

Jim Barrasso, CAS Coordinator

CAS is one of the three parts of the Core of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Curriculum (along with Theory of Knowledge and the Extended Essay) and plays a very important role in an IB education. CAS is designed to make sure that students not only learn from books and academic classes but also learn from their experiences.

The designers of the IB Program felt it was important that students not be one dimensional, and that they get out and interact with the world they live in. Creativity, Action and Service activities are designed to facilitate that.

One of the most enjoyable parts for me, as the CAS Coordinator, is sitting down with the students and interviewing them about their two-year CAS experience. I hear everything from stories about hiking to Ancient Cities high atop Peruvian Mountains to playing underwater hockey at the bottom of the Sandwich High School Pool. I see pictures posted of the Roman Coliseum and the Trevi Fountain, listen to drum solos and review student art portfolios. As CAS Coordinator, I'm blessed to have a unique "inside" view into what our school is all about – and it's a real fun, fulfilling part of my job.

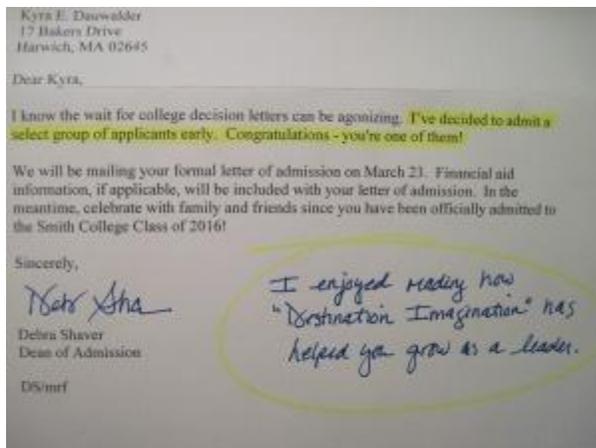
It's also a pleasure when I can help facilitate student service projects, and see students like Corey Bracken volunteer at the Cape Cod Hospital Consignment store and participate in the national homeless memorial, or hear about Alec Dixon teaching Riverview students how to play dungeons and dragons. I'm very, very proud of all the good we do in the community for others – but also for ourselves and our own growth.

So, what's it take to succeed in CAS? Over the course of two years, we like to see four main things accomplished:

“Big 4” things Sturgis students must do to meet CAS requirements:

- Participate in at least one ongoing collaborative project that includes at least two out of the three: creativity, action and service
- Be engaged in CAS activities an average of 2-3 hours a week
- Document evidence of all 8 learning outcomes, with a good balance of creativity, action and service at the end of two years
- Reflect in a meaningful way on a regular basis that shows the student's growth.

The following seniors were selected by Jim Barrasso to be featured in this article because of their meaningful CAS experiences:



Kyra Dauwalder

I think talking about the advantages of CAS for college and scholarship applications is extremely important, especially for those who don't take CAS very seriously.

As a matter of fact, CAS really will help those of you who are planning on going to college. I'm not saying it's more important than grades or SAT scores but extracurricular activities can definitely polish up your application. If you have an impressive CAS portfolio, colleges will get the impression that you will be a very good addition to their community. Additionally, in interviews, the main topic will more than likely end up being a discussion about your CAS activities. Because of the blog reflections for CAS, I was able to incorporate the eight learning outcomes into my answers during my interviews. I was able to express clearly and confidently what I had learned, what I liked about the activities, and what I had accomplished, etc. In these interviews, carrying on an enthusiastic conversation where you can speak intelligently and easily will only help you. Also, in every interview I had, I was able to connect with my interviewer through my activities: maybe they coached volleyball or participated in Relay for Life or helped coordinate DI on Cape Cod. At Hobart and William Smith (HWS), I was interviewed by an English teacher who grew up in Columbia. When I said I was in Club de Libros and enjoyed reading Spanish literature, we started speaking in Spanish and I walked out with a gift from her: a Spanish book by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The CAS connection can end up helping you get into the college! Really! Of course grades are also a factor but in the end, I was awarded the Trustee Scholarship at HWS and I am now in the running for a full scholarship. I believe my interview was a contributing factor to help me win that scholarship.

Speaking of scholarships, CAS becomes even more important! There are millions of scholarship out there for all types of interests and accomplishments. If you are active in CAS, there will be a lot more opportunities to apply for scholarships. CAS gives you experience in describing your activities. You will also have more unique experiences than other applicants. Extracurricular activities are a huge part of scholarships. If your grades aren't high enough for the majority of scholarships, CAS becomes your new best friend when looking for the scholarships for which you are eligible.

