



We are: Reflecting

■ Page 4: In order to focus on the future, Valley students are learning to reflect on the present.



We are: Unique

■ Page 5: Valley's Today & Tomorrow program is as unique as the Individuals it serves.



We are: Making Music

■ Page 7: A former loading dock is now a music room for Valley 'rockers.'

Dreaming Big

Dear Valley Community:

We encourage our students and their families and those attending the DDS and MRC programs to dream big. At Valley we encourage the people we educate/serve to hold us to high standards and take pleasure in meeting their high expectations. In the spirit of continuous improvement throughout this issue you will read about the recent programmatic improvements that have been made at every level. These enhancements are additional artifacts highlighting that Valley Collaborative is a unique and special place.

Again, last year due to sound fiscal management and the strong enrollment trends in our schools/programs Valley was in the position to return another \$2 million to its member districts.

This past summer we had a very successful summer school program. Valley is proud of the high quality enrichment programming opportunities that our students and the DDS clients were afforded. Staff are required to present the rationale for the school trips their students go on and align the school trip with the Learning Standards. At Valley we believe that some of the most powerful authentic learning occurs in the "real world."

The following list is an example of just a few of the dreams/school trips Valley made come true this summer so that our students and the adults attending the DDS and MRC programs can develop and grow into their fullest potential.



VALLEY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DR. CHRIS A. SCOTT WELCOMES STAFF BACK ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

I hope you enjoy this edition of the Newsletter. Please let me know if I can be of assistance – my door is always open.

My best to you,
-Chris

Summertime Dreams and Trips

3 Trolls Games and Puzzles
Jump On In Inc
Adventure Bound
Kimball Farm
AMC Tyngsboro 12
Laser Quest Danvers
Animal Adventures
Lowell Spinners
Ben & Jerrys NH Treats, LLC
Max's Country Golf
Boston Duck Tour
Merrimack Valley Pavillion
Boston Rock Gym
Metrorock Climbing Centers
Build A Bear

At Valley Elementary, Creativity and Collaboration

The Valley Collaborative Elementary School provides unparalleled opportunities for students through extensive creativity and collaboration with families in order to incorporate state of the art programming and tools to promote growth for every child. The staff, who truly are unique and the driving force in our school, have spent a significant amount of time this past summer ensuring that our curriculum maps link to amazing resources across areas including social emotional learning and literacy. Our new Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) lab provides children with virtual reality experiences across curriculum maps. Children are virtually traveling to ancient Egyptian pyramids to discover the ancient world, while also meditating. These tools provide a sense of calming that has had a tremendous secondary benefit and effect across the entire school.

Technology isn't the only thing we have added. This summer, the music therapists and our new art therapist worked with our social workers and speech and language pathologists to connect the social skills curriculum to all aspects of therapeutic interventions. Unique documentation and referral systems have made constant communication between these specialists possible, which ensures that student's goals are targeted and adapted to many new situations throughout our facility. It is truly amazing to witness the ingenuity our staff demonstrate in order to utilize resources throughout the school day. This makes a unique learning environment, as kids move throughout a seamless school schedule but are constantly learning and engaged.

Our parents are a very important piece of our school's culture. We are proud to

say that this year, we are piloting the "Wrap Around Services" (WAS)

Initiative in order to support families in the difficult process of accessing community resources. We have a dedicated social worker whose primary responsibility is to ensure our students and their families receive targeted wrap

around services by partnering with other State agencies such as Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), and Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF), that will help our students be more successful in school and at home.

Valley's knowledge of State agencies, such as DDS, DCF, and MRC, will ensure that our students are able to access all of the services and resources available to them from these State agencies in a coordinated and effective manner. The WAS Initiative will help to ensure our students benefit from a coordinated pathway that helps students transition seamlessly from elementary, to middle, through high school, and through transitional services into adulthood. In this manner, solving multiple problems of behavior and academic generalization, as well as decreasing frustration for our families, will relieve some of the stresses that families face. We are excited to focus on the WAS Initiative, as it will help foster positive and successful wrap-around services



VALLEY ELEMENTARY STUDENT IZAAH SAVCHUCK DROPS OFF ITEMS COLLECTED FOR THE MIDDLESEX GAS FIRES.



STUDENT ERIC NABYDOSKI AND LIFE SKILLS INSTRUCTOR KERRI SPECK UNLOAD ITEMS COLLECTED FROM STUDENT RUN DONATION FOR THE MIDDLESEX GAS FIRES.

for families, which can mimic this unique aspect of our school experience, in providing continuity and streamlined efforts in focusing on the 'whole' of our student body. ■

Welcome to the Valley Family!



