

Check out the November 2020 Newsletter!

See the online version at vvschool.ca/news-events/newsletter.



Learning Without Limits

Happy November! October may have been less wild than September was on the enrolment front, it was still a month of uncharted waters for Vista Virtual School, with Student Parent Teacher interviews (SPTs) being held strictly online for the first time and ongoing uncertainty over Provincial Diploma Exams and the like. Your patience, as always, is greatly appreciated.

The COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to impact almost every aspect of school life here at VVS. Under normal circumstances, we would be holding award ceremonies for our students this month in Calgary and Edmonton, but this is unfortunately not possible this year. That said, awards will be mailed out to students this month, and recipients will be acknowledged via social media, so stay tuned for that.

As our student body has grown, so too has our teaching staff. We were pleased to welcome several new teachers to our team in October, including some returnees to the school. Many of you have already had the chance to meet these new teachers through online SPTs, which continue this month. You can check out who's who on the [teacher pages](#) on our website.

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.

We hope you have a wonderful month of November. Stay warm!

Sincerely,



Mike Loitz,
Principal



Treena Bradbury,
Associate Principal



Frank McCallum,
Associate Principal

New This Month

ShadOnline 2021

Applications are now open for [Shad 2021](#), a nationwide STEAM and entrepreneurship program for students in grade 10 and 11. Normally a live-in program, Shad 2021 will take place entirely online in virtual campuses and include synchronous real-time sessions, industry-leading keynote speakers, and a signature design project. Registration is open until December 7 for this program, which runs from July 5 to July 30, 2021.



Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs)

Pembina Hills School Division has decided not to hold PATs for the 2020-2021 school year. This decision was made in response to the disruptions caused by the sudden shift to at-home learning due to COVID-19 in early 2020 as well as the anticipated high rate of absenteeism. Please contact us at vsupport@pembinahills.ca if you have any questions or concerns.

Provincial Diploma Exams

The Fall 2020 Provincial Diploma Exams began on October 29 and will continue until November 10. Students who received an official school-awarded mark for a subject after the August 2020 Diploma Exam date for that subject are exempt from the Fall 2020 exam. No changes have been announced yet regarding the January 2021 exams. For more information, please read this [news update](#).

Student Parent Teacher Interviews (SPTs)

VVS' Student Parent Teacher Interviews (SPTs) will continue 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 if they have not already done so.

Flu Shots

Alberta Health Services is continuing to offer free flu shots to all Albertans aged six months of age and older. Due to COVID-19, AHS clinics and pharmacies will be providing shots by appointment only this year. More information is available [here](#).

Remembrance Day

Vista Virtual School typically marks Remembrance Day (November 11) with an in-person event, usually a military history-themed field trip of some kind. Last year VVS students attended events at the Loyal Edmonton Regiment Museum and the Military Museums of Calgary. This year, however, the Canadian Forces have cancelled all in-person Remembrance Day events due to COVID-19.



REMEMBRANCE DAY
Let Us Not Forget

That said, the 102nd anniversary of the end of World War I will not go unmarked. For the week leading up to Remembrance Day (Nov. 5-11), in lieu of the usual in-person events, we will be providing links to the [National Veterans' Week Speakers Program](#) video series, developed specially for schools by the Department of National Defence. You may view [these videos](#) at your leisure.

The National Veterans' Week Speakers Program videos provide an opportunity for students to get acquainted with the Canadian military, learn about historic and current engagements and deployments, and better understand how Canadian service members continue to contribute to peace and stability domestically and on the international stage.

Any questions about this should be directed to vsupport@pembinahills.ca.

CAREERS The Next Generation: Virtual Exploration Events

CAREERS The Next Generation is holding two virtual career fairs in November as part of its Virtual Exploration Events. Events include virtual tours, demonstrations, Q&A sessions with industry professionals, and information on student internships. The first of the two will focus on internship opportunities in the [steamfitter-pipefitter trade](#) on Tuesday, November 10, while the Wednesday, November 25 event will focus on [information and communication technology \(ICT\)](#) opportunities.



