

# COMPASS JOURNAL

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## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Somewhat to my amazement, it is thirteen years since we founded Compass. I remember clearly being on top of a 30 foot ladder, painting ceiling tiles, listening to Bob Ross dream about creating a school where this wide range of kids would thrive. More than a decade later, what have we learned?



1. We have created a school where kids are happy to come to school. Parents frequently tell us how their teenager pushes them to get to Compass early or stay late.
2. Finding ways for students to shine is a pathway to helping them succeed in other areas. Accomplishments in an exploratory such as photography or on mountain day or on an individual assignment can lead to success in other areas.
3. There is a deep need for accessible school options to compliment, not supplant, traditional public schools. No school can serve all kids well—some need a fresh start, a different learning environment, or more personalized attention to thrive.
4. Parents from all economic circumstances will make the best choices for their kids when the options are free.
5. We have proven we can offer a rich, diverse, encompassing educational program at a per student cost at or below local public schools. More significantly, our cost per graduate, a too often ignored statistic, is much lower than surrounding schools of any type.
6. Despite aiming to be a model for other schools, we know that school quality really happens one school at a time. Likewise, our impact for students happens one child at a time. Education is a very personal enterprise.
7. At the heart of all this is great teachers. Great education doesn't come in a package simply to be delivered. Compass depends on teachers who know their subject, understand a ton about adolescents, are tremendously caring, and believe in every child (among other super-hero traits needed to work together for a common purpose).
8. Positive school climate is essential to the well being of students and staff. Especially with teens, the old adage applies that you can lead a horse to water but can't force it to drink. Kids are more open to learning when they like school, feel valued, and are included in the process of making school work.
9. While school independence has many virtues, it puts even more pressure on us to be clear about our vision and accountable for our results. It is not good enough just to make students feel good about school; clearly targeting learning outcomes is essential for the future opportunities for graduates.

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## ALUMNI PROFILE

The thing I value most about my Compass experience is how many times I was put out of my comfort zone. This includes being part of the judiciary committee, going to Mexico and living with a Spanish speaking family, staying in Douglas, Arizona by myself for 2 weeks and biking to and from Mexico every day on my senior project, and acting as a player/coach for Frisbee. These are things that I thought I wanted to do at the time, but might have backed out of if I wasn't in such an encouraging community. It is also things like these that have helped me become the person I am today.

-Jake Saunders, Continued of page 3



*"I have changed the way I thought of teachers because I always thought they were trying to make us miserable with heavy loads of homework, but I realized they were trying to help us; they were trying to get us to learn."*

-Brittany Ritchie, Grade 8



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# NOTEWORTHY NEWS



## Zumba Dancing in the Big Room

### CES Fall Forum

8 Compass teachers and 5 students traveled to Providence RI for the annual Coalition of Essential Schools Fall Forum. The theme of this year's forum was "A Conversation among Friends." One product of the conference was reviving collaborations with Parker School and Four Rivers for professional development and for school quality review. We think these partnerships will benefit all of our schools.

### Vermont Public Television Documentary Film

Compass is featured in an upcoming VPT documentary entitled "Vermont's Education Transformation." Film crews have been at school a couple times capturing best practices in Vermont high schools for the 21st century.

### Consortium of Schools Formed

A consortium of Southern Vermont Independent Day Schools has formed to work together to provide educational options for every child's success. Together, we are hosting an Information Session on School Choices January 21st, 10-12 am, at Marlboro Graduate Center in Brattleboro.

### Soccer

As one player commented on the way to the end of year tournament, "I've never been on a team that improved so much during the season." Our very young soccer team showed great growth with some fine results, including a 3rd place finish in the Greenwood School tournament.

### Grant Awards

A major gift from the Wolf Kahn and Emily Mason Foundation will help us extend our arts programming by supporting an arts coordinator and providing resources to bring in visiting artists to teach in the intensive program. A grant from the Vermont Principal's Association Service Learning and Leadership Project will allow us to expand our outdoor adventure offerings in the intensive program to connect more to the larger community.

This generous support is essential to assure every student has access to every part of the Compass program.

