



RIVER VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

100 School Lane, Blairsville, PA 15717

Mr. Michael Leasure, Principal



September 12, 2023

Dear Class of 2025 Parent/Guardian:

Your child's junior year of high school is a very important year for postsecondary planning. We understand that although this is an exciting year, it may also be a year filled with questions and uncertainties about the future and what that looks like for your child. It is our goal to assist your child in making this year as smooth and successful as possible.

The majority of the steps you and your child need to complete for their post-secondary goals should be completed during this pivotal year. This letter is designed to provide you with information that you should find helpful in managing this process. We are asking that you please thoroughly read this letter and keep it in a location where you can easily refer to it. This will ensure that you and your child are taking the necessary steps toward post-secondary planning. We have included important dates and times regarding a variety of district services such as field trips and evening workshops.

This year we will be meeting with students in the class of 2025 for career focused conversations. The purpose of our meeting is to cover some very important steps that your child should take towards planning their future. During our discussions, we will ask your child about career goals, future post-secondary plans, and we will also refer to the SmartFutures^(R) interest inventory information that will assist in narrowing your child's career options that are aligned to interests, strengths and values. Additionally, we will also review your child's academic transcript and ensure that your child is scheduled for the appropriate courses to meet their career objective. We will also cover topics including college entrance exams (SAT and ACT), scholarships, collegiate athletics (NCAA eligibility guidelines), job shadows, post-secondary visitations, FAFSA (financial aid) information, and more.

****Please review the list of categories/items that may apply to your child's future plans****

Students who are unsure of their future career goals or are entering the workforce directly out of high school:

Interest Inventory: All students must take the SmartFutures^(R) Interest Inventory in their Transition 11 class as well as their Senior Government class. We use an online career interest inventory called **SmartFutures** <https://www.smartfutures.org>. It can be accessed from any computer that has internet capabilities. The results will provide your child with a RIASEC code to help identify their individual strengths, interests and values.

If interested, the STEAM Academy offers the following programs:

- BioMedical Technology -Cybersecurity -Electrical Occupations/Powerline
- Pathways to Health Professions -Welding Technology -Esports
- Sports Medicine and Rehabilitative Therapy -Teacher Preparation

Military Services:

Federal Service Academies - Students interested in applying to a Federal Service Academy should see Miss Buffone immediately as the application process is rigorous. The colleges operated by the U.S. Federal Government are referred to as the Federal Service Academies are:

- United States Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado
- United States Coast Guard Academy, New London, Connecticut
- United States Merchant Marine Academy, Kings Point, New York
- United States Military Academy, West Point, New York
- United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland

***For enlistment in the US Armed Forces:** Please see Miss Buffone to set up a meeting with a recruiter.

For students planning to pursue ANY further postsecondary education:

***Campus Visits & Job Shadowing:** Your child may receive 5 excused absences from school to make postsecondary campus visits. **We strongly encourage students to visit each school that your child has a potential interest in attending during their junior year.** Please do not wait until your senior year to complete campus visits. Most campus visits can be set up online through college websites. To set up visits online find your postsecondary institution of choice and click on the link to admissions. If possible, we encourage parents/guardians to go along on these campus visits. At times, a campus visit may be impossible (for students planning to go out of state). In this instance, we recommend that the student do a thorough search of the school's website, and set up a phone interview through the admissions department.

***Scholarships:** For questions regarding scholarships, please see Mrs. Faulk. Many local and national scholarships are advertised directly through the Guidance Office. We are currently working on getting the Guidance website up and running. **Most of these scholarships cannot be completed until your child's senior year; however, we wanted to make you aware that next year your child will be responsible for obtaining and completing scholarship applications.** During your child's junior interview, we will cover the location of the scholarship files within the Guidance Office. We will also give a reminder to students to be diligent about checking the scholarship files weekly during their senior year. We encourage parents to also remind your child to check the scholarship files. In addition, scholarships will be updated on a weekly basis on the River Valley Guidance Office website at: [School Counseling - River Valley High School \(rivervalleyisd.org\)](http://SchoolCounseling-RiverValleyHighSchool.rivervalleyisd.org). We post all scholarships that come through the Guidance Office online and through the school announcements. Although we advertise many scholarships through the Guidance Office, it is impossible for us to have knowledge of specific scholarships that are offered through individual colleges and universities. Please visit the website of your child's prospective postsecondary institution for more information regarding scholarships. Additionally, there are thousands of other scholarships available on the web. It's a good idea to do a scholarship search online to access some of these additional scholarship opportunities. Please don't let free money go to waste!

