

# the COMPASS

BVT SCHOOL COUNSELING NEWS | WINTER 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 and life ready. Together, we can help you chart their course.



## Finding Balance

Do you ever wonder how your teen finds the time to handle their academic coursework, vocational training, and other interests and commitments? In the age of achievement culture, teens attend school, participate in numerous after-school athletics and activities, hold part-time jobs, and often feel overwhelmed by the pressure to perform at the highest level. Finding time to do it all successfully can be challenging and usually unrealistic.

As school counselors, one of the biggest challenges we see in the course planning process is that our students want to say "Yes!" to everything. All too often, by saying yes to demanding, higher-level courses without fully considering the time required for their coursework and extracurriculars, students end up rethinking that decision during the add/drop period. As a result, they need our help finding balance.

As a parent, you play a role in this balancing act, and with our support, together, we can make all the difference. When your teen selects their academic courses each year, there is much to consider. You think beyond the classroom and ponder, "Will these courses fit into their career and post-secondary game plan?" It's an ideal time to chat with your teen about the offerings that make sense to them, why they might aim to take College Prep (CP), Honors, or Advanced Placement (AP), and whether the courses align with their goals. Additionally, evaluating your teen's extracurriculars and considering limiting them to one or two a season is a good idea.

### Course Planning

BVT has strict graduation requirements. With four years of academics and studying a vocational trade, our students automatically do more in half the time than a conventional high school. Your teen doesn't need to take every challenging class offered. We recommend a grade of 90 and above before students move up a level. Also, do not double-jump. So, if your teen is in CP, do not move to AP if they have yet to try the honors level first. There is a lot to consider. So, let's explore the different course levels:

- **College Prep:** It's called college prep for a reason. CP courses and above are what colleges are looking for. If your teen wants to attend college and is in all college prep-level classes by their junior year, they are on the right track.
- **Honors:** Whether your teen wants to work for that state-of-the-art company or attend a competitive college, they may consider higher-level courses that are within their ability but not to the detriment of their well-being. Employers and colleges want to see your teen challenging themselves appropriately and their grades trending upward. If your teen wants to enter the workforce directly, they need to consider courses that will enhance the skills required in their field. Knowing how to communicate effectively is essential when starting a business. Perhaps consider taking Spanish or a workplace writing course. Taking an honors math or science course may also help in their trade.

- **AP:** Advanced placement courses are only available junior and senior years. Consider how your teen is progressing at the honors level and their capacity to handle an AP course. Try to avoid overload by spreading AP courses out over the two years. College credit is possible but involves passing an AP test with a qualifying score.

### Yes vs. No

We don't want our students burning themselves out. Your teen must understand and learn the material being taught, which means selecting appropriately challenging classes aligned with their career and educational goals. It's great to try one or two courses that challenge them, but if they're selecting a schedule that will overwhelm them, where they're constantly trying to catch up and are stressed out, it may be time for them to consider saying "No" or being more selective when saying "Yes."

By mastering the "Yes" and "No" balance, your teen can confidently explain to a prospective employer or college admission counselor who they are and what makes them uniquely prepared for their chosen career path. How great is that?!

To learn more about course planning and the registration process visit [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/courseplanning](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/courseplanning).

## Making Spirits Bright!

Our Student Council is hosting a Holiday Gift Drive. This annual event brings the holiday spirit into your home, whether you are a family in need of holiday gifts or you'd like to donate to this worthy cause. To participate, simply contact us by **December 6th**. Learn more by visiting our Giving Back page: [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/givingback](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/givingback).

# Interested in Scholarships?



Financing your teen's future is a BIG deal! Whether they need money for tuition or new tools and equipment, scholarships can help with paying the bills. Members of the Class of 2024 earned more than 330 scholarships and awards that exceeded \$9 million in collective renewable value. This essentially free money is awarded due to various factors, such as financial need, academic and vocational merit, strong character, good citizenship, and/or extracurricular performance.

Are you wondering how your teen can make the most of available scholarship opportunities? Encourage them to:

- View and apply for statewide, community, and BVT scholarships on the Scholarship Canvas page.
- Look for additional scholarships through your town, place of employment, and any community organizations that you or your teen are associated with.
- Check with prospective schools to see if additional information is needed to be considered for university scholarships.
- Take advantage of the Scholarship Support Days this spring.

Learn more about our scholarship offerings and application process at [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/scholarships](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/scholarships).

## Let's Talk About It

A lot is happening in the world that can make everyday life feel overwhelming for young people. Getting them to open up and share their feelings can be challenging, especially when talking about depression. The many reasons teens may decide not to share their struggles are all too real – they don't want to burden others and are worried they will be judged or treated differently.

Left untreated, depression can make it difficult for teens to attend school and complete classwork and even lead to substance abuse and self-harm. Talking about depression with a trusted adult can be a crucial first step in getting support from a professional. That's why it's essential to teach our students how to recognize depression and to speak up and take action if they're concerned about themselves or a friend or family member. This begins by implementing the Break Free From Depression Curriculum with our freshmen, where they:

- Learn the signs and symptoms of depression and suicide.
- Discuss the stigma, risk factors, and internal thoughts associated with depression.
- Review how to talk with a trusted adult or someone they're concerned about, and practice healthy coping skills.

Armed with this knowledge, students participate in a voluntary depression screening to help them self-assess and identify any friend or classmate who may be struggling with depression.

If you or your teen need help talking about depression, contact our teen's school counselor. Working together, they can suggest appropriate follow-up care and support. To learn more, visit [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/freshmenmentalhealthcurriculum](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/freshmenmentalhealthcurriculum).

## CALENDAR 2024 – 2025

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

Nov 25th	Holiday Drive Begins
Dec 1st	College-Bound Senior: FAFSA Opens
Dec 3rd	Juniors: Career Action Plan
Dec 13th	Seniors: QCC Decision Day
Jan 14th	Juniors: Course Selection
Jan 15th	Freshmen: Course Selection
Jan 23rd	Sophomores: Course Selection
Feb 24th	Seniors: Scholarship Support Day
Mar 4th	Freshmen: Break Free from Depression – Pre-Test/Module 1
Mar 5th	Freshmen: Break Free from Depression – Module 2
Mar 6th	Freshmen: Break Free from Depression – Modules 3 & 4/ Post-Test
	Freshmen: Depression Screening Opt-out Deadline
Mar 11th	Freshmen: Depression Screening
Mar 13th	Juniors: College Fair

*NOTE: All dates are subject to change.*

## Assessments

MCAS, AP, SAT, PSAT, oh my! Keeping track of all the assessment exams and requirements can be challenging. Here is a sneak peek at the winter schedule:

### Winter College Entrance Exams

- Dec 7th SAT Exam
- Dec 14th ACT Exam
- Feb 8th ACT Exam
- Mar 8th SAT Exam
  
- Mar 25th & 26th Sophomores: ELA MCAS Exam
- Apr 7th-9th Sophomores: PSAT-10

Visit: [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/assessments](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/assessments) for more assessment and registration information. It's your go-to reference for exam schedules, prep courses, and do's and don'ts on exam day. School counselors are available to answer questions and help your teen develop a personal assessment calendar.

