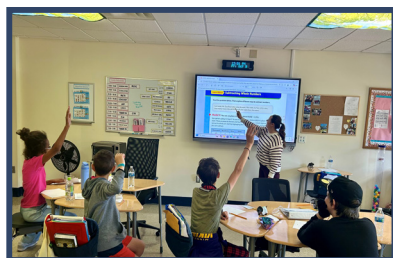


Achieving Great Things



Gaining Momentum

■ Page 2: Valley Elementary is creating a culture of respect and kindness.



Trying New Things

■ Page 3: The Transitional Programming at Valley Middle/High School is creating a culture that helps students thrive in all aspects of their lives.



Cultivating Connection

■ Page 8: A new community garden program is a hit with individuals, who are exploring their interest in growing flowers and vegetables.



FROM LEFT: KURTIS LEDOUX, 6TH GRADE; BRYAN THOMAS, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, VALLEY ELEMENTARY; DR. CHRIS A. SCOTT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR; ARMANI BLANCO, 3RD GRADE; JOIA MERCURIO, DEPUTY DIRECTOR; RENATO SILVA, SCHOOL SAFETY & FACILITIES MANAGER

Dear Students, Staff, and Families:

At Valley Collaborative, we know that great things happen when dedicated professionals come together with a shared commitment to student success. This year, our staff has continued to demonstrate that commitment through meaningful professional learning, collaboration, and a shared focus on strengthening teaching and learning across Valley. A significant part of this work has been our ongoing professional development series with Katie Novak, Education Consultant with Novak Education. Together, we are exploring the theme "Creating Multi-Tiered Systems with a Foundation of UDL in a Special Education Setting."

This focused professional learning is providing our staff with opportunities to deepen their understanding of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support while connecting these practices directly to the unique needs of our students and classrooms.

One of the most valuable aspects of this work is the opportunity for teams to immediately apply their professional learning to curriculum development. Staff are collaborating, reflecting, and using UDL principles as they continue to refine their curriculum and develop meaningful scope and sequences.

**continued on page 7*

Elementary School: Respect and Kindness



KURTIS LEDOUX PLAYS THE GUITAR AT A RECENT FREE-TO-BE-ME FRIDAY EVENT

From weekly events that let students share and express themselves to schoolwide initiatives aimed at creating a culture of kindness, the schoolyear at Valley Elementary is shaping up to be a very special one. Here's a look:

Free-To-Be-Me Fridays

The last Friday of every month, Valley Elementary counselors and music therapist Meghan Pope will be hosting "Free-To-Be-Me Fridays" where the students will be encouraged to either showcase one of their talents or bring in an item from home to show-and-tell. As both performers and audience members, the students have an opportunity to work on concepts such as confidence-building, descriptive language, social listening and questioning, self-expression and identity, and perseverance and practice. The events are a continuation of Free-To-Be-Me Fridays that were held every week throughout the summer program and were a hit with students, who looked forward

to sharing and expressing themselves in front of peers and teachers each week.

Random Acts of Kindness

Kindness in the Classroom is coming to Valley Elementary. The Tier 1 evidenced-based social emotional learning curriculum is designed to help schools create a culture of kindness. Each unit teaches six core kindness concepts: Respect, Caring, Inclusiveness, Integrity, Responsibility, and Courage. Throughout this school year, the Elementary School counselors will focus on these concepts in their social skills groups. After every six week unit students will work collaboratively on a schoolwide group project. Examples include: Schoolwide Clean-up Day, Kindness Challenges, and Food Drives.

Community Connections Guide

The SLPs and OTs designed a Community Connections Guide to create a shared schoolwide experience across classrooms and related service providers. Each six-week Community Connection includes a common focus, character trait, and essential question that can be integrated into classroom instruction, therapy, specials, and schoolwide activities. The Community Connections themes include: Building Our School Community, Fall/Harvest & Community, Winter Around the World, Healthy Living, Stories & Discovery, and Caring for Our World. SLPs are running language groups throughout the school and OTs are leading cooking/craft groups in connection with the initiative.

"Our students are capable of incredible kindness, and we wanted to build those strengths and create a schoolwide culture where kindness, empathy, inclusion, and respect are celebrated and reinforced every day,"

explains School Counselor Jen Glow, who is leading the effort along with Speech Language Pathologist Jillian Wendler and Occupational Therapist Sue Donato.