Heather MacKay welcomed twins into her family! Caden and Carter Mackay were born on May 18th, 2018 weighing in at 3 pounds 11 ounces each. They have grown into strong, healthy and happy boys and love to play and smile at each other!

Discover, Learn, Create: Valley Middle School and High School Alternative Programs

The Valley Middle School and High School Alternative programs are unique in several ways! Our programs place a big emphasis on meaningful relationships between the staff and the students. One of the biggest priorities of our staff is building a genuine, supportive, trusting relationship with every student. By creating these genuine relationships, students are able to be successful, both academically and socially. These relationships also help students identify and foster developmentally appropriate and positive risk taking. Students find their true selves when they are pushed out of their comfort zones and supported throughout the whole process. This may look different from student to student, depending on the program they are located within at Valley. Examples of these experiences could include exploring an offsite internship, building a robot, climbing a mountain, or taking a dual enrollment college course. No matter how the students achieve this success through relationships, Valley has found the results to be the same: love for the staff, love for their peers, and love for Valley. Our programs are able to create experiences and memories that the students can remember forever.

Another unique aspect of our program is the emphasis placed on transitioning out of high school and into adulthood. Valley does an incredible job of helping students discover themselves. We encourage every student to investigate his/her passions and search for meaningful aspects in life that are motivating and bring joy. Students work closely with our transition teacher and guidance counselor to create an individualized pathway for a successful



MIDDLE SCHOOLER BOBBY GAYE IN WOODSHOP WITH HIS INSTRUCTOR RON STAPLETON.

transition after graduation. Students meet frequently to discover, learn and create an individualized plan for their unique needs and situation. By utilizing the resources available to them through Valley, students are able to explore many career options before graduating. Students have the ability to gain entry level job skills by working at our in-house shops or offsite internships, attend college and job tours, practice applying for jobs, work on interviewing skills, create their resumes, apply for college, and/or take college level classes during high school.

Many of our families have been struggling to find the right educational fit for their child. Our teachers and administrators are in constant contact with families so they understand exactly what their child is doing and what types of experiences they are getting the opportunity to be a part of. If a student is struggling, staff will see that immediately and address it. We won't let weeks or months go by without addressing a problem one of our students might be having, be it in school or out.

When a parent or guardian has questions, they know they can contact the school and get an answer immediately. This is the beauty of being part of such a small, tight knit program. Our ability to form these strong relationships with students and families reassures them that we are here for the best interest of our students. When parents begin to realize this, they begin to understand that when they are struggling with their child, they can come to us for help. When they need additional supports in their child's life, they know they can turn to Valley. Providing this level of support is pinnacle to helping solve problems for students and families alike.

The Valley Middle School and High School Alternative Program are excited to move into the 2018-2019 school year. With many changes in the works, Valley's Middle School and High School Alternative Programs are looking forward to creating many more special memories and opportunities for staff and students to share and grow together. ■



CODY SWEENEY ON A CANOEING TRIP, OVERLOOKING THE RIVER.

Reflecting as a Way of Life: Middle School and High School Transitional Programs

Often times, we get caught up in our day-to-day routines and do not have the time, or do not give enough time, to reflect upon our experiences. The exercise of reflection is incredibly significant as it can shape one's future goals and shed light on how one felt or experienced a particular event or current practice.

The act of reflection is something that is instilled in the educators at Valley Collaborative. Teachers run a lesson or activity and then take the time to look back and ask themselves- What worked? What would I do differently next time? What learning experiences occurred? Asking our students to practice this skill is also something that is embedded in programming at Valley. The following is an excerpt from a School to Work student's journal response to the question: "How was your summer?"

I first came to Valley this summer. I expected my summer to be boring beyond belief. Not only did I feel frustrated, scared and nervous, but I felt alone and without my friends...Then I walked into my new classroom.

As soon as I entered the room, 2 students asked me my name and wanted to share pictures they were looking at. I immediately felt better. Staff also helped me advocate my concerns of sitting in a classroom all summer and asked for my input for summer field trips. I soon learned that my new class would not be simply sitting inside a classroom while the rest of the world enjoyed summer, we would be enjoying the summer, too. Of course we were doing an academic project, but we would also

be travelling literally all over the state! We would be going out into the community to practice our life and social skills. We went shopping, had lunches, and visited cool spots like the beach, zoo, Lowell Spinners game, and Wolf Hollow. YES, LIVE WOLVES!

We did hit a few speed bumps along the way, but I realized there were a ton of people here to help me stay on task and in a good space where I could reach my goals.