### Radio Programming

Compass was the guest of Steve West's WKVT radio program this fall. Senior Starcie Grout and Junior Isaac Shaw were captivating in discussing the Junior Class Global Connections Travel Program. You can hear the podcast at [http://1490wkvt.com/play\\_window.php?audioType=Episode&audioId=5576245](http://1490wkvt.com/play_window.php?audioType=Episode&audioId=5576245). Director Rick Gordon was Steve's guest earlier to discuss his new book, "Transforming School Climate and Learning."

*"I didn't expect everyone to be so nice. It was very strange to come here and not have people judge me. It's hard to handle school work and drama at the same time. It's a lot easier to concentrate on school work here because that doesn't really happen."* -Serena Pellerin, Grade 7

## SOME INTERESTING EXPLORATORY & INTENSIVES FROM THIS SEMESTER:

Songwriting

Fencing

Zumbarobics

Juggling

Outdoor Adventure

Belly Dancing

Visual Art Challenge

Ceramics

Meditation

### Director's Message - Continued from Page 1

10. To realize this vision, it is critical to have well-organized structures to foster the results we want. Over time, we have developed tightly integrated formats that target our most valued ideals in numerous, overlapping ways. Regular classes, Exploratories, travel, service, and Project Week all work together to help every student develop "21st Century skills." Portfolios help all of this coalesce for each student to develop self-awareness and direction.
11. Finally, I have learned to appreciate the value of leadership in keeping all forces working in a common direction. If everyone is in charge of everything, it is simply overwhelming. And if everyone acts autonomously, we can work at cross-purposes and lose the consistency students and adults need. I think we continue to evolve in finding the right balance of inclusive leadership but with greater clarity of roles and structures so that each individual feels valued but we all work together for common ends.

There are loads of other lessons we've learned and much more we continue to learn every day. Maybe this is my biggest lesson—that schools are very human, dynamic institutions that are always interesting—demanding we remain open to possibility and responsive to the ever-changing needs of students, staff, and the world that surrounds us.



# ALUMNI PROFILES

## AUSTIN RICE - CLASS OF 2011

**Current Location:** Brattleboro

**What are you doing currently?**

At the moment my time is spent working at The Colonial Motel Tavern, working on independent film projects, playing/learning bass guitar and spending time with friends.

**What have you been doing since leaving Compass?**

From early July to late October, Lexi, Jake White and I traveled cross country in my now very weathered car. We visited various relatives and friends, stayed at all the National Parks we could, saw some great bands live, saw the sights and stumbled on awesome places and people we never knew about. Overall the trip was very rewarding, because it gave me the opportunity to experience more of the world and do it independently for the first time.

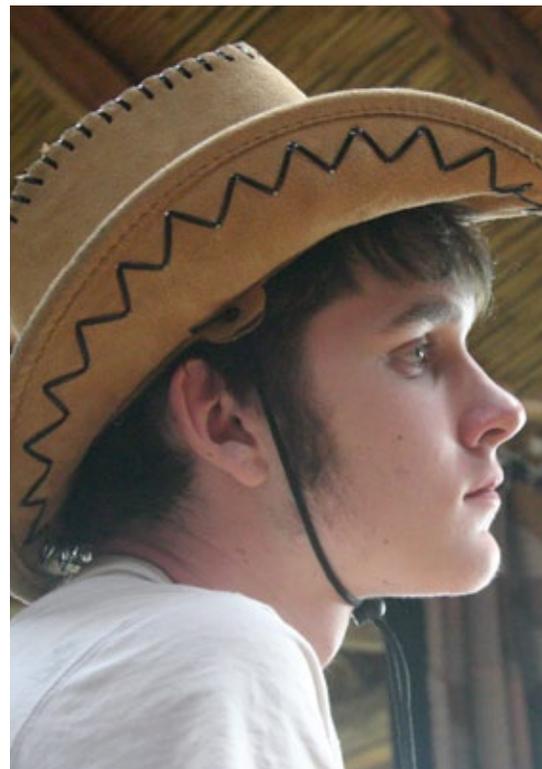
**Future Plans:**

I plan on attending the New England Institute of Art for filmmaking before too long.

