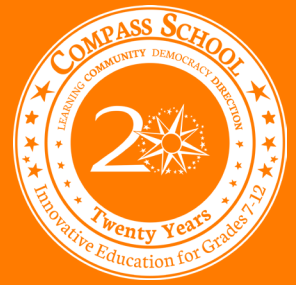


# COMPASS JOURNAL



VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1 - DECEMBER 2018



## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

### 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

20 years! I'm not sure we ever envisioned Compass reaching this milestone. Immersed in serving students and continually improving the program, I don't think we recognized how much we have accomplished.

In looking back on documents from the school's earliest years, it's striking how consistent our programs and practices have been over time. The essential elements of the school advertised even before the school started included: the value of community, personalized learning plans, assessment by exhibition, attention to both habits of mind and academic standards, a flexible and responsive schedule, active learning, living democracy, and diverse learning experiences to educate the whole person.

While our practices have evolved over time, our values have never wavered. From our inception, we held a belief that every student could find success, students need to have their voices cultivated and heard, individuality should be celebrated, everyone should have diverse learning experiences, and we're all learners together.

Reviewing two decades of Compass Journals, what stands out is the story thread that weaves throughout these 20 years. Just looking at the titles over the years, a few themes arise:

1. "Raising Good Kids": Successful adults in our rapidly changing, complex world draw on having had diverse experiences and skills, and a "Yes I Can" attitude we cultivate here.
2. "Developmental Learning": Helping students tell their own story through "Acceptance, Achievement, Affirmation," and valuing "Doing the Little Things Right."
3. "Progressive Education 2.0": Assuring traditional learning goals while equally valuing "21st century, soft skills."
4. "Making a Difference in the World": Service, community based learning, and real world learning experiences provide meaning and purpose.



5. "What is Learning: Ambitious Adventures": The idea that powerful learning goes far beyond traditional classrooms and may take us far afield, literally and figuratively.

Most recently, integrating these ideas, we considered the tagline of "Compass: More than Just School." Like any school, we are concerned with the development of academic knowledge and skills for our students—reading, writing, numeracy, etc.—but we also know that contributing in the dynamic global world of the 21st century, one needs much more than academic ability. To be successful, people will need to communicate and collaborate, be flexible and adaptable, think both critically and creatively, and know how to problem solve in novel situations that will inevitably arise as the world changes around us.

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Mountain Day



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How we attend to all of these important outcomes is where the Compass program can contribute to the educational dialogue in the US. Some lessons we have learned include:

1. Equally value skills and knowledge outcomes, and make both part of all learning experiences: Knowing things is valuable, but maybe more important is application—organizing ideas, thinking critically and creatively, communicating well in a variety of formats, and working well with others. Ultimately it's how we put knowledge to use that makes a difference in our world.
2. Provide a balance of “teacher directed” and “student led” learning experiences: Sometimes more structure helps focus learning; sometimes more “messy” learning can teach valuable lessons and reflect the realities of life outside school. Every student needs to engage in a wide variety of circumstances that engage different skills and abilities and, most significantly, ask students to exercise flexibility to adapt to different conditions. Life outside of school isn't always orderly or organized into neat little hour-long chunks. Applying learning to complex tasks helps students practice problem solving and decision making.
3. Responsiveness and Personalization: Not everyone learns at the same pace or from the same experiences. Teachers who know each student well, which happens through diverse experiences together, can adapt or modify assignments to better resonate with each student's needs and interests.
4. Learning and growth is developmental: Believe in every child, be patient, allow for failure, give chances to amend for mistakes, honor accomplishments, build on strengths. Being a teen can be tough and full of uncertainty. Support, trust,

and belief in each person's essential goodness and potential help students develop belief in themselves.

5. Relationships and community: Few of us learn in isolation from others or our environment. Strong relationships between teachers and students are the foundation for trust, honesty, risk taking, and the pursuit of continual improvement.
6. Self-understanding may be the most essential result: Knowing your strengths and areas for growth, knowing what you find interesting, what motivates you, what you are better off avoiding, and feeling comfortable being you is the best foundation for life beyond high school. The portfolio process, proficiency tracking, and other reflection activities help students own their learning and identify for themselves (and communicate to others) the proficiencies most meaningful to them.
7. Celebrate, appreciate, express gratitude: Create structures to honor successes small and large. Build on positives. Show appreciation. As one student expressed at our year-end closing circle, “I'm grateful to be at a school where people show gratitude.”

Through our 20 years, our values have remained amazingly consistent—working together as a dynamic learning community committed to helping every person find success. Through the involvement of students, parents, outside supporters, and, most of all, our incredibly dedicated teachers and staff, we have lived these values while continually adapting to keep the school vibrant and fresh as we celebrate our 20th anniversary.”

