

# Compass Chronicle

Counseling | Winter 2019

## Happy New Year and welcome back!

It is hard to believe that we are almost done with our first semester of school. We hope you all had a productive winter break in which you had a chance to catch up with any missing assignments and/or recharge your “batteries” to continue an excellent school year. Our return from winter break has been smooth and scholars are once again buzzing with new learning in their classes. As we are near to closing the fall semester, we reflect on the proud accomplishments of the counseling services department team and all the wonderful things we have planned for the remainder of the school year. Happy 2019 and thank you as always for your continued support.



Sincerely,

Debra Stephan, Director of Counseling Services

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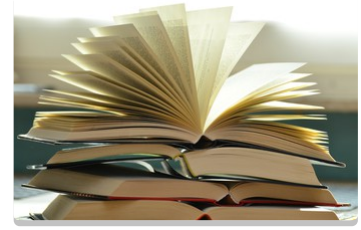
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## WHAT'S NEW IN COUNSELING?

It has been an exciting time in the counseling services department since the school year started. We close the fall 2018 semester with having delivered 8 counseling webinars for scholars and learning coaches centered around academics, social-emotional intelligence, and college & career. We introduced our college spotlights to expose our scholars to post-secondary options. Also, our scholar success coordinator has made tremendous impact coordinating the much needed additional supports for our scholars!



The second Counseling with Compass Live event was held the last week of November and while we had hoped for a larger turnout it was nonetheless a valuable experience where we got to learn about all the wonderful opportunities available at Cypress Community College. We invite you to connect with your counselor to learn more about these and other excellent opportunities available to you at your local colleges. Even if your plan is to apply to a 4-year college or university right after high school, there are many opportunities to help you at your local colleges to get ahead with college credits or start exploring a career today!

Finally, as we look ahead to the spring 2019 semester, we invite you to join us in celebrating two special events. The Great Kindness Challenge will be taking place the week of January 28th during which many schools and their scholars across the United States and the world participate in various ways to care for each other that goes above the normal interactions. This year's theme is "Lend a hand, be kind to ALL." Mr. Samples and Mrs. Schwartzberg will be kicking the week off with a virtual rally to share the wonderful opportunities you can take advantage of to participate in during the week that will include fun club activities and challenges. The other event we would like to invite you to celebrate is National School Counseling Week 2019 from February 4 through February 8th where counselors across the nation are celebrated during this one week of the year! This year's theme is "School Counselors: Providing Life Lessons" and will focus on the efforts your counseling team strives for in creating a positive impact on scholar academic success and planning for a career. If a counselor has made a positive impact in your life, we invite you reach out to your counselor to let him or her know what a difference they've made.



**FAMILY SPOTLIGHT**



## **This month we are happy to highlight the Mahoney Family!**

**CCS:** What does a typical day look like for you and your scholar?

**Mrs. Mahoney:** Our daughter is very self-motivated and thrives on sitting down to start a lesson, and see it through to the end. She is committed to her success with school. Because she is able to work independently, I do not have to spend time monitoring her nor do I have to pry her out of bed in the morning to get her to start her schoolwork. She has carved out a routine for herself that she diligently maintains. Sometimes she works on her schoolwork at the local Starbucks, but mostly she works at home. She can bring her school with her wherever she wants; that is the beauty of being a scholar at Compass Charters. Because she is a senior, filling out applications and writing college essays had to be included in her daily routine. I believe, (and Cara wholeheartedly agrees), that being an online high school student has afforded her the ability to manage her time in a way that the brick and mortar school couldn't, therefore reducing the stress of college apps.

**CCS:** What has been your greatest joy and what has been your greatest challenge in schooling at home? How did you overcome the challenge(s)?

**Mrs. Mahoney:** The absolute greatest joy for our family was to see our daughter become a healthy, thriving 17-year-old. She did not have a positive experience at her traditional high school. Kids can be very hurtful to each other, and social media can definitely compound this problem. With the click of a button, you are unfriended, unfollowed, unaccepted all of which can lead to one's undoing, and ultimately depression. Her experience became so bad that she did become depressed and developed an eating disorder which lead to Anorexia. She dropped to 87 pounds at 5' 6" so we knew we needed to remove her from that environment. We enrolled her in Compass Charter and she immediately became a happier, more self-confident person. It was a long road to get her to a healthy weight as well as reinstating her mental health. That was the most challenging time, but through it all, being able to work independently on her schoolwork, at home, helped in her journey to recovery. And I am proud to say, she is a healthy weight and a happier girl!

**CCS: Why did you Compass Charter Schools, among the vast competition out there?**

**Mrs. Mahoney:** Our older daughter decided she wanted to finish high school online in her junior year. We enrolled her in a competitor online school, as we weren't aware of Compass Charters at the time. When it was time to register Cara, a couple years had gone by and even though we had a fine experience at the other online school, I wanted to do more research to find the perfect fit. We are firm believers that the same school may not be the right one for all of your children, as children from the same family have different learning styles. After finding Compass Charters, and speaking with an administrator that we coincidentally knew from my other daughter's online school and now worked at Compass Charters we instantly knew it was the right choice, almost like a meant-to-be moment, and continue to feel that we made the best decision.