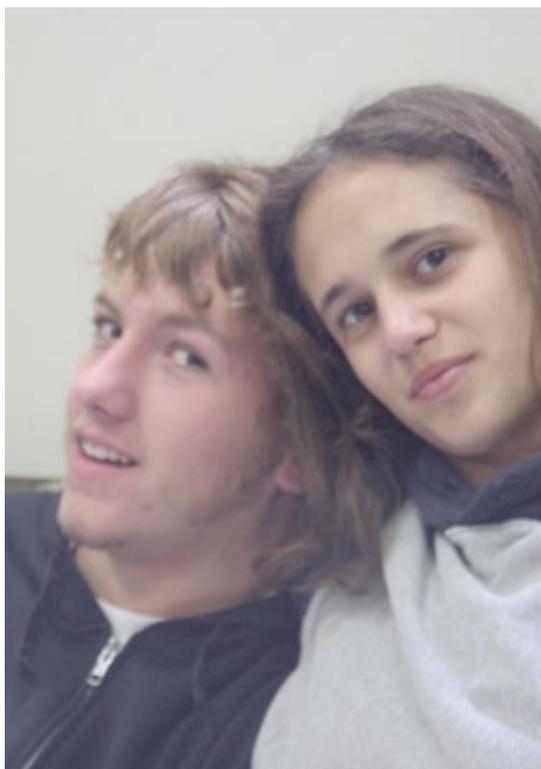
**How has Compass helped you in your current life?**

Attending Compass really helped me gain the confidence in my abilities as a filmmaker, student and person that I needed to pursue what interests me and be recognized for it.

**If I were to share one piece of advice to other Compass students, it would be the following:** If you have a passion in life or a dream you want to make a reality, then go for it. Anything is possible and if you work for a goal, through thick and thin, you will find yourself where you want to be.



Austin Rice in Ecuador



Jacob & Emily

## JACOB SAUNDERS - CLASS OF 2008

**Current Location:** University of Vermont

**Major:**

Bachelors of Science from the College of Nursing and Health Science with a minor in anthropology from UVM.

**What are you doing beyond the academics?**

I started playing ultimate Frisbee when I was in the 8th grade out in the parking lot during lunch and I haven't stopped. I was one of three freshmen to make the "A" Frisbee team and have been elected Captain for my junior and senior years. The captains are responsible for planning all the events we go to, which includes a week-long trip to Georgia with 48 people, weekend tournaments to Florida and Nevada, as well as other various weekend tournaments throughout New England. The captains take care of all the logistics for these trips, which is a big part of managing the budget given to us by the University. In addition to this, the other captains and I help run practices and teach the game to anyone who wants to join our club.

**Where do you think you are heading?**

I know I still want to be involved with Frisbee, both as a player and possibly as a coach after graduation. I also know that I want to go to graduate school to pursue a degree in communication sciences and disorders.

**How has Compass helped you in your current life:?**

I think that Compass has helped me a lot with managing group dynamics. I am always in group settings, whether it is in the classroom, at board meetings, with my team, or with my roommates. I think Compass provided me with a lot of opportunities to fill a variety of roles within a group setting.



# CURRICULUM CORNER



Frida Kahlo Visits Spanish Class

## MATH

**Calculus:** We are focusing on the three big ideas of calculus: limits, rate of change, and area under a curve, culminating with the Fundamental Theorem of Calculus. Our emphasis is on depth of understanding and independent thinking. Next semester, we will explore how these ideas apply to non-polynomial functions.

**Pre-Calculus:** Finishing logarithms and now reviewing for a challenging final exam. Next semester is trigonometry and we are looking forward to the practical side of that.

**Geometry:** Students have conquered the great concepts of right triangles, mastering the trigonometric ratios. Onward we move to circles and their relationships with tangents and secants.

## SCIENCE

**7-8:** Chemistry: We started with phases of matter and had a lot of fun exploring dry ice. Now we're doing heat transfer work with the ever popular birthday candle lab and hot air balloons.

**9-10:** With Julian, students created great websites focusing on a controversial science topic of their choosing. They presented evidence for both sides of the debate and made an informed opinion. Please see <http://cropcirlceassignment.weebly.com/> for an awesome example.