**Rick Gordon, Director**  
rick.gordon@compass-school.org



Studio Art ELO



11-12 Grade Community Service Day



# NOTEWORTHY NEWS

## New Staff

Compass School is thrilled to welcome three new educators into the vibrant Compass community. Emma Schneider has taken on the position of high school Humanities teacher and college counselor (as well as co-teaching sex ed, co-advising 9th graders, and being an incredible support for kids). Amar Langdorf, who was a student teaching intern at Compass last year, is teaching Spanish and middle school humanities, helps with the music ELO and is leading a rock climbing exploratory. Rocio Franco is teaching advanced Spanish and is a fluent Spanish speaker who grew up in New York and moved to Spain in 1986 where she worked in several foreign language academies. It is exciting to add the talents, perspectives, and positive energy of new faculty to the Compass community. These new teachers are fitting in and adding much to the already strong educational program at Compass School.

## Bingo Returns

Bingo is back at Compass! Reviving the glory days of the Compass building when it was an Elks Club hosting high stakes bingo for busloads of players coming up from Connecticut, the 11th grade class is hosting Bingo the last Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. (December excluded) to support the junior class Global Connections trip. The general public is warmly invited to join in this event, with all bingo supplies available along with baked goods and refreshments for sale. This is an incredibly fun evening for all involved--bingo players as well as the students working at the event. Please plan to come and invite other family, friends, and neighbors. It is always a pleasant evening for all.

## Title Money Grants

We are appreciative of receiving federal title money to support students, teachers and school programs. Title 1 funding is providing us a half time tutor to support students in reading, literacy and math. Title 2 funds support professional development, allowing the teachers to work in departments to map curriculum and align proficiencies to better identify and target prioritized learning goals. Title 4 funding supports social-emotional well being and is helping us implement our Healthy Minds, Healthy Schools initiative to make a more mindful, healthy school.

## Breakfast Program

Compass is serving breakfast daily (thanks to Cher's generosity and hard work). Breakfast is provided during our new break period after first block, where we have encouraged students and teachers to take a "mental health break" to enjoy socializing and relaxing and not to rush trying to catch up on work or get ready for class.

Like all our food here, the quality is exceptional. What is most valued with the breakfast program, beyond the nutritional aspect, is the social environment it has engendered. With more than half the school eating breakfast each day, we have almost everyone sitting together in the big room, speaking face to face, enjoying each other's company, and being social without phones and computers just like the old days! What a nice addition to our community.

Join us for our. . . .

# 20<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

All former graduates, students, staff, parents and community members are invited to return to Compass to connect with old friends, current students and teachers, and contribute to our vibrant learning community.

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**MAY 31**

# TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY FIESTA

**Saturday March 2nd**

**2**



# CURRICULUM CORNER

## HUMANITIES

**7/8:** Students began the year examining their individual identity by creating plaster “Identity Masks” depicting the various forces that shape who we are and how we interact with the world. From there, we explored concepts of group identity by studying how governments are structured and reading George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. We then explored themes of leadership, fear, human nature, freedom and individuality while reading *Lord of the Flies* and *The Giver*. We conclude the semester by constructing our own short stories while also preparing our Presentations of Learning.

**9/10:** The semester began with an examination of how change happens in America, looking through the lens of American government, literature, and contemporary issues such as immigration and poverty in the US. Students read Helena Maria Viramontes’ novel *Under the Feet of Jesus* about migrant farm workers and created their own graphic novel adaptation of the book. The unit culminated in a forum where students presented speeches on “Who is making the change you want to see in America?” The semester concluded with a unit on reading and writing poetry.

**11/12 English: Environmental Justice and World Literature:** In this five-week, college preparatory course, students read and discussed literature and poetry related to environmental justice around the world. They studied the novel *Familiar Things* by famed Korean author Hwang Sok-Yong and read poetry by authors from the Marshall Islands, the US, and Canada. Much of the course focused on concepts of justice, disposability, waste, and resilience. Students culminated the course with an independent research project that shared a key environmental justice issue and current solution to it with their peers.

**11/12 Comparative World Religions:** Our study of religion covers structures of many of the major and minor religions, their historical context, and modern practice. We learn about a variety of different faiths and discuss concepts of living faith and what it means to be part of a faith community. Students research religious symbols, create infographics, and complete written components focusing on articulating personal beliefs and the beliefs of others and putting them in a historical and cultural context.



Ceramics Exploratory Class

## SCIENCE

**7/8 Geology/Astronomy:** The year began with student-designed experiments looking at erosion as a powerful ongoing geological event. Students designed tectonic models to share at Westminster Center School. Students constructed sundials with Compass grandparent Mac Oglesby, and are now creating constellation perspective models to demonstrate the unique view of the universe that we have from Earth. Students are working on independent research projects in astronomy, also to be shared at Center School.

**9/10 Fluid Dynamics and Newton's Laws:** The year began with a study of buoyancy and our now famous cardboard boat competition where students try to design and build the most effective cardboard boat that can carry a student across the pond. Great fun, teamwork, and learning! Since then, science students have taken two units: 1) A continued study of fluid dynamics, including pressure laws and aerodynamics; and 2) Newton’s Laws, including the physics of motion and forces. Both units include numerous hands-on problem solving challenges and experiments.