When you apply for "match" and "reach" schools, remember you are in a pool of thousands of other students who have taken AP or IB classes and have similar SAT scores and grades. If you

are a more active student with a great extracurricular background, CAS is the perfect boost to push you over hundreds of other students as a better prospective student.



Fallin Dennen

CAS has been an amazing experience for me, not only because of the different activities I had the opportunity to be involved in but also the life lessons that I will take away from each activity. I learned a lot about working with others and using my creative abilities but I think the most important lesson I learned was to persevere through trials – even when the turnout is not what you expected. This thread has been prevalent in every activity I have been involved in; however, Girl's Varsity Soccer is the activity that stands out the most. I have been on the team since I was a freshman at Sturgis. The experience I had has shaped the way I look at a problem and approach it. Soccer has taught me what it means to persevere. One example of this is during the past year, I was blessed with the opportunity to be Co-Captain of the team. This taught me a lot about what it means to be a leader and how to encourage your teammates to do their best. Over the last four years, I stayed with soccer even when I had doubts about my ability as a player. I have learned that “practice makes permanent, not just perfect” and if you put your mind to something, there is no limit to your ability. This mindset helped me become a better player and persevere through the long practices and trying games. Regardless of our two state games over the course of my four years at Sturgis, I learned that it never hurts to try and push yourself beyond what you think you can do. An example of this perseverance for me was the fact that I didn't shoot a goal at all my freshman year, I shot two my sophomore year and then in my senior year I scored the tying (and only) goal at the Nantucket game, pushing us one step further into the State tournament. If I had not tried or pushed myself in practice, that opportunity never would have presented itself. Being involved in activities like Soccer, Yearbook, Prom Committee, Riverview Mentors and One Day, One Goal just to name a few, I have learned to persevere and work with others in order to achieve a common goal. As a freshman I would look at a problem and be afraid to even engage in fixing it. However, through the various activities I was involved in for CAS, I was able to learn life lessons that have become a part of who I am.



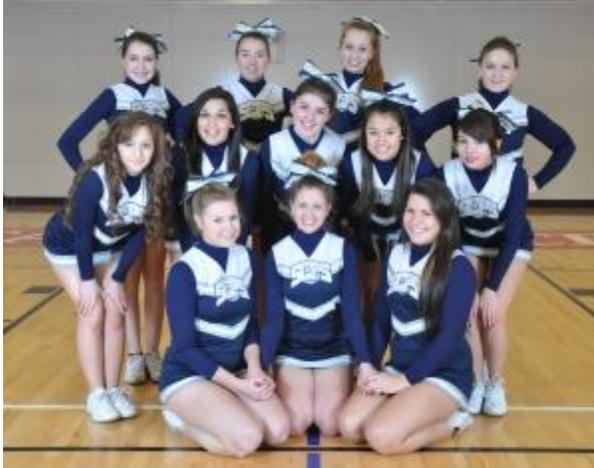
Hannah Driscoll

When Mr. Hyer first introduced us to CAS at the end of sophomore year, I admittedly didn't think it was a very big deal. I thought, "I'll do some community service for a few weeks, and call it a day." I had absolutely no idea how big a component CAS would really become for me. This Fall, a little over a year later, I found myself in Mrs. Fogg's office, discussing what I thought the IB had given to me, in regards to my life after Sturgis. After reflecting for a moment, I responded "Through CAS and my reflections, I have realized that the IB is so much more than a program, it's a way of living and a way of becoming a better person. It's about the content of a person's being, not solely their ability to score high marks on the exams."

As I sit with my ManageBac page open, it immediately comes to mind that my



CAS portfolio over these last two years surrounds a large goal: the evolution of my photography career. Although this is not the only project I pursued in my years as an IB Diploma Candidate, it is undoubtedly the thing I spent the most time working at. Mr. Hyer has worked in the photography industry and mentored me. He taught me how to set up and break down the lighting equipment I need when shooting sports and theater photos for Sturgis. Now, a year later, I am able to do it entirely myself, and shoot the pictures without the aid of a more experienced photographer.



I have learned more than I ever imagined through taking on the bulk of photography needs here at Sturgis. I have learned how to trust my instincts in shooting what I believe makes a good photograph. I have also learned to manage my time wisely. I realize that there are times when I cannot do it all and have to ask for help: a skill I believe will be incredibly helpful in my future life.

