Welcome to Our First Compass Points Newsletters!

It is with great excitement that we are publishing this first edition of the Compass Points newsletter. After having conducted two successful “Becoming a Compass School” training workshops in October 2009 and in May 2010 at the Prem Tridhos International School (PTIS) in Chiang Mai, we are gaining momentum in building a network of schools and educators who are actively applying the Compass and ISIS Accelerator tools in their classroom teaching as well as the management and decision-making of the school.

Our aim with this newsletter is that it will be a useful resource for the Compass Schools Network of practitioners, as well as for any educators interested in sustainability and transformative education. Compass Points will be published quarterly, and will include information, insights, resources, case studies and updates on all that is going on within our network and further afield with respect to sustainability education; sometimes referred to as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Education for Sustainable Futures (ESF), among other titles.

So, we welcome you all as readers and eventually members of our small but growing network of schools and educator-practitioners in this journey to transform education “as” sustainability.
A Short History of Compass Schools

The Compass School concept grew out of a conversation that we had back in 2008 after running an AtKisson ISIS Accelerator Intensive workshop, which was primarily targeted at the development and private sector. It just so happened that this workshop was attended by a number of teachers, administrators from PTIS as well as from WWF-Thailand and the Ministry of Education in Lao PDR. With so many educators present, there was a rather quick mental link made in seeing the cross-over implications of the Compass and ISIS concepts, methods and tools for ESD and transformative education, as promoted by UNESCO and practiced by many international schools that follow the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum.

It was soon thereafter that the Compass School concept was more formally articulated through a concept paper put together by our Senior Associates, Alan AtKisson, Robert Steele, Lister Hannah and Ben Roche. As a result, Compass Schools was officially launched in January 2009 by the members of AtKisson Group as part of the group’s contribution to the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD).

In March 2009, Alan AtKisson, the President of AtKisson Group, was invited to be the keynote speaker at the East Asia Regional Council of Overseas Schools (EARCOS) teacher conference, and again in November for the administrator conference.

At both conferences he also conducted several short workshops for the conference attendees on the Compass School concept and tools. The reaction from people who attended these sessions can be described as full-on excitement, enthusiasm for this new initiative. Armed with this professional encouragement we have moved forward in our efforts promoting the model and tools and to diffuse them out to the education community throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

As of now, we have conducted two 2-day introductory workshops on the concepts, tools and methods called “Becoming a Compass School” for 45 teachers and administrators from international schools, international NGO non-formal educators, government officers, and university lectures. Compass School colleagues (as we refer to the workshop participants) have come from a number of different countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines and Vietnam. We are soon poised to run our third workshop, hosted by one of our flagship schools in Bangkok, the New International School of Thailand (NIST) from 5-7 November 2010.

As a result of the two previous workshops, we now have eight schools that are actively using the Compass in their classroom teaching and two schools, PTIS and NIST who are using the Compass as a central part of their own “whole school” journey in transforming themselves to be models of sustainability education.
A Compass School is essentially a school that practices sustainability in its governance, management, operations, teaching & learning, school culture and relations with the outside community. This “whole-school approach” is crucial to successfully integrating the principles and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of a school’s existence. Schools that model sustainability will be much more effective in influencing the development of their pupils’ values, attitudes and decisions and actions than schools that only address sustainability in the curriculum.

The starting point for a Compass School is the metaphor of the compass itself: a tool for assessing our present situation and for setting direction towards living and learning more sustainably.

The Compass of Sustainability uses the four directions of the Compass (N, E, S, W) to reflect four fully interdependent dimensions of life:

- The natural systems on which all life depends (N = Nature);
- The economic systems that provide humanity with goods, services, and meaningful work (E = Economy);
- The social and cultural systems that provide cohesion, identity, security and freedom (S = Society);
- The health, happiness, and quality of life for individual people and their families (W = Wellbeing).

These "Four Compass Points," provide a simple, clear, integrated, and comprehensive structure for sustainability learning. It is also a platform for the sustainable management of schools as institutions that actively model the behaviour that they seek to develop.

The Compass can be used as holistic lens or mental model in classroom lessons, or used to help frame the entire curricula for alignment with education for sustainable development (ESD). The Compass can also be a frame and guide for setting school policy in line with sustainability principles, help manage school operations for more effective embodiment of the sustainability ideal and help develop measurable indicators of progress. It also easily provides a common symbol, a metaphorical "centre of gravity," around which everyone in the school community can gather and feel part of this great civilisational journey toward a sustainable society.

The Compass Schools approach and methodology translates these general dimensions into the more specific working areas of school life, which we call Compass School Portals. They are six key areas that new ideas and action can be done within and outside of the school and they encompass the following areas:

1) School Governance;
2) Teaching and Learning;
3) Management, Operations and Support;
4) School Culture;
5) Buildings and Grounds and
6) Networking and Partnerships.
Through the six Portals, the school puts the four pillars into practice by involving the whole school community – students, teachers and other staff, members of the local community, parents, local authorities, local media and businesses. It encourages teamwork and helps to create a shared understanding of what it takes to manage and run a school in a way that contributes to sustainable development at every level – global, local, and personal.