**11/12 Ecology:** Students deepened their knowledge of essential ecological theory through readings, films, lectures and hands-on activities such as designing mini “biospheres” and competitive plant growing. Students wrote research papers on global environmental issues and included a public educational outreach component shared with Antioch graduate students and guests at Compass Day.

**11/12 Physics: Momentum, Energy, and Rotation:** Students built on their knowledge of Newton’s laws by studying the ideas of momentum, energy, circular motion, center of gravity, and rotational mechanics. Students grappled with how these ideas play out through hands-on investigations designed to isolate one concept at a time. In the second semester, students will put these ideas into action in a project-based unit that explores the physics of machines.



9-10 Science Buoyancy Challenge



## 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.

**Algebra 2:** We have been working with graphing and the visual approach to equations. We are watching how a graph moves with transformations in an equation and what we can glean from a function.

**Geometry:** Students are mastering basic geometric concepts and the accompanying vocabulary and notation. They use this visual and symbolic language to develop visual/spatial thinking and critical problem solving. Students are also developing their skills around graphic presentation and clarity.

**Algebra I:** The Algebra 1 class started off the year studying elements of algebra including learning the vocabulary necessary for communicating in and about math. We worked with exponents and radicals in new and in-depth ways. With this firm understanding of operations, we delved into solving equations and inequalities. Before the semester is over, we will have learned how to solve for components of a line and how to graph linear functions on a coordinate plane.

**Pre-algebra:** Students are exploring the foundations of algebra, developing healthy habits of mind in looking at patterns with negative numbers and fractions with the Center for Mathematics Education's Algebra I text. The goal is to use this student-driven, collaborative problem-based model in covering the first half of this Algebra I curriculum.

**Math Workshop:** Students have been working on strengthening their foundational math skills, focusing on multiplication and fractions. They have also been practicing mental math and understanding word problems, with the ultimate goals of learning to think flexibly and knowing what to do when faced with an unfamiliar problem. Students have also been challenging themselves on Khan Academy with a diverse range of topics from reading graphs to multiplying negative numbers.



WW1 Exploratory Class

## SPANISH

**MS Spanish 1:** We are playing with the basics of communicating socially in Spanish, developing the foundational skills of language acquisition, and exploring the diversity of Hispanic culture.

**MS Spanish 2:** This course builds on the basics of social communication and foundational skills of language acquisition. We are working on talking about where things are, how to make a request, and improving our use of numbers. Currently, we're to ask good questions and communicate answers clearly.

**Transitions A/B:** These beginner/intermediate Spanish classes started from a basic level and quickly ascended into proficient communication. Students have been working on foundational vocabulary, noun & adjective agreement, and present tense conjugation. We are moving into more conversation and speaking practice.

**HS Spanish 1:** Students have learned the basics of Spanish grammar, with conjugating verbs and subject-verb agreement. They are able to talk about where they live and describe themselves and their families. Students are also learning the finer points of the verbs "to be", SER and ESTAR, and exploring the strange and wonderful complexities of beginning Spanish.

**HS Spanish 2:** We have been combining some training on the dynamics of language structure with an in-depth look at daily routines and schedules. The intersection of language and culture will prepare them to explore the world of a teenager in the Spanish speaking country they choose to visit for their Global Connections experience in the spring.

**Advanced Spanish:** Students in this class have been working on conjugation, vocabulary, and sentence construction. We began the year by reviewing the present tense, moving quickly into past tense conjugation. Students work on writing full sentences every day in class and for homework. We have also been working on conversation skills and will continue to deepen this practice as the year goes on.



