Welcome to AP Computer Science Algorithms!

Instructor: Sage Cook

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Sage Cook, and I teach AP Computer Science Algorithms, AP Computer Science Principles, and Intro to Programming at _____ High School. I'm thrilled at the opportunity to work with your children this year and get to know them both as learners and human beings!

A bit about me: I was born in Santa Monica, California, but spent most of my childhood in Bellevue, Washington. I've always had that drive to create my own of everything I saw, so I gained a passion for coding and computers from a young age through making my own video games with the Game Maker engine.

As I got older, I realized, however, to my dismay, that most of my peers didn't have that intimate connection to technology that I did. I was lucky to have a parent who worked a tech job and was able to give me the knowledge and resources I needed to nurture this passion. I went to college at Western Washington University where I completed 3 years of a Computer Science Bachelors before I finally made up my mind to pursue a degree in Secondary Education instead.

I was inspired to become a teacher because I think everyone deserves the chance to experience the euphoria of making little icons move across a screen, of spending hours on a program and finally seeing it work perfectly, of feeling in control of the computer rather than the other way around. I believe it is critical to the success and happiness of future generations that they gain an understanding and appreciation for the technology that has come to dominate all of our lives, and that we come to view computers and coding as a common literacy rather than an eldritch magic wielded only by the lucky few.

That is why everything we do in my classes is motivated first and foremost by the development of practical skills, and secondly by fun, because computers have always been more about fun and exploration to me than anything else.

The rest of this document will hopefully give you a sense of what to expect from my classroom. I can't wait to embark on this journey with you and your students, and I'm thankful for all the support and experience you bring as parents, guardians, and mentors!

Sincerely,

Sage Cook

Our Course Values:

Diversity & Equity

In a field that boasts a long and continued history of racial and gender inequality, it is a top priority for me to promote diversity and equity in our classroom so that all students, regardless of race, gender, or any other aspect of their identity, feel welcomed and empowered in our community. As part of this, we will look at the history and current state of computing from multicultural perspectives and think critically about ways that we can create positive change in the system.

Creativity & Self Expression

Computer Science is not all numbers and logic. In fact, contrary to popular belief, it can be quite creative! I believe strongly in the importance of the arts and humanities to our work as computer scientists, and I also know that many bright minds can be turned away from CS if we don't acknowledge its potential for creative pursuits. So, I strive to provide students with exciting and interdisciplinary assignments where they can both explore their artistic selves and sharpen their problem-solving toolkits.

Community

Computer Science in a vacuum can be fun for some people, but where it really becomes useful is when we see how it interacts with the world around us! In this class we will make every effort to connect with the community through guest speakers and collaborations with classes from other subject areas, as well as giving back to our communities through student-led, socially minded coding projects.

Celebrating Mistakes

Learning requires making mistakes, and in Computer Science, we make a lot of them! Every day is filled with hilarious bugs and glorious mess-ups, and we are bound to get frustrated and give up easily unless we approach these with grace and good humor. In our classroom I invite students to celebrate their mistakes by documenting them in the weekly class forum and competing to see who can get their programs to fail in the most ridiculous ways. This serves the dual functions of releasing our tension/frustration and also building the good habits of documenting our work and learning from others.

Policies:

I strongly believe in choosing equitable grading practices that offer students multiple opportunities to prove their growth as learners and eliminate sources of stress wherever possible.

- Assignments will consist of in-class participation, weekly take-home check-ins, longer personal & group coding projects, and AP practice exams.
- For homework assignments, all deadlines are soft deadlines. I would rather have students turn in assignments late than rush through them or not do them at all, so I will accept late work at a penalty of 10% of the available points.

Parents/Guardians with Industry Experience: We Want YOU!

As stated above, I'm very passionate about bringing the wider community into the classroom. As I have never worked in the tech industry myself, I am always looking for guest presenters with that experience to give students some context and insider knowledge about what that world is like.

If you or someone you know has relevant experience in the field of CS and would be willing to spare the time to share your wisdom with us, we'd be thrilled to have you as a guest in our classroom! Please **email me** if you are interested in getting involved.

Teacher Contact Information:

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