

# Check out the October 2020 Newsletter!

See the online version at [vvschool.ca/news-events/newsletter](http://vvschool.ca/news-events/newsletter).



**Learning Without Limits**

**We made it!** To all our students and parents/guardians, we would like to thank you for your patience during an extremely challenging month of September. Online schools have a lot of new rules to contend with this year, some of which we are still working to implement. Your continued patience with us is greatly appreciated as we adapt to the “new normal”.

September was a marathon month for our staff, who have had to handle an unprecedented deluge of registrations. We would like to thank our teachers, administrative assistants, business managers, and academic counsellors who moved mountains to make it all happen. Our hats go off to you!

As our student numbers have greatly expanded, so too has our teaching staff. In September we welcomed eight new teachers, plus four who are returning to VVS after a stint with ADLC. More will be joining us this month. As they join our team we continue to add their profiles to our [staff pages](#).

If you have received an email requesting that parents/guardians verify their Student Information System (SIS) information, we request that you log in and do so as soon as possible. If you require login credentials for your SIS account, please email us at [vvsupport@pembinahills.ca](mailto:vvsupport@pembinahills.ca).

As always, we welcome your comments. If you have any questions or concerns, please phone us toll-free at 1-855-974-5333 or talk with your teacher. If you have any VVS-related stories you'd like to share, please contact [Ben Freeland](#), our communications and marketing specialist.

Until next time, stay warm, study hard, and have a happy and safe month of October!

Sincerely,



Mike Loitz,  
Principal



Treena Bradbury,  
Associate Principal



Frank McCallum,  
Associate Principal

## New This Month

### **WISEST SET Conference**

The University of Alberta's Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science, and Technology (WISEST) is once again hosting its annual [SET \(Science, Engineering, and Technology\) Conference](#) for young women and gender minority students in grades 10-12. Registration opens Monday, October 5.



### **Adult Learning at Vista Virtual School**

School-aged registration for grades 1 to 12 are now closed for 2020-2021 (except for interjurisdictional and international students), but we are still welcoming adult students, defined by Alberta Education as having been 20 years old, or older, on September 1, 2020. For more information on our adult upgrading program, please visit [our website](#) or email us at [vsadults@pembinahills.ca](mailto:vsadults@pembinahills.ca).

### **Back-Ordered Materials**

Due to this year's extraordinary demand, some course materials are on backorder. We are working to have the materials delivered to you as soon as possible. In the meantime, please speak with the teachers as they will be able to keep students engaged and on curriculum until materials arrive.

### **Vaccine Information**

Routine immunizations are typically provided for children in grades 1, 6, and 9. More information is available through [Alberta Health Services](#) or through your local Community Health Centre.

Speaking of vaccines, it turns out anti-vax conspiracy theories are nothing new. Read this fascinating article in [The Conversation](#) about 19<sup>th</sup> century scaremongering around the smallpox vaccine.

### **Flu Shots**

Alberta Health Services will begin offering flu shots on October 19, 2020. All Albertans, six months of age and older, are eligible for a free flu shot. Due to COVID-19, AHS clinics and pharmacies will be providing shots by appointment only this year. More information is available [here](#).

### **COVID and Halloween**

Is it safe to trick-or-treat this year? Alberta's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Deena Hinshaw [was asked this question](#) during one of her recent COVID-19 news conferences. Her answer: yes, provided the necessary precautions are taken.

Staying safe this Halloween starts with costume design. Traditional Halloween masks may be fun, but they offer no protection against COVID-19 because they typically have big holes in them. However, COVID masks can always be modified or created specially as part of a costume, which also makes for a fun arts and crafts project.



Of course, keeping your hands clean is an absolute must. Trick-or-treaters and guardians should always have a supply of antiseptic wipes on hand for use after every visit. People at home can help by setting up a hand sanitizer station and handing out candy with a pair of kitchen tongs to help ensure social distancing. Also, knocking is safer than ringing doorbells because it involves less surface area contact.

The Alberta government has released [this guideline](#) on staying safe this Halloween. In short, the season need not be scary for all the wrong reasons. Stay safe and have fun!

### **Timelines and Expectations**

Our high school program operates on a semester system, following the traditional school year. All assignments for the first semester must be submitted prior to January 15 so that grades can be finalized by January 31.

High school students must also complete a short E-Learning and Learning Management Systems course (COM1255) immediately, if they have not already done so.



Elementary and junior high students should submit all assignments by June 15, 2021 at the latest so that grades can be finalized by June 30.

All students are expected to work to work regularly, submitting assignments according to the timelines provided by the teachers. Students are required to work regularly, submitting assignments according to the timelines provided by the teachers. Those who do not submit work in September and October put their continued registration in jeopardy.

Students are generally expected to put in around 30 hours of work on their studies every week.

### **School Council and Parent Input**

Although we do not have a formal School Council, we welcome parents, guardians, and students to provide input on the operations of the school. Your suggestions can be directed to [Mike Loitz](#), Principal.