The group explains that the initiative tries to turn the natural parts of being an elementary school student—friendship struggles, misunderstandings, hurt feelings, exclusion, and conflicts—into teachable moments. Says Jillian: "They provide opportunities for us to teach students how to treat others, navigate friendships, manage conflict, and make people feel included and valued. Creating a schoolwide focus around those ideas is a meaningful way to support both the social-emotional growth of our students and the positive community we want our school to be."

Cultivating community connections is another goal of the initiative. "Community connections are important right now, especially at the elementary school age, because children need opportunities to experience what it feels like to belong to something outside of their inner circle, where they can get to know the people around them, feel valued, and recognize that they have a place within their school community," says Sue.

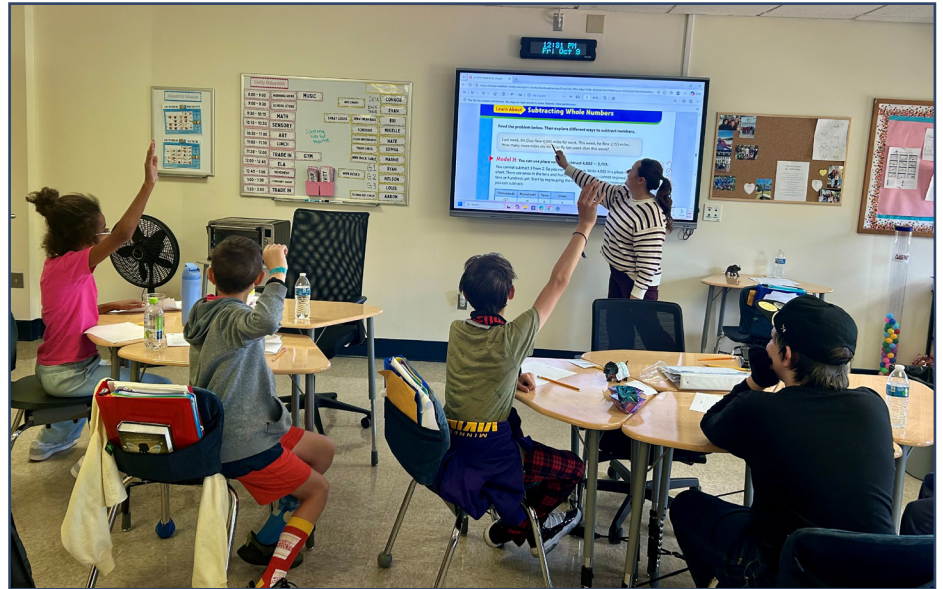
With a shared framework among teachers, therapists, and other service providers that helps build essential skills including empathy, confidence, communication, and a sense of belonging, the Community Connections Guide creates a shared schoolwide experience while still allowing each classroom to make it their own. Says Sue: "In a world that can sometimes feel increasingly divided, distracted, and screen-focused, giving children—and the adults who support them—intentional opportunities to connect, participate, and belong may be one of the most important things we can do."

Transitional Programming at Valley Middle/High School: Aiming Higher!

When Kali Rowe started the school year, she set an ambitious goal for her students. “I wanted to work on them being excited to be at school,” says Kali, who is a transitional middle school special education teacher. A few months into the school year and that goal is turning into reality. “A lot of them are coming to love school. For kids who may have had difficult experiences in their previous schools, that’s a big deal.”

Down the hall from Kali, Lori Escolas has been helping students set their own goals for the school year. Lori, whose students are transitioning from middle to high school, encouraged them to write down what are known as SMART goals, an acronym for specific, measurable, attainable, reasonable and timely. “I wanted them to see that you can actually put an action plan together to make these goals happen,” says Lori. One student wanted to become a better reader, a goal he has been making big strides towards reaching. “He used to be shy to read in front of the class, but now he’s feeling more confident.”

In the past few years, Valley Transitional Middle and High School has made great strides in creating a culture that makes students feel safe. The next step is to work in greater expectations for academic rigor, explains Assistant Principal Brian Mihalek. “When kids feel safe and valued in their classrooms they can take risks with their learning.” Last year saw new curriculum and programs introduced, along with data-driven decision making that helps Valley staff meet kids where they are. Those changes are already paying off, says Brian. “We’re able to help students reach their academic potential



KALI ROWE TEACHING A CLASS IN VALLEY'S TRANSITIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL.

in a way that’s really exciting.”