Middle School Camping Trip



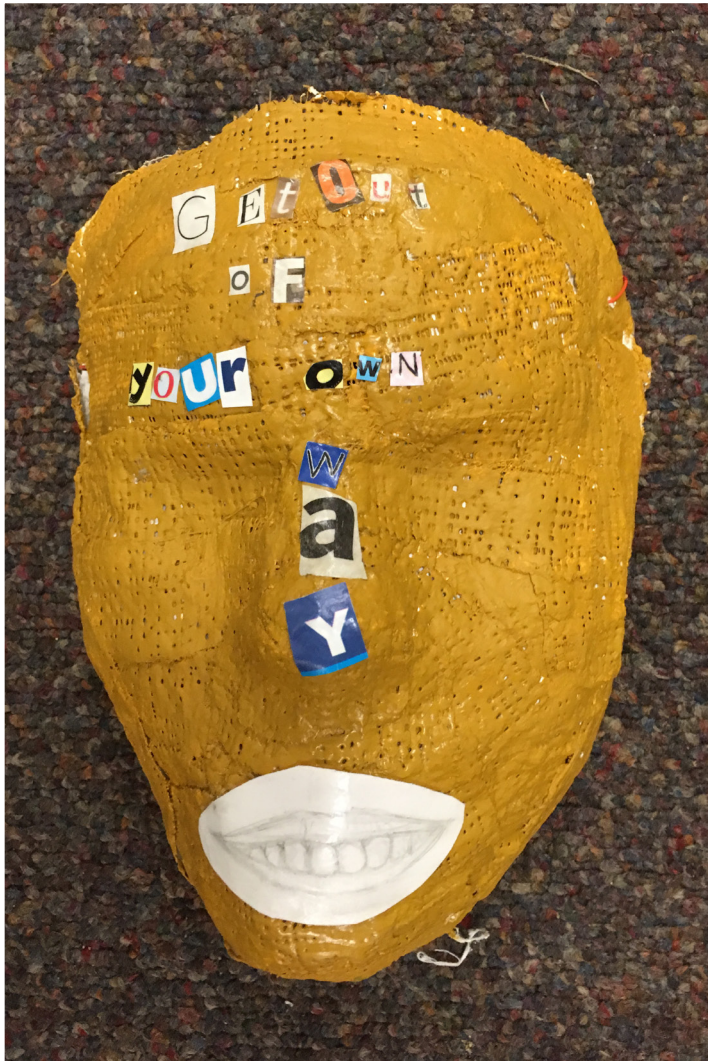
# STUDENT WORK

## Get Out of Your Own Way

Emilee M., grade 8

People have told me they see me as someone who is always happy and positive but I also go through things that are hard and stressful, I also cry, I also overthink. I just want other people to see me as me and realize I am also human and go through every emotion known to man.

On my mask I put the words “Get out of your own way” on the forehead which is a quote I found online. I thought it really represents how people feel like they can’t express themselves because of what other people think when really they aren’t letting themselves express themselves because of you. Then on the cheeks I put things that go through our heads when we think of trying something new. Through the thoughts that go through our head I put a red x to symbolize that it doesn’t matter what others think as long as you are being you.



“Middle School Mask Making” Emilee M., grade 8

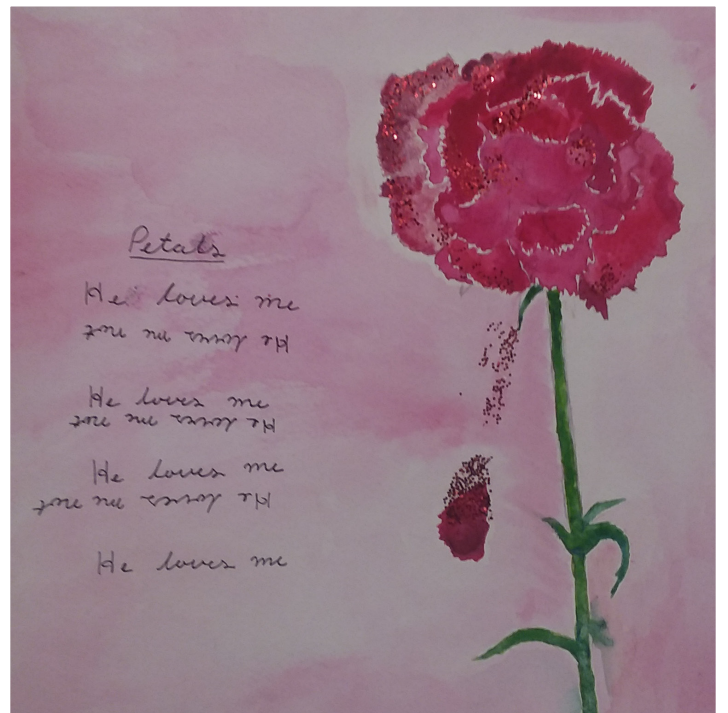


“Middle School Mask Making” Calleigh P., grade 8

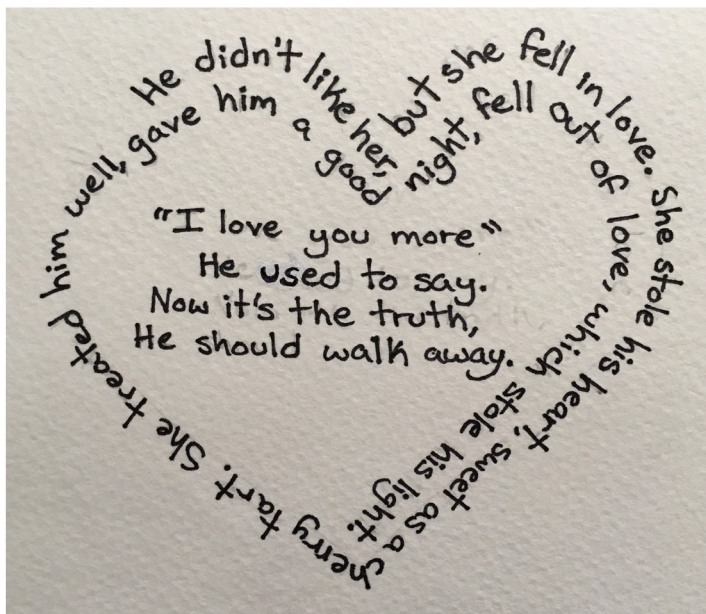
## My Mask

Calleigh P., grade 8

I present myself as a bright and happy person, while deep down inside I’m not like that exactly. Others have told me they see me as a beautiful, kind, and amazing person. They always say how beautiful my red hair, freckles and blue eyes are. My friends come to me to help cheer them up, saying to me that I’m amazing at helping cheer them up because of how kind I am. Although most days I never feel that way. So with my mask I am showing my bright, beautiful, cheerful and kind side--the side of me I show others, because I portray myself in that way.