### **Student Parent Teacher Interviews (SPTs)**

VVS' Student Parent Teacher Interviews (SPTs) will be held this month via Google Meet. Parents and guardians are encouraged to contact their children's teachers as soon as possible to set up and organize meetings.

### **Diploma Exams**

The Fall 2020 Diploma Exams will be held from Thursday, October 29 to Tuesday, November 10. Morning exams will run from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm, and afternoon exams from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. The official schedule is available from [Alberta Education](#). The deadline for January 2021 Diploma Exam registrations is November 2.

### **Monthly Events Calendar**

Check out our [monthly events](#) on our website. We update this calendar as events are added.

## Important Dates in October

October – [Women's History Month \(Canada\)](#)

October – [Canadian Library Month](#)

October 1 – [National Seniors' Day](#)

October 5 – [World Teachers' Day](#)

October 10 – [World Mental Health Day](#)

October 11 – [International Day of the Girl Child \(UN\)](#)

October 12 – Thanksgiving Day (Statutory Holiday, VVS campuses closed)

October 18 – [Persons Day \(Canada\)](#)

October 24 – [United Nations Day](#)

October 31 – Halloween

## Kids and Seasonal Affective Disorder

It is that time of year again when the mornings are dark and peeling yourself out of bed gets that much harder. Most people find that as the days get shorter, the mornings are a bit more of a struggle.

However, for around six percent of the population (including many teens), this seasonal change leads to a debilitating mental health condition that is far worse than garden-variety winter blahs.



Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD for short) is the result of two chemicals that affect mental well-being getting out of balance. As the days grow darker, the body produces more melatonin, a chemical linked to sleep, while a lack of sunlight can lead to a deficiency in serotonin, a chemical associated with feelings of well-being and happiness. While all of us feel this to some extent, for many the result can be extreme fatigue and depression, and with that a significant drop in motivation and, often, academic performance.

Why some people are affected more than others by this imbalance remains a mystery. SAD is especially common among older teenagers and young adults, although kids of all ages are prone to it. It is also four times as common among women and girls than among men and boys. Not surprisingly, SAD is most common in northern latitudes where the fall and winter days are the shortest.

If you suspect you or your child may have SAD, it is worthwhile talking to your doctor. If you suspect it in your child, the best approach is to be non-judgmental and supportive in bringing up the subject, emphasizing that it is a natural medical condition that is nobody's fault. A check-up with the doctor is a good plan, particularly in cases of chronic fatigue, which can be the result of other health problems such as hypothyroidism, hypoglycemia, or mononucleosis.

Thankfully, there are many ways to treat SAD. Treatment typically involves light therapy, involving some sort of light box or therapeutic lamp. Installing full-spectrum lightbulbs in your house can also help. Time spent outdoors is vital to curbing SAD, as is physical exercise, healthy diet, and a regular bedtime routine—preferably without electronic devices. Talk therapy can also be helpful for many in dealing with the depression.

As for schoolwork, parents and guardians can help by being present and available to help. If your child is struggling with SAD, they may need more help than usual with their homework, as well as some extra encouragement. Make sure they know you are on their team, and that you take their problems seriously.

For more information on children and Seasonal Affective Disorder, read [this article](#).

## Happy World Teachers' Day!

October 5 is World Teachers' Day. First marked in 1994, WTD commemorates the anniversary of the adoption of the [ILO/UNESCO Recommendations Concerning the Status of Teachers](#) in 1966.

Vista Virtual School would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our wonderful (and expanding) team of teachers for the amazing work that they do. Thank you for making a difference every day!



Please visit our [staff pages](#) to get to know our new teachers.

## Contacts

<b>Principal</b>	Mike Loitz		
<b>Associate Principals</b>	Treena Bradbury	Frank McCallum	
<b>Academic Counsellors</b>	<a href="#">Dominick Gallo</a>	Andrea Robin	Christy Filgate (Special Ed.)
<b>Adult Academic Counsellors</b>	<a href="mailto:vsadults@pembinahills.ca">vsadults@pembinahills.ca</a>		
<b>School Hours</b>	8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (teachers' working hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.)		
<b>Contact Information</b>	P: 1-855-974-5333	VVS Support x5317	
	<i>Edmonton Campus</i> x6100 300-10055 106 Street NW Edmonton, AB T7N 1P4	<i>Calgary Campus</i> x6200 341 58 Avenue SE Calgary, AB T2H 0P3	
<b>School Email</b>	<a href="mailto:vsupport@pembinahills.ca">vsupport@pembinahills.ca</a>		
<b>We're Online</b>	<b>Twitter</b> @VistaVirtualSch	<b>Facebook</b> VistaVirtualSch	<b>Website</b> vvschool.ca
<b>Connect with Us</b>	Please follow us on <a href="#">Facebook</a> and <a href="#">Twitter</a> for updates on events and activities throughout the year. Our <a href="#">website</a> is also a valuable source of information.	Do you have a story to tell (or a typo to report)? Email <a href="#">Ben Freeland</a> .	The newsletter is published monthly and sent to students, parents, and guardians by email.