It is in classrooms like Kali’s and Lori’s where the vision and mission that Brian describes becomes real. Kali, who guides 11 middle schoolers through their core academics—reading, writing, math, history and science—says that she’s much more focused this year on ways to motivate her students to want to learn. “Too often students think of their academic work as something they have to do. I want to get them engaged and excited about what we’re doing,” says Kali.

Lori’s class of ninth graders has a major focus on literacy this year. Students are currently reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and even formerly ‘shy’ readers are eagerly participating, despite the book’s challenging vocabulary. “They’re really enjoying the book, which is great, because it means that they’re learning to enjoy reading,” says Lori.

While this is a transition year for her students, who’ve moved from middle to high school, it’s also a change for Lori. She formerly worked

with young adults at Valley, helping them learn the life skills necessary for the workplace and adulthood. The connection between learning and independence is something she emphasizes with her new students. “High school is much more about discovery learning and putting the pieces together yourself,” says Lori.

While Valley staff and leaders have been laser focused on academic standards, including working with education consultant Katie Novak to better align teaching and learning at the middle and high school with Massachusetts’ standards, there are still plenty of opportunities for joy. Field trips and community trips are a key part of building student excitement about school, says Kali. She describes a student whose transition to Valley from his previous school district had been challenging. This fall, he was able to participate in his first field trip. “He came back from apple picking and told us that he’d had the most amazing day ever,” says Kali.

Alternative Programming at Valley Middle/High School: Setting a New Standard

The last few years have seen big changes for Valley Middle/High School's Alternative Programming. Physical relocation and construction have given various programs their own space, while a deepening commitment to social and emotional learning has made Valley a more welcoming place for students. This year, the leadership team is bringing renewed attention to academics. "The SEL piece is huge because students need to feel safe and regulated," says Principal Nick LeClair. "We've got that, and now we're all about achievement."

Key to this heightened academic focus is a systematic effort to identify where students are in their learning so that Valley teachers and staff can help them move to the next level. "It's really exciting," says Literacy Coach Jake Smith. "The goal is for teachers to have a clear picture of what students have already learned, what they need help with, and what kinds of interventions are going to benefit them." Jake says that while the thought, planning and coordination involved make this a big lift for the program, the payoff will be worth it. "I think it's going to make such a huge difference in how we address the needs of our students."

To help realize these ambitious goals, the school is partnering with education consultant Katie Novack. Nick says that he hopes that bringing in an objective set of eyes from outside to assess Valley's academic systems will result in better alignment with Massachusetts' standards. A new standards tracker allows teachers to see whether each student is meeting state benchmarks. "We're looking at math, science, history and ELA, but we're also

thinking ahead to the digital literacy standards that many districts are adopting," says Nick. "How can we help our students become ethical users of technology, including AI?"

There's also a heightened emphasis on literacy, including a new focus on helping students master the skills they'll need to read and comprehend text both in and out of school. As a literacy coach, Jake's focus is on working with teachers to incorporate literacy throughout the curriculum. "We're trying to make every class a literacy class," says Jake. Whereas in the past he was more likely to instruct teachers on what he wanted to see in their classroom, his new role is much more collaborative. "Now I'm much more focused on how I can help teachers reach our shared expectations."

While Valley is known for its social and emotional programming, Nick and his administration team hope to burnish its academic credentials, including by encouraging more students to participate in dual enrollment programs with partnering programs, including Middlesex Community College. Sophie Beard is currently taking an anatomy and physiology class, a subject she plans to study as a biology major in college. Caroline Kajko is taking college-level English, something that she thinks will prepare her for the next stage of her education. Both will graduate from Valley next spring having already earned college credits.

Both students say that academic



CAROLINE KAJKO AND SOPHIE BEARD, BOTH SENIORS, ARE TAKING COURSES AT MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE THROUGH VALLEY'S DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAM.

support from teachers and staff at Valley have made it possible for them to thrive in their college-level classes. Caroline says that if someone had told her younger self that she'd soon be dual enrolled at a local college she wouldn't have believed them. "It seemed like something that was too hard for me," Sophie says that she hopes that more students will pursue dual enrollment, including those who aren't yet thinking about college. "There's always time to get your grades up. Don't stress about it," counsels Sophie. "But if you think you want to do dual enrollment, start early and remember that everyone at Valley is here to help you."

