

# the Link

BVT PARENT NEWSLETTER • SPRING 2025

the  
Compass  
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## It's Been a Great Run!

Best known at BVT for being an approachable, caring man of the people. Our Superintendent-Director, Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick, genuinely engages with students and staff, and has an uncanny ability to be in-the-know on all things Valley Tech. Whether he is in the halls talking to kids, taking part in our annual Color Run, or on the sidelines of athletics events cheering on our Beavers, it is evident that he cares for our students. As Dr. Fitzpatrick prepares for the next chapter of his story, we can all salute and say, "IT'S BEEN A GREAT RUN!"

Anthony E. Steele II — Principal

## After half a century of transformative work, Dr. Fitzpatrick is preparing to retire, leaving behind an impressive legacy.

His career has been marked by an unwavering commitment to student success, innovation in technical education, and leadership that has shaped our school into one of the most respected institutions in the region. It is no secret that Blackstone Valley Tech (BVT) is an extraordinary school; therefore, it should not come as a surprise that our leader, affectionately known as "Doc," is anything but ordinary.

His journey into education began long before his tenure at BVT. From an early age, his parents instilled in him the importance of doing a good job. Starting as a paperboy on the streets of Milford to reading meters for the local electric company, hard work was always in his blood. A graduate of St. Mary's Catholic High School, he grew up with a passion for learning and an innate desire to help others achieve their potential. After earning his undergraduate degree, Doc pursued further studies, ultimately obtaining a doctorate in education, which set the foundation for his future in educational leadership. His initial roles in the education field were characterized by a focus on improving educational access, fostering student engagement, and addressing the evolving needs of the workforce.

In 1994, he became the third superintendent-director in our school's history. At a time

when technical education was becoming an increasingly important pathway for students seeking careers in skilled trades, he was the right person for the job ahead. His ability to recognize the balance between the academic and vocational aspects of education was one of the key elements that led to his success in this field. During this time, BVT became a model for excellence in vocational and technical education. Under his leadership, the school expanded its curriculum, introduced cutting-edge technologies, and formed strong partnerships with local industries and businesses. These collaborations helped ensure that students were not only equipped with the skills to excel in their trades, but were also prepared for college if they chose to pursue higher learning.

Not surprisingly, Doc's talent, experience, and perspective was recognized by his peers, and he assumed leadership roles throughout the state. As a leader among leaders, he served as the president of the Massachusetts Association of Superintendents, the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators, and the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools. New and veteran colleagues from around the state and nation frequently reach out to him for advice and guidance, which he happily gives.

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Doc is a tireless advocate for vocational education and its importance in preparing students for successful careers in fields ranging from health-care to information technology. One of his major accomplishments was the expansion of programs that allowed students to gain real-world experience while still in high school. This included internships, apprenticeships, and hands-on training that directly tied academic learning to industry needs. His belief in the value of vocational education extended beyond just preparing students for the workforce—it was about giving them confidence and a sense of accomplishment in their chosen fields. The culture at BVT under Doc’s leadership became one of pride in skilled craftsmanship and the pursuit of excellence.

As technology rapidly advanced, so too did our programs under Doc’s direction. He consistently sought out opportunities to integrate the latest technological advancements into the school’s curriculum, ensuring students receive a relevant and rigorous education. In addition to embracing technology in the classroom, Doc was instrumental in enhancing our campus. Under his leadership, the school underwent significant renovation, including the 36-million-dollar expansion project in 2004 that provided students with cutting-edge resources to practice their craft.

His leadership extended beyond BVT. He believed deeply in the importance of community partnerships, often forging connections between local businesses, government organizations, and other educational institutions. A leadership style grounded in collaboration, he worked tirelessly to ensure that BVT was not only a leader in education but also an integral part of the local economy. This philosophy also led to strong alumni networks as graduates returned to contribute to the school’s continued success, whether by supporting Co-Op, Advisory Committees, or other school initiatives.