CAREERS The Next Generation also has an ongoing [virtual mentorship series for young women](#) in grades 9 to 12 interested in careers in technology and trades. The next session will focus on careers in the automotive and mechanical trades, and will take place on Tuesday, December 15.

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 aged 20 (as of September 1, 2020) and up. For more information on our adult upgrading program, please visit [our website](#) or email us at vsadults@pembinahills.ca.

Student ID Cards Available

Are you or your child interested in having a Vista Virtual School ID card? Email us at vsupport@pembinahills.ca with your (child's) name and Alberta Student Number together with an appropriate headshot, and we will get this sent off to you.

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.

Homework: Do's and Don'ts

Vista Virtual School students enjoy a high degree of independence. It is one of the great things about our program. However, with that independence comes a responsibility to be your own taskmaster. VVS students are expected to put in around 30 hours of work on their studies every week and submit assignments steadily throughout the year.

Some students make the mistake of hanging onto assignments and submitting them all at the last minute or waiting until the last possible moment before starting and submitting. This not only results in

delays in getting work marked, but it also means students are unable to learn from mistakes and apply that learning to future work. Please do yourself (and your teacher) a favour and follow timelines!

Another mistake some students make is trying to get ahead by doing assignments early, and without covering the supporting coursework. While VVS does provide students with opportunities to “get ahead”, this is a terrible way to do it. Teachers set due dates so that students have enough time to cover the relevant material and hurrying through the homework defeats the purpose of coursework.



In sum, the best approach to homework is to a) follow timelines and b) don't stress about trying to get ahead. Your teachers want to see you succeed and have designed their courses to allow sufficient time for steady, step-by-step learning. Also, if you are struggling with assignments, please reach out to your teacher(s). They are there to help.

Monthly Events Calendar

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

Important Dates in November

October 29 to November 10 – [Provincial Diploma Exams](#)

November – [Family Violence Prevention Month](#)

November 1 – [Daylight Savings Time Ends](#) (Clocks go back one hour)

November 2 – [Deadline for adding or withdrawing from first semester 5-credit courses](#)

November 5 – [International Volunteer Day](#)

November 5 to 11 – [Veterans' Week](#)

November 10 – [World Science Day for Peace and Development](#)

November 11 – [Remembrance Day](#) (Statutory holiday, VVS campuses closed)

November 13 – [World Kindness Day](#)

November 14 – [Diwali](#)

November 16 to 20 – [Bullying Awareness Week](#)

November 19 – [World Philosophy Day](#)

November 20 – [Transgender Day of Remembrance](#)

November 20 – [World Children's Day](#)

November 23 to 29 – [Canada History Week](#)

November 25 – [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#)

November 25 to December 10 – [16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence](#)

November 27 – [Holodomor Memorial Day](#)

Pulling the Plug on Cyberbullying

November 16 to 20 is Bullying Awareness Week. Bullying is defined as the use of force, coercion, or threat to abuse, aggressively dominate, or intimidate somebody characterized by hostile intent, an imbalance of power, and repetition over a period of time.

Bullying happens everywhere—at home, at school, in the workplace, out in the world, and (increasingly) online—and in Canada the statistics on it are worrisome. A survey of 35 countries showed Canada as having the ninth highest rate of bullying among 13-year-olds. According to these findings, at least one in three Canadian teens reported being bullied recently, and 47 percent of Canadian parents reporting having a child victim of bullying.



Around one in five adolescents report specifically being targeted by cyberbullying. Cyberbullying takes many forms, including “flaming” (a direct online attack on a person), exclusion, cyberstalking, “fraping” (hijacking a person’s social media accounts with harmful intent), outing/doxing (revealing sensitive information), and old-fashioned harassment. Cyberbullies sometimes antagonize their victims via subtler means, creating social media posts that never mention the victim by name (thus avoiding detection by teachers, parents etc.) but are nonetheless recognizable to the victim and their peers.

The unique features of the electronic environment, from the anonymity factor to the increased accessibility of victims, make cyberbullying harder to stop than traditional bullying, and many experts believe that its effects are even more damaging than traditional bullying, which tends to be confined to a specific location: the schoolyard, a workplace, and so on. Negative consequences of cyberbullying run the gamut from depression and anxiety to poor grades and absenteeism to self-