

the Compass

BVT SCHOOL COUNSELING NEWS • FALL 2024

Welcome to *the Compass*, our school counseling noteworthy news source. Our team of compassionate counselors are here to guide and support you and your teenager on their educational journey. We're dedicated to fostering the academic, career, and social-emotional wellbeing of your teen to promote individual talents, and a curiosity for learning as they reach their full potential and become career, college, and life ready. Together, we can help you chart their course.

Practice, Practice, Practice!



Parenting, like teaching, demands an infinite, inconceivable amount of patience. Especially as your teen heads back to school and adjusts to new routines, you might find yourself prompting them with reminders: "Did you remember to set your alarm, charge your laptop, or do your homework?" What would happen if they forgot those things or you didn't remind them? Would they have the skills to handle the situation?

We understand that letting go, allowing them to do things for themselves, and facing the consequences if they don't can be challenging. As parents and educators, we work together to help your teen develop skills and problem-solving strategies to address challenges they'll encounter in their everyday lives. Students learn best through practice and repetition. So, it's our job to prepare them to leave high school with the tools, grit, and focus to hit the mark and achieve their career goals. When it comes to mastering self-actualization skills, it takes lots of practice repeated day in and day out.

From the first day of school to the moment they walk across the stage at graduation, we see incredible growth in our students. Along the way, our school counselors plant the seeds of independence and encourage students to implement different problem-solving strategies in any given situation. The curriculum for freshmen focuses on recognizing the signs of depression, sophomores learn about stress management and self-care, juniors build upon these topics with a review

lesson, and seniors focus on life after high school, transitioning into adulthood, and accessing care after graduation. Through mindful conversations and having the courage to do hard things, your teen learns to cultivate their problem-solving skills and personal growth by practicing:

Self-Awareness: the ability to look within ourselves and accurately identify what we are feeling, thinking, or doing in the moment. With this increased sense of awareness, we can more easily interpret our true emotions and motivations.

For instance, if your teen returns to school after an extended absence, they may feel anxious or overwhelmed about completing the accumulated assignments. Being self-aware requires looking within themselves without judgment and recognizing their anxiety, which could present as a headache or an upset stomach; this is a normal emotion.

Self-Reflection: the exercise of introspection where we can pause and contemplate why we are feeling, thinking, or acting this way. This practice helps us gain insight, so we can clarify our goals, values, strengths, and areas for improvement while challenging our beliefs and considering our experiences from another perspective.

If your teen is returning to school after an extended absence, it can take them a moment to comprehend their thoughts and feelings (nervous, stressed, or worried). They may need

help understanding what their emotions are telling them and how to complete the assigned work while staying caught up on current assignments.

Self-Management: the ability to regulate our emotions, thoughts, and behaviors consciously and productively to plan what we're going to do. A person with strong self-management utilizes impulse control, stress management, goal setting, and organizational skills to respond to different situations effectively. They can follow through because they have a deeper understanding of the source of their reactions.

Self-management can be challenging after an absence or if your teen has been unfocused and negligent with their course work. They may need to develop an effective game plan in order to manage the workload. This may include deep breathing techniques or going for a calming walk to get them in a better state of mind to follow through with their responsibilities.

Self-Advocacy: the process of understanding your needs, knowing what support might help, and communicating those needs to others. As we become more independent, we learn to advocate for ourselves. In doing so, we become more comfortable deciding what we want and have the courage to ask for help when needed.

After an absence, the teen practicing self-advocacy will ask for help when needed. However, the teen who is still learning self-advocacy may need help contacting a teacher, making an appointment with their counselor, or seeking extra help in order to catch up. They might benefit by visiting our Learning Lab, each day before and after school from 7:15 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Our teaching assistants are available to get them focused and back on track.

Encouraging your teen to practice, practice, practice these self-actualization skills will empower them to have agency over their lives and build a strong foundation for adulthood. Mastering these skills will build their confidence, allow them to work creatively and productively, and develop pride in themselves — life skills they'll need to succeed now and in the future.

