

The Compass School

Education Built to Last
Facilities Best Practices Tour 2013

The Compass School
537 Old North Road
Kingston, RI 02881

Serving 162 students, Grades K-8
Public Charter School

Built 2000 7,660 sq ft
School website: www.compassschool.org



Facility

- 9% GHG reductions
- 20% water use reductions
- Rainwater barrels
- Many permeable surfaces
- Solar PV contributes 9% of electric needs
- Extensive energy monitoring

Health

- 85% of students walk/bike/bus/carpool
- 105 minutes PE per week
- Outdoor PE year round
- Outdoor classroom spaces, including woodlands and wetlands
- School-wide salad and stew days
- "Indoor shoes" reduce dirt and dust

Education

- Student scores in top 2% of state in science
- On site GLOBE and Smithsonian Tree Study connections to grounds
- 15 teacher professional days each year

School Highlights

Multi-age classrooms

Extensive Gardening program

Students use greenhouses and composting

Project Based Learning

Sustainable and Environmental

Curriculum imbedded in daily school life

Whole school activities

Build community cohesiveness



"Actively gardening, composting, recycling and learning about the environment through a project based approach benefits our students in immeasurable ways"

~ Allen Zipke, School Director

Read more about this school and other Green Ribbon Awardees at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/awards.html>

The mission of **The Compass School** is to teach environmental sustainability and social responsibility. Students in grades K-8 are taught through a project based approach, researching various topics and presenting their learning to others at project shares, or conducting stewardship projects. The curriculum is created around environmental topics, and environmental sustainability is embedded into the everyday life of the school. Classroom studies involve such topics as a study of waste, energy sources, robotics, solar car construction, biomimicry, aquaponics and aquaculture.

The Compass campus comprises 20 acres of historic farmland, with 5 acres of wooded wetlands, a stream, vernal pools, and a variety of local plants and animals. The remaining area surrounding the school is fields with rock walls. The property has native landscaping that requires no irrigation. Most walkways and entryways are constructed of permeable materials. The entire property is extensively used as an outdoor classroom and as an area to take walks and enjoy nature. Students are often outside engaged in a variety of activities, both on-campus and away on field trips. They do nature journaling and study vernal pools, tree growth, soils, stream habitats, and learn how farms produce food. Seventh and eighth grade students go on an annual camping trip to a location where they can study the local environment. The physical education program meets outside all year and includes winter activities such as sledding.

The Compass School building is a model of sustainable design. The main building has extensive windows in every room providing natural light. An array of solar panels on the roof provides a partial source of electricity for the building and a computer program allows students to monitor output. Updating computers, use of CFL light bulbs, adjustable thermostats in every room, attention to heat loss, and use of windows in warm weather has allowed us to reduce energy consumption by 30% over the past two years.

All students at Compass are involved in an outstanding organic gardening program which includes composting and caring for a flock of chickens. The idea of promoting locally grown foods is also the focus of our annual fall fundraiser, "A Celebration of Local Foods."

In addition, the Compass School is a GLOBE (Global Learning and Observation to Benefit the Environment) School; as such students are participating in a worldwide phenology study. Students are also conducting a long-term tree growth study for the Smithsonian Institution. As a result of these activities, in conjunction with daily life at The Compass School, students recognize that they are part of a global community of caretakers of the earth.

