

AP STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Remember to have students answer the questions for the designated AP course. For example, if this focus group is Biology, they should answer all the questions based on the AP Bio course. Also, you do not need to ask the probing questions after each question if students have already responded to it.

I. Decision to participate in AP

1. What AP courses are you taking?

II. Impressions of AP class and teachers

2. What courses did you take to prepare you for taking this AP **[insert the designated AP course name]**?
 - Were there prerequisites? If not, did you take some classes that you thought would lead up to this?
 - Did anyone advise you on what to take?
 - Were your choices good ones? Why or why not?
3. How would you describe the content you are learning in this course? (Probe for indicators of depth, complexity, abstractness, etc.)
 - Is it challenging? In what ways?
 - When you finish class, does your mind feel tired? Do you really have to think in class?
 - In class do you find the answers to questions you've always wondered about?
 - Do you make connections in class between new areas of study and prior learning?
 - Do you now feel like a specialist in _____ (whatever the AP subject area is)?
 - Do you feel better informed now?
 - Do you feel that you have gained skills or knowledge you could apply to other areas?
4. Do you enjoy what you are doing in AP classes? Why or why not?
 - Do you enjoy (or not enjoy) it because of the teaching? The assignments? What you're learning? The people in your class?
5. In AP, are you given opportunities in class to practice or apply what you are learning to real life situations or to apply the knowledge in solving new problems?
 - How do you think you could use what you've learned in class in the real world?
 - Do you see how professionals solve problems with this knowledge?

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6. Contrast the instruction you receive in AP classes with other classes you are taking.
 - Do you find a significant difference in the instruction you receive in AP courses than the instruction you receive in other classes? Explain.
 - Do you find the AP teachers offer a faster pace of instruction in their classes compared to your other courses? Explain.
 - Do you find the AP teachers offer more or less or equal amounts of independent learning in their classes? Explain.
 - Why did you decide to take AP courses? (What was appealing, what did you hope to gain. . .?)
 - When did you decide AP was right for you?
 - What was the biggest factor motivating you to take AP courses? (Ask about the specific AP courses they are enrolled in.) What nonacademic and academic factors increase or decrease your motivation to learn?
 - Are there other options for gifted or advanced students? What? Why choose AP over those options?
 - Are you taking any other college level courses in another setting at this time? Have you in the past?
 - Would you consider yourself to be a high achiever? What has led you to that conclusion?
7. Were there any negative factors that discouraged you from taking certain AP courses? What?
 - Did the work, the course content, peers, parents, teachers ever make you think twice about taking AP?
8. What nonacademic and academic factors contribute to your continued enrollment in AP courses?
 - Are your friends and family supportive? If so, how? If not, why do you continue to take them?
9. Who or what has the biggest influence on you regarding educational decisions? Explain how.
 - Think about your peers, parents, and teachers and talk about their influence on you.
10. Are there any changes that need to occur in your AP course to better reflect your learning?
11. Have you dropped out of any AP courses and if so, why?
12. How does the grading factor into your decision of taking AP courses?
 - Do you consider the weighting of grades at all when you are registering for courses?

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III. General educational achievement/motivation/attitude

13. What are the greatest contributors to your educational achievement? Why?
 - What makes you want to do well?
 - What helps you do well?
 - What do you consider to be your biggest school-related achievement so far? (Were you proud to tell your parents? What things do your friends congratulate for?)

14. What are the greatest limitations to your achievement? Have there been people or programs that have helped you address those limitations? Were they effective? Why or why not?
 - What makes it hard for you to do well?
 - What do you do then?
 - Whom do you go to for help?

15. What are the best educational experiences you have had? [This can be in middle or high school.] What characterizes a good learning experience for you?

16. What is your definition of success? [Note: don't guide students to say in school—this answer can be for any aspect of their life.]
 - What nonacademic and academic factors contribute to your successes?
 - What about school helps you succeed?
 - What outside of school helps you succeed?
 - What about you helps you succeed?

17. There is research on teenagers that says even when teens are experiencing great academic success in a class, they don't want to be there. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Does it apply to you and explain why?
 - Have you ever felt this way? Do you feel this way about AP courses you are taking now?
 - Have you ever had friends who felt this way?

18. What is your attitude toward school? Toward particular courses?
 - Overall, how do you feel about school? Good, bad?
 - Are you learning a lot in class?

19. Do you feel any social pressure from peers who are or are not in the same program as you? If yes, who exerts that pressure? In what way?
 - For the peers who aren't in the same program, do you feel your school experience is the same or different from theirs?
 - Do you have brothers or sisters? If yes, explain how your school experiences are the same or different from theirs. Parents?

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IV. Other

20. In what ways do your teachers consider your interests and learning styles when they teach? Explain.
- Do your teachers lecture as well as write on the board and use overheads?
 - Do they show movies or pictures?
 - Do you ever have a choice of how you can turn in an assignment: write a paper, make a poster, make a video, etc?
 - Are the AP teachers' styles ones that do or don't suit you better?
21. What kind of extracurricular activities do you enjoy?
- What do you do for fun?
 - Do you ever get a chance to do anything like this in class? Which class and how?