

Moving Forward: Transforming DP & CAS through Service Learning

Cathryn Berger Kaye, M.A.

November, 2010, a work in progress

The IB Position on DP & CAS

With the International Baccalaureate exploring ways to align the Diploma Programme and CAS—Creativity, Action, Service—with a more authentic service learning experience, schools have the opportunity to rethink their current approach. With an accurate and well-articulated understanding and framework for service learning, the alignment becomes more apparent.

At Hong Kong Academy, this exploration is in process to create a roadmap for K-12 alignment of service learning as a valued teaching pedagogy. During this five day consultation, the school leadership and teachers saw how my approach to service learning, conveyed through professional development in large and small groups, blends seamlessly with the IB approach to PYP and MYP and furthers the infusion of the Learner Profile attributes. In fact, Steve Dare, head of school, stated that service learning could be the thread within the school that ensures the Learner Profile attributes are being internalized. It may be that service learning ultimately reveals evidence that internalization of the Learner Profile attributes has occurred.

Overview of the Service Learning Process Related to CAS

When examining the development of a revised DP and CAS approach, the consistent message considered was regarding infusing the research-based *process*, the Five Stages of Service Learning.

Investigation

Preparation and Planning

Action

Reflection

Demonstration

When teachers know how to infuse these stages within the academic and social and emotional landscape of units of inquiry and in other programs and initiatives, the likelihood of desired student outcomes can be reached. When the process of service learning is integrated *prior* to the DP and CAS years, we agreed that students will arrive more capable of a complete and gratifying experience.

For example, in conversation about CAS with a guest from the Canadian International School (CIS) meeting with Hong Kong Academy CAS leadership in a session I led, comments were made that in its current state at CIS, “Students are not showing commitment to an issue they are passionate about, or planning an event and getting their teeth into something. The program now needs to focus on how to do this.” In his school, and many other IB schools, adults do all the planning of events and students simply show up and get their hours. One student from Hong Kong Academy had inquired if giving blood four times in the school year could meet the CAS requirement.

This is typical in many schools implementing CAS. The loss is significant. Students may *do*, however they may not *understand*. They may *participate*, however the sense of purpose may be to meet the CAS requirement rather than to have an actual impact or be personally connected with a cause or issue they care about. And the learning of *how* to construct a plan of action—how to investigate and prepare—is completely missed. This can be further validated by weak reflection that is usually more like reporting that delving into the cognitive and affective aspects of the experience. Of course, there are situations where students can be engaged I moved by tutoring or building a home for Habitat for Humanity. Students may find themselves compelled to learn or do more because they happened to sign up for this particular Saturday and they discovered a personal connection and rise to leadership. As educators, however, leaving this up to chance seems way too arbitrary. Establishing a design based on what we see as reliable makes sense. The pedagogy of service learning offers a proven, practical design with ample room for youth ingenuity, personal

connection, creativity, and action.

Identifying Skills to Establishing a Process

Steve Dare suggested we develop statements that clarify, *What would a 12th grader be able to do?* as a result of being in CAS. One might think we want students to arrive with these abilities and yes, many skills and attributes could and would be in play depending on the prior way students learn, particularly how they are involved with processes of inquiry, leadership opportunities, and high level service learning. However, we can keep in mind that CAS does avail opportunities to keep uncovering what skills are needed, and is an ideal venue for strengthening, honing and applying these skills during CAS so competencies evolve to the desired level of proficiency.

With this in mind, consider these aspects of development that a 12th grader might have acquired by the conclusion of CAS, to become a person who demonstrates the ability to:

- recognize personal interests, skills, and talents and apply them in meaningful ways
- conduct social analysis through action research to identify a meaningful issue to address and authenticate a need
- design questions that stimulate further inquiry into the chosen topic or issue
- understand how to develop a plan of action to address that problem
- establish a network of supportive peers and adults and be likewise supportive of others
- communicate effectively to contact people who have information or resources
- prepare a well-articulated proposal for a course of action
- connect local and global issues and know avenues of responding that are being or could be applied in diverse settings
- promote a cause using well-chosen appropriate mediums
- monitor progress and advancements made
- acquire assistance as needed
- integrate varied technologies and platforms at all stages of the process
- value reflection and do so in ways that are challenging and ongoing
- convincingly relay ideas and solutions using effective, engaging presentation skills
- receive and consider feedback from others.

Transferable Skills

In *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* (pg 241), I identify the process of service learning as “a means to internalize skills and use them in any learning situation. These foundation incremental skills can be deliberately woven into the Five Stages of Service Learning enabling students to:

- ask questions
- listen and retain
- be observant
- identify similarities and differences
- recognize diverse perspectives
- work independently, with partners, and in groups
- identify and apply their skills and talents
- acquire assistance as needed
- be resourceful
- gather & manage information
- summarize & take notes
- effectively solve problems
- test hypotheses
- follow-through with reasonable steps

Explicit inclusion of these and other skills dramatically deepens the service learning experience. . . . Rather than assume students have these competencies, service learning affords opportunities to develop skills in deliberate and explicit ways as students ask questions to investigate community needs, develop step-by-step plans, construct persuasive arguments, and role-play to ask for help with a challenge arises. The results are students who can ‘read’ the world around them, and know how to apply their skills toward learning and life.”