Doc’s career is a testament to the life-changing power of vocational education and his dedication to making career technical education a viable and valuable path, which has changed countless lives. His 50 years in education exemplify what can be accomplished when passion, vision, and dedication are at the core of leadership. Through his tireless efforts, BVT has become a beacon of excellence in vocational education, and his influence in the field of education will be felt for generations to come. He leaves behind a legacy that is truly worth celebrating—one that reflects his unwavering commitment to our students, the community, and the future of education. Thank you, Doc. It’s Been a Great Run!



## Heart of the Matter

February brings Valentine’s Day, feelings of love, and lots of hearts to mind. It’s also American Heart Month, when adults are encouraged to focus on cardiovascular health. But cardiac screenings are essential for everyone, regardless of age, even if you think you’re healthy.

While the prevailing perception is that heart disease is primarily an adult disease, there are thousands of seemingly healthy youths with undetected heart conditions. Kellie Carroll of Grafton, a parent in our school community, joins other Massachusetts families in sharing their stories to raise awareness about the importance of youth heart screenings and life-saving measures like CPR and AED awareness. “My son, Tyler, died unexpectedly,” said Kellie. “For months, we did not understand why.”

### Tyler’s Story

“Tyler was healthy at every physical. The only time he was ill was with ear infections. As Tyler started participating in baseball, bowling, and gymnastics, we noticed he would gasp for air. We mentioned it to his pediatrician, as we thought he might have asthma like his dad. But it wasn’t asthma. In November of 2001, Tyler was diagnosed and treated for strep throat. The holidays came and went, and we looked forward to registering him for kindergarten. On February 3, 2002, Tyler was happy and eager to participate in a church play with friends and cousins. In the church hall, a cousin heard Tyler gasp for air and asked if he was ok. He assured them, of course, and said, ‘I want to carry the light into church.’ Later that day, he went to his grandparents’ house for dinner and fell off the back steps and was unconscious. First responders administered CPR, but they were unable to revive our son. We were in shock. The postmortem revealed Tyler had a viral infection from strep throat that traveled to his heart and cardiomyopathy. I can’t bring my beautiful son back, but I can share Tyler’s story to help other families understand that heart conditions can affect people of any age.”

### Youth Heart Screenings

Cardiomyopathy in children and teens often goes undiagnosed. As many as 1 in 500 adults may have this undetected heart defect, which can be hereditary. While routine heart health screenings are part of adult preventive health-care, standard sports physicals do not routinely include screening methods like an electrocardiogram (EKG).

We checked in with our Athletic Trainer, Molly Awiszus, about cardiac screening guidelines, and she said, “Heart screenings are important for all students, not just student-athletes.” As a certified athletic trainer, she is trained to act quickly and initiate immediate lifesaving measures in a cardiac emergency.

You can find Molly on the sidelines assisting coaches and student-athletes when an injury occurs and ensuring protocols are followed. She also advises athletes and their families on the best courses of action during recovery and assesses their eligibility to return to sports. When a student-athlete wants to return to sports, Molly follows a graduated return-to-play protocol, which involves a gradual increase in activity level, monitoring for symptoms (that could affect the heart), and the athlete’s full recovery before returning to full participation in their sport.

### Lifesaving Tools & Skills

By quickly performing Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and using an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), athletic trainers can significantly contribute to the “Chain of Survival” — the critical steps needed to maximize cardiac arrest survival. AEDs are located in every wing of our school and in the common areas outside the fitness center, the old gym, the competition center, and the nurse’s office. They are also in the athletic trainer’s office and with them on athletic fields during all practices and games.

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## Let’s Talk Shop

The BVT approach to Career Technical Education (CTE) encourages the exploration of rigorous vocational, technical, and academic skills. Our academic teachers and vocational instructors work in concert, continually assisting students with career planning through a CTE lens. While our program offerings cover many professional areas, there is no better way to gain valuable insights and knowledge about a prospective career path than first-hand from a trade professional.

To help students evaluate career options, our Career Enrichment team held its 2nd Day with Industry Experts on December 18th. The event, by design, allows juniors actively career planning and seeking jobs to hear and talk with various business and industry leaders and learn more about their professional experiences, credentials, further education, and the day-to-day realities of their full-time employment.

The schedule of events included three sessions and five panels to maximize the time of our students, staff, and guest speakers. A panel moderator directed each session to allow students time to ask questions or speak one-on-one with the industry representatives after the presentation.