With Eric, students studied chemistry, including atomic structure, periodic table, reactions and equations, and lots of hands-on work such as designing and carrying out experiments on ethyl alcohol combustion, creating online "Prezi" presentations on chemical elements, and carrying out in-depth "mythbusters" explorations which we documented with original short films.

**11-12:** We engaged in core science content in physical and organic chemistry, including formulas and equations, stoichiometry, organic nomenclature and topics in organic chemistry. We are now beginning a new unit on electricity and magnetism in which we will learn the fundamentals and then engage in an engineering challenge where teams of students will design and build devices that utilize electromagnetic induction.

**8th Grade Math:** We are delving into roots and radicals. We are working with triangles and the Pythagorean theorem and soon might build some noodle homes, as well as continuing work on pre-algebra and algebra skills.

**7th Grade Math (Pre-algebra 1):** This semester we have studied the properties of operations, factors and multiples, squares and square roots, patterns, and algebra. We also have been reviewing arithmetic skills, including multiplication, division, and operations with decimals. We are ending the semester with an inquiry project, in which each student asks and tries to answer his or her own deep mathematical question.



Olivia and Miah in Chemistry Class



Team Building on the Middle School Camping Trip

**HUMANITIES**

7-8: The focus of this semester was on the idea of progress, reflecting on their own lives by reading “The Absolutely True Diary of Part Time Indian,” creating a series of diary entries, and talking about the influences in their lives. Then the class broadened their perspectives and contemplated what progress meant during the beginnings of the United States. Students read from Columbus’ diary, Howard Zinn’s “A Young People’s History

of the United States,” and Laurie Halse Anderson’s “Chains.” The final project of middle school humanities was the creation of children’s books related to the history we studied in class.

9-10: With Julia: What scares us? An examination of fear and how this affects us—personally, politically, and in literature.

With Amir: 19th Century US History:

Studying the major political and social developments and themes of the 19th century in the United States and applying lessons from the 19th century to political and social challenges that our state and country face today.

11-12: Julia: Self and Society: Defiance, Decisions, and Discontent in Literature and Film. This is a literature-based course that explores themes such as defiance, deciding what is right, and the nature of good and evil.

Amir: Intellectual, Political and Social History of the Western World. The purpose of this course is to provide students with a basic foundation of knowledge in the history of thought and related political and social developments in what is commonly called “The West.” Students explore their evolving views about what defines a good person, society, piece of art, and conception of reality itself.

**SPANISH**

7-8: Students have been answering why Spanish is so important. Through a wide variety of activities, students have learned all the Hispanic countries, emotions, “survival expressions,” how to ask and answer common questions upon meeting new people, and how to conjugate -AR verbs.

**HS Spanish 1:** Students are learning and practicing the wonderful language from vocabulary to grammar to pronunciation.

**Level 2:** Through essay writing, reading, grammar work, listening and acting out the language through creative skits and poems, students are learning loads of fun grammar rules such as: stem-changing verbs, irregular verbs, contractions, present progressive, etc.

**Level 3:** This semester we delved into the past tense, exploring the many different ways of expressing events in the recent, concrete and indefinite past. Students demonstrated their learning through written and performed nature guides, stories of their past, song reflections, and interviews with famous Hispanics.

**Level 4/5:** Students are doing all sorts of real work in Spanish: creating an art piece to describe themselves in the words of other famous Hispanic writers, learning about Magical Realism as a general literary genre, writing their own creative short story, and studying Hispanic historical events.