This year, thanks to Mr. Barrasso, I have gained more understanding about the ethical side of photography. As a photographer, it is my goal and responsibility to create pieces of digital art that accurately represent a moment, time, and place in a positive light. However, there are instances when a photograph of a person or scene are misinterpreted or misconstrued and can be portrayed in a negative light. That is when I need to remember that the people in my photographs are not people I myself have simply “created” but that they are



human beings (for the most part!) with feelings. They can have reactions to seeing themselves photographed, and I need to be sensitive and respectful of that. It is my hope that in the coming years, other Sturgis students will rise to the bar I have set and strive to include a vibrant depiction of this special community the way I have, through photographs taken with integrity and skill.



Zach Fayne

Although the International Baccalaureate program has impacted many different aspects of my life, one of the most important things that I have done is the CAS program. CAS stands for creativity, action, and service, but what it stands for in reality is life-changing experiences, self-awareness, and the ability to make a difference in the world. At first I was unaware of what I should do for CAS because it was very ambiguous. However, as my junior year progressed, I learned that community service is not simply something you do for school; it is a way of life. My first volunteer experience was in Costa Rica, where I took a trip with Sturgis to volunteer in poor farming communities. The trip was not only a great personal experience, it was eye opening to see the problems of the world and the impact that determined people can have. I was not originally keen on going to a foreign country because I was fearful of the dangers. However, when I was there, it was not about being in danger, it was not about worrying about my well-being or my image, it was about making a positive impact in a community of need. CAS drove me to take the trip and travel into the country. However, it was the experience that changed my life and made me realize what I am capable of and what I want to do in life.

Shortly after the trip to Costa Rica, I furthered my CAS experience and joined a Non-Governmental organization that helps children in the downtrodden country of Haiti. CAS made me realize that life is what you make of it, and everyone can have an impact. Whether it is day by day or over a lifetime, making a change in a corrupt world is completely possible. Within weeks afterwards, I traveled to Haiti by myself, planning to volunteer in three different orphanages over a period of a week. I did not know what to expect. After the first day, I was so overwhelmed with not only the devastation throughout the country, but the hope and happiness of the people – despite all their hardships. I realized that the my experience does not only need to stay mine, but I need to publicize my goals through volunteering and hope that other people will want to do the same. I created a journal and wrote in it every night while I was in Haiti to reflect on my feelings and the impact of my actions. Here is a journal entry from the second day of my trip to Haiti:

“Day 2

Today was without a doubt the most meaningful and important day of my life. Sometimes you can't put the things that you see into words and today was an example of just that. The day started off with a trip to a remote village to buy some art made from metal. Our driver, Samuel, a man in his thirties who is blind in one eye, brought us to our destinations for the day. It was

amazing to see how the metal-crafters make their crafts. They take apart steel oil drums, stencil in different carvings ranging from fish to women with flowing hair. Each and every thing they make is beautiful. They make every little dot, bump, and line with a hammer and a steel nail. It is incredible to see how they do this. There were five different metal craft shops on the street where we stayed. It was on that street that I saw some of the hope that this country has so much of. I was walking up the road when I saw a young boy sitting by himself against a wall. He couldn't have been older than three and no younger than one. But when our eyes met, I could see the twinkle in his eye, the happiness of just being there in that moment. I cracked out a smile and then his whole entire face lit up from his smile to the look in his eyes. It made me laugh a little, and in that moment I realized that this country has so much more than destruction and despair, it has hope, it has love, and it has belief. I could not count how many times that happened throughout the day, where I would smile or wave to someone and they would instantly smile back at me. It made me believe that change has come. Many times throughout the day Samuel would say, all we need to have is hope and faith that God will get us through our hardships and troubles, praise God, thank God, love God. People where I come from complain and worry about the simplest and most unimportant things possible, yet the people here have lost so much, and yet, they are the ones who are always happy and look on the bright side. We then visited the orphanage which was beautiful in every means of the word. Straight from the look in every child's face, all 85 of them, to the song of thanks each and every one of them sang to us as we departed. These are children that have nothing to their name besides a bed and the clothes they wear on their back, and even with such limited things, they can look you in the eyes and smile. Maybe they wish things were better, but they accept what they have been given and they value it. They value the fact that they are alive and they have some sort of shelter. The shelter is hurting and in need of many rocks to level the ground to prevent flooding when it rains. A new water system is needed to produce cleaner water. But that is what these volunteer organizations are for: to fix, to help, to change, and to make a better life for these children. Their voices were amazing and breathtaking. The sound was so sweet to the ears for so many different reasons. After we waved our goodbyes, we took the trip to the Palace, a part of Port Au Prince that had been most plagued by the earthquake. It was without a doubt the hardest thing I have ever done in my life: the things I saw, the people, the destruction, the way they lived, it was simply heartbreaking. The second I stepped out of the car to look around, I was instantly surrounded by people looking and begging for money. I gave one man \$10 and shortly afterwards, I could not take a step forward because there were so many people around me. After I finally got back to the car, we drove around one of the tent cities and it was one of the worst things I have ever seen. There were children with distended stomachs, children without any clothes on their back, cramped in tents no bigger than the size of a bathroom. It was more than sad, yet these people still find a way to make it through the day with a smile. What hit me the most was when we rounded a corner, we saw a woman with two children, one that was so malnourished that her hair had turned orange. The woman started banging on our door and looking into my eyes asking for money to feed her starving children and I could not do a thing about it. A few tears fell from my eyes as we drove off leaving her in the wind, and I knew at that moment, my life had changed. I need to help as much as I can. Seeing people's face so drained of emotion and staring aimlessly at you makes you wonder what you can do to help. Seeing the destruction of countless buildings and houses collapsed and filled with rubble makes you raise the question of what happened to the people who were in there when the earthquake hit. I may never know, but the real question is, would I ever want to know? Today has significantly changed my life on so many levels that I could not