Valley Making a Difference Awards: FY 2026

October 2025

Valley Elementary School

Student of the Month:

Sammy Howlett

Staff of the Month: Luke Shaw

*Valley Alternative Programming
High School*

Student of the Month:

Tavernier Harris

Staff of the Month: Cristina Iebba

*Valley Alternative Programming
Middle School*

Student of the Month:

Emmanuel Terranova

*Valley Transitional Programming
Middle School*

Student of the Month:

Jaylin Jean-Baptiste

Staff of the Month: Taylor Pitari

*Valley Transitional Programming
High School*

Student of the Month: Gavin Wargo

Staff of the Month: Peter Teutsch

Valley Adult Services

Individual of the Month:

Hannah Dwight

Staff of the Month: Christine Joslin

November 2025

Valley Elementary School

Student of the Month:

Dionisio Quadros

Staff of the Month: Kim Silva

*Valley Alternative Programming
Middle School/ High School*

Student of the Month MS:

Jacob Colon

Student of the Month HS:

Sophie Beard

Staff of the Month:

Colleen McAnespie

*Valley Transitional Programming
Middle School*

Student of the Month:

Calisto Tiburcio

Staff of the Month:

Victoria Clauson

*Valley Transitional Programming
High School*

Student of the Month:

Connor Bodas

Staff of the Month:

Mitchell Doherty

Valley Adult Services

Individual of the Month: Jason Doyle

Staff of the Month: Brenda Kenney

Valley District Staff

William Hernandez

December 2025

Valley Elementary School

Student of the Month: Gracie Taff

Staff of the Month: Gabriella LeMay

*Valley Alternative Programming
Middle/High School*

Student of the Month MS:

Elijah Tong-Rousseau

Student of the Month HS:

Ryder Galvin

Staff of the Month: Ian MacAulay

*Valley Transitional Programming
Middle School*

Student of the Month:

Isaac Wilson

Staff of the Month: Rebecca Pincott

*Valley Transitional Programming
High School*

Student of the Month:

Aaron Callahan-Leon

Staff of the Month:

Courtney Dufresne

Valley Adult Services

Individual of the Month:

Jacob Bettencourt

Staff of the Month:

Robin Sabatino

Valley District Staff:

Matthew McCarthy

January 2026

Valley Elementary School

Student of the Month:

Olivia Buonamano

Staff of the Month: Erin Frazier

*Valley Alternative Programming
Middle/High School*

Student of the Month MS:

Christian Lapierre

Student of the Month HS:

James Straffin

Staff of the Month: Joshua Plunkett

*Valley Transitional Programming
Middle School*

Student of the Month: Louis Lorino

Staff of the Month: Mariah Waldron

*Valley Transitional Programming
High School*

Student of the Month: Colby Provost

Staff of the Month: Amie Silva

Valley Adult Services

Individual of the Month: Matt Booth

Staff of the Month:

Samantha Weeden

Valley District Staff

Joseph Venskus

Chrystalia Metrakas

February 2026

Valley Elementary School

Student of the Month:

Jameson Osterfield

Staff of the Month: Chloe Greco

*Valley High School – Alternative
Programming*

Student of the Month:

Gavin Correia

Staff of the Month:

Katharine Werner

*continued on next page

Making a Difference Awards

**continued from previous page*

Valley Middle School – Transitional Programming

Student of the Month:

Jude Galbraith

Staff of the Month: Hannah Barry

Valley Transitional High School – Transitional Programming

Student of the Month: Elijah Gain

Staff of the Month: Clo Sherwood

April 2026

Valley Elementary School

Student of the Month: Nate Skuse

Staff of the Month: Alyssa Thomas

Valley Alternative Programming Middle/High School

Student of the Month MS:

Anthony Estrada

Student of the Month HS:

Keegan Carter

Staff of the Month: Joshua Plunkett

Katharine Werner

Timothy P. McDonald

Danielle E. Sheehan-Brabant

Stephanie M. Wallace

Valley Transitional Programming Middle School

Student of the Month:

Abram Brittsan

Staff of the Month: Faithe Shatford

Valley Transitional Programming High School

Student of the Month:

Anthony Normand

Staff of the Month: Kiely Tenhope

Valley Adult Services

Individual of the Month:

Arun Maudgal

Valley Adult Services

Staff of the Month:

Victoria Jarome

Valley District Staff

Christina Foss

Brian Mihalek

Bryan Thomas

Holly Tierney

Nick LeClair

Karen Rowe

June 2026

Valley Elementary School

Student of the Month: Nate Skuse,

Staff of the Month: Alyssa Thomas

Valley Alternative Programming Middle/High School

Student of the Month MS:

Anthony Estrada

Student of the Month HS:

Keegan Carter

Staff of the Month:

Joshua Plunkett

Katharine Werner

Timothy P. McDonald

Danielle E. Sheehan-Brabant

Stephanie M. Wallace

Valley Transitional Programming Middle School

Student of the Month:

Jude Galbraith

Staff of the Month: Faithe Shatford

Valley Transitional Programming High School

Student of the Month:

Anthony Normand

Staff of the Month: Kiely Tenhope

Valley Adult Services

Individual of the Month:

Arun Maudgal

Staff of the Month: Victoria Jarome

Valley District Staff

Christina Foss

Brian Mihalek

Bryan Thomas

Holly Tierney

Nick LeClair

Karen Rowe

Everett V. Olsen Jr. Award for Highest Academic Honors

William Cochran

Dr. Anthony Bent Leadership Award

Brian Mihalek

Community Partner Award

Haran Painting LLC

Community Leader Award: 3M

Maria Espinoza - Area Lead

Luis Santiago - Planner

Wilmary Garcia - Procurement

Claudia O'Rourke - Director of Manufacturing

Hector Rivera - Supervisor of Operations

In Recognition for Service to the Valley Community

Valley Collaborative recognizes two members of our Board of Directors who are retiring: former Superintendent of the Tewksbury Public Schools, Ms. Brenda Theriault-Regan, Dr. Michael Flanagan, former superintendents of the Tyngsborough Public Schools. Joining the Board are the new Tewksbury superintendent, Dr. Nancy Milligan, and Mr. Michael Woodlock, the new superintendent of Tyngsborough Public Schools. The extended Valley community is grateful to all for their service.

Transitional Programming at Valley Middle/High School: Aiming Higher

**continued from page 3*

For Lori, being in a brand new Valley classroom has provided an opportunity to reflect on her own lengthy career. “I just realized the other day that I’ve been teaching for 27 years. So I have seen it all.” With so much experience teaching virtually every grade level, Lori says she’s now revisiting what she’s done in the past that will help students prepare for their futures. “I want them to see that the things we’re working on in our classroom will help them in a few years when they’re getting jobs outside of school or getting their drivers licenses,” says Lori. “I want them to see that there is a lot to look forward to.”



ANDRES DIAZ AND LUCHIEN MOORE IN WOODSHOP CLASS.

Six students on their goals for the school year

“By practicing and sitting for a longer period of time I will get good at reading and go up by 1 grade level,” AD, high school.

“I want to learn more, be myself, stay true to myself by challenging my brain and being myself,” SGF, high school.

“By the end of the year I will learn Algebra to get into Greater Lawrence Technical School,” ES, high school.

“I want to be brave and be able to work with new staff,” NS, middle school.

“I want to work on being kind, listen to staff, and not be so sneaky,” RP, middle school.

“I want to have more discipline and have more focus in school,” LL, middle school.

Achieving Great Things

**continued from cover*

The benefits of this work extend directly to our students. A strong foundation in UDL helps educators anticipate the diverse ways students learn and create multiple pathways for engagement, representation, and expression. Rather than waiting for students to experience difficulty, our teams are working to design learning experiences that are accessible and responsive from the start.

Our work with multi-tiered systems also strengthens our ability to identify and respond to individual student needs. By developing consistent systems of support and using student information to guide instruction, we can provide the right level of support at the right time.

Ultimately, this work helps create learning environments where students have greater access to instruction, increased opportunities for engagement, and multiple ways to demonstrate what they know and can do.

We are incredibly proud of the dedication, expertise, and enthusiasm our staff brings to this work each day. Their commitment to continued growth ultimately strengthens the educational experiences we provide to our students.

Together, we are learning, growing, and achieving great things at Valley Collaborative.

My door is always open.