Hawk Count in Science Class

*“I started at Compass for eighth grade. Things changed: I was on time to class, I haven’t missed any days and I do most of my homework on time. I don’t get away with not doing it, so I try to keep up.”*

–Andrew Lighthall

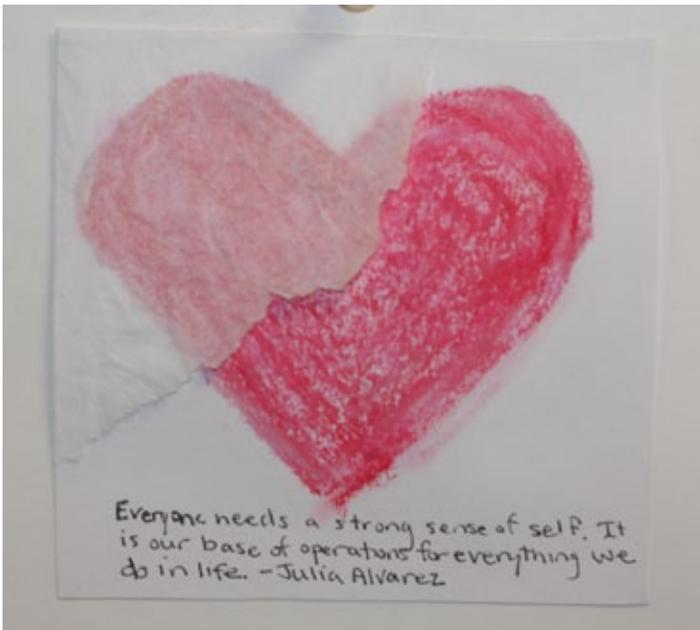


# STUDENT WORK

## Travel

*Jill Murphy, Grade 12*

I have the familiar burning on the soles of my feet. Something I associate with summer, running around outside, or working on the farm. I'm walking on a long, dusty road and ahead of me, I see huge green mountains, livestock, fences made from living trees. The air steaming with humidity. A completely unrecognizable landscape. My brain thumps from a pleasant headache, tired eyes from seeing everything new. A steady pressure and strain from translating. I imagine babies might feel like this every day. Everything is new and language is a constant rumble that fills up my whole body.



**"Speaking from the Heart" Manya Gordon, Grade 12**



**"Skeleton" by Micheal Houle, Grade 7**



**"Self Portrait" Jonah Nigro, Grade 12**

## 420 Character Writing Challenge

*Rachael Drinker, Grade 8*

I stepped from the balcony into my room. I left the door open behind me to let in the fresh spring air. Just as Fran, the maid, entered the room, a loud ring came from the phone on my light pink desk. I dismissed Fran with a wave of my hand and told her to start breakfast as I picked up the receiver. "Hello?" I asked. A silence followed, I heard a click and then a dial tone. Strange, only a few people had my number.

## The Grove, Introduction to a Scary Story

*Theo Sutton, Grade 9*

The paddle caused a whirlpool in the twilight, made even darker by the overhanging trees. The salt water stung my nose and hundreds of little black crabs scuttled away through the roots making a clicking sound against the bark. I couldn't see the bottom, but sometimes I would see something darker and the shadow would slip away. Being in a one-person kayak made me feel more alone, and I moved in closer to the person in front of me. We had to be single file as the path of water made by the two mangrove islands was only a few feet across.



### Longest Sentence Challenge

*Sophie Bade-Kaye, Grade 9*

The penguin sighed and walked away from the sinking ship as he sang the song that he had learned that long ago day when he and the turtle had visited the county fair to see the pig, but had gotten caught up playing the ring toss for hours, before the pig finally came to get them, and introduced them to his cousins, a gang of wild boars, who were all musicians, and who taught the penguin and the turtle many songs and dances, from many different countries, time periods, and cultures, and showed them a dance they had been taught by a man named Albus Percival Wolfrick Brian Dumbledore, who, incidentally, had cast the spell that made it so that the pig, the turtle, the penguin, and the gang of boars could speak, sing, and dance-especially if it was that aforementioned dance that had been taught to the animals by Albus Percival Wolfrick Brian Dumbledore, because he was very fond of this dance, and because of this, made sure to include it in his spell, so that the animals of the world could rejoice in albus Percival Wolfrick Brian Dumbledore's favorite dance, and spend forty three thousand, eight hundred and five point six eight two four nine hours dancing this wonderful dance, which Julia Taylor, a fantastic teacher at the Compass School, did not like, because it disrupted the her calm, serene, focused, awesome, amazing class, who loved every millisecond of every second, of every minute of every hour, of every day, of every week of every month that they spent in her glorious humanities class at the Compass School, where they learned many things, like how to rap, speak proper English, and use punctuation, such as commas, dashes, and semicolons, which came in handy in all of her various assignments, including essays, quizzes, tests, and regular assignments, which there were many of, because Julia Taylor wanted to make sure that her students knew what was going on in her class, and could keep up with the various books and articles her students were told to read.