***Financial Aid:** Students who are planning to attend a postsecondary institution should fill out the FAFSA financial aid form during their **senior year**. The FAFSA is the form that drives any financial aid that may be granted to your child by the government. Although your child is a junior, it may be a good idea for you to attend Financial Aid Night this year so you can become familiar with this process. You will be invited to Financial Aid Night again next year, when your child is a senior. **Financial Aid Night is scheduled for Wednesday, October 25, 2023 from 6:00-7:15 p.m. in the High School Auditorium.**

For students planning to attend a 4-year college or university:

PSAT/NMSQT- (Pre-SAT): Given at River Valley High School. It's a cost-effective way to prepare for the SAT. Mrs. Faulk scheduled the PSAT and will be in contact with you about all information needed to register for the PSAT.

SAT & ACT: Students who plan to attend a 4-year college or university after high school should take the SAT or ACT during their junior year. You may sign up for other SAT test dates offered at different locations on several Saturdays throughout the school year. Please visit www.collegeboard.com for SAT test dates and registration deadlines, or www.act.org for ACT test dates and registration deadlines. Fee waivers will be available in the Guidance Office for students who receive free or reduced lunches. Eligible students can use two fee waivers per year to take the ACT or SAT.

Collegiate Athletics:

Any student who thinks there is even a slight possibility that they will play a Division I or II varsity sport while in college needs to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center online at www.ncaaclearinghouse.com. There is a fee to register. PLEASE NOTE: NCAA legislation requires that students who wish to enroll in a Division I or II college and play collegiate level sports must send their ACT or SAT scores directly from the testing institution (such as the College Board) to the NCAA Clearinghouse. College Entrance Exam scores will not be accepted from the high school transcript.

Pre-Apprenticeship/Apprenticeship:

Students at the STEAM Academy will have the opportunity, provided the student demonstrates the required tactile skills and cognitive aptitude, to participate in either a Capstone Program (Cooperative Education), OJT paid internships, and/or a pre-apprenticeship that is linked to an approved apprenticeship.

Students who do not attend the STEAM Academy and according to their CFIEP, as well as have completed their course requirements for graduation, may be granted the opportunity to participate in a OJT, school-to-work program designed to aid in career exploration and decision making.

Applications:

Before Thanksgiving of your child's senior year, your child should complete applications for future schooling (this includes applying to colleges, universities, technical schools, trade schools, or talking with a military recruiter). **NOTE: please pay attention to application deadlines for each postsecondary institution to which you plan to apply.**

We know this can be overwhelming, but it's so important to take the initiative and plan ahead. As always, the guidance staff wishes you and your child a successful year! If you have any questions please feel free to reach out.

Important Dates

***Financial Aid Night- October 25, 2023 from 6:00-7:15 p.m. in the Auditorium.** A representative from the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) will go over many important topics for securing Financial Aid for college. All 11th and 12th graders and their parent/guardian are urged to attend.

***IUP Career Fair & PSAT-Mrs. Faulk is working on this information and will be in contact with juniors about attending the Career Fair and regarding a scheduled date for the PSAT.**

***River Valley Career and College Expo (CaCRE) – November 1, 2023.** This will be held at the STEAM Academy gymnasium with approximately 35 employers and post-secondary institutions being invited. Students will have a personalized schedule developed based on their results from the interest inventory and their RIASEC code(s).

Counselor Notes & Assigned Duties:

In our welcome letter sent home in August, we noted there have been some big changes in the Middle School and High School Counseling Department. We both will serve as the school counselors for grades 6th through 12th. We will not be splitting students by grade or alphabetical order. This enables the students to connect with either counselor or the first available counselor. Although we are not splitting student caseload, we will be dividing duties.

Please contact the below named counselor for questions regarding these specific topics:

Miss Buffone: Junior and Senior Letters, Financial Aid Night, FAFSA Completion Workshop, ASVAB Testing and Interpretation, NCAA Eligibility Center, attending Special Education meetings, The Challenge Program, Military Services

Mrs. Faulk: PSAT, Dual Enrollment/College in the Classroom, AP Testing, attending Gifted IEP Meetings, PA Smart Futures, Scholarships, IUP Career Fair

Also, please be aware that Ms. Buffone has not officially started the school year at River Valley School District. Her predicted arrival date will be on September 25, 2023.

We are looking forward to a great school year! Please email with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Tammy Buffone

Bethany Faulk

Miss Tammy Buffone
School Counselor
buffone.t@rvsdpa.org

Mrs. Bethany Faulk
School Counselor
faulk.b@rvsdpa.org