begin to describe them. This trip is the start of something new, and the start of something amazing in my life.”

My point is that CAS is capable of changing lives. It is not simply a school assignment but a life assignment because the goals and outcomes of CAS last a lifetime. My outlook on society, people, and life as I know it has completely changed as a result of my CAS activities and what I have gained from them. I have never been more pleased or appreciative of a program such as CAS because it made me realize that anyone is capable of anything.



Jacob Howe

My experiences with CAS activities at Sturgis have completely changed me as a person. It opened my eyes to my strengths and weaknesses, showed me amazing things in life, and provided clues to my significance. The activity that has changed me the most is definitely my trip to Costa Rica, which I paid for in part by getting a job and fundraising with classmates. Before living with them for two weeks, I saw myself as fundamentally “different” from everyone else; I immaturely saw myself as totally unique in my thoughts, feelings, and morals amongst my peers. I felt as though I was somehow “incompatible” with everyone else. In addition to learning hard work and experiencing another culture, I realized that I wasn’t that much different than everyone else. This allowed me to become more comfortable with social encounters.

After two years of CAS, I have learned a lot about myself, too much to say in this brief article. The journal writing procedure really helped me to express my thoughts and to consolidate what I had learned in my several activities. CAS has taught me a lot about life, and for that reason I think everyone should do it.



Anna Lieberman

I never fully understand the true beauty of CAS until my senior year. Until then, it was just something to do – blogs to write, activities to check off. It never fully clicked for me until, as a senior, I started using co-leading the Gay-Straight Alliance as a CAS activity. There had been a tiny GSA at Sturgis my freshman and sophomore years, and I'd been involved for both years, but the club never accomplished much. Day of Silence was always popular, but barely any of the student body knew that the GSA existed. By my junior year, the club had completely disappeared, and though a friend and I tried to start it up again, we couldn't find a faculty adviser. After my own experiences with harassment, I was adamant that Sturgis could not go another year without a club that offered a welcoming, all-inclusive environment.

As soon as school started up in September, a like-minded friend and I went straight to our favorite theater teacher and asked if she'd be willing to be our GSA adviser. She agreed, and thus began what I will forever refer to as the highlight of my entire high school career.

It is now March, and our GSA has become more than I ever imagined. We have almost thirty members in total (a huge number for our miniscule school), a beautiful diversity mural underway, and multiple events planned, but our club is truly about much more than just the facts and figures. At every meeting, I watch something beautiful happen: kids coming out of their shells, slowly but surely. When we shut the door to our meeting room, it instantly becomes more than just an English classroom; it becomes a space where everyone can be themselves, where there is no fear of judgment. I've watched members admit to secrets that they never thought they'd be able to share; I can clearly remember being moved to tears by the bravery of one girl who chose to come out for the first time at one of our weekly meetings.

Helping to create the GSA at Sturgis is absolutely one of my proudest accomplishments, and though it sounds cheesy, CAS has helped me to fully understand why. Because of the blog posts that I'm required to write, I really sit down and *think* about what is happening at each meeting. It's not just something to do for fun; though I certainly enjoy working with the GSA, it's become more than just an extracurricular activity. It's easy to think of "issues of global importance" and "collaboration with others" as just boxes to check off, but when you really start to investigate how they apply to the activities that you're passionate about, CAS starts to make sense.