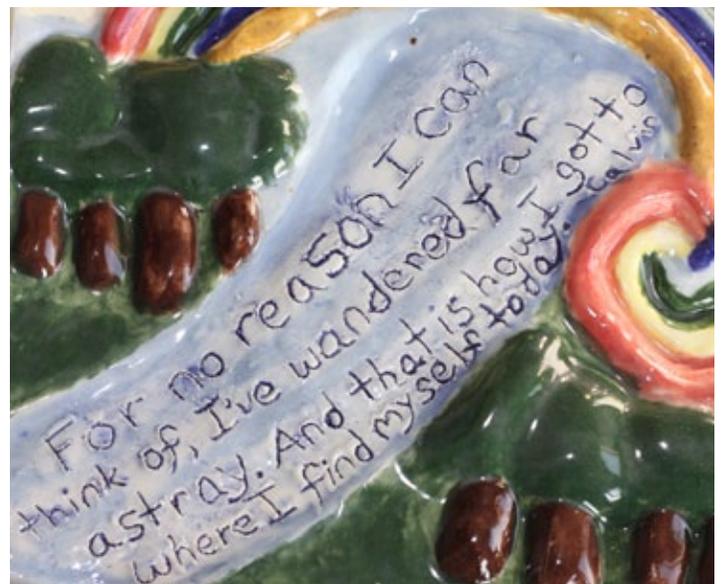


**"Bring Out" by Miah Fiske, Grade 11**

### An Introduction to Cultural Evolution

*Cheyenne Vaughn, Grade 11*

Cultural evolution and biological evolution are intertwined. Cultural evolution works much in the same way biological evolution does. When there is variation, selection and heredity, there must be evolution. In biological evolution, organisms can vary by the length of their beaks, color of their feathers or some other attribute. If a varied attribute allows an organism to outperform another, the organism can pass its genes with the DNA for the specific variation on to its offspring. Cultural evolution works much the same way except it's ideas which are "fighting for survival." The biggest difference between cultural evolution and biological evolution is that cultural evolution happens because of memes where as biology evolves through DNA. This is a pretty big difference but cultural and biological evolution are still very intertwined because they can cause each other.



**"Water Tile" by Taylor Drinker, Grade 7**



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Kate in Art Challenge Exploratory

## A MESSAGE FROM THE DEVELOPMENT OFFICE



Betsy with her two boys

Greetings! I want to introduce myself as one of the new members of the Compass community. As Admissions and Development Director, I spend much of my time observing what makes Compass so important in our community and sharing that story with prospective families, donors, community, and foundations. Compass students and staff make my job easy. This place is truly remarkable.

Many students find Compass because they are seeking a school where they feel valued, where teachers are accessible, and where their education feels relevant. Compass is the place for that. Students are able to work closely with faculty to cultivate their strengths and have them reflected in their coursework. Classrooms are alive with learning. Students are up out of their seats and engaged in their education and their community.

Compass staff and board are working to share this story with the community and enjoying great results. Our success is reflected in three recent grant awards, the wide participation in the annual

fund drive, the Junior Class Fiesta Dominicana, and in the many visitors and inquiries we have every week.

We excited about our promising plans and are rolling up our sleeves. As we look to the months and years ahead, board, staff, and students are working towards a strategic plan for the campus that reflects and enhances the learning going on at Compass. Wouldn't it be great to have an outdoor classroom? A dedicated art room? Aesthetic landscaping and more? We will be working with foundations, donors, families, and professionals in the community to help bring these dreams to life, while also ensuring we sustain the mission to keep tuition accessible for families.

It will take a village to make this school all it can be and we welcome your involvement! Please do not hesitate to contact me. I welcome your input and support. [Betsy@compass-school.org](mailto:Betsy@compass-school.org)

-Betsy Jaffe, Director of Development and Admissions