**CCS: What do you enjoy most about being part of our Compass community?**

**Mrs. Mahoney:** Oh my goodness, where to start...From day one, we have talked to the most friendly, welcoming, supportive and encouraging school administrators I have literally ever spoken with. I have had 3 children come up in the school system, and I can honestly say with 100% certainty that Compass Charter School has been the best experience. You never feel like you are wasting anyone's time, or bothering them with the many questions that arise in this different learning environment. Cara's counselor, Ms.Schwartzberg, has been very accessible and responsive, whether it be email, phone or even text. She has been wonderful with helping Cara choose electives that best suits her. She has made Cara feel good about herself, which in turn, gives the scholar that confidence that is needed to be a successful student. Cara's college counselor, Ms. Olson, has also been extraordinary with aiding and guiding Cara through college choices, college applications as well as being instrumental in writing letters of recommendations. She too has been a very positive influence on Cara. One of Cara's teachers, Mrs. Ginn, was also very kind and wrote a letter of recommendation. Cara enjoys every class she has taken; her favorites being Economics and Criminology. All of her teachers are very responsive and communicative.

**CCS: What advice would you give parents thinking about schooling their child at home?**

**Mrs. Mahoney:** Online school is not for everyone, but it is truly an amazing solution for so many circumstances and for so many families. For us it was for health reasons. It enabled our daughter to work at her own pace, while not feeling peer-pressured, or being distracted by negative influences. She was able to get the help she needed to become healthy without missing school days, because online school affords you the flexibility to work it around your schedule. Independence and self-direction, along with establishing a routine, builds confidence as well as developing time management skills. But online school is not just about working by yourself; Learning coaches and their scholars are part of a community. You have as much communication with teachers and counselors as you need. You receive progress reports. The scholars also interact with other students in discussion questions and learning labs. There are field trips and school picnics! It is the full package. A lot of people think that online school is easier than a traditional school, or that it isn't taken as seriously when it comes time to apply to colleges. This is simply not true. Online school is actually very challenging. Cara's grades have gone up and this is not without hard work and diligence. But like anything you desire in life, that is what it

takes. We are an online school family. We are proud to be a part of this community that has enriched our child's school experience and taken it to another level. When people ask us where our daughter goes to school, and we say she does online school, we are proud to say, 'It's called Compass Charter School, and it is wonderful.

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## STAFF SPOTLIGHT



### **This month we recognize Gabriela Gonzalez, Counselor**

**CCS: What is your job title and what are a couple of the things you do at Compass Charter Schools? How long have you worked for this organization?**

**Mrs. Gonzalez:** My title is counselor and I work with scholars whose last names begin with S through Z in grades 6 through 12. I work with scholars to address any personal and/or academic challenges they may face. My work with scholars covers a vast amount of items because there isn't much that wouldn't be included in what is personal or academic. I also support scholars with their post-high school planning and preparation in collaboration with other counseling team members. I've been with Compass since August of 2016.

**CCS: Tell us your "why" for doing what you do here at CCS?**

**Mrs. Gonzalez:** I love that my job allows me to engage with scholars on a more personal level. Two things bring me to my "virtual office" every day: 1) the ability to get to know scholars beyond their grades or test scores, and 2) the opportunity to impact a scholar's life on a daily basis. One of my favorite things is seeing or hearing a scholar's reaction when the spark goes off because they learned something new or feel empowered to do more.

**CCS: As an educator, is there piece of advice you'd like to share with learning coaches or scholars?**

**Mrs. Gonzalez:** Explore different avenues to support your scholar's learning. If you feel the educational setting that your child is in currently isn't working, take the leap of faith and explore other settings that may work. Regardless of the outcome of your exploration, you will have learned something new!

**CCS: Share one thing about you very few people would know?**

**Mrs. Gonzalez:** I have experience volunteering for various city-wide projects and homeless shelters. If I could, I would volunteer my time to help others in my local community full-time.

**CCS: What do you and your family like to do during your free time?**

**Mrs. Gonzalez:** It's hard to find a lot of free time with a 3-year old and 15-year old but when we do have some down time (especially when it's not water polo season!) we like to travel, explore, and go on adventures together locally and abroad. When relaxing at home, I like to read, craft, cook, or just watch some Netflix or Hulu.



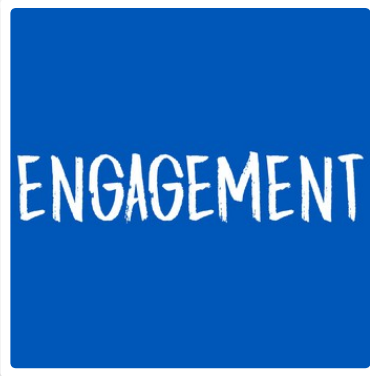
## SHARE YOUR STORY



Are you enjoying the educational experience at Compass? Tell us! We want to hear from you. Why did you decide to join the Compass family? Or, what do you love most about being part of our community? Share your comments and all of your wonderful experiences at Compass with us! [Click here](#) to share.



**Continue to Exceptional Scholar Services, Engagement, and Main Newsletter**







## Compass Charter Schools

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Visit our [website](#) for more information about our academic programs. Or, contact Debra Stephan, Director of Counseling Services at [dstephan@compasscharters.org](mailto:dstephan@compasscharters.org).

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