

CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION



THE OPPORTUNITY ENGINE



Student Spotlight

Colin Graffeo, a junior at Glenvar High School, serves as the Virginia FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) State Vice President representing the Blue Ridge Region. Colin has been a member of FBLA since he was a freshman. As a State Vice President, Colin works closely with members of the state officer team to promote FBLA, plan events, present workshops, and act as a liaison between the state and local chapters.

Career and Technical Student Organizations, including FBLA, provide co-curricular leadership and skill development opportunities for many RCPS Students.

IN THE WORKS



Industry Insight Tour - Branch February 4, 2026

Teachers, administrators, and support staff are invited to visit Branch for an industry tour and learning experience. Participants will explore the facility and learn about career opportunities available to students in the construction trades.



Sleep in Heavenly Peace January 30, 2026

Building trades students from Burton will participate in a service event this month, building beds for children in need. Their hands-on work will make a meaningful impact in our community.

Middle School GO TEC Labs

The GO TEC (Great Opportunities in Technology and Engineering Careers) labs at HVMS and WBMS are nearing completion, marking an important milestone in expanding hands-on career exploration opportunities for students. GO TEC is a Virginia-based initiative that helps schools introduce students to high-demand technology and engineering careers through experiential learning. Implemented primarily in middle schools, GO TEC offers a Career Connections curriculum and dedicated labs where students explore fields such as welding, precision machining, robotics, automation, and IT using industry-aligned equipment and activities. The program builds early career awareness, strengthens technical skills, and creates clear pathways from middle school to high school, to postsecondary education, and the workforce.

GO TEC labs are supported through GO Virginia funding and includes approximately \$150,000 in equipment and supplies per lab. Plans are also underway for the remaining three middle schools to receive GO TEC labs next school year.



Hermitage Sign Collaboration

On December 16, 2025, the Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony at Hermitage Roanoke to celebrate the completion of a recent improvement project. During the event, Burton Center's Building Trades program was recognized for its outstanding work in completing the project after the Hermitage sign was damaged in a storm earlier in the year. Students applied their skills in a real-world setting, showcasing the value of hands-on learning and strong community partnerships. Now their craftsmanship is on display for the community to enjoy!



Photo credit: 'Roanoke Regional Chamber of Commerce'

Teacher Feature

Meet Bob van Gerven, HVMS TechEd Teacher!

Bob was born and raised in the Netherlands and holds an associate's degree in horticulture, along with bachelor's and master's degrees from Mary Baldwin University. After spending 18 years with Verizon in roles ranging from technician to management, he transitioned into education, teaching technology education at Lucy Addison Middle School and currently at Hidden Valley Middle School. This year, he has led several highlights, including the continued success of Eagle News, a schoolwide YouTube news program, a CO₂ car tournament, and the launch of an after-school robotics club. Bob is looking forward to full implementation of the GO TEC lab at HVMS.



"With positive mental attitude, failure is a learning experience, a rung on the ladder, and a plateau at which to get your thoughts in order to prepare to try again"

Quote by W. Clement Stone

Work-Based Learning News

Putting Learning to **Work!**

Registered Apprenticeship allows students to earn while they learn by combining classroom instruction with paid, hands-on experience in high-demand careers. Through a regional partnership among Roanoke County Public Schools, Botetourt County Schools, Salem City Schools, and Roanoke City Schools, students gain valuable skills, industry credentials, and early career connections. On January 22, we will host the Registered Apprenticeship Showcase at the Berglund Special Events Center, launching the annual hiring season. This event is a critical first step in the process, giving students the opportunity to meet businesses, explore career pathways, and begin applying, interviewing, and accepting registered apprenticeship positions. We are excited to welcome businesses, students, and families to the showcase.

To learn more about Registered Apprenticeship, visit www.rcps.us/studentapprentice.

Please reach out to Amanda Painter (apainter@rcps.us) to get involved!



See the latest updates at: www.rcps.us/RCCTC

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As we delve headlong into the new year, the CTE department is busy on many different fronts. Federal Perkins V grant-development begins in earnest in the very near future so the Plan is ready for the School Board to review and approve in April. In my message in the Nov/Dec Opportunity Engine newsletter I mentioned the CTE General Advisory Committee (GAC). The GAC is comprised of a vital combination of parent, student, industry and school personnel and has a hand in the development and approval of the Perkins Plan for the school division. I look forward to working with these stakeholders to produce a substantially approvable Perkins Plan for RCPS. On a grant-related note, I have been working with a consortium of school districts on a GO Virginia grant application to outfit our remaining three middle schools with GO TEC labs next school year! These grants are just a couple of the behind-the-scenes tasks that the CTE department tackles to provide RCPS students with excellent career investigation, exploration and preparation in middle school and high school.

Moving forward together,

Jason Suhr

Opportunity Engine Podcast

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