“Petals” West N., grade 10



“Walk Away” Ayiana P., grade 9

### An Ode to the Isles

Lilly H., grade 10

This is the island of my childhood,  
where some of my fondest memories take place.  
The island whose welcoming docks and shores smile at all as they arrive.  
Where the mosquitoes swarm and the wild blueberries grow.  
Where music and laughter swell into a great crescendo  
Into the humid night sky.  
And I am filled with a sense of comfort.

As the rock's cruel barnacles cut my feet with no remorse,  
And the stinging scent of salt water burns my eyes  
All that I truly feel  
Is pure bliss.  
The gray water laps over my feet,  
Freezing me to the core,  
Whilst the sun slowly scorches my skin.

A place in which the lobstermen's breath smell of whiskey  
no matter the time of day.  
Where every dull beach  
Is clad with wrinkled rose hips.  
As thousands of spiders under my feet  
Part like the red sea with each step  
Burrowing at the speed of light between your rocks.

This is the island of my childhood.  
The island that taught me how to ride a bike  
And baked me rhubarb pie when the sun refused to shine.  
Where the sunsets over the harbor distract me  
from the pains in my feet.  
And each passing person shares a smile and a history  
Where I will forever remember and return to.  
Where I will forever be grateful for what it has given me  
On this island the size of your palm.

### College Essay Excerpt

Jack L., grade 12

As I further pursued my unfinished artistry, it began to affect my other work. My appreciation of conclusion remained the same but I gained love for the process. I now reveled in each act of filmmaking from the moment of conception to the its culmination. Choosing the words seemed just as important as which ones I'd chosen.

More than knowledge of melody or rhythm, music showed me the beauty of the process, a revelation that is vital in learning anything. You can always make a better film, article, or song, but the charm of diving into that bottomless pool is you can't hit your head on the bottom, only take little bumps along the way. I'm not saying those bumps aren't still my favorite part, but the path to each one seems a lot more exciting than it used to.

### College Essay Excerpt

Linaea D., grade 12

I feel that these experiences with people who were sometimes unpleasant have taught me a lesson. There is no one side, no single argument, no simple answer. People are complex and I have to realize that. I can't know everything about a person. I can learn to read and understand them, but never know them. Despite some of these experiences not being pleasant I believe they were invaluable because they pushed me to learn. I tried to pattern myself off the negatives of my peers worst characteristics, and in turn I believe they did the same with mine. In the end we all grew up because of each other, and that's wonderful.



“Found Art Sculpture” Isabella H., grade 10

# CELEBRATING

# ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 20 YEARS



## ★ A HISTORY OF COMPASS ★ ★ ★ ★

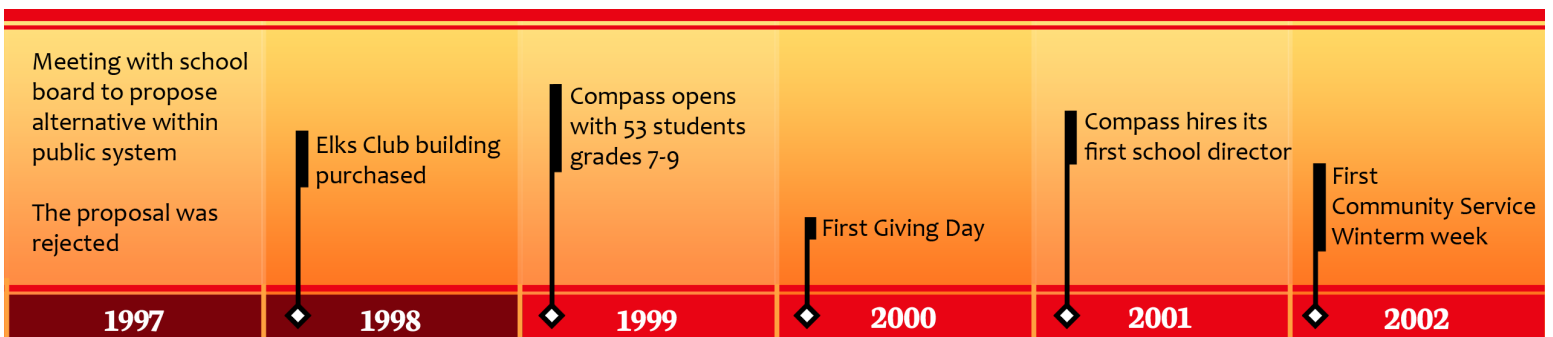
Compass School was founded in 1999, following a year-long effort involving over 100 community members to advocate for a new option within the public school system. In the late 1990s, our regional public schools, like schools nationwide, had over 30% of its students not graduating from high school. Bellows Falls Middle School was labelled a “school in need of improvement” by the state, and many felt the local public schools just weren’t working for many kids.