**Compass School in Focus**

Currently we have eight schools that are using the Compass and ISIS tools and methods in various ways, though these early adopters are finding the Compass most valuable and accessible as a tool to enhance their teaching and learning in the classroom.

Prem Traidhos International School (PTIS), a K-12 international school located in Chiang Mai, Thailand and following the IB curriculum, is taking a whole-school approach towards integration of sustainability issues, thinking, values and systemic mindsets through the use of the Compass. Below are some of the highlights of their journey so far.

**PTIS Highlights**

Following the first Compass Schools training workshop held in October 2009, the group of six teachers met to plan a whole school professional development (PD) workshop for all academic and non-academic staff across all departments. This PD workshop was used to introduce the compass model to all members of the school in order to establish a common understanding of the model and the processes.

A second session followed to establish indicators for the campus as a whole, working on what defines a good indicator and selecting key indicator statements. Participants from all academic faculties across the Junior and Senior School (teachers, interns, teaching assistants), Boarding Programme, Finance Department, Housekeeping Department, Maintenance Department, Transport Department, Admissions Department, Prem Academies, and the Visiting School Programme participated.

Principle stakeholders were identified and a plan was set in place to gather data in areas relating to energy consumption, introduction of alternative energy sources, modifications to existing energy sources, percentage of processed versus organic food stocked and purchased, volume of packaging and other food transport services, and socio-economic links to local agriculture, including the Prem Farm.

As a further outcome, the Professional Development (PD) committee and the PTIS Sustainability team have made a proposal that each of staff PD day be used to also tackle one issue centered around a Compass point, thus ensuring that Compass is a centre stage with the whole-school.

**Compass in the Classroom**

Compass has been used extensively by PTIS teachers as a teaching support tool in the classroom. In the Kindergarten Early Years classes (K – Gr1) the team has used the Compass to revise the early-childhood timetable.
The team leader has simplified Compass icons around her classroom & says that the Junior School (again using the Compass) has made vast changes to the children’s lunch, resulting in a mass reduction in waste and the addition of healthier choices for the children, both for their snacks and lunches. Additionally, the primary team plans to create at least one unit of inquiry for each grade level that integrates the Compass.

The Grade 5 teacher has accomplished many great things in her classroom with aid of the Compass model. All correspondence between school & home is electronic. All work for the PYP exhibition is done on Moodle & Mahara. The class is especially delighted that not one tree has been felled for their work! When the grade 5s had to write and give speeches on a topic, the teacher (Mary) got them to plan and evaluate their topic in accordance with the Compass.

The grade 7 science class carried out an Energy-focused project last year using the Compass. The students’ objective was to create a ‘perfect and sustainable world’ using all of the Compass points. The class teacher immediately recognized the potential for cross-curricular work, as have other teachers in other subjects such as English and Math.

In the Middle Years Programme (MYP) English the teacher, Sarah, has used the Compass often within her syllabus. According to her, the students are so familiar with it, that there is very little planning needed. It has been used with the grade 6s to predict the end of book and in place of an end-of-book report. The grade 7s have used the Compass as a comparative tool between our lives and those of medieval England when reading ‘Catherine Called Birdy’ (another cross-curricular unit between English and humanities) which was very effective.

In the upper grades, the Diploma Biology and Environmental Systems and Societies (ES&S) courses to grade 11 and grade 12, case study work to enhance concepts taught in class for the ES&S course is now centered around the Compass Model. Students in both Biology and ES&S have conducted a great deal of field work over their two years in the Diploma, with a focus on collecting quantitative and qualitative data – students have learned that by applying the Compass Model in their analysis and evaluation of the data, they are able to cover all aspects required of them by the IB internal assessment criteria more easily.
Up Coming Events

Becoming a Compass School Training Workshop 5-7 November Bangkok, Thailand

Embrace sustainability and immerse yourself in this interactive and intensive learning experience that will take teaching and learning to the next level. Our third training workshop has been extended to include NIST student exhibition and teachers’ showcases of how Compass points are implemented in their classrooms. That is, it will be even more hands-on and focused on the classroom practice than the previous sessions.

You will have a chance to meet like-minded teachers and leaders in the ESD movement, who have been using the Compass model to enhance students’ thinking process, and learn about their success stories and challenges.

Isn’t this a great time to step up and aim for transformative teaching and learning?

Let’s take a journey towards sustainability together…

For more information on the next “Becoming a Compass School” workshop, please visit www.atkisson.com/resources/compass-education or send an e-mail to Nadha Vikitsreht at nadha@atkisson.com

Their grades on the discussion, evaluation and forming valid conclusion criteria have improved and their written expression is more logical. Topics including air quality, water chemistry, succession, biodiversity and conservation, human impacts on river systems, agricultural techniques, resource use, effects of overpopulation, impacts of global climate change and global carrying capacity have been examined.

At Prem the Compass is used in the Primary Years Program, in the Middle Years Program & at Diploma level. According to several teachers that we have talked to, they have found that once the students learn the initial concept of the Compass (N E S W), the whole idea can be taught in ANY subject!

Subjects where the Compass is prevalently taught is usually due to the staff being trained and being familiar with the model: Sciences, Humanities, Mathematics, Languages, Drama

The Compass is an easily grasped concept, from the very young, to the very old (am discounting myself in the latter).