Jessica Pearson

While participating in CAS activities as part of the IB program, I have experienced many things and created new memories. I have volunteered in a hospital, volunteered in a library, interned at an aquarium, taken a cake decorating class and participated in the Relay for Life, in addition to participating in school clubs and events. Working inside and outside of Sturgis has provided me with the ability to work alongside both my peers and professionals.

While working in the hospital, I volunteered in a variety of hospital departments; the department that I enjoyed most was the hospital emergency room. While working in the emergency room, I was initially unsure what to expect; however, I was determined to make the most of the opportunity. I learned about all aspects of the hospital experience – from the point of view of the hospital professionals, as well as the patients. When visiting a hospital, one usually sees only through the eyes of the patient. This opportunity provided me with the ability to observe what occurs through the eyes of the doctors and nurses. During my time volunteering in the hospital, I was able to see the passion that many people have for their professions and the staff's ability to provide a patient with help that only they could provide – and the thankfulness that follows.

Interning at the Woods Hole Aquarium was a great opportunity to learn how the organization of NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) helps the public. During my time as an intern, I was able to learn about over-fishing and the distribution of the fishing locations in order to prevent a species of fish from being over-fished, as well as other species from overpopulating. Interning at NOAA also provided an opportunity to interact with marine life. Whether it was going on nature walks with the public or preparing the seals and turtles daily meals, every second of my experience provided a new learning experience with opportunities that were exciting to explore.

In addition to volunteering at a hospital and aquarium, I also participated in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life. Our Relay for Life team is dedicated to raising money and awareness so we can fight back against cancer, which ultimately helps my community by providing medical research leading to a cure. This organization brings together a community that has one common goal – finding a cure for cancer – and the experience has been truly inspiring. Working as a team toward a common goal has provided me with an experience I will not soon forget.

In addition to my activities such as volunteering and interning, the ability to take classes such as cake decorating or participate in school clubs allows me to learn skills outside the classroom.

I feel I have grown as a person from the activities I have participated in through the CAS program. The skills I have learned will follow me for the rest of my life. Volunteering has ultimately led me on a personal journey to becoming an active, contributing member in my community. Knowing that others are benefiting from my contribution is a truly rewarding and satisfying feeling.



Sebastian Rowell

When I think of CAS, the thought really embodies my whole Sturgis experience. Sure, there were plenty of ups and downs, but that is what made my high school career unique. Had I gone to Barnstable High School, my alternative school, I would never have this great experience that many have yearned to have. Like I said, I would summarize the entire CAS aspect of Sturgis as being unique. Of course, the whole concept of CAS isn't original, but it is something that Sturgis exposed me to for the very first time. Prior to doing CAS activities and projects, I was incredibly fond of keeping a journal, whether it be in foreign countries, or about day to day common habitual events. This really prepared me for the whole idea of "CAS-ing" if you will, and didn't make the tasks I would do tedious or cumbersome. On the contrary, I would claim that they were quite enjoyable.

As I near the end of my Sturgis high school life, it is incredibly difficult to see it without CAS. CAS is not what Sturgis is centered around, but part of the bigger picture, on a level with the IB Learner Profile and the overall Sturgis culture. CAS doesn't make Sturgis unique, but Sturgis makes all three of these aspects unique. These aspects have opened my mind to alternate views that I would never come across had I gone to a school without the IB. Sturgis is just one large melting pot with students from all over South-East Massachusetts, and with Sturgis' small relative size, the diversity makes the entire community a family. I greatly respect that, and this respect is what I will take with me when I graduate. Whether or not I receive my IB Diploma, I can say with great confidence the entire IB experience has benefited me, prepared me for college, and changed my overall outlook on life. I made plenty of friends that I will know the rest of my life and can attribute that to the entire IB Program. To come full circle, CAS made me think in depth regarding the activities I did seasonally, for example Varsity Soccer. It wasn't a simple summary, but made me ask myself questions, like how am I helping the team or how is this making me a better person? CAS will be different for every IB student and, like I mentioned, will make one's journey through Sturgis unique. To conclude, I can say that CAS, the IB, and everything at Sturgis has made me a better person. Sturgis enabled me to live with an open mind and try things I normally wouldn't. For that, I thank Sturgis, my teachers, and my friends for shaping me into the individual I am today. Thank you.