Over 300 people showed up for a special school board meeting to raise the idea of starting another school in the district that might provide a publicly accessible option that worked somewhat differently from the existing middle and high school. The board asked for a proposal, which came after a year of research involving over 100 community members, most of whom had strong ties to public education. Despite a strong presentation for a school modelled on the principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools, the board took little time to reject the idea, seemingly not interested in having another school that might compete with the existing schools.

Somewhat deflated, the idea was dropped for a year or so, until when we learned that the former Elks Club building, that we had scouted as a possible school site, was for sale. A group of a dozen that had continued meeting about the school idea (Karen Augusta, Bob Ross, Neil Madow, Laurie Indenbaum, Leslie Goldman, Matt Peake, Tony Elliot, Kathy Elliot, Elaine Gordon, Rick Gordon, Roxane Blake, and

## THE 10 FOUNDING PRINCIPLES OF ★ ★ ★ ★ COMPASS SCHOOL ★ ★ ★ ★

1. The Value of Community
2. Democracy
3. The Main Lesson
4. Personal learning plans
5. Habits of Mind
6. Performance Based Assessment
7. Standards
8. Inquiry-based, experiential methods of instruction
9. Flexible Schedule
10. Project Weeks





George Blake) agreed to contribute the down payment needed to purchase the building (\$60,000) and thus Compass School was on its way. The name Compass School was determined early in the process from a suggestion by Matt Peake, connecting the ideas of direction, leadership, and navigating the world.

Once the building purchase was underway, this group spent a year planning, applying for state approval, hiring the original four teachers, cleaning and preparing the building, and doing information sessions for the community to recruit students for the first class.

From the very start, the driving ideas for Compass School were to serve a diverse population of kids who were not thriving elsewhere, to be a school where every child would find success, and to be a model



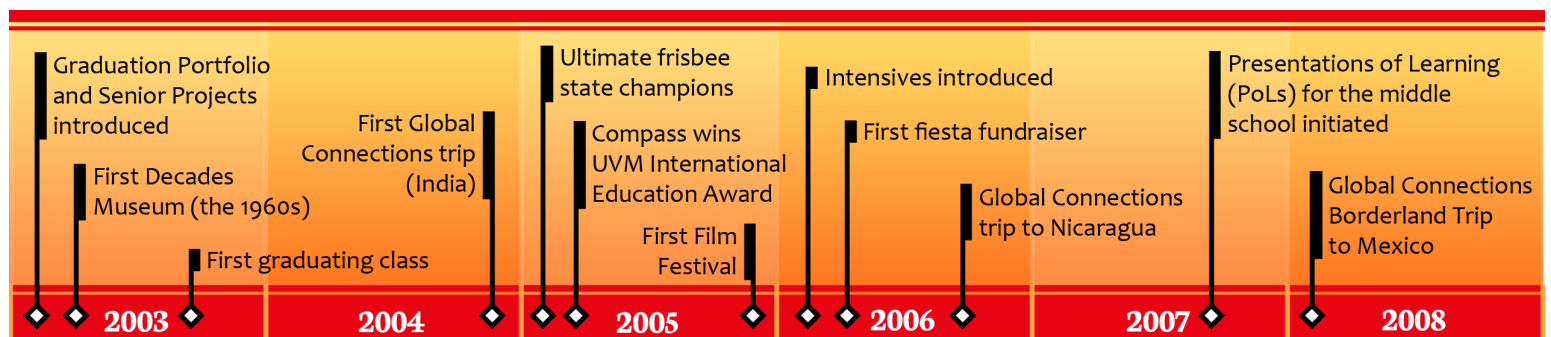
## ORIGINAL MISSION STATEMENT

The Compass School challenges and supports learners to journey from the world within to the stars beyond--through personal discovery, working with others, and taking action in community. Four broad concepts guide the design of the educational program at Compass:

1. Learning through real world, project based, integrated curriculum.
2. Achieving academic excellence through personalized learning
3. Connecting school to the community and the natural environment.
4. Being a community where all voices are valued.

for publicly accessible choice where we played by “public school rules” (open enrollment, access to special education supports, and a per pupil cost not above the public schools). Opening in September 1999, Compass started with 53 kids in grades 7-9, with plans to add a grade each year with the first graduating class scheduled for June 2003.

The initial years were exciting and somewhat chaotic. While most of the founding principles carry on to today, such as personalized learning, attention to habits of the mind, depth over breadth, and a strong sense of community, one initial idea that has been modified was having a very flat hierarchy with no school director and shared leadership among all of the original faculty (without an identified leader). With a student population largely of middle school age, the first year or two involved a lot of really exciting learning experiences, many taking kids outside the building for community based learning about Vermont and the region (we fondly remember the middle school unit on historical and modern agriculture and their musical presentation of their findings). The school aimed to be highly student centered with individualized learning plans for every child. We quickly learned that this was draining on both teachers and students. As the oldest students expressed in the 3rd year, “We like classes and we like the teachers. We can’t imagine coming to school and deciding to spend 27 minutes on my science exploration, and 42 minutes writing an article, etc.” Being more pragmatic than dogmatic,



# ALUMNI INSIGHTS

## WILSON SCHREIBER - CLASS OF 2007

Compass opened my eyes to the realm of possibility and creativity. I have the notion now that there is no obstacle that I can't overcome, and almost no problem that can't be solved. Compass is a one in a million kind of school that should be an example for the nations' educational system.

