



The impact of creativity, action, service (CAS) on students and communities

Snapshot developed by the IB Research department based on a report prepared by: Mary Hayden, Anthony Hemmens, Shona McIntosh, Andrés Sandoval-Hernández, Jeff Thompson
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Key findings

- Participation in creativity, action, service (CAS) was perceived to contribute to changes in Diploma Programme (DP) students in terms of their **personal dispositions, behaviour** and **interpersonal relationships**.
 - Specifically, coordinators, students and alumni believed that CAS helps students to become better at **“taking on new challenges”, “learning to persevere”** and **“developing better interpersonal skills”**.
- Coordinators in this study suggested that a successful CAS programme depends on identifying CAS activities that students consider to be both **meaningful** and **enjoyable**.
- The study found two variables to be important for successful CAS implementation: students perceiving CAS as a **valuable use of their time** and **goal-setting** before beginning CAS activities.
- Students identified five factors as supporting a successful CAS experience.
 - **Variety:** Students’ activities are varied.
 - **Challenge:** CAS helps students to push themselves.
 - **Self-knowledge:** CAS results in students learning new things about themselves.
 - **New interests:** CAS leads to new passions and interests.
 - **Reflections:** Meaningful and flexible reflections help students to make sense of their experiences.

Background

This study explored the impact on students and communities of one component of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP): creativity, action, service (CAS)¹. The study involved current DP students, staff responsible for delivering or supporting CAS, and DP alumni. Research was carried out in Asia-Pacific (AP) and Africa, Europe, Middle East (AEM). Student, alumni and teacher perceptions of CAS, details of CAS projects and examples of good practice were collected via online surveys. Survey responses were submitted from 7,973 students, 490 coordinators and 903 alumni from the AEM and AP regions.

Findings

Overview of coordinator, student and alumnus/a perceptions of CAS

Participation in CAS was perceived to contribute to changes in DP students in terms of their personal dispositions, behaviour and interpersonal relationships. Coordinators, students and alumni believed that CAS helps students to become better at “taking on new challenges”, “learning to persevere” and “developing better interpersonal skills”. Additionally, nearly 80% of alumni agreed with the statement “CAS helped me to learn about life, the world and other people”.

¹Throughout the full report, the 2008 *Creativity, action, service Guide* vocabulary—creativity, action, service—is employed to reflect the language of the stakeholders at the time the study was undertaken.

Perceptions of CAS as challenging but rewarding

Students perceive CAS to be difficult, seeing it as a challenging element within a challenging programme, but also agree it is rewarding. Students identify “service” as the most difficult of the three strands (85.4% agreement) but also rated this as the most rewarding CAS strand (figure 1).

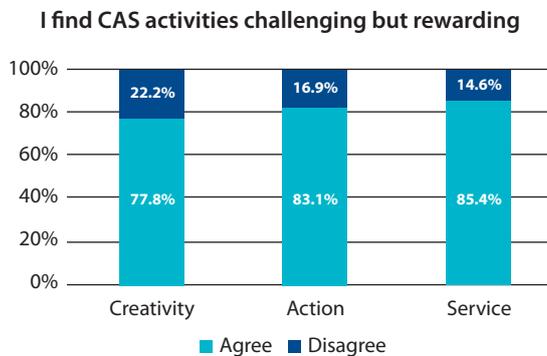


Figure 1: CAS activities “challenging but rewarding” (according to students).

Attributes and skills developed through CAS

More than 70% of students agreed that their participation in CAS has helped to develop the learner profile attributes. CAS seemed to have the least impact on development of the “inquirer” attribute (73.9%), and the greatest impact on development of the “communicator” attribute (89.8%).

Students also generally believed that CAS would have a positive impact on them post-DP. Figure 2 shows that 80.7% of students perceived CAS to be helpful in preparing them for future life, while 73.4% believed that CAS is helpful in preparing them for university.

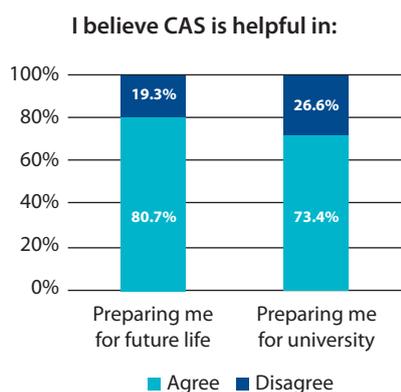


Figure 2: “I believe CAS is helpful in ...” according to students.

Negative perceptions of CAS

In some cases, CAS was seen as a distraction from studies, which may reflect the relative importance placed on academic achievement by some schools at the expense of CAS. Another issue raised by students was the apparent paradox of mandatory service; others perceived CAS activities as turning their non-academic leisure time into something more burdensome. The arduous nature of written reflections was often identified as a drawback. When it is possible to support CAS activities that are rich, well-focused and meaningful to students, the experience is more likely to have a positive impact on them. Additionally, schools can take specific actions, such as attempting to make reflections more flexible.

Good practices for implementing CAS

The following list provides a cross-section of findings drawn from students and coordinators.

- Coordinators in this study suggested that a successful CAS programme depends on identifying CAS activities that students consider to be both meaningful and enjoyable.
- Schools that are explicit about the aims of CAS, such as supporting the development of learner profile attributes, may facilitate students’ understanding of the programme and feed into its success.
- Consistently, two variables were found to be important for successful CAS implementation: students perceiving CAS as a valuable use of their time and goal setting before beginning CAS activities.
- The findings indicate that parents play an important role in explaining students’ perception of the overall benefits of CAS. If schools are able to encourage parents to become more involved in—and supportive of—CAS, this will increase the potential impact of CAS on students.
- Students identified five factors as supporting a successful CAS experience.
 - Variety: Students’ activities are varied.
 - Challenge: CAS helps students to push themselves.
 - Self-knowledge: CAS results in students learning new things about themselves.
 - New interests: CAS leads to new passions and interests.
 - Reflections: Meaningful and flexible reflections help students to make sense of their experiences.

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