My best to you,

Chris A. Scott, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Valley Collaborative

Adult Services: Cultivating Connection

The Valley Collaborative Adult Program partners with a number of different organizations to provide individuals with both Group Supported Employment and Volunteer opportunities. Beyond the partnerships we hold with organizations in the community, we also highlight specific interests of the individuals and create programming accordingly. One interest many of the individuals continue to identify is gardening and the propagation of flower and plant life. Based on this intrigue, the Valley Adult Program now runs a daily interest exploration site titled "Community Gardening." The Community Gardening crew has established, and maintains, a number of gardens throughout our community, with differing focuses on the plant life being preserved at each site.



LEFT TO RIGHT:
JULIE ANDERSON,
ERIK REGO,
CAROLYN NOEL
AND STACY FRANCIS
SHOW OFF NATURE'S
BOUNTY.



JASON ROWE AND DIRECT SUPPORT
PROFESSIONAL ANGELA FISETTE AT TEWKSBURY
PUBLIC LIBRARY.

Behind the Tewksbury Public Library, the focus was twofold. The first area was set up as a vegetable garden. Direct Support Professional Angela Fisetle, leaning on her own experience and expertise, created garden beds to enable the growth of a number of vegetables that individuals could take home to share with their families. The vegetables have even been used in cooking lessons for individuals in CBDS programming. The gardening crew cultivated tomatoes, carrots, squash, cucumbers, blueberries, and snap peas. While maintaining the vegetable garden, the Valley crew met a man named John Ryan who runs the Monarch Ranch in Tewksbury. The Monarch Ranch is a nonprofit conservation initiative dedicated to breeding and releasing monarch butterflies, restoring native pollinator habitats, and providing environmental education. John and his team have been incredible in facilitating learning opportunities for our individuals, and have instilled a passion that led to the individuals

wanting to create their own butterfly garden. Angela used a second garden plot behind the Tewksbury Library to do just that.

At the Billerica Housing Authority, Valley has donated both flowers and attention to multiple garden beds on site. Direct Support Professional Christine Joslin supported individuals while tapping into her own passion for horticulture. During the spring and summer, the crew planted marigolds, petunias, zinnias, sunflowers and a number of native grasses.

These gardens have helped to create a welcoming and homey feeling to the people residing in the BHA buildings. Beyond creating the gardens at BHA, Christine also supports Community Gardening crews to establish and maintain plant life within the various Valley Collaborative buildings. Angela and the crew also maintain a vegetable garden outside of the Valley Collaborative Elementary School full of vibrant colors and extensive plant life.

*continued on next page

Adult Services: Cultivating Connection

*continued from previous page

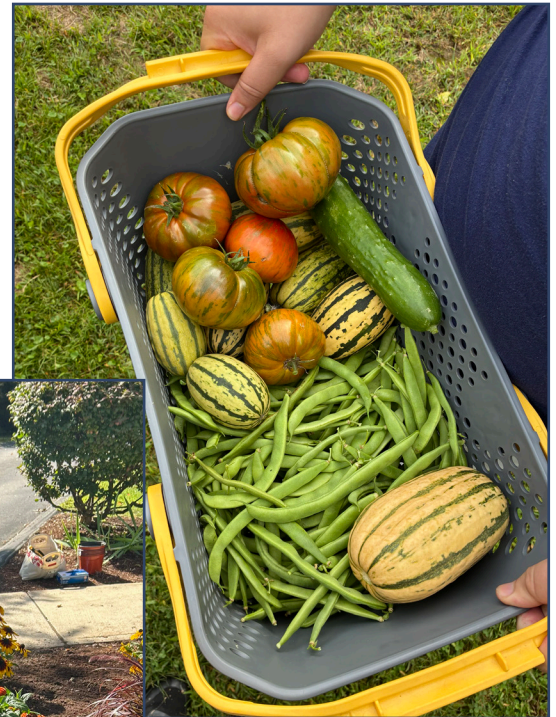
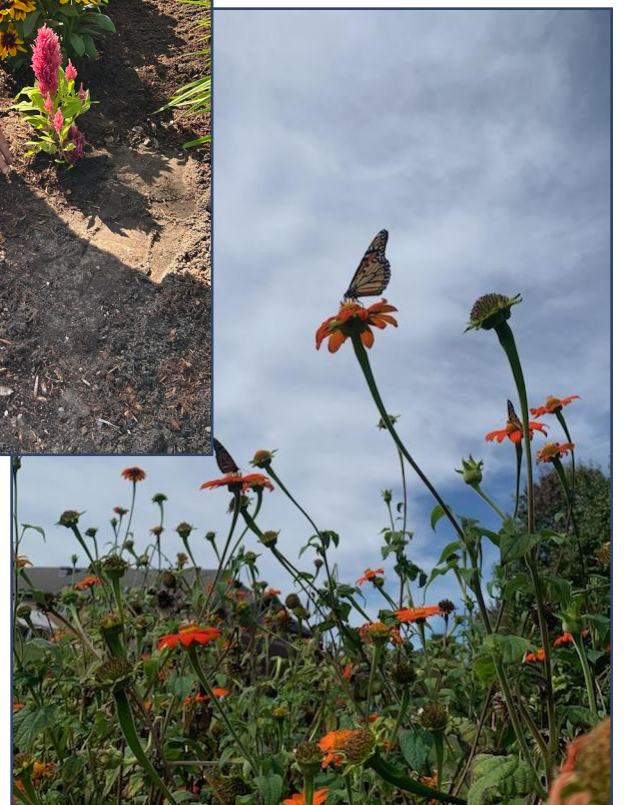
Classrooms, offices, and common spaces throughout the Valley community are green and full of plant life based on the efforts of Angela, Christine, and the Community Gardening crews.

