



COMPASS

Valor Collegiate Academies

The Compass model fosters holistic and adaptive development—including key physical, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual disciplines—through a focus on community and relationships as well as individual identity work.

Scan QR code with your phone's camera to access this content online.



OVERVIEW

The Compass model goes beyond academics to develop students in mind, heart, body, and spirit. Compass ensures that all members of the community (young and adult) are engaging in deep, holistic, and adaptive development work.

The Compass model is implemented in 64 schools and is helping over 30,000 students experience more social acceptance, social concern, and social reciprocity as well as less emotional exhaustion. Valor offers cohort learning communities, one-on-one coaching and consulting, resource toolkits, and school visits to others interested in implementing the model.

[► Compass Overview](#)



What Makes This Model Innovative?



Whole-Child Focus

The Compass model supports students cognitively, emotionally, socially, and physically. Learners engage in experiences that nurture the totality of factors that impact their learning, development, character, and overall health and well-being.



Affirmation of Self & Others

Compass supports learners in developing a unique, positive sense of self and purpose as well as a deep respect for the identities of others. Diverse identities are celebrated, nurtured, and leveraged in meaningful and anti-oppressive ways to support everyone's learning.



Connection & Community

The Compass model is relationship-rich. Learners are deeply known and respected by a variety of adults and peers and form meaningful relationships across lines of difference that nurture empathy, foster belonging, support well-being, and build social capital.

DESIGN

Goals

The model is designed to develop five interdependent Compass Disciplines that represent excellence in each human dimension—body, heart, mind, and spirit. Each Compass Discipline has two Compass Core Habits that are essential to master.

Sharp Mind

Pursuing knowledge and skills through critical thinking, creative problem solving, curiosity, and diversity of perspective. Having a Sharp Mind also means being able to listen and communicate effectively in relationships.

Compass Core Habits: Curiosity & Diversity

Big Heart

Having the courage to stand in uncertainty, to connect with and value others, and to be kind to self and others. Having a Big Heart also means having compassion for the needs of the world and having the courage to step into difficulty and suffering to be a part of the solution.

Compass Core Habits: Courage & Kindness

<p>Noble Purpose</p>	<p>Being connected to one’s deepest values, living from one’s best self-story, and bringing joy into the world. Having Noble Purpose also means being connected to communities’ values, shared histories, stories, and identities, as well as being grounded in communal identity. <i>Compass Core Habits: Joy & Identity</i></p>
<p>Aligned Actions</p>	<p>Working steadfastly to ensure actions match intentions. Having Aligned Actions also means being an engaged and supportive community member and being willing to contribute, through actions, to the greater good. <i>Compass Core Habits: Determination & Integrity</i></p>
<p>True North</p>	<p>Being balanced, present, and alert. True North is the most balanced center where one is able to be present and make clear decisions about next steps. <i>Compass Core Habits: Balance & Presence</i></p>

Experience

The Compass model guides every member of the community (adult and child) through their own adaptive developmental process. Every member of the community is expected to be developing their own Inner Compass and to be constantly refining and strengthening it by engaging deeply in their various communities.

The Compass model consists of two basic parts: (1) the Compass Phase System, which is a scaffolded developmental system to support students in developing their own identity throughout grades 5–12, and (2) the Compass Circle process, which is a facilitated practice to support relationship and community development.

Compass Circle

Circle is the heart of the Compass Model’s experiential learning approach. It is where the community comes together to support themselves and each other in their Compass development work. Circle is founded on the belief that individual human development takes place in safe and trusting communities, and that the community as a whole benefits from each individual’s growth. [▶ Compass Mini-Documentary](#)



The structure of Compass Circle is composed of five core components:

- **True North** – A short guided contemplative practice, generally led by the facilitator, that helps create a collective sense of presence in the Circle.
- **Check-In & Check-Back** – An opportunity for each participant to briefly share how they are

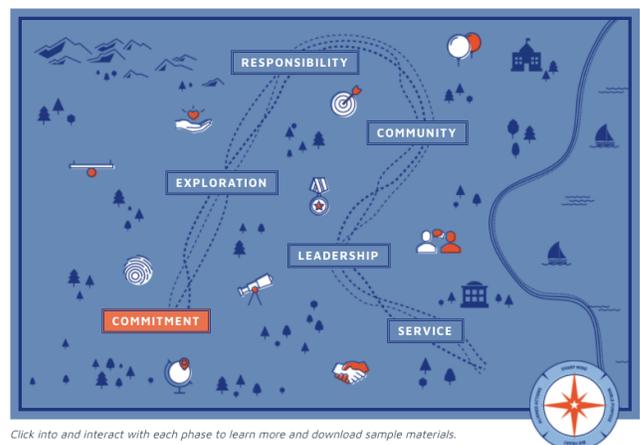
doing and what they might need from Circle by choosing a strong feeling word that describes their current state of being. After everyone has checked-in, the Check-Back is a built-in time for the facilitator to check back in with a few participants.