As you can see in **Table One: Integrating the Five Stages of Service Learning into with Student Competencies and Learner Profile Attributes**, the process of service learning provides a solid framework. Within that frame students will find a sequence that provides assurance, *this is where I am and where I am headed*. Having a language for how to identify and move towards solving problems that matter both to the student and the community assists the learner. When specific skills are needed to move from one stage to the next, students can be forthcoming and in doing so, learn how to ask for assistance, an oft overlooked yet beneficial internalized skill. All of the organizers noted are found within *The Complete Guide to Service Learning*.

Table One: Integrating the Five Stages of Service Learning into CAS with Student Competencies and Learner Profile Attributes

Note that at throughout the Five Stages of Service Learning, students:

- integrate varied technologies and platforms at all stages of the process
- reflect
- acquire assistance as needed

The Five Stages of Service Learning	Skill Development	Organizers/Evidence	Learner Profile Attributes
Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize personal interests, skills, and talents and apply them in meaningful ways • Conduct social analysis through action research to identify a meaningful issue to address and authenticate a need 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal Inventory 2. Gathering Information About a Community Need 	Reflective Inquirers
Preparation & Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how to develop a plan of action to address that problem • Establish a network of supportive peers and adults and be likewise supportive of others • Connect local and global issues and know avenues of responding that are being or could be applied in diverse settings • Communicate effectively to contact people who have information or resources • Prepare articulated proposal for course of action 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take Action 2. Take Action 3. Who Is Helping? Government and Community Groups 4. Community Contact Information 5. Service Learning Proposal 	Knowledgeable Thinkers Open-Minded
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a cause using well-chosen appropriate mediums • Monitor progress and advancements made 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promotion — Turning Ideas into Action 2. Progress Monitoring 3. Capture the Action 	Caring Principled Risk-Takers
Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value reflection and do so in ways that are challenging and ongoing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Four Square Reflection Tool 	Reflective Balanced
Demonstration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convincingly relay ideas and solutions using effective, engaging presentation skills • Receive and consider feedback from others 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Once You Know It, Show It! 2. Community Response 3. Student Self-Evaluation 	Communicators Open-Minded Reflective

Additional Aspects to CAS

- *Identify a meaningful issue to address.* Often students focus on the *action* they want to take rather than the *underlying issue* or social concern. As a remedy, each CAS initiative would be based on a theme. From the theme they may narrow the overarching topic and then investigate, i.e., conduct research. For example, the overarching theme may be environment and the issue would be pollution. In *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* are thirteen themes noted in the thirteen chapters of part two of the book. These can provide a solid set of themes as this list has evolved because of youth interest and action. Plus, each of the thematic chapters have examples of what youth have done at varying grade levels and websites to learn more. This becomes a resource for students.
- *Literature Connection.* Based on the theme, students read three selections—a combination of different kinds of books, articles, journals, or organization publications. Again, *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* has annotated bibliographies on each theme to be of assistance in this process. And there is a great case to be made for one of the books to be a picture book. Students are often amazed at how sophisticated topics are presented for young children, or they may find that what appears as a picture book is really more appropriate for an older audience.
- *Careers Study.* With integration of community partners or connection with agencies or mentors, perhaps students can be expected to interview two people about their career paths and include this in their exhibition. This could be further developed to have one interview with a person in the public sector and one in the private sector, both related to the same theme. By collecting the person's resume ahead of time, the questions and interview can be most revealing and help students prepare their own resumes.
- *Technology Integration.* Technology integration seems so evident as almost not necessary to note! With a multitude of options and platforms and the with which youth already integrate social networks and video and photos and blogging, coming up with ways this can also keep students engaged and advancing their techno-abilities will be most exciting.

As the discuss of CAS continues, more aspects may be developed that will enrich the experience.

A Case for Service Learning in PYP & MYP

The idea that students can suddenly arrive in grades 11 and 12 and be able to provide service that has personal meaning with confidence and competence seems unlikely unless they have been engaged in the process before. If students do learn from modeling and experience, then that's what is needed. Hong Kong Academy sees the K-12 continuum of service as absolutely vital to meeting the school's mission of preparing citizens for the 21st Century, and to be healthy growing members of society. To this end, during the consultation, I met with teachers at all grade levels in the elementary and middle school to review and apply the principles of service learning within their units of inquiry. All grade levels and subjects have either begun to determine the integration or are well on their way with plans. How this will be integrated into the school's planning documents and how the *Planning for Service Learning* organizer I used may be part of this documentation is yet to be determined. What is for certain is this: service learning will be embedded in the elementary and middle school years within academics. This will provide an ideal environment for students as they move through Hong Kong Academy or arrive from another school as preparation for CAS.