Does the Schedule Fit?



Back-to-school always seems to be buzzing with students musing about their schedules. They're talking about which teachers they have, who's in their classes, and their potential workload. Once they've had a chance to move through their course schedule, they usually move on to other topics of conversation. Still, there are occasional cries about changing a class or two.

If your teen is crying out, try not to panic and take some time to talk to them about why they don't think a class is a good fit. Often after some investigating, you'll realize it's not time to raise the white flag. Some students worry because they had a friend who struggled with a particular teacher, and they need a little reassurance that it doesn't mean they will struggle as well. Other times, a student's initial impression might be that the workload is too hard or too easy. That often changes as everyone settles into the class and gets to know each other. So, it may be wise to get the teacher's perspective and/or give it a cycle or two and then reassess.

If it ultimately seems that a transfer would be best for your teen, our add/drop period runs **September 9th – September 20th**. This timeline provides students with an initial window for testing their schedules. It also limits the confusion of students transferring between classes while being mindful of potential make-up work accumulation. Our end date also ensures that transfers occur prior to when the state requires all courses to be recorded on transcripts, which is preferable when considering college admissions.

Here are a few things to keep in mind as you review your teen's course schedule:

- Students are not permitted to change courses due to teacher preference.
- Students are transferred to the course section with the most available seats to ensure equity.
- Our add/drop policy is available at: www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/adddropolicy.



They're on the Move!

From the moment they walk on campus, our seniors (and their parents) can almost hear the cheers and enivision caps flying through the air at graduation. There's A LOT to do to get them there, no matter what career path they choose!

To help ensure they have a well-thought-out plan, our Career Enrichment teachers help the seniors build on the Career Action Plans, which they're required to complete as part of their senior portfolio. Their career plans break down the post-graduation process into well-researched, manageable steps to entering the workforce, enlisting in the military, attending a two-year college or technical program, or embarking on a four-year college degree. In addition, our counselors offer support by developing these plans during the introductory lessons and via individual appointments. During the first few weeks of school, our counselors also visit the seniors in their shops so they can review the college application procedures. Be on the lookout for an e-mail that will be sent to you outlining our processes to help support your teen at home.

It's almost time for them to leave the nest, so let's get ready! For more career planning tools and resources, visit www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/careerplanning.

CALENDAR 2024 – 2025

Parents, keep your teenager up-to-date on all our school counseling events, deadlines, and workshops.

- Aug 21 Sophomores: Meet Your Counselor
- Aug 22 Freshmen: Meet Your Counselor
- Sept 5 Seniors: College Application Process Workshop
- Sept 9 Academic Course Add/Drop Begins
- Sept 10 Seniors: Career Action Plans/Financial Aid Lesson
- Sept 20 Academic Course Add/Drop Deadline
- Oct 2 Thanksgiving Drive Begins
- Oct 3 Juniors: Depression Review Lesson
- Oct 8 Juniors: Depression Screening
- Nov 5 Juniors: College Application Process Lesson
- Nov 13 Junior Parents: College Application Process Workshop
- Nov 25 Holiday Drive Begins

NOTE: All dates are subject to change.

Assessments

MCAS, AP, SAT, PSAT, oh my! Keeping track of all the exams and requirements can be challenging. No worries. Here is a sneak peek at the fall schedule:

- Aug 20 Juniors: PSAT Open Registration
- Aug 24 Seniors: SAT Exam
- Sept 13 Juniors: PSAT Registration Deadline
- Sept 14 Seniors: ACT Exam
- Oct 5 Seniors: SAT Exam
- Oct 7 – 10 Juniors: PSAT Exam
- Oct 26 Seniors: ACT Exam
- Nov 2 Seniors: SAT Exam
- Dec 7 Seniors: SAT Exam
- Dec 14 Seniors: ACT Exam

Visit: www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/assessments for more assessments and registration information.

It's your teen's go-to reference for prep courses, schedules, and dos and don'ts on exam day.