This student's journal reflection will be used to help shape further discussion about what the students in the class would like to propose for trips and activities during the upcoming school year. Continuous reflection at every level, occurring among both students and faculty, has allowed the Transitional Programs at the Valley Middle and Transitional High School to create and develop individualized programming, which not only makes



STUDENT WISDOM MGANGA ENJOYING A SWIM WITH OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST ALLYSON LOCKE AT BERRY POND IN ANDOVER.

us unique, but sets us apart from all other schools. We reflect on current practices and data to make informed decisions about the needs of our students. Our uniqueness has enabled us to successfully overcome obstacles for our students and their families.

Many of our families reflect upon and bring common goals to the Valley team as we collaborate to identify opportunities for growth. The insights and supports we receive from our sending districts, along with our own teachers, related service providers, nurses, and aides, also offer invaluable support and guidance as our cohesive team is able to combine goals with rigorous learning targets in order to carve out a truly targeted Individualized Education Plan. It truly is a team approach!



STUDENT JADEN QUINONES AT THE MSPCA IN METHUEN CUDDLING THE ADORABLE KITTEN, SNICKERS.

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Reflecting as a Way of Life

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Valley also provides consults to outside providers along with families so there is a cohesive and consistent manner in which a student's behavior is addressed.

We also foster students independence so that they are able to complete activities of daily living with decreased prompts and support. This translates to students being able to make simple snacks for themselves when they arrive home or preparing full meals for a special Sunday dinner. The Transitional Programs also allow students to access opportunities that parents and families never dreamed of! Students who participate in the Transitional High School's School Trip flew on an airplane, many for the first time, to places such as San Francisco and New Orleans.

Often, it's the things in life we take for granted such as facilitating friendships so that students finally feel a sense of community and belonging when coming to school each day. The implementation of Social Skills groups throughout all of Valley's Transitional Programs are based on the reflection of our practices and developing programming around what we could do as educators to help students presenting with this need.

These are just a few of the things that make the Valley Transitional Programs unique. We have learned through reflection that sometimes all you need to do is ask a simple question like, "How was your summer?" and the end result is an amazing one filled with new opportunities and endless possibilities. ■

Adult Services: Unique Today & Tomorrow

Valley Collaborative's Today & Tomorrow Program is very unique! From the moment you enter the building and arrive at our common area, located at 25 Linnell Circle, you are instantly greeted with warm smiles from our Individuals and staff alike, along with a friendly hello! Many visitors comment that they feel an immediate sense of welcome and that the atmosphere is positive and full of happiness. Our Individuals care for one another, which is often demonstrated by a warm smile, daily checks to ask "how are you?," and singing to brighten your day. When birthdays are near, our Individuals can be heard singing "Happy Birthday" to each other and to our staff. Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Service Coordinators often remark, even during the referral process, that this 'family' energy



INDIVIDUALS ENJOYED A FAST-PACED GAME OF BASKETBALL AS A RECREATION ACTIVITY.

at Valley Collaborative is unique and highly contagious on site!

Valley is contracted by DDS to provide a work-based program for Individuals comprised of three distinct pieces: Group Employment, Career Planning, and Community Based Day Supports (CBDS). These pieces work together to enrich the lives of the Individuals we serve. We provide Individuals with support to explore, discover, and connect with their personal interests and options for community involvement,

personal interest, and hobbies. We provide Individuals an opportunity to work and participate in activities that reflect their interests and preferences. Individuals are involved in activities that connect them to other people in the community. Through scheduling, Individuals are provided opportunities to obtain employment that match their skills and interests.



RAY BUSBY, JOE PIRANIEN & BRENNIA SIEGFRIEDT PLAYING BASKETBALL.

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Unique, Today & Tomorrow

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Additionally, we provide Individuals with the opportunity to explore a variety of novel vocational interests with ongoing opportunities for increased independence.

At Valley, we provide all of these pieces out in the community. We feel the best experiences for our Individuals occur daily within natural community contexts, supported by our strong and caring staff, to help achieve each Individual's ISP goals. Supporting our Individuals within the community also allows them to integrate their experiences as contributing members of society. Through our Adult Recreation Program social activities occur once a month and has enriched the lives of our Individuals with typical experiences including Painting with a Twist, bowling, the Stone Zoo, a Lowell Spinners game, movie night, and mini golf. These activities strengthened our community and brought peers together that normally would not have the opportunity.

For our families, communication is a top priority! We provide a forum to communicate our concerns and listen to familial concerns regarding our Individuals.

We work collaboratively with families to support all aspects of the Individual's life. We discuss medical needs and provide consultation with our Program Nurse. Our program's social worker support provides help to families while navigating the Individual's feelings, answering questions they have, and directing them to appropriate community resources or additional DDS supports.

