# the Compass

BVT SCHOOL COUNSELING NEWS | WINTER 2026

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.




## Cultivating An Attitude of Gratitude

November is recognized nationally as Gratitude Month. This season invites us to annually slow down and reflect on the people, experiences, and everyday moments that bring meaning to our lives. While gratitude is often associated with Thanksgiving, it is much more than a holiday tradition. It is a simple yet powerful practice that can support mental health and well-being year-round.

At its core, gratitude is the act of noticing and appreciating the good in our lives, both big and small. It does not mean ignoring challenges or pretending everything is perfect. Instead, gratitude helps us recognize sources of support, connection, joy, and hope, even during difficult times.

For teens, gratitude might look like appreciating a friend who listened after a tough day, feeling thankful for a supportive teacher or coach, recognizing a personal accomplishment, or enjoying simple moments like sharing a meal with family or spending time with loved ones.

**Mental Health Benefits**

Adolescence can often bring challenges and transitions. Between academic demands, extracurricular commitments, social pressures, and planning for the future, teens often have a lot on their minds. Practicing gratitude can help them build emotional balance and develop a healthy perspective.

Research suggests that gratitude is linked to increased happiness, improved self-esteem, reduced stress and anxiety, stronger relationships, more resilience, better sleep, and greater overall well-being. While gratitude is not a cure for life's difficulties, it can help teens focus on sources of strength and support as they navigate those challenges.

**How to Practice Gratitude**

Parents and caregivers play an important role in helping gratitude become a natural part of family life. The goal is not to force positivity, but to create opportunities for reflection, appreciation, and connection.

- **Model Gratitude:** Teens often learn more from what we do than what we say. Consider sharing something you're thankful for each day, whether it's a kind gesture from a coworker, support from a friend, or a joyful moment with your family.

- **Ask Intentional Questions:** Instead of the usual "How was your day?" Try asking:
  - "What was the best part of your day?"
  - "Who made a positive difference for you this week?"
  - "What is something you're looking forward to?"

These questions can spark meaningful conversations and encourage reflection without dismissing challenges.

- **Create Traditions:** Practicing gratitude does not have to be complicated. Consider simple ways to build it into routines you already have, like sharing a daily "high point" during dinner, writing notes of appreciation on your gratitude pumpkin, or reflecting on positive moments before bedtime.

- **Encourage Appreciation for Others:** When your teen notices someone's kindness or support, encourage them to express their thanks. A quick text, handwritten note, or simple conversation can strengthen relationships and foster a greater sense of connection.

- **Keep It Real:** Let's face it, some days are harder than others, and that's okay. Just because your teen is grateful for certain things doesn't mean they can't also feel sad, frustrated, disappointed, or overwhelmed. It's important to acknowledge that two things can be true at the same time:
  - A teen can be grateful for their parents and still feel upset after an argument with them.
  - A teen can appreciate having friends and still feel lonely sometimes.
  - A teen can be thankful for their opportunities and still feel disappointed when something doesn't go as planned.

Keeping it real with your teen helps them acknowledge difficult emotions while also recognizing the people and resources that help them through those moments.

**Small Moments Have Lasting Impressions**

Like many healthy habits, gratitude works best when practiced consistently. Taking just a few moments each day to notice what is going well can help teens build resilience, strengthen relationships, and support their emotional well-being.

As we enter this season of thankfulness, sharing, and connection, we encourage our families and all members of our school community to explore simple gratitude practices. Together, these small moments of reflection can create lasting benefits, helping us cultivate a sense of appreciation and hope, long after the holiday season.



# Big Decisions, Bright Futures

For many of our students, fall is a season of big decisions. Freshmen are thinking about which vocational program is the best fit for their interests and goals, while seniors are actively pursuing post-graduation plans through college applications, military pathways, Co-Op opportunities, and career exploration. While these decisions are exciting, they can also bring up feelings of uncertainty and create stress.

As parents, it can be tempting to help teens find the "right" answer. While it's natural to want to point them in the right direction, these moments are valuable opportunities for teens to explore their interests, reflect on their goals, and learn more about themselves. Consider the following ways to support your teen through big career decisions:

**Normalize Uncertainty & Encourage Exploration**
Remind your teen that it's okay not to have everything figured out and not to have all the answers. Career paths are rarely linear, and choosing a vocational program, college major, or career pathway is an important step, not a final destination. Each experience teaches them more about their interests, strengths, and future goals.

**Listen More Than You Advise**
Asking thoughtful questions and creating space for conversation helps teens build confidence in their decision-making.

**Focus on Strengths and Interests**
Help your teen think about what they enjoy, where their strengths lie, and what types of opportunities energize them.

**Encourage Curiosity, Not Perfection**
Rather than worrying about making the perfect choice, remind your teen that each experience provides valuable insight into what they enjoy, what challenges them, and what opportunities they may want to pursue in the future.

By providing support, perspective, and encouragement, you can help your teen feel empowered to explore their options as they learn more about themselves and the future they want to create.

## Every Dollar Counts



We know financing your teen's future is a BIG deal! Help them make the most of scholarship opportunities, by encouraging them to:

- Apply to eligible statewide, community, and BVT scholarships posted on Canvas.
- Search for additional scholarships through your town, employers, and community organizations that your family is affiliated with.
- Research prospective colleges' requirements for additional scholarships.
- Take advantage of **Scholarship Support Day** on **Friday, February 26th**.

Our seniors are invited to view the scholarship Canvas page and apply for scholarships. Get a jump start on the process by helping your teen review our scholarship options at: **www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/scholarships**.

## CALENDAR
### 2026 – 2027

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

| | |
|---|---|
| Dec 9th | Seniors: QCC Decision Day |
| Jan 12th | Juniors: Course Selection |
| Jan 14th | Freshmen: Course Selection |
| Jan 20th | Sophomores: Course Selection |
| Feb 26th | Seniors: Scholarship Support Day |
| Mar 11th | Juniors: College Fair |
| | Freshmen: Depression Screening Opt-Out Deadline |
| Mar 15th & 16th | Freshmen: Signs of Suicide Curriculum |
| Mar 17th | 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 5th — SAT Exam
- Dec 12th — ACT Exam
- Feb 27th — ACT Exam
- Mar 6th — SAT Exam

- Mar 24th & 25th — Sophomores: ELA MCAS Exam
- Coming in April — Sophomores: PSAT-10

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.