When asked what she likes about the gardens, Julie Anderson responded: “Butterflies! They are pretty!” Julie says she likes gardening because it is something her mom has always done so she has fond memories of doing that with her.

Mike Kempton is also a big fan of the butterflies. “I get to explore the butterfly farm and see how pretty the butterflies are. The Monarch butterflies are yellow and black.”

“I like Community Gardening because it’s fun,” added Erik Rego. “I like to be able to grow plants, especially blueberries and green beans. I’m learning a lot of new things about how to garden different plants.”

TOP: A SELECTION OF VEGETABLES GROWN BY INDIVIDUALS IN VALLEY’S ADULT SERVICES PROGRAM; MIDDLE: NICK BAKER AT THE BILLERICA HOUSING AUTHORITY; BOTTOM: MONARCHS IN VALLEY’S BUTTERFLY GARDEN AT TEWKSBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY.



DAMIEN MOJICA GOUVEIA SHOWS OFF SOME FLOWERS.

Valley Collaborative Leadership Team



Chris A. Scott, PhD

Executive Director,
Finance and Operations
cscott@valleycollaborative.org



Mazyar Moshtaghi

Chief Technology Officer
mmoshtaghi@valleycollaborative.org



Matthew Gentile

Director of DDS Services
mgentile@valleycollaborative.org



James George

Business Manager/Accountant
jgeorge@valleycollaborative.org



Heather Mackay

Principal, Valley
Elementary School
hmackay@valleycollaborative.org



Jessica Marcotte

Lead Nurse
jscalzi@valleycollaborative.org



Joia Mercurio

Deputy Director
jmercurio@valleycollaborative.org



Nick LeClair

Principal, Valley Middle School
& Transitional High School:
Alternative Programming
nleclair@valleycollaborative.org



Renato Silva

School Safety & Facilities
Manager
rsilva@valleycollaborative.org



Kari Morrin

Director of HR, Title IX and
504 Coordinator
kmorrin@valleycollaborative.org



Nicole Noska

Principal, Valley Middle School
& Transitional High School:
Transitional Programming
nnoska@valleycollaborative.org

Valley Collaborative Board of Directors



Dr. Jay Lang, Chair

Chairman of the Board,
Executive Committee
Member

Superintendent
Chelmsford Public Schools



Dr. Kerry Clery

Superintendent
Billerica Public Schools



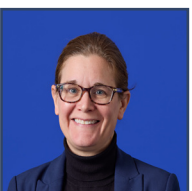
Mr. Steven Stone

Superintendent
Dracut Public Schools



Dr. Geoff Bruno

Superintendent
Groton-Dunstable
Regional School District



Dr. Denise Pigeon

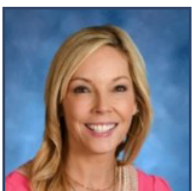
Executive Committee
Member

Superintendent
Nashoba Valley
Technical School District



Mr. Brad Morgan

Superintendent
North Middlesex
Regional School District



**Dr. Nancy
Milligan**

Superintendent
Tewksbury Public Schools



**Mr. Michael
Woodlock**

Superintendent
Tyngsborough Public
Schools



**Dr. Christopher
Chew**

Superintendent
Westford Public Schools