Every staff member in Valley's Today & Tomorrow program has a voice when it comes to the care we provide to our Individuals. We have found

this unique team-oriented approach not only enriches the lives of the Individuals we serve, but also the lives of our staff. ■



ALYSSA LAWYER BOWLING AT WAMESIT LANES



BEN CIRIELLO FLEXING HIS MUSCLES AFTER A STRIKE!



MAGGIE KING WAITING FOR HER TURN TO BOWL.



MIKE KOCZAN HAPPY WITH HIS RESULTS.



DENNIS WALSH, MATT PETERSON, JULIA MCNALLY AND PAUL BURKE HAVE A DRINK WHILE WAITING FOR THEIR TURN TO BOWL AT WAMESIT LANES.

Facilities Report: Building an Appealing Environment

For Valley's Facilities and Maintenance Department, when students are shouting and screaming "School's out for the summer," our team exclaims, "The tools are out for the summer"! Throughout the summer months, the Facilities and Maintenance team, along with their vendors, made some great improvements to each Valley location. Our team put in countless hours to make sure staff and student alike were proud to call Valley their home when the doors opened for the start of the school year in September.

At 40 Linnell Circle new construction projects our team tackled over this time included a wide variety of upgrades. A new time-out room for Valley Middle School's Alternative Program on the first floor was created and is complete with LED lighting and carpet. For the same program, our team focused on the demolition and reconstruction of a brand new milieu area to create a community space for students. The open concept space features new vinyl tile and a storefront glass door which separates programs. Additionally, two offices were eliminated to create classrooms on the first floor. Following this demolition, ceilings were patched, walls were plastered then painted, and a carpet was installed to complete the classrooms.

On the second floor at 40 Linnell Circle a conference room was created and is now a great meeting space as well as the pathway to the Principal's office. Another large project on the first floor was the addition of the music room to the loading dock area. The space, which has been fondly called the "School House Rock and Dock," is equipped with soundproof insulation as well as padded carpeting. The room is still awaiting a few needed additions including a double door – but everyone is excited for the new space for the new school year.



VALLEY'S NEW 'SCHOOL HOUSE ROCK AND DOCK,' A MUSIC ROOM EQUIPPED WITH SOUNDPROOF INSULATION AND PADDED CARPETING IN THE SITE OF A FORMER LOADING DOCK.

THE BRAND NEW MILIEU AREA CREATES A COMMON SPACE FOR STUDENTS FEATURING AN OPEN CONCEPT DESIGN AND A STOREFRONT GLASS DOOR TO SEPARATE DIFFERENT PROGRAMS.



New tile flooring was added to all single stall bathrooms throughout the facility.

In our Tyngsboro location floors were refinished and walls were painted. Our classrooms and the common areas look fresh and ready for the new school year.

Also at 25 Linnell Circle, home to our Adult Programs and Central

Office, the Nurse's office also received a 'facelift' during this time with fresh paint and a waxed floor.

At the end of the day, our team's main focus is to make Valley's facilities an appealing place to come everyday. Our team takes pride in the work and their extra effort that goes into the smallest of tasks is evident at each of our locations. ■

Summertime Dreams and Trips

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Museum Of Science
Canobie Lake Park
New England Aquarium
Charles River Boat Co
North American Wolf
Foundation Inc
Chunky's Movie Theater
One Stop Fun
Dave & Buster's
Patriot Place
Discovery Museum
Rock Show Inc
Eric Carle Museum

Skateland
Essex River Basin Adventures Inc
Sky Trail Massachusetts
Fenway Park Tours Boston
Red Sox
Stonehenge USA
Funtagious
TCs Training Center
Harvard Museum of Natural
History
Wamesit Lanes
Imagine That
You're Fired

Valley Collaborative Leadership Team



Chris A. Scott, PhD
Executive Director
cscott@valleycollaborative.org



Nicole Noska
Principal, Transitional Programming,
Valley Middle School,
Valley Transitional High School
nnoska@valleycollaborative.org



Joia Mercurio
Assistant Executive
Director of Curriculum & Technology
jmercurio@valleycollaborative.org



Julie Fielding
Principal, Alternative Programming,
Valley Middle School,
Valley Transitional High School
jfielding@valleycollaborative.org



Kari Morrin
Director of Student & Adult Services
(DDS & MRC) and Human Resources
kmorrin@valleycollaborative.org



Heather Valcanas
Interim Associate Director of
Adult Services
hvalcanas@valleycollaborative.org



Jessica Scalzi
Lead Nurse
jscalzi@valleycollaborative.org



Joseph Venskus
Adult Services Manager, DDS
jvenskus@valleycollaborative.org



Annie Willis
Principal, Valley Elementary School
awillis@valleycollaborative.org



James George
Accountant
jgeorge@valleycollaborative.org

Valley Collaborative Board

Chair: Mr. Timothy Piowar
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Public Schools

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