- **Circle Work & Resonance** – This is the "content" of Circle and consists of a variety of pre-planned work that participants bring to Circle (Badge Work, Individual, Relationship, and Community Work), as well as organic work that may surface from the Check-In. The Circle responds to all work with Resonance—a practice in which participants in the Circle bring the individual who has shared work to the center of the Circle to name what was particularly salient or moving in the work and how it impacted them.
- **Appreciations** – An opportunity to publicly share gratitude for the specific ways participants positively impacted one another. Similar to Resonance, participants in Circle will individually call another to the center and share their appreciation.
- **Closing** – A ritual that formally “seals,” or closes, the practice of Circle that consists of a reflection and a closing motto or cheer.

Compass Phase System (Badge Work)

The Compass Phase System is a playlist-like curriculum that allows adults and students to develop Core Compass Habits, the essential mindsets, habits, and skills critical to master the Compass Disciplines. There is a pathway for each of the 10 Core Compass Habits. This competency-based framework supports both the development of curriculum and the design or alignment of assessments to make sure students are progressing toward the development of an Inner Compass. Both students and faculty participate in their unique versions of the Phase System.

The Compass Phase System is in many ways like the process of earning badges in Boy Scouts. Students perform different experiential tasks that are designed to help them grow across the Compass Habits and Disciplines. The completion of Badge Work culminates in participants sharing their experience with their community of peers within their own Compass Circle. Each phase includes Compass Discipline-based signature experiences, which are experiential and reflection-based, and a tracking sheet. Each phase has badges and projects that are aligned to each of the Compass Disciplines.



The Compass Phase System has six phases:

- **Commitment Phase** – Making the commitment to join the community, agreeing to uphold and live by the agreements of the community (or working with the community to change them), taking the risk to share one’s voice and story with the community, continuing the work of developing meaningful relationships with others within the

community, and identifying ways to develop oneself to best serve the community.

- **Exploration Phase** – Diving more deeply into one’s “work” within the community. This includes the work of self-discovery and identity development as well as the work of relationship-building and community contribution.
- **Responsibility Phase** – This phase signals a readiness to take full ownership of one’s role within a community. The work of the responsibility phase is the work of servant leadership and of finding ways to develop one’s own Compass in the service of others.
- **Community Phase** –Turning the work of community-building to the greater world. In this phase, scholars explore ways to utilize their own community strengths and skills to serve greater causes and/or to help other communities.
- **Leadership Phase** – The leadership phase spans throughout both 9th and 10th grades as scholars learn to bring their own strengths and identities into community leadership.
- **Service Phase** – The service phase is the culmination of all of the developmental work that students have done throughout their tenure in the Compass program. Students are encouraged to find their Noble Purpose in service of their communities.

Supporting Structures

The model can be integrated into a school’s existing overall model but will require shifts in curriculum, culture, adult roles, and scheduling.

“Working the Compass” and engaging in holistic human development are at the core of all learning, not just isolated to a short period of time.



CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, & ASSESSMENT

The Compass Disciplines and Core Habits should extend beyond Circle and Badgework into every aspect of learning when a school implements the Compass model. This entails emphasizing social-emotional learning in all aspects of the school. The Compass Phase System, a competency-based framework and curriculum, guides students in identity and relationship development in a scaffolded way that helps each learner chart the path to excellence in each of the Compass Habits.

Valor also recognizes that social-emotional competencies are not cognitive skills and cannot be defined and measured as such. So Compass assesses SEL skills through Contextual Assessments, which ask important questions about the school environment (e.g., Does the student have a safe, supportive circle in which to be vulnerable?), Performance Assessments (e.g., Does the student convey key elements of their inner experience in their life story?), and Self Reports (e.g., How often does the student believe they take risks and share things about themselves with others?)

Compass both requires and builds a culture of trust and strong relationships so that everyone in the school community can take the risks required for true growth and development.



SCHOOL COMMUNITY & CULTURE

The Compass model supports community and culture by strengthening relationships and sense of belonging. The Compass model is based on the belief that the most fundamental building block of culture and community is *a relationship* and that our own Inner Compass can only be developed within the context of safe, strong, trusting relationships. The Compass model helps guide students' development of their own Inner Compass within the contexts of their individual relationships and their place within multiple communities.

Compass Commitments represent the relational agreements community members make to each other to build a foundation of relational safety and trust necessary for growth. Through a commitment-based culture, schools can create a foundation of trust and safety so that everyone in the school community can take the risks required for true growth and development.

[!\[\]\(950a62bbddad88d64435fd35607dfc42_img.jpg\) Compass Commitments](#)

Adults must work on their own holistic human development so they can support students in their development.



ADULT ROLES, HIRING, & LEARNING

Adults who are committed to their own development are positioned to effectively guide students through the same processes. Adults are encouraged to "walk their talk" in terms of commitment to their own individual and relational growth. At Valor, staff members participate in Faculty Circle one hour per week. They also complete Faculty Badge Work, which is aligned to the foundational components of the Compass model. Schools adopting the Compass model should similarly prioritize these adult developmental strands, which include narrative and contemplative practices, restorative justice, and adaptive growth.