The panels comprised of individuals from the following occupational areas:

- Health, Wellness, and Beauty
- Automotive, Commercial Utilities, and Manufacturing
- Uniformed Services and First Responders
- Construction Trades and Heavy Machine Operation
- Science, Tech, Engineering, and Math (STEM)

After the Uniformed Services panel, we spoke to a few of our students to hear their thoughts on the event. Here’s what they shared with us:

Connor Lane of Hopedale, a junior in our Electrical program, said, “It was pretty cool speaking with Ben DeBoer, a BVT graduate, about the Army National Guard and trying on his tactical vest. It was helpful to have different forces of the U.S. military branches represented on the panel and to hear first-hand about their experiences. I am interested in learning more about ROTC programs, which assist students through college in exchange for military service after graduation.”

Dylan Fleming of Millbury, a junior in our HVAC/R program, stayed behind to talk more with Anthony Sullivan, an Environmental Police Officer. He shared, “Officer Sullivan went to the University of Maine. I want to pursue a similar career path and become an Environmental Police Officer. I want to study environmental science at the same college, so hearing his perspective was helpful and informative.”

“I enjoyed hearing from the experts,” said Parker Waugh, a junior in Electronics. “I am currently keeping all my options open. I haven’t decided what to pursue after graduation, but I might be interested in STEM in the military and a career as an Engineer.”

Along with our students’ appreciation, we want to thank the industry experts who took time out of their schedules to partner with the Career Enrichment department and made this day possible. They are the leaders that inspire and shape our student’s future careers.

## CALENDAR 2024 – 2025

To help keep you up-to-date on important school information and events, visit our Important Dates page at: [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/importantdates](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/importantdates).

- Feb 17 – 21 Winter Break – NO SCHOOL
- Feb 27 Winter Concert – 7:00 p.m.
- Mar 7 Second Trimester Ends
- Mar 12 SkillsUSA District Competition
- Mar 17 First Day of Spring Sports Tryouts
- Mar 20 Early Release – 11:00 a.m.  
Superintendent’s Gourmet Dinner
- Mar 21 Teacher In-Service – 7:45 to 10:30 a.m.  
Student Late Start – 10:30 a.m.
- Apr 2 Spring Art Show & Concert – 6:00 p.m.
- Apr 3 & 4 Drama Club Dinner Theater
- Apr 4 Senior Portfolios Due
- Apr 5 Incoming Freshmen Placement Testing & Parent Orientation – 7:30 a.m.
- Apr 12 NHS/NTHS Color Run – 10:00 a.m.
- Apr 18 Early Release – 11:00 a.m.
- Apr 21 – 25 Spring Break – NO SCHOOL
- May 1 Early Release – 11:00 a.m.
- May 2 SkillsUSA State Competition at BVT – NO SCHOOL
- May 5 – 9 Senior: Last Week of Academic & Final Exams
- May 10 Junior & Senior Prom
- May 12 – 16 Senior: Last Week of Shop & Final Exams
- May 16 Senior: Last Day of Co-Op  
Third Trimester Ends for Seniors
- May 19 – 21 Senior Attendance Make-Up
- May 22 Senior Checkout Day
- May 26 Memorial Day – NO SCHOOL
- May 27 Senior Class Day  
Senior Memorial Scholarship Night  
(by invitation only) – 6:30 p.m.
- May 28 Senior Breakfast & Graduation Rehearsal
- May 29 Class of 2025 Graduation Ceremony
- May 30 Junior Portfolios Due
- Jun 3 Spring Concert – 7:00 p.m.
- Jun 4 BVT’s Got Talent – 7:00 p.m.
- Jun 6 Third Trimester Ends for Juniors, Sophomores & Freshmen
- Jun 9 26th Annual Golf Tournament
- Jun 17 Last Day of School / Early Release – 11:00 a.m.

Note: These events and dates are subject to change.

# the COMPASS

BVT SCHOOL COUNSELING NEWS • SPRING 2025

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.

## Regain the Momentum

Have you ever lost momentum even with the end in sight? This easing up can happen to the best of us, and our students often experience it in the third trimester. As school counselors, we've noticed students losing steam and starting to coast this time of year. Whether it's a slip in grades, a lack of focus, or simply feeling overwhelmed, it's not uncommon for students to lose momentum and need additional support.

