the Compass

BVT SCHOOL COUNSELING NEWS | WINTER 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 curiousity for learning as they reach their full potential and become career and life ready. Together, we can help you chart their course.



It's Your Move!

Parenting a teenager is a lot like a chess match — requiring strategy, patience, and foresight — where every move matters. Whether it's offering guidance, encouragement, or learning to let go, each decision helps shape your teen's future. With the endgame in mind, we work together to empower your teen to advocate for themselves, make strategic decisions, and position themselves for long-term success. So, when the time comes to let them go, you can remind them — "What happens next is no longer up to 'us' — it's your move!"

Until then, you know your teen and their learning style best. You know when they apply themselves or have let things slide. You've seen your teen excel in certain areas and fall short in others. And when they do, your instinct is to help. However, when teens struggle academically, there's a balance between telling them what to do and allowing them to decide for themselves when to advocate, seek out additional support, and handle their work independently, and of course, reminding them that their decisions (or moves) have consequences and can lead to a successful outcome or a setback.

As adults, asking for help often feels intuitive. But for teens, especially those still developing confidence, it can feel like a major step. Like many parents, you've probably encouraged your teen to stay after school for Extra Help, only to be met with reluctance, excuses, or indifference. As counselors, we experience the same pushback.

Some students simply won't consider Extra Help until they're in danger of losing something they want, like their eligibility for athletics or Co-Op, in which case they may suddenly be motivated to seek Extra Help.

Self-advocacy isn't easy, but it's an essential life skill. One of the most powerful ways to teach it is to model it. Letting your teen witness you seeking support when you need it helps normalize the behavior and permits them to do the same.

Benefits of Extra Help

Many students who were once reluctant to attend Extra Help have found it surprisingly beneficial and are now more likely to seek it out on their own. Here's what they gain:

Clarify Concepts: Teachers can further explain topics that your teen did not fully grasp during class and allow them to ask specific questions. If their classroom is too crowded or they feel they'd benefit from another teaching style, they can work with a different teacher — one they've had before, a friend's teacher, or someone new.

Catch up & Move Ahead: If your teen is falling behind, Extra Help can provide targeted support to get them back on track. It's also a chance to learn more effective ways to study, complete homework, and approach challenging subjects. Over time, your teen moves from passively reacting to challenges to developing strategies that help master them.

Improve Performance: Consistent use of Extra Help often leads to improved grades and test scores. We encourage your teen to notice when they're struggling, identify when to ask for help, and take initiative. They don't need to stay for the full session — once they've received what they need, they're free to move on to another classroom, practice, or after-school activity.

Accessing Extra Help

Extra Help is available after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays until 3:00 p.m., regardless of whether it is an academic or a shop week, and students may opt to take the 3:15 p.m. Late Bus back to their town. If those days are not feasible, some teachers may be available by appointment on alternate days.

The Endgame

By actively engaging in Extra Help and learning to advocate for themselves, students develop the skills and confidence they'll need far beyond high school. If we've played the game well, they'll graduate knowing how to navigate life's challenges with wisdom and confidence. In the meantime, we'll continue to work together — but ultimately, we know that their next move is theirs to make. So, when it comes to Extra Help — and much more — we can confidently say: It's Your Move!

Student Reflections...

"The first time I went, Extra Help was a disaster, but that was on me. I showed up, but I wasn't locked in. I went back with an actual game plan, and things went way smoother. Now that I know what I'm doing, I can usually get my questions answered in 5-10 minutes."

"Coach didn't flip out when I got to practice late because of Extra Help. I was shocked, but all he cared about was that I gave him a heads-up."

"I had a lot to make up, and my girlfriend's teacher had fewer students, so I went there instead. It felt really awkward at first, but I explained the situation and they were happy to help. I got what I needed — it was all good."



A Schedule That Fits

If you have ever gone on a woodland hike, you know that selecting the best-fitting pair of hiking shoes makes all the difference between having a comfortable trek and getting a blister. A shoe that doesn't quite fit is the same kind of discomfort your teen risks if they don't plan next year's schedule carefully. The repercussions can carry over into future years, depending on course progression and their post-graduate plans.

During course planning, we often see students struggle to comprehend the overall time required for their coursework, extracurriculars, family, social life, and daily self-care. Our eager beavers want to say "Yes!" to everything, but they already do more in HALF the time than conventional high school students. Having a schedule filled with demanding, higher-level classes isn't always the right path for them.

As a parent, you can help your teen consider:

- Skill level according to teacher recommendations.
- Which classes align best with their post-secondary goals.
- Priorities and time constraints.

By working together, your teen can develop a schedule that not only feels good but meets all of their needs.

Want to learn more? Take a moment to browse our course planning page for more information: **www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/courseplanning**.



Scholarships Await

At this point during the school year, our seniors are actively working on their post-secondary plans. In reviewing your teen's career path, you may be wondering how you might support them in paying for their trade tools, technology, or school tuition. We encourage you and your teen to make the most of available scholarship opportunities by:

- Applying to the eligible statewide, community, and BVT scholarships posted on Canvas.
- Looking for additional scholarships through your town, places of employment, and community organizations that your family is affiliated with.
- Researching whether additional information is needed to be considered for scholarships at prospective colleges.
- Taking advantage of our **Scholarship Support Day** on **Thursday, February 26th**.

Be on the lookout, our seniors will be soon be invited to view a scholarship Canvas page and apply for scholarships. Our school counselors will hold sessions to support them in the application process this coming spring. Get a jump start on the process by helping your teen review our scholarship options at: **www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/scholarships**.

CALENDAR
2025 – 2026

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

Dec 12th	Seniors: QCC Decision Day
Jan 13th	Freshmen: Course Selection
Jan 14th	Juniors: Course Selection
Jan 21st	Sophomores: Course Selection
Feb 26th	Seniors: Scholarship Support Day
Mar 12th	Juniors: College Fair
Mar 16th	Freshmen: Depression Screening Opt-Out Deadline
Mar 16th & 17th	Freshmen: Signs of Suicide Curriculum
Mar 18th	Freshmen: Depression Screening

NOTE: All dates are subject to change.

Stay Informed & Engaged
We're now using ParentSquare, an all-in-one communication platform that connects our staff to you and your teen. It streamlines messaging by allowing us to share announcements, reminders, and updates in one secure place. All our parents were automatically enrolled with the e-mail address listed in PowerSchool. To customize your ParentSquare communications perferences, simply download the app and log in to stay informed and engaged.

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 6th — SAT Exam
- Dec 13th — ACT Exam
- Feb 14th — ACT Exam
- Mar 14th — SAT Exam

- Mar 24th & 25th — Sophomores: ELA MCAS Exam

Visit: **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. Our school counselors are available to answer questions and help your teen develop a personal assessment calendar.