Student and staff schedules must include dedicated time for Compass Circle and Badge Work.



SCHEDULE & USE OF TIME

Implementing Compass requires students to spend 90 minutes per week in Circles (30 minutes in mini-Circles and 60 minutes in full-length Circles). Additionally, students need a minimum of 60 minutes per week of advisory time dedicated to Badge Work. If an advisory or mentor period is not currently in place in the school, one will need to be created. Student Circle sizes, and therefore mentor class sizes, are recommended to be approximately 15–25 students. Valor strongly recommends that Student Circle sizes not exceed 25 students. Valor also encourages schools to schedule Circles in the morning, prior to academic instruction, and to hold

all Circles at the same time to minimize disruptions and maintain sanctity.

IMPLEMENTATION

Supports Offered

Valor offers the following supports to help you implement the [Compass model](#). Valor does not condone or encourage schools to try facilitating Compass Circles or Compass Badgework without direct training through Compass Camp.

Valor has identified the systems and structures required, as well as the conditions that enable a successful implementation of the model. [Readiness Structures & Conditions](#)

Compass Camp

Cost Associated



A cohort-based credentialing program for select schools to adopt the Valor Compass model. [▶ Compass Camp Testimonial](#) This includes:

- Coaching: You'll get direct training and support from Valor's Network Leadership Coaches throughout your three-stage implementation plan (Community Foundation, Implementation, and Credentialed).
- Curriculum: You'll gain access to Valor's entire playbook for the Compass model.
- Community: Through the cohort model, you'll develop deep and lasting relationships with other leaders on their journey to relationship-based schools.

[Learn More](#)

Compass in Leadership

Cost Associated



A cohort-based leadership development program designed to help school leaders develop as whole humans. Compass in Leadership helps leaders find their own leadership center and story, in fellowship with other leaders, so that they can meet the demands of their role in a more centered, connected, and purposeful manner.

[Learn More](#)

Community Tour Visit

Free



A Community Tour is the best way to experience Compass at Valor. During your visit, you will have the opportunity to observe classes, listen to a brief presentation on the Valor model, and have Q&A time with a member of the Valor leadership team.

[Sign Up](#)

Reach

64

Schools

30,000

Students

Impact

Students and faculty engaging in Compass report a strong sense of connection and community.

[Valor and University of Virginia Human Development Research Team, 2021](#)

- 90% of students say Compass Circle helps them understand people who are different from them.
- 87% of students say Circle shows them how what they say and do makes a difference to others.
- 86% of students say Circle helps them share themselves with others.
- 82% of faculty say Compass Circle changed their approach to emotions.
- 80% of faculty indicate Compass Circle helps them develop friendships.
- 87% of faculty say Compass Circle helps them focus their attention, even when there is distraction.

At the flagship school where the Compass approach is combined with a rigorous academic model, Valor middle school students rank in the top 5% of achievement scores and top 1% of growth scores in the state of Tennessee. [Valor Collegiate Academies, 2018](#)

Contact

Taryn Sprayberry

Director of Strategic Partnerships

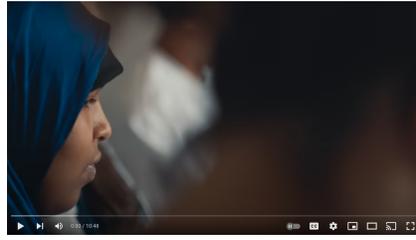
tsprayberry@valorcollegiate.org

RESOURCES



[Valor's Compass Model Overview](#)

Valor's Chief Culture Officer, Daren Dickson, breaks down each component of the Compass model.



[Valor's 'Powered by Compass' Approach](#)

A mini-documentary featuring Valor's Powered by Compass approach, where you can see Circle in action.



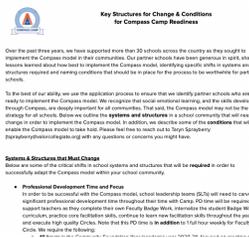
[Compass Commitments](#)

The Compass Commitments represent the agreements community members make to build a foundation of relational safety and trust necessary for growth.



[Powered by Compass Partners](#)

A video featuring the voices of Compass partners to hear directly from schools who implemented the Compass model.



[Readiness Assessment](#)

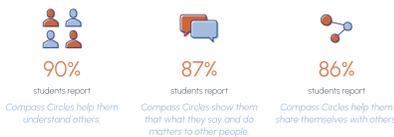
Valor has identified the systems and structures required, as well as the conditions that enable successful implementation of the Compass model.



[Compass Website](#)

This is the Compass website where you can learn more about the model.

STUDENT IMPACT AT POWERED BY COMPASS SCHOOLS



[Compass Impact](#)

Valor and the University of Virginia Human Development Research Team found that students and faculty engaging in Compass report strong connection and community.



[Valor Results](#)

Valor middle school students rank in the top 5% of achievement scores and top 1% of growth scores in the state of Tennessee.