As a parent in tune with your teen, you know their aspirations and ponder the best way to assist when they lose speed and motivation wanes. Sometimes, a gentle reminder that they have the ability, skill, and resources can make all the difference in how they approach their work. Other times, an alternate strategy is needed to reflect, refocus, and recommit. Here are some strategies you may want to employ to empower your teen to harness their energy and move forward.

**Reflect:** We all face challenges and setbacks. Before suggesting solutions, ask your teen how they're feeling and what hurdles they're encountering, then listen. Let them know their feelings are valid, and speak to them with kindness and compassion. Instead of saying, "You need to get your grades up," try asking, "I've noticed you've been struggling lately. What's going on? How can I help?" Prompts like this allow your teen the space to reflect and talk about what's concerning them, whether it's a challenging class, social pressures, or a lack of interest in a subject they're studying.

**Refocus:** We all have something that inspires us, even if we lose sight of it. Reconnect your teen with their "why." For some, it's making a team or doing well in their shop; for others, it's a long-term goal like securing a competitive Co-Op job or college acceptance. If your teen loves sports, remind them how academic performance can affect eligibility to play. If they're passionate about their trade, good grades can open doors to Co-Op opportunities. Once they see a connection between their effort and passion, they may regain their momentum.

**Recommit:** We have all had to reignite our interest and enthusiasm at some point. Watching your teen not completing assignments can be tricky because you don't want to see them fail. But at the end of the day, it's their work, and they have to be the ones with the resolve to complete assignments and meet deadlines. Rather than telling your teen what to do, ask them about their plan for finishing strong. When they have a say in how they approach their schoolwork and routines, they're more likely to feel in control and recommit to the work ahead.

**Lean into Healthy Habits**  
While ownership of your teen's actions or inactions should be on them, they may need your help to find achievable solutions. Show your support by encouraging these healthy habits:

**Set Goals:** It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the big picture. Help your teen break down their challenges into smaller, achievable goals. Instead of telling your teen to "study more," you might say, "How

about we plan a study session for your math quiz tomorrow evening?" Completing short-term goals helps them regain confidence and creates a sense of momentum for long-term results.

**Keep a Schedule:** Some people are more organized than others, and this is where many teens stumble. They have goals and to-dos, but they need to put the plan into a schedule to get organized. Suggest using a creative planner or a fun, interactive app to help build their schedule.

**Work Environment:** Identify a good space for your teen to do their work. It could be a cozy room in your home, the library, or a quiet coffee shop. But make sure you remove the distractions and tuck away the devices.

**Active Breaks:** If your teen tries to complete hours of assignments in one sitting, they could benefit from active breaks. Stand, stretch, or go outside to clear their mind and refuel with a healthy snack. A five- or ten-minute break will make them more productive when returning to their classwork.

**Self-Care:** It's hard to do our best when we're not taking good care of ourselves. When teens are overwhelmed, self-care is the first thing to slide. Help your teen prioritize self-care, such as getting enough sleep, exercising, and eating healthy foods.

**Seek Out Support:** Encourage your teen to establish a support system to help keep them focused and on track. Teachers offer extra help and tutoring services on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and organizational support is available through the Learning Lab.

**Celebrate Progress:** Recognize consistent progress with positive reinforcement. After a particularly tough week, acknowledge your teen's effort to improve by saying, "I noticed you've been putting more time into your assignments. That shows real commitment, and I'm proud of you."

Together, we will keep your teen inspired to reach their goals. As they learn how to harness their energy, build momentum, and see the positive outcomes of their effort, they'll persevere through challenges.



Workforce



College



Military

## Senior Year is Coming...

Transitioning from a junior to a senior is pivotal in a teen's high school years. Seniors are considered student leaders, role models, and mentors. It's a time of great power and responsibility. That can be exciting and scary and comes with a whole host of other emotions. And it's A LOT of work!

