

An Interview with Chris Mannix

a transcript of a video interview

conducted by Cathryn Berger Kaye

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Chris Mannix, is the International Baccalaureate Career-related Certificate (IBCC) manager, and curriculum and assessment area leader for the Diploma Programme Hexagon Core.

Cathryn Berger Kaye: Service has long been part of the International Baccalaureate (IB)—what is that about and why has this been a mainstay of the approach to learning?

Chris Mannix: The IB was developed in the 1960s, fundamentally around the values of Kurt Hahn, and his idea of a well-rounded student. He wanted to look at aspects of students' education beyond just the academic skills. He wanted students to be involved in such things as physical activity, creativity and service. His concept of service was to serve others, and in particular to serve the community.

I think it was best brought to life in the 1960s in Atlantic College in South Wales, which was where they brought the ideas of CAS, as it is now known in the Diploma, to life. One of the key elements of the CAS program at the school was service. It has long been a very, very important aspect of the Diploma Program. And is also an important aspect now of all three programs in the IB. Service is a fundamental aspect, part of the values and principles we hold dear in the IB.

CBK: Now you see some changes being made with the concept of service. We have talked about the notion of service learning. How will that make changes in the IB programme as you see it today?

CM: I think it's got the potential to make fundamental changes to what our concept of service is. Up until now, we have looked at service as if the students are giving something to other parts of the community. But there is no reciprocity. Sometimes I worry that students think they are doing others a favor. I always used to worry at the school where I used to be at that service was to have a casual clothes day, pay \$5 and that money would be given to a particular charity. Which is not my idea of proper service. There's no real action. Action is a really important aspect of service.

I want to take community service beyond that. I want to take it into the area of service learning whereby in fact it underpins what else we do in the Diploma Programme, so it underpins other subjects, and underpins other aspects of the core such as Theory of Knowledge and Extended Essay. Because it should *add to*. And I don't want CAS particular service compartmentalized. I want CAS, service in particular to be a natural part of the learning process. I want to see the Diploma move towards service learning. We have mention of it up until now, but we haven't pushed it and emphasized it because I think service learning is where I would like to take the Diploma Programme toward.

CBK: You mention the reciprocity element as key and that's embedded in service learning. Are there any other factors you see young people can gain in a dramatic way?

CM: I think greater engagement in issues of global importance. I think service learning and a good project can help enormously if we look at what can be done locally but that it has global implications is really important. I think a service project done with a team of students could be immensely powerful if we do a collaborate project. There is the possibility of schools from different countries joining up to have a collaborative service project together—that would be a powerful model for intercultural understanding and awareness and action. I want students to actually be doing something that has meaning and so that's another powerful aspect of service learning. This will create and build on existing knowledge and existing skills and create new knowledge and new skills and areas of interest for them. I am a great believer that this fosters knowledge development, civic development, social development, personal development, the four key areas that students benefit from when they undertake service learning projects.

CBK: Often when I am with schools they talk about the hours, that there is an emphasis on hours, especially with the CAS program, and students need to fill in hours. This is again a change on the emphasis as I am hearing.

CM: Hours is totally the wrong way to go. When students are only interested in doing CAS activities so they meet the hours requirement—this is absolutely not the spirit of CAS. There has to be intrinsic value in doing CAS, not doing the hours. It's important for schools to create that environment in CAS so students do CAS because they want to do CAS, and so it's not a chore. And it's all about meeting learning outcomes, new learning. I don't want schools or kids to talk about hours and ticking off hours.

CBK: So CAS is a culmination of a long history in IB. Where would service learning be throughout the program or is there a potential so when students get to CAS they have a history of service to draw from?

CM: My ideal would be within the IB itself and across all programs, a continuum of service learning beginning at the very start of a student's IB education in primary school and as they go forward it's a continuation. So when they get to the Diploma they know all about service learning, it's part of who they are. It's part of a complete IB education. That would be my goal for the IB education. It's not just let's say the Diploma Programme, it's in fact part of the entire continuum of IB programs, that so service learning is embedded within IB education for all ages.

CBK: So this is something that's new for many people in IB. How might this transition occur so people have a level of comfort and confidence in moving forward?

CM: I think IB has an obligation to provide as many workshops as possible so teachers become more comfortable with the idea of service learning. We must include service learning in our IB documents as well. I would like to think that in the future when we are looking at a CAS guide for example, there is a significant amount of information on service learning but equally important is giving examples. That's probably really important for schools and teachers, having clear examples of what service learning is about, and how it can be brought into the subject areas and included in Theory of Knowledge. Specific examples that teachers can say, "Ah, yes, that's service learning." They need to understand the difference between community service and service learning because there's a big step and it is that step which is crucial in service learning.

CBK: So now there is interest already occurring in different IB schools in different programs. What advice do you have for people who want to begin dipping their feet in the water and seeing what service learning is about. Is this something they can start or is this something they need to wait for?

CM: Absolutely schools should start investigating in service learning now. They don't have to wait for the IB to officially give the go ahead. Schools are already encouraged to do it; they should be taking it on. I think schools should be learning as much as they can and actually starting to introduce service learning activities within their schools. There are a number of schools around the world that actually already do service learning activities and the IB network is always happy to share, and I am sure schools who already do service learning would be glad to share ideas and example. I am sure the IB could organize something within our virtual communities to establish a service learning network, to encourage schools to start developing service learning activities now. Don't have to wait: now.

CBK: This may shift a school away from an emphasis on hours even now. Schools might say, "We are taking this approach," and they would be alright within the IB?

CM: Absolutely. Some schools already have a few problems with the idea that in CAS now they must do a project. And they haven't known what to do with this project. This project should be, if it were me in the school and I was the CAS coordinator, a service learning project with all my students involved. This is a perfect way of fulfilling the existing CAS requirement let alone what may or may not happen in the future.

CBK: Some people are questioning, they are saying the logistics are difficult, and connecting to academics when they are so complex already. Do you see there is enough flexibility in our schools and in our thinking that we can still embrace this?

CM: I really do. I don't think schools should think of service learning as an add on. That would not work because teachers are already overworked. They will say, "I'm not going to do that, I really haven't got enough time." What it really should be is brought into the teaching and learning process within the classroom. And when you are doing a particular topic which clearly has potential for a service learning activity, bring it in there because what that will do is deepen the students' knowledge of that particular topic and in fact broaden and increase their knowledge on that topic. In fact you do it within your class time and it will help your subject as it is.

CBK: Now you are launching a new effort called IBCC (International Baccalaureate Career-related Certificate) which will have service learning as well.

CM: The IBCC is a new initiative and service learning is a part of it. I want students to combine some community service but also have service learning. I think there is a role for what I call "compassionate service," such as volunteering. Kids will always react to crises, such as the floods in Pakistan and the earthquake in Haiti. They will always want to help and there are many ways to help. That's part of community service. I don't want to get rid of that. What I think is also equally as important is to undertake a sustained ongoing service learning project which supports the other areas of the IBCC course as well. I don't think service learning is just for IBCC, I think it's for every aspect of the IB programmes.

CM: **Service learning is one of the most exciting things that any school can do. It will enrich students' experiences and I would suspect they will be, as in the common phrase, "life long learners" and lifelong learners of service.**