitement to your son or daughter this year!

Sincerely,

*Aaron Portenga*

Aaron Portenga  
Psychology Teacher