

Compass Guide to High School

Compass offers a unique array of high school experiences that make this time of your life rewarding and exciting, prepare you for life beyond high school, and help you set direction for your future. Our goal is to help every Compass graduate be self aware and self confident, with “the knowledge, skills and dispositions to pursue your dreams and make a positive difference in the world.” This guide is intended to help you better understand high school life at Compass and how to make the most of this opportunity.

What is the basic Compass High School Program?

All Compass students are expected to take courses in Math, Spanish, Science and Humanities. Humanities combines what is more traditionally considered English and Social Studies. In the first semester, there are more distinct subject focused courses in English and Social Studies with the second semester dedicated to more interdisciplinary work.

In addition to course requirements, there are a wealth of other learning experiences at Compass aimed to develop well-rounded learners with the diverse skills needed for a dynamic, global world. All high school students also are required to participate in (and possibly teach) Exploratories, Health Week, Community Service, Project Week, Community Service Winter Term, Mountain Day, College Day, Spring trips, the 11th grade Global Connections International Trip, Junior and Senior Projects, and Portfolio Roundtables.

What are the requirements a student needs to meet throughout high school to be able to graduate?

Humanities Block

English	4
Social Studies	4

Science/Tech Block

Science (w/lab)	4
Technology	1

Mathematics

[completion of Algebra II & Geometry required]	3
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Foreign Language

[In same language and successfully passing level 2 competency exam]	3
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The Arts [.5 per year]	2
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Physical Activity [.25 per year]	1
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Health [.25 per year]	1
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Total required: 26

Other Requirements

Junior Project

Junior International Trip

Senior Project and Presentation

10th Grade and Graduation Portfolio Roundtable

Community Service

Community Service Winter Term

Project Week

Annual Participation in Health Week, Mountain Day, College Day, and Giving Day



Will I be Prepared for College?

Compass has an impressive record with college admissions, with over 90% of our graduates accepted at colleges. Many of our graduates have received generous merit based college scholarships for academic excellence, leadership, and service, often covering the full cost of college tuition for four years.

Compass grads (and their college professors) tell us they are incredibly well prepared for college in terms of critical thinking, writing, reading, expressing their ideas, problem solving, and communicating in a variety of formats. This reflects the wide range of experiences at Compass from coursework to Project Week to travel to service.

The area that is harder to measure is Compass grads' readiness for college workload. Because of the many ambitious and challenging projects at Compass, most of our graduates are able to self monitor to complete work at any level. At the same time, Compass encourages students to learn to self-advocate—prioritizing responsibilities and negotiating with teachers to personalize assignments. On balance, we feel our graduates have the independence, responsibility, self awareness, and motivation to be tremendously successful at college. While every high schooler has some areas that are challenging in college, these skills of self-management and strong thinking and reasoning are of tremendous value in higher education.

How does the program vary from year to year as I get older?

9th graders have Foundational Studies the first semester, where the 9th graders take core courses together in Science, English (with a focus on writing), and Social Studies (focusing on civics and American democracy). The second semester, 9th and 10th graders take Science and Humanities courses together.

10th graders start the year in English, Social Studies and Science classes along with the 11th and 12th graders and join with the 9th graders for the second semester Humanities and Science courses.

11th grade is punctuated by the Global Connections International Program that brings the whole class for two weeks (or more) of immersion and service in a foreign culture. Students help plan this trip in Junior Seminar during the fall, including organizing the fundraising Fiesta Night where we host several hundred people for a dinner and dance. The trip occurs in January, and is followed by time to process the learning and prepare for public presentations to help increase international awareness in this region. Juniors also complete a Junior Project, an independent research based learning experience following your own interests, and preparing you for the more extensive Senior Project in your 12th grade year. 11th and 12th graders have more choices in Science and Humanities, with two exciting Spring cross disciplinary electives which have included Filmmaking, Science of the Mind, Fast Food and Sustainability, and Oceans.

12th grade is the culmination of your high school experience. Senior Seminar is dedicated to supporting you in preparing post high school plans including the college application process as well as shaping your Senior Project and Graduation Portfolio. Seniors serve as school leaders in various capacities, helping with orientation, advisories, and other school functions. Senior Project is scheduled in a 6 week window, but can be extended if a student has completed other graduation requirements and has plans for learning experiences tied to this project. This could be an extended internship, travel, college level courses, or research that pursues your individual



interests. In May, 12th graders are done with classes and dedicate their time to portfolio completion, preparing for graduation roundtables, and planning the graduation ceremony that is always a moving event and a highlight of the year.

What privileges and responsibilities increase as students move up in grades?

11th and 12th graders have several possible privileges:

1. Off campus lunch—students in good academic standing can go off campus for lunch following the school policy
2. Students in good standing can choose to follow independent choices for Wednesday afternoon work time to do study at home, complete community service, or pursue some outside learning experiences.
3. Seniors who have met graduation requirements early can do an extended Senior Project (even for the whole second semester). This could be an internship, job shadow, travel, research project, or other learning experience that pursues your interests and further learning and growth.
4. 11th and 12th graders can be exempt from Mountain Day with a proposal for an alternative all day physical activity.
5. 12th graders can be exempt from College Day and choose to dedicate this day to other post graduation planning.

What if I want to participate in a different program for a semester away from Compass?

There is a process for proposing alternative senior year plans outlined in the handbook. In short, you need to make a proposal for what you will be doing and how you will meet all Compass graduation requirements. There is also a proposal form for any independent study that might apply during your Compass years. It is your responsibility to make arrangements for any independent work including payment, planning, supervision, etc. While there is some pro-rated rate for tuition for days missed, there are also some administrative costs that apply to all students regardless of days attended at Compass.

Is Compass “Rigorous” enough?

Tony Wagner, a well-respected educational researcher from Harvard, has written extensively on “Rigor Redefined.” He discusses how 21st Century society asks for a different view of rigor, one tied to developing strong thinkers, problem solvers, communicators, and collaborative workers with the ability to adapt to changing conditions. Wagner’s skills for the 21st century align closely with the five Compass learning realms of Knowledge, Thinking and Reasoning, Communication, Personal Development and Community Involvement.

Some schools define rigor as doing large quantities of work that is often of the same type of textbook reading and test taking (and may even be almost intentionally not enjoyable). At Compass we look at rigor as the breadth of experiences we expect of every student. We strive to develop good students and good people. It is asking a lot to require every student to take all our academic classes, participate in a wide range of exploratories, complete portfolios and Senior Project, climb on Mountain Day, be a leader in our school democracy, travel out of the country, solve real world problems in Community Service Winter Term, learn independently in Project Week, etc. While this may look different than a traditional definition of rigor, this is the kind of challenge that prepares Compass grads for the 21st Century world beyond our school walls.

What is Special about Compass for High School?

There is much special about high school at Compass. As one graduate said at his Graduation Roundtable, "My whole high school experience would have been worth it just to do my Senior Project. No other school would have ever given me this opportunity."

Of course, there is much more than Senior Project that is special about Compass, but this is emblematic of the opportunities and independence engendered at the school. While high school for many kids in America is an exercise in "jumping through hoops," guessing how to please teachers, or putting up with derisive peers, Compass offers a supportive and challenging environment where everyone is committed to your success. Teachers and students work together to shape the curriculum and overall school program. Students have real power in shaping school policy and programs, and teachers consciously aim to personalize learning to work for every student.

There are numerous opportunities at Compass to make learning work for you. In classes, you often have choices within individual assignments. Project Week,



Exploratories, Junior and Senior Project all are designed to help students learn to identify and pursue individual interests and passions. The Graduation Portfolio asks you to reflect on your own learning and growth and share that with others. The 11th grade international travel program brings all our students well beyond our borders. Advisory and Senior Seminar support you in the transition to life beyond high school.

Compass was designed intentionally to prepare every student for life in the world beyond our school walls. It is all about what is best for students. This commitment to your success, ultimately, is what is most special about Compass for high school.