## EMMA MULLEN - CLASS OF 2005

Compass has helped me in going beyond the words of a textbook to creating purpose for the work I undertake. Compass gave me the opportunity and the tools to look around, see the world overseas, explore my home and to know where I stand in the grand scheme of things.

## CORY BROOKE-DEBOCK - CLASS OF 2008

Compass has done an excellent job in preparing me for the rigors of college life and work. Thanks to the Compass focus on community and figuring out how you as an individual learn, I went to college knowing exactly my strength and weaknesses.

## ANNA BOWLER - CLASS OF 2007

Compass taught me how to be a student and learn from every experience I have.

## SARA LEPKOFF - CLASS OF 2010

Attending Compass made me strive to find my passion in everything that I do.

## ZACH STEVENS - CLASS OF 2004

Compass taught me to be self-directing, self-supporting, self-sufficient, independently curious, fiercely egalitarian, and sassy. This school, and the people I met there, changed my life.



we worked with the students to find a balance of more teacher directed experiences (typically the main lesson classes in science, math, Spanish, and humanities) and more student centered ones (special days such as Winterm, Project Week, and Giving Day). This balance has been a central feature of the Compass program, giving every student widely diverse experiences that give everyone places where they are very much in their learning comfort zone and other places where they are stretched. Because everyone is expected to engage in all of these experiences, there has developed a shared sense of peer support to be open to challenge and understanding of difficulties we each can face in different situations.

A significant evolution in the school was hiring a director in our third year. This helped us develop more consistent structures and more clear roles for teachers (assigning "guruships" to individuals who then became champions for things like exploratories, judiciary, or school climate).

One of the most important developments in those early years with the new director was piloting the portfolio process for graduation. What started out as an alternative means of assessment that we felt would be more meaningful and comprehensive than a final exam evolved over the years to be the most powerful and gratifying experience we as educators have ever been part of. It has been inspiring to see the many layers of impact in portfolios, from deep student reflection and self-awareness to forming a unique community of support among roundtable participants to bringing in community members to see the school and value our students to honoring this important rite of passage and having parents grant their child this step into independent adulthood.

It seems most of the essential elements of Compass have remained intact since those early years, being refined over time to be integral to the school culture. Mountain Day, Giving Day, Winterm, and Project Week were defining parts of Compass from early on. From about Year 3 to Year 8, I think we felt good about continually gaining traction with consistency and clarity of the program and improving what we did year by year.

The one major addition in that period was adding the international trip, which evolved from the fact that grades 7-10 had a lot of real-world field experiences but the upperclassmen, whose curriculum focus was on "The World Beyond Our Borders", ended up studying the world only in the classroom, as we felt we lacked the financial wherewithal to be able to travel. But inspired by Miles Horton's *The Long Haul*, we posed a challenge to the class in a unit titled "Travel" to design a trip that was at least two weeks long, was focused on cultural immersion and not tourism, and cost less than \$1500. The next year, we were able to do our first trip, to India, and followed this up the next year with a trip to Nicaragua. Like most schools, we opened this up to whoever wanted to go, and those who traveled invariably returned saying this was the most transformative learning experience of their lives. Like most schools, those who traveled tended to be (although not exclusively) from more privileged backgrounds, so after this second year we decided

## Did You Know? ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Over the last 20 years Compass School has served students from over 30 towns in Vermont, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire.



## Did You Know? ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Compass has over 200 alumni out making a difference in the world.

that this experience was something that should be available to every student and we committed to assuring all could go regardless of family income. Compass was recognized by UVM with the International Education Award for this commitment to travel and how we engaged students in cross cultural learning throughout the Compass program.

About year 8, we came to recognize that just getting better each year was not enough and there were parts of the program that needed more serious attention. We engaged in a strategic planning process involving students, families, and staff, and took a serious look at all we did, affirming much and finding areas, such as math and exploratories, that we needed to reorient to be more effective. Our process of having students work with teachers in the summer on planning had long lasting results, with students creating the idea of developing intensives for more focus in exploratories, and then the community as a whole working through an emotional process to end our grading system of words such as outstanding, excellent, good, fair and instituting the somewhat more traditional use of A, B, C, D, F.

Compass has continued to remain vibrant with this student leadership in shaping our school program. Students brought the ideas of Comps and ELOs and helped revise the schedule to incorporate new learning experiences. Grants from generous outside funders allowed us to expand our health program to be an essential part of school (including the important step of hiring a school counselor) and to institute a 1-1 computer program so that every student has access to this essential learning tool.

Thankfully, the value of the Compass program has come to be recognized by colleges, and we are proud of the high rate of college acceptances and the impressive level of merit based scholarships our graduates receive for their leadership, community involvement, and breadth of experience.