Luckily, our juniors are not on this journey alone. We start preparing them for their senior year and beyond through career exploration and reflection activities as early as freshmen year. By their junior year, our school counselors and career enrichment teachers are working with them to put their post-graduation goals in motion by introducing the Career Action Plan. This portfolio piece helps guide students through the planning process and spark meaningful conversations about your teen's plans for the future and the tasks ahead that will help them get there.

Students select a Career Action Plan template for entering the workforce, military, or preferred

college pathway and use it to develop a well-researched timeline of tasks to complete before graduation. For instance, the plan might direct your junior to review the Co-Op eligibility requirements and consider whether the Co-Op job they are interested in is a good fit for them when directly entering the workforce or determine whether the colleges on their list require SAT/ACT scores, and if so, when they plan to register for and take these exams.

The Career Action Plan is designed to help our juniors think through their post-graduate plans, guide them through what tasks they need to accomplish, and assist them with organizing all the related items on their to-do list so they don't miss any critical steps in the process. By chipping away at it piece by piece, your teen can start senior year confident and well-prepared.

Encourage your junior to share their Career Action Plan with you and together, review our Career Planning Checklist: [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/careeractionplans](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/careeractionplans).

## Cartwheel

It's not always easy to know how to support your teen's mental health, but help is available. Our partner Cartwheel Care offers:

**Telehealth Mental Health Services**  
Licensed clinicians are available outside school hours within seven days of a referral. Services available may include assessments, therapy, medication, and/or care coordination.

**Free Webinars & Mental Health Resources**  
Webinars are designed to empower caregivers with practical, actionable information on various mental health and wellness topics. To learn more, visit [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/mentalhealthwellness](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/mentalhealthwellness).

## Show Us the Money!

Your senior receiving a scholarship is a great reason to celebrate. Share your excitement by completing our Scholarship Reporting Form. It only takes a moment to fill out and get your senior listed in our graduation program. Only those grants and scholarships reported to us by **Friday, May 9th**, and/or issued on Scholarship Night will be listed in the graduation program.

So, don't delay! Visit [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/scholarshipreporting](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/scholarshipreporting) and show us how excited and proud you are of your teen's accomplishments.

## CALENDAR 2024-2025

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

Feb 24	Seniors: Scholarship Support Day
Mar 4&5	Freshmen: Depression Curriculum
Mar 5	Freshmen: Depression Screening Opt-Out Deadline
Mar 11	Freshmen: Depression Screening
Mar 13	College Fair
Apr 4	Seniors: Career Action Plan Due
Apr 10	Career Fair
Apr 28	Course Verification Sheets Available
Apr 30	Seniors: Seeking Supports After High School Lesson & Checkout Surveys
May 6	Sophomores: Building Wellness Lesson
May 30	Juniors: Career Action Plan Due
July 31	Drop AP Courses Deadline
	Request Schedule Changes Deadline

Sept 2-12 Add/Drop Period

*NOTE: All dates are subject to change.*

## Assessments

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

### College Entrance Exams

- Apr 7-9 Sophomores: PSAT-10
- Mar 8, May 3 & Jun 7 SAT Exam
- Apr 5, Jun 14 & Jul 12 ACT Exam

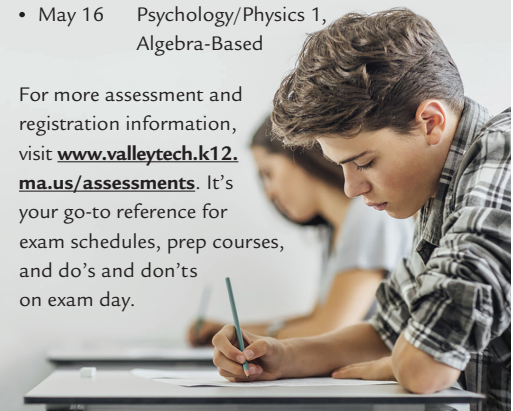
### MCAS Exams

- Mar 25 & 26 Sophomores: ELA
- May 20 & 21 Sophomores: Math
- Jun 4 & 5 Sophomores: Science
- Jun 4 & 5 Freshmen: Honors Science

### Advanced Placement Exams

- May 5 Biology
- May 6 Chemistry
- May 7 English Literature & Composition
- May 9 U.S. History
- May 12 Calculus AB/Music Theory
- May 14 English Language & Composition
- May 15 Spanish Language & Culture /Computer Science Principles
- May 16 Psychology/Physics 1, Algebra-Based

For more assessment and registration information, visit [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/assessments](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/assessments). It's your go-to reference for exam schedules, prep courses, and do's and don'ts on exam day.



