

# Compass Public Charter School's Philosophy

The Compass Public Charter School's mission is to prepare each child with a personal compass that will guide them in life's directions. We do so by developing students who are competent, confident, productive and responsible young adults who possess the habits, skills and attitudes to succeed in life and be offered the invitation of a post-secondary education and satisfying employment.

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The philosophy of the Compass Public Charter School is grounded in the belief that when there is low threat and content is highly challenging, accelerated learning takes place. Compass Public Charter School will create this low threatening environment and safe harbor with a unique character education curriculum that focuses on kindness and taps into each child's innate need to know boundaries while protecting every child's dignity. This is done through expectation training, in which teachers clearly illustrate and define what kindness looks like before students have a chance to be unkind. Daily procedures are designed to support the school's emphasis on kindness. Students who display kindness and good citizenship are given special recognition through a well-designed reward system.

Each child has the right to come to school without fear of taunting, teasing or violence. Each parent has the right to expect a school to provide a safe, kind environment for his/her child. Each staff member has the right to teach without fear of violence. Students, parents and teachers can be reassured that our best efforts will be put forth in creating a safe harbor.

The atmosphere created by this focus on kindness allows children to soar socially and academically. Students are not afraid to take academic risks, like asking or answering questions in front of peers, when they feel safe and supported. They are not distracted from learning by fear. This is extremely important because our educational focus is accelerated learning, and this is the only way it can be achieved. A culture that is warm and friendly, orderly and free from chaos is developed as a result of this discipline method.

Another unique aspect of Compass' character education curriculum is the dramatization and memorization of classic poems and quotes, such as "The Man In The Looking Glass". The students learn such pieces through automaticity, and discuss the meanings and morals behind them. They develop a sense of pride as they perform them for others. The tempo for our academic program is set by student capabilities, not by textbooks. Our students will be well grounded in the basics, such as, reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. In addition, they will be taught fine arts, foreign language, and technology.

Compass Public Charter School's methods of instruction are based primarily on a "teach to the ceiling" philosophy with fast paced direct instruction. The Idaho State Standards are the floor. All students are encompassed in this method, and no child is left behind or left unchallenged. If a child doesn't understand a concept at first, they will eventually master it through daily repetition, assessment, and review.

The focus isn't on when a child understands a concept, but rather that they will understand it in the end. This takes the desperation out of teaching and the anxiety out of learning. Direct instruction combined with individual student attention is the key to success at Compass Charter. A child who needs remediation will be continually taught through these methods and will receive extra individual instruction from the teacher, educational assistants, and parent volunteers.

Teachers are engaged in the act of direct teaching throughout the day using a variety of proven teaching techniques including: tactile, visual, kinesthetic, auditory, group and independent approaches. By taking into account and addressing the varying developmental rates and learning modalities of the student population, it is possible through this direct-teaching and monitoring approach to keep curricula challenging and the expectations for learning high.

Standards and standardization are the basis of assessment. Learners are shown exemplary performances for given tasks. An assessment of their efforts reflects how closely it matches this performance. The goal is not only to give a grade, but also to encourage students to do their personal best and show them their own improvement throughout the year. Self-assessment is also used. As active participants in assessment of their own work, learners are encouraged to develop intra-personal understanding of their strengths and deficiencies and an objective view of their accomplishments. In addition, a score on a piece of work can be improved if the learner is willing to accept the challenge for improvement put forth by the assessment.

Performance is assessed on at least three levels: 1) Student progress relative to previous performance will be assessed through portfolios of video taped oral presentations, written reports, individual and group projects, and/or via computer learning packages. 2) The students will be assessed on their attitudes and personal/academic habits through teacher evaluations of projects and video presentations, as well as parental input. 3) Performance will be assessed according to state developed standards.

In conclusion, Compass Public Charter School has established a school philosophy, embraced by teachers, the administrator, students, and parents which holds that every child is valued and every student will succeed at a high level both socially and academically. The character education plan strives for a safe school infused with positive peer pressure, students who are ready to learn everyday, and who possess the self-discipline needed to maximize theirs and other's educational experiences. Compass' academic program is designed to meet the needs of the students, not cater to the convenience of teachers, administrators, or to the school calendar. That means that all styles and rates of learning are taken into account, yet expectations for achievements are not compromised. Once again, when there is low threat and content is highly challenging, accelerated learning will take place, and the results will be outstanding!