So as we approach our 20th year, it feels like what has characterized the school for all these years is amazingly consistent:

- Strong relationships between students and adults
- Commitment to educating “the whole child”
- Undying belief in every child, with a deep sense of optimism and a deep reserve of patience
- Valuing student voice and choice
- Being a place where everyone is known well and valued for their individuality
- Supporting every student to find success in school
- Honoring our sense of community
- Finding balance between structure and flexibility, “real world” and in-school learning, teacher directed and student centered experiences
- Being a dynamic learning organization committed to continual improvement

There is much to be proud of in the 20 years of Compass School, most of all is the impact on transforming student lives and producing graduates who are good students and good people who, in the words of our mission statement, can pursue their dreams and make a positive difference in the world.

### CHEYENNE VAUGHN - CLASS OF 2013

Being a student at Compass is not only about learning deeply and widely (although it's definitely about that), it's about learning how to be a member of a community.

### DEVIN HENNIGAN - CLASS OF 2013

I learned to think laterally rather than just straight forward. Not how to just think outside the box, but use the box to get something else later.

### CAL GLOVER-WESSEL - CLASS OF 2008

The critical thinking skills that I learned at Compass have carried me to places— educationally, artistically, and physically—that I would not have gone to otherwise.

### ASA JEN GALEN (COSTLEY-BUPP) - CLASS OF 2006

Compass gave me a voice and an opportunity to be enfranchised in the structuring of my learning experience through student democracy.

### RACHEL DURANTE - CLASS OF 2012

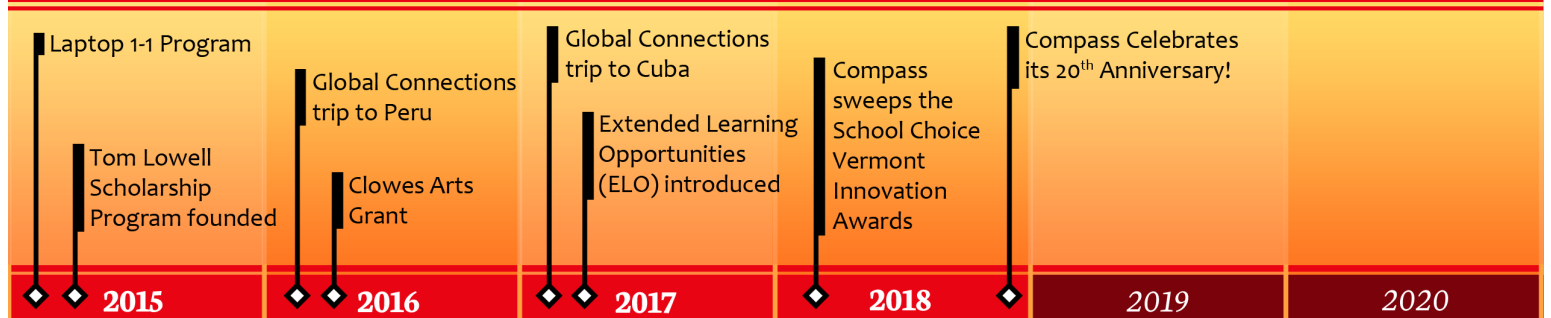
Compass really encouraged me to think for myself, which has helped me get to where I am today. It has also allowed me to discover what I am truly passionate about and explore my interests in a way that incorporates them into my schoolwork, which I would not have been able to do anywhere else.

### WILLOW HOLDEN - CLASS OF 2003

Compass is certainly the reason I am so self-motivated.

### REESE LESTER - CLASS OF 2006

To say that Compass was one of the most positive and life changing experiences of my life would be an understatement. I was encouraged to grow and learn my own way and really flourish as a unique individual.





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Louise's 9th Grade Advisory for 2004

## ★★ THOUGHTS FROM THE FOUNDING BOARD ★★

Compass School is 20 years old! As a returning board member and one of the founders of the school, I am so happy to see and hear that the goals we set out for the education of our children are being realized and the school's performance has gone beyond our original expectations. The guiding principles of learning, direction, community and democracy are still guiding the staff and their decisions about how to allocate time and resources. The depth of learning, attention to and awareness of individual needs, and the level of community service locally and abroad are especially gratifying to see in our world today. The ideas and aspirations for the school have been expanded and developed over the past 20 years. Students are challenged to explore their diverse interests—while performing at their best academically and as caring community members.

Students learn through travel, community projects, school leadership and outstanding teaching, as demonstrated through the Student Portfolio roundtables. They are consistently

amazing presentations of their learning and growth as students, demonstrating their readiness to move on to the next level or to graduation. Each year the graduating class has had successful college admissions and received outstanding financial aid packages. Last year's class even included a national merit scholar winner! As past board member Matt Peake said, "The school still obviously has a reason for being."

The staff continues to be top notch and the school is now known around the state as a top independent school. Challenges still exist of course, especially as school funding issues are in the news. We can always use donations and a new school van for accessibility needs. As always, involvement by the extended school and local community are needed and welcome! Congratulations to all who have contributed to 20 years of success!



**-Roxane Blake, Co-President of the Compass School Board**