# The Next Four Years

As we welcome our incoming freshmen and say goodbye to our graduating seniors, there is a common theme regarding their respective journeys. First-year students are eager to explore their new school and all it has to offer, while our seniors have embraced the experience, forged their path, and are uniquely prepared to take the next step. In doing so, they've come full circle and are at the cusp of another starting point.

As parents and educators, we work together to offer your teen guidance, recommendations, and advice during their high school years. We support them in developing new skills, pursuing opportunities, and reaching milestones. Ultimately, how they approach each year is up to them, which is why there is a deep sense of achievement in witnessing their transformation into independent young adults.

We feel like proud parents when our students reflect on their time with us and articulate how much they have grown. In an article titled, Trading Traditional for Exceptional published by Parents with Preparedness Magazine, senior Zabel DerKosroffian shares her four-year BVT journey. "I learned not only vocational skills but also how to become a responsible and accountable person, skills that seem to be lost in my generation. As I have prepared to be a leader, a professional in the workplace, a public speaker, and a powerful networking figure, I have confidence in my abilities that far surpass others my age."

Our parents and students continue to be our most valued ambassadors for vocational education. Take a moment to read Trading Traditional for Exceptional by Zabel DerKosroffian ([www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/bvtinthenews](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/bvtinthenews)) and be inspired to share your story with the world.



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"We are fortunate to have many AEDs accessible throughout our campus, thanks to grant funding," said Molly. "In a cardiac emergency, immediate intervention is the key factor in potentially lifesaving situations. Knowing how to use an AED and being proficient in CPR can significantly increase the chances of survival for an athlete (or anyone) experiencing cardiac arrest. All our coaches, officials, and many staff members are trained and certified in CPR and AED use."

## Heart Health Questions

If you have a family history of heart conditions, get to the heart of the matter and visit your doctor to discuss regular cardiac screenings to monitor for potential issues in your children. For more information and to find a youth heart screening event near you, visit [www.parentheartwatch.org/national-youth-heart-screening-day](http://www.parentheartwatch.org/national-youth-heart-screening-day).

*This article is for informational purposes only. For medical advice or diagnosis, please consult a medical professional.*

## Color Run 2025

Join our students, Dr. Michael Fitzpatrick, and members of the National Honor Society, and National Technical Honor Society at this year's 5K Color Run on **Saturday, April 12th**. It's more than colorful and fun, all proceeds help us support the society events, graduation stoles, and scholarships. Mark your calendar and get ready for the chalk dust to fly.

## It's Putter Madness...

...if you don't join our 26th Annual Golf Tournament on **Monday, June 9th**, at Highfields Golf & Country Club. Don't miss this opportunity to gather with friends, hit the links, show off your skills, socialize, and take part in our auction and raffles. Registration is at 9:00 a.m., with tee times to follow at 10:00. The cost is \$150 per player or \$600 a foursome.

Register today at [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/golftournament](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/golftournament) and support this fun-filled event!



# BVT

**Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School**  
65 Pleasant Street, Upton, MA 01568  
508-529-7758  
[www.valleytech.k12.ma.us](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us)

Link Up...



As a Massachusetts Green School, BVT fosters open conservation. In that spirit, parents are reminded that all resources — school year calendar, lunch menus, daily announcements, bus routes, and mandatory forms — are available at [www.valleytech.k12.ma.us](http://www.valleytech.k12.ma.us). Be sure to take advantage of PowerSchool, the software that allows you access to your child's assignments and schedule. If you're unable to access our website, contact the main office at 508-529-7758.

In addition to this newsletter and our robust website content, our social media sites will give you an opportunity to connect and engage with us. Join in on the conversation by following us on X: [@BVTHighSchool](https://twitter.com/BVTHighSchool) and Instagram: [@bvt\\_highschool](https://www.instagram.com/bvt_highschool).

