

# **CAS**

## **Creativity, Action, Service**

John Andrews, DMHS IB Guidance Counselor

### **Why do we have to do CAS hours?**

• Creativity, action, service (CAS) is at the heart of the Diploma Program. It is one of the three essential elements in every student's Diploma Program experience. It involves students in a range of activities alongside their academic studies throughout the Diploma Program.

### **What are the requirements of CAS?**

• Students are required to do a total of 150 hours, 75 hours junior year and 75 hours senior year. The CAS requirement takes seriously the importance of life outside the world of scholarship, providing a refreshing counterbalance to the academic self-absorption some may feel within a demanding school environment.

### **What are the 3 strands of CAS?**

- **Creativity:** arts, and other experiences that involve creative thinking.
- **Action:** physical exertion contributing to a healthy lifestyle, complementing academic work elsewhere in the Diploma Program.
- **Service:** an unpaid and voluntary exchange that has a learning benefit for the student. The rights, dignity and autonomy of all those involved are respected.

### **For student development to occur, CAS should involve:**

- real, purposeful activities, with significant outcomes
- personal challenge—tasks must extend the student and be achievable in scope
- thoughtful consideration, such as planning, reviewing progress, reporting
- reflection on outcomes and personal learning.

### **The CAS program aims to develop students who are:**

- reflective thinkers—they understand their own strengths and limitations, identify goals and devise strategies for personal growth
- willing to accept new challenges and new roles
- aware of themselves as members of communities with responsibilities towards each other and the environment
- active participants in sustained, collaborative projects
- balanced—they enjoy and find significance in a range of activities involving intellectual, physical, creative and emotional experiences.

**As a result of their CAS experience as a whole, including their reflections, there should be evidence that students have:**

**•increased their awareness of their own strengths and areas for growth**

-They are able to see themselves as individuals with various skills and abilities, some more developed than others, and understand that they can make choices about how they wish to move forward.

**•undertaken new challenges**

-A new challenge may be an unfamiliar activity, or an extension to an existing one.

**•planned and initiated activities**

-Planning and initiation will often be in collaboration with others. It can be shown in activities that are part of larger projects, for example, ongoing school activities in the local community, as well as in small student led activities.

**•worked collaboratively with others**

-Collaboration can be shown in many different activities, such as team sports, playing music in a band, or helping in a kindergarten. At least one project, involving collaboration and the integration of at least two of creativity, action and service, is required.

**•shown perseverance and commitment in their activities**

-At a minimum, this implies attending regularly and accepting a share of the responsibility for dealing with problems that arise in the course of activities.

**•engaged with issues of global importance**

-Students may be involved in international projects but there are many global issues that can be acted upon locally or nationally (for example, environmental concerns, caring for the elderly).

**•considered the ethical implications of their actions**

-Ethical decisions arise in almost any CAS activity (for example, on the sports field, in musical composition, in relationships with others involved in service activities). Evidence of thinking about ethical issues can be shown in various ways, including journal entries and conversations with CAS advisers.

**•developed new skills**

-As with new challenges, new skills may be shown in activities that the student has not previously undertaken, or in increased expertise in an established area.

All eight outcomes must be present for a student to complete the CAS requirement. Some may be demonstrated many times, in a variety of activities, but completion requires only that there is **some** evidence for every outcome.

**Responsibilities of the student**

- self-review at the beginning of their CAS experience and set personal goals for what they hope to achieve through their CAS program
- plan, do and reflect (plan activities, carry them out and reflect on what they have learned)
- undertake at least one interim review and a final review with their CAS adviser
- take part in a range of activities, including at least one project, some of which they have initiated themselves
- keep records of their activities and achievements, including a list of the principal activities undertaken
- show evidence of achievement of the eight CAS learning outcomes.

**Appropriate activities might include:**

- physical assistance to the elderly
- a structured series of visits to a home for orphans
- helping with rehabilitation at the local hospital
- teaching basic literacy
- establishing and coaching a sports team for disadvantaged youngsters
- establishing and leading a musical ensemble for visually impaired people
- involvement in a theatrical production to which refugee children are invited
- teaching the use of computers
- environmental restoration and protection.

**What is not CAS?**

- It is not a points-scoring exercise.
- It is not a passive experience.

**Examples of activities which are inappropriate:**

- Any class, activity or project which is already part of the student's Diploma Program.
- An activity for which a student is personally rewarded either financially or with some other benefit (unless this benefit is passed on in full to a worthy cause).
- Doing simple, tedious and repetitive work, like returning school library books to the shelves.
- Working in a retirement or children's home when the student:
  - has no idea of how the home operates
  - is just making sandwiches
  - has no contact at all with the residents or children
  - actually does no service for other people.
- (The above example can be applied to many other activities purporting to be CAS.)
- A passive pursuit, such as a visit to a museum, the theatre, art exhibition, concert or sports event, unless it clearly inspires work in a related activity in which a student is already engaged.
- All forms of duty within the family.
- Religious devotion and any activity which can be interpreted as proselytizing.
- Work experience which only benefits the student.
- Fund-raising with no clearly defined end in sight.
- An activity where there is no leader or responsible adult on site to evaluate and confirm student performance.
- Activities which cause division amongst different groups in the community.

**Guiding Questions**

- Is the activity a new role for me?
- Is it a real task that I am going to undertake?
- Does it have real consequences for other people and for me?
- What do I hope to learn from getting involved?
- How can this activity benefit other people?
- What can I reflect on during this activity?