

COMPASS ACADEMY

FAQS



Compass Academy

Frequently Asked Questions

Question	Answer
What kind of school is Compass Academy?	Compass Academy is a competency-based school of student choice that offers students opportunities to connect their coursework to their interests, the community, and careers of potential interest through project-based and experiential learning.
What does “competency-based” mean?	It means that students may earn credit for learning outside the classroom, and that students advance upon demonstrated mastery of competencies, which are specific skills aligned with Illinois Learning Standards. Although the standard for “meeting competency” is higher than that of a traditional “passing” grade, at Compass Academy, we apply the “not yet” concept to student achievement, meaning that students who need additional time to master a concept are able to work at their own pace and may receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs. In this model, student learning is individualized and personalized, and is focused on skill development and application of knowledge, allowing students to pursue deeper learning and extended learning opportunities when they are interested and ready.
How is the schedule different at Compass?	Students at Compass can have a flexible schedule, meaning that they may start or end their day at different times, and they may also take classes at multiple locations in order to best meet their academic needs. Students at Compass Academy also have one day a week, Wednesday, for off-site experiential learning, which may include job shadowing, service learning projects, independent projects, and internships.
How will transcripts be different at Compass Academy?	Compass Academy has partnered with The Mastery Transcript Consortium to ensure evidence of student learning is communicated to colleges and scholarship organizations in a format that is easily understood and aligned with entrance/selected criteria. <i>“MTC Schools don’t reduce learners to single numbers, but they do hold them to high standards. When learners master</i>

	<i>critical skills and content, they earn “Mastery Credits”, which combine to create a clear, succinct visualization of each learner’s unique strengths.”</i>
Will a competency-based transcript be accepted by colleges/universities?	Yes, the Mastery Transcript has been accepted by nearly 270 colleges and universities to date, including highly selective schools such as Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Northwestern University, University of Chicago, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Here is a more complete list of schools that have accepted the Mastery Transcript.
Will students continue to earn credits towards graduation?	Students will still work to meet graduation requirements; however, they will do so through a Competency-Based Education (CBE) model, meaning students will meet the requirements by demonstrating proficiency in identified competencies.
Will students graduate from East or North or will they get a diploma from Compass?	Although future plans include Compass Academy becoming a diploma-issuing school, students will receive their diploma from East or North.
Are students able to transfer back to East or North if Compass is not a “good fit”?	Yes. We ask for a minimum of a one-semester commitment and then if a student wishes to return to their home high school, the student will be supported in that transition.
If you are accepted at Compass, do you automatically have a spot secured for the following year?	Yes. For example, students who enroll at Compass Academy for their 9th grade year will be able to continue their 10th grade year without having to re-enroll.
Is Compass Academy a full-time high school or does it only offer a few classes?	Compass Academy is a full-time high school, but students may attend full-time or part-time in conjunction with their home high school, ECC, or FVCC.
Is this appropriate for juniors or seniors, or for students who have already attended high school at East, North, or somewhere else?	Absolutely. Compass Academy is open to all students in grades 9-12. We work with each student to ensure the student’s schedule meets their individual needs.
Will the number of students be limited?	Compass Academy will be home to a maximum of 200 students. If our number of enrollments exceed the capacity of Compass Academy, we will institute a random lottery.

Can students attend full-time at East and only take one class at Compass?	Compass Academy students will need to attend advisory and one seminar at a minimum; however, students who do not attend Compass Academy may be able to attend community-based courses that are offered outside of the regular school day if there are available spaces.
How is athletic eligibility addressed?	While students attending on a traditional high school schedule must be passing five classes to remain eligible for athletics or activities, the IHSA allows students on a block schedule to be enrolled in fewer classes at a time while remaining eligible. This means that Compass students who participate in athletics or activities at EHS/NHS will remain eligible as long as they are working toward competency in all of their courses.
What businesses and organizations will students work with?	D303 is fortunate to have many partnerships with area businesses through our existing work-based learning opportunities. At Compass Academy, we will work with students to ensure they work with businesses that align with their interests and career goals.
Are there additional costs for students who attend?	Typical high school registration fees apply.
Is Compass Academy being rolled out across the nation? Is D303 intending to gradually transition from a current traditional curriculum/school setting to Compass?	There are many competency-based education programs across the nation that have shown much success over the past several decades. While developing Compass Academy, we researched multiple model schools including, but not limited to Clark Street Community School in Wisconsin, Belton New Tech High in Texas, New Tech High in Zion-Benton, High Tech High in California,, Danville New Tech Academy, The Early College at Guilford in North Carolina, and Renaissance High in Tennessee.
Are AP and/or dual credit classes offered at Compass Academy?	Since Compass Academy is a personalized learning environment, the dual credit and AP courses offered will be need-based. For AP courses not available at Compass Academy, students will still have access to those courses at East or North. Several Compass students currently take dual credit courses at ECC, and in the near future, we plan to offer some dual credit courses on site as well.

Does Compass Academy accept students who have IEPs?	Yes, the Academy is grounded in inclusion and equity. Special education and related services support will be individualized and provided based on the recommendations from a student's IEP team.
Without grades, how will this correlate to college entrance and opportunities for scholarship?	The short answer is competency-based transcripts are widely accepted and often preferred. Highly selective schools, including Harvard and MIT, have accepted students with a Mastery Transcript. Colleges and universities receive a variety of transcripts from non-traditional education programs, as well as from schools around the world, and they are accustomed to evaluating them when making admissions decisions. Competency-based transcripts provide more information on student mastery of knowledge and skills than the traditional A-F grading scale. Furthermore, the Mastery Transcript also includes a digital portfolio, so it can provide college admissions officers with more clarity on applicants' college readiness than a traditional transcript.
Is there evidence regarding ACT test scores based on this model?	Results from research show that, on average, the students in the competency-based schools performed equally as well as or better than the students in the seat time based schools. (2019)
Will transportation be provided?	Yes, the D303 Transportation Department will provide Compass students bus transportation to and from home, their home high school (if needed), and the Academy. Students who are able to drive will step through a similar process as we have at the high schools based on the number of available parking spaces for students.
Where is the Haines Center?	The Haines Center is located in the old Haines Middle School building in the heart of downtown St. Charles on 9th Street.