

Contact:
Veronica Parsloe
Director of Community Engagement & Development, COMPASS
Veronica.parsloe@compassboston.org
(617) 721-8989

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COMPASS School hosts 39th Annual Violence Prevention Day, advancing proven model for student success

(Boston, MA) – The Community Providers of Adolescent Services (COMPASS, Inc.) hosted its 39th Annual Violence Prevention Day on May 27, 2026, bringing together students, families, and community partners to honor the life of a student lost to violence and to reaffirm a shared commitment to prevention, healing, and opportunity.

The annual event traces its origins to 1987, following the murder of a COMPASS student. In response, the School launched the Peace in the Streets Violence Prevention Program and Ceremony—an initiative that has grown into a cornerstone of COMPASS’s approach to supporting youth impacted by trauma. Today, the ceremony serves as both a memorial and a celebration, recognizing student growth while reinforcing nonviolent norms and positive relationships with adults and community supports, including public safety and service providers. Community partners who attended include the Boston Fire Department & EMS, Boston Police Department, Louis D. Brown Peace Institute, Cape Verdean Association and Dorchester Food Co-op.

“VP Day is impactful because it is rooted in the loss of a COMPASS student years ago; it stands as a powerful reminder of why the work we do matters,” said Keir Araujo, Director of COMPASS School. “The history behind VP Day makes it so much more than just another school event. Most of our students don’t know or remember the story, but watching them have fun, learn, and engage in the day’s activities is exactly what it was created for, and that’s the beauty of it.”

COMPASS School, located in Dorchester, serves students ages 6–21 in grades 1–12 who require specialized educational and therapeutic support. Many students face significant challenges, including exposure to community violence, substance abuse, poverty, and chronic instability. These factors place youth at elevated risk for school failure, court involvement, and long-term unemployment. Students often arrive having experienced trauma and lacking consistent positive adult relationships, which can result in distrust of authority, poor attendance, peer conflict, and academic performance well below grade level.

To address these complex and intersecting needs, COMPASS has developed and implemented the BEAMS (Beginning, Engaging, Acquiring, Mastering, Strengthening) milieu treatment model. Built over nearly 40 years and informed by research and outcomes data, BEAMS expands upon the School’s original violence prevention efforts

to provide a comprehensive, structured framework that supports students' academic, behavioral, emotional, and social development.

The BEAMS model includes a Point System that reinforces prosocial, on-task behavior through tangible incentives; a Step System that allows students to earn milestones and privileges based on attendance, classroom engagement, counseling participation, and safety; and embedded skill development in communication, anger management, conflict resolution, and frustration tolerance, practiced consistently throughout the school day. Violence Prevention Day remains a visible, annual celebration of this work and the progress students achieve.

With renewed philanthropic investment, COMPASS aims to deepen its impact by reducing physical and verbal aggression through increased use of conflict-resolution and self-regulation skills; improving student engagement as demonstrated by gains in attendance, time in class, and participation in counseling and group activities; and strengthening protective factors such as positive relationships, motivation for learning, and a hopeful outlook on the future. Progress is tracked through school data and student feedback to ensure continuous improvement and accountability.

Beyond the School, COMPASS provides a range of community-based services to families across Massachusetts, positioning the organization as a leading provider of special education and human services. Guided by a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, COMPASS works to equip young people with the skills they need to become self-sufficient, productive members of their communities.

For more information about COMPASS, please visit:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/COMPASSBoston/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/10853959>

Instagram: @compass_boston

Website: <https://compassboston.org/>

Partnership and sponsorship opportunities are available for corporations, small businesses and other local entities. Please contact Veronica Parsloe, Director of Community Engagement and Development at veronica.parsloe@compassboston.org for more information.

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