DP Academics

Since the DP is new at Hong Kong Academy, teachers need to work their way through the curriculum and program before they can see possible ways to incorporate service learning as a teaching method. This makes sense. There does of course remain opportunities to, over time, identify authentic ways of incorporating service learning activities into the classroom that support the curriculum.

We did find, however, that during the DP programme, considering infusion of service learning into the Group 4 Project is a good fit, as noted in the explanation to follow.

Transitions and Opportunities

Through conversations with Hong Kong Academy leadership, we all became cognizant of how IB has built-in opportunities for service learning *if* one looks at the program through a service lens. And we did. Five particular areas lend themselves to creating this ideal alignment for service learning, for developing an internalized vocabulary for participation in service, and to guide students toward discovery of what issues they find most compelling. This of course can and will change, and that's ideal as well, as students develop a repertoire of understanding across a range of topics and concerns. How appropriate for students: to become open-minded (learner profile attribute) to issues through a developmental and age-appropriate program, and then to reflect (learner profile attribute) about which issue is the one to embrace for CAS.

Table Two: Transitions and Opportunities that Set the Stage for CAS Competencies shows the sequence that could establish strong protocols for service and continue the alignment. Note that Learner Profile attributes are also noted.

Could this sequence provide preparation for CAS? Would this prepare students to genuinely desire to participate in meaningful learning and service whereby they would identify a need, and whether working alone or in collaboration with peers, show the sustained commitment to a cause? While this particular approach has yet to be taken within the IB, there is evidence in other schools that engagement in high quality service learning prior to their culminating year propels students to develop an idea and provide service that makes a notable contribution. Since school is first and foremost a place of learning, I would always emphasize how the learning is of greatest importance. However, when the learning and service are embedded in academics and shown as of essential importance through the leadership and continual weaving of this thread through the years and key moments and transitions, we will come to know what students care about, and marvel at what they strive to do and what they accomplish.

Table Two: Transitions and Opportunities that Set the Stage for CAS Competencies

Select documents from *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* (CGSL) or through other publications by Cathryn Berger Kaye (CBK) are noted as are other potential links under Resources.

Grade–Opportunity	What Students Do	Resources
<p>Grade 5–Exhibition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquirers • Knowledgeable • Thinkers • Communicators 	<p>Students apply the service learning vocabulary they have been exposed to through Units of Inquiry. As part of their process they find out about an aspect of their community that has a service implication. They keep a blog, have mentors, consult with peers, maintain a running dialogue with their support team (including parents), and meet deadlines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Service + Learning + Service Learning (CBK) – Service Learning Vocabulary (CGSL)
<p>Grade 9–Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable • Open-Minded • Risk-takers • Reflective 	<p>This would be an essential time to ensure students have a working knowledge about service learning, with inclusion in their academics. If they participate in an overseas service opportunity, doing Investigation and Preparation & Planning would ensure the process is learned and the service more suitable for the recipients. In all cases, the concept of reciprocity would be made explicit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Service + Learning + Service Learning (CBK)
<p>Grade 10–Personal Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquirers • Caring • Reflective 	<p>With an advisor’s support, students select an area of exploration. They keep a process journal and aim for an exhibition that would be shaped, in part, by the guiding question: <i>Where is the service within this experience?</i> Students would then showcase an element of authentic <i>action</i> within their exhibition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gathering Information About a Community Need (CGSL) – Taking Action (CGSL) – Global Youth Service Day, a way for students to act tell their story; see www.gysd.org
<p>Grade 11–Group 4 Project with Biology and Chemistry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquirers • Knowledgeable • Caring • Communicators 	<p>While research is key to this opportunity, the premise can now have at the core: <i>Who can be influenced by your research?</i> By providing this research to an identified recipient—a person of influence, or a platform that gives local or international exposure to the research, purpose will elevate the process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gathering Information About a Community Need (CGSL) – an upcoming website for <i>STREAM–STudents Reporting Environmental Action in Media</i> could be a likely place if students assume roles as youth citizen journalists about an environmental issue
<p>Grade 12–Extended Essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquirers • Knowledgeable • Principled • Open-Minded • Balanced 	<p>For the subject of exploration, students engage in Action Research—Media, Interview, Survey, Observation/Experience. They develop a case <i>for</i> action. This can be a baseline for the need that compels students to take action during CAS. Should a student want to embark on another topic for CAS, he or she would have the background to successfully complete meaningful authentic research that validates the need and sets the stage for action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gathering Information About a Community Need (CGSL)

For any of these opportunities, the In Our Global Village program could be a way for students to collectively tell their story or findings to a world-wide audience; see www.inourvillage.org and click on In Our Global Village.