

# Executive Summary



## History

Founded in 2011, Compass Charter Schools (CCS) was founded with a small team of devoted educators in Southern California looking for a family-centered alternative to the traditional brick and mortar school. Thus began Compass's innovative virtual program. While CCS has evolved over the years, the desire to provide excellent educational options that are responsive to unique family and scholar needs has remained strong among its virtual programs.

Since its founding, CCS has expanded to sites across the state of California, offering a network of free public charter schools that enrolls and serves scholars from over 18 counties in and around Los Angeles, San Diego, and Northern California. Designed to meet scholars where they are, Compass's Online and Options programs provide customized and individual curriculum to support families on their educational journeys. Over the past 10 years, CCS has strived to educate the highly gifted, the bullied, the academically challenged, the chronically ill, the athletically and artistically talented, and many other scholars who sought a personalized educational experience outside traditional classroom walls.

## Current Moment

Over the past three years, CCS has grown rapidly in the number of scholars and families served, staff size, geographic reach, and range of scholar and family needs. Furthermore, the devastating effects of COVID have drawn greater attention to the benefits of virtual and at-home learning, contributing to a new surge in CCS scholar applications.

In March 2021, key strategic questions facing the organization included:

- **Sector:** How will the devastating effects of COVID draw attention to the benefits of virtual and at-home learning and contribute to greater demand for the CCS model?
- **Identity:** What is unique about CCS's model and approach? How does the organization tell a cohesive story of who they are in a way that is inclusive of both the Online and Options programs?
- **Culture:** Do all staff members have a consistent understanding of our values? How do staff across the organization work together to deliver on core values?
- **Impact:** What is the impact CCS aims to have on scholars and families? How is impact measured and communicated?
- **Growth & Sustainability:** How will leaders of the organization stay ahead of political and policy changes? What is the organization's appetite for innovation and growth? How will new opportunities be identified and pursued?

A high-level strategic planning process was initiated to achieve the following:

- Align staff around a renewed definition of our approach, values, and vision for the future;
- Comprehensively assess network growth opportunities; and
- Define org-wide strategic priorities, bringing together various improvement and compliance initiatives into one cohesive 3-5 year plan.

## Vision for the Future

Through the planning process, CCS clarified essential elements of the organization's philosophy ("Every scholar has the potential to thrive and be successful if they are supported in the right environment"), approach ("We encourage a personalized approach where scholars are seen for who they are and can choose their best educational path to find academic success"), and impact ("We support and celebrate many paths to personal fulfillment") into a one-page Impact Statement. This new resource is intended to be used internally among staff, scholars, families, and leadership to reinforce our collective vision, as well as shared externally to communicate CCS's unique approach with prospective families, evaluate mission alignment with new hires, and attract new partners and funders.

By generating a new Impact Statement for the organization, CCS reaffirmed its commitment to its current mission statement (*Our mission is to inspire and develop innovative, creative, self-directed learnings, one scholar at a time*), but also recognized the need to update its vision statement given the lack of relevance of key phrases (e.g. *the ways in which arts and sciences nurture a curiosity for life-long learning*). Strategic planning exercises also confirmed the use of ARTIC <sup>1</sup>values and contributed to the process of fleshing out in more detail how staff, families, and scholars are expected to demonstrate these values in their interactions with one another (Appendix).

### Strategic Priorities

With a clear vision for the future, CCS honed in on its most pressing strategic priorities over the next 3-5 years in order to fulfill its desired impact. The four strategic priority areas that emerged: staff development, equitable scholar outcomes, growth of its presence and influence, and thought leadership and model innovation. Over the next 3-5 years, CCS will work to achieve the following core goal outcomes:

1. Build trusting relationships and a culture of collaboration, innovation, and ongoing learning among staff;
2. Provide equitable support for all scholars by leveraging the full Compass community to advance each individual scholar's academic and social emotional progress;
3. Position Compass to meet the growing demand for personalized virtual learning while proactively adapting to political changes; and
4. Becoming a recognized leader in personalized learning in California and beyond.

For each core goal, staff working committees identified key strategies that will help drive success towards realizing the desired outcomes. These strategies are highlighted in the Strategic Plan Framework which will serve as the guide rails for organization-wide planning and strategic decision making over the next 3-5 years.

### Implementation Support

During Fall 2021, leadership and staff committees will flesh out tactical implementation of these core goals and key strategies, using an annual planning template to organize personnel, resources, and metrics for implementation and progress monitoring.

In service of incorporating the scholar voice, driving equity throughout future decisions, and strengthening the strategic plan implementation, CCS will also engage scholars to understand their educational experiences through an equity tool known as Highlight<sup>2</sup>.

### Final Thoughts

It is a difficult time for K-12 schools. As COVID, mask mandates, and health ordinances continue, more families may seek alternative education options which may lead to additional growth opportunities for CCS. New scholars may enter CCS with significant learning gaps or heightened social emotional needs. Additionally, political and policy changes continue to be a threat to California-based charter schools and may introduce more constraints or open up new pathways for how CCS delivers its model.

While some external factors may be outside of CCS's control, the new strategic plan will best position CCS to ensure every staff member is supported, trusted, appreciated, and connected to a common vision. As CCS continues to strengthen its people, instructional practices, systems, and culture, the organization will be in a stronger position to serve more scholars and families through a gold standard model of personalized virtual learning.

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<sup>1</sup> ARTIC = Achievement, Respect, Teamwork, Integrity, Communication

<sup>2</sup> Highlight by Friday captures scholars' perceptions of their conditions of learning across dimensions of Basic Needs, Belonging, Self-Efficacy, Rigor, and Hope. The results can be disaggregated to clearly identify equity gaps and a supporting program encourages scholars to help design interventions.

# Impact Statement

## Who We Are

Compass exceeds expectations for how education can be taught through personalized virtual learning. Forming deep partnerships with teachers, scholars, and families, Compass responds to each scholar's unique needs, dreams, and background while preparing them to successfully pursue their goals after graduation. In partnership with families and a dynamic staff, Compass brings a variety of teaching experiences, learning styles, and wrap-around supports to equitably serve California scholars along their educational journey.

## What We Believe

Every scholar has the potential to thrive and be successful if they are supported in the right environment. We encourage a personalized approach where scholars are seen for who they are and can choose their best educational path to find academic success. We believe every scholar, family, and staff member is an important stakeholder and is welcomed, appreciated, and heard as part of charting their course through Compass.

## What We Do

- We intentionally match scholars and families with virtual, at-home, and in-person learning programs that support their lifestyle and vision for success
- We provide coordinated academic, social emotional, and college & career readiness support
- We hire passionate and knowledgeable staff, inspire collaboration, and encourage professional learning
- We continuously improve our personalized learning models and influence a more individualized approach to learning throughout the education sector

## How We Do It

- By acknowledging scholars' lived realities to appropriately engage, challenge, and prepare them to lead fulfilling lives
- By coaching families through their challenges and goals and offer trainings on personalized education
- By connecting and equipping counselors, educators, and families to thoroughly understand scholars' needs and deliver individualized supports
- By investing in resources to support professional growth and building trust among staff
- By monitoring new trends, capturing best practices across Compass programs, and creating opportunities to share knowledge back to the field

## Our Impact

We support and celebrate many paths to personal fulfillment. Upon graduation, scholars have the foundational knowledge, motivation, and abilities to successfully progress to the next stage of their journey - be that through entry into a career, additional training and service, entrepreneurship, or further education at a college or university. Graduates and their families are proud of their achievements and recognize the positive impact the Compass community had on their confidence, sense of pride, and self-awareness.

Long term, Compass alumni are independent thinkers with the capability to forge their own path. They understand what's essential to their continued personal growth and possess the skills and values to not only become, but maintain being productive, contributing members of their communities.

# Strategic Plan Framework

## Core Goal 1 (staff development)

**Build trusting relationships and a culture of collaboration, innovation, and ongoing learning.**

### Key Strategies:

- Articulate and reinforce Compass' vision and values
- Improve processes for staff goal setting and on-the-job coaching aligned to performance management systems
- Improve methods of reflection, sharing, and collaboration across departments
- Support staff to pursue professional learning opportunities and share back key insights

## Core Goal 2 (equitable scholar outcomes)

**Provide equitable support for all scholars by leveraging the full Compass community to advance each individual scholar's academic and social emotional progress.**

### Key Strategies:

- Create and reinforce org-wide standard measures for scholar success (academic and social)
- Educate and motivate families to achieve shared expectations for scholar success using diverse communications channels and community events
- Improve our ability to identify and support individualized scholar support needs (academic and social)
- Develop and track measures of equity and generate new solutions to equity gaps

## Core Goal 3 (growth)

**Position Compass to meet the growing demand for personalized virtual learning while proactively adapting to political changes.**

### Key Strategies:

- Review composition of communities and identify new families who may benefit from personalized virtual learning
- Monitor and assess implications of federal, state, and local politics and policy changes
- Develop a communications strategy to influence the narrative of Compass and promote its status as a premier public school
- Research and apply for new charters in smart locations that expand Compass's impact

## Core Goal 4 (thought leadership & model innovation)

**Become a recognized leader in personalized virtual learning within California and across the US.**

### Key Strategies:

- Communicate Compass's approach, expectations, and unique benefits
- Stay up-to-date with advancements in curriculum design and delivery aligned with scholar interests and diverse backgrounds
- Explore new combinations of blended learning (virtual, in-person, on campus, and/or at home) and pilot new model enhancements
- Share Compass' key competencies with external audiences in California and beyond to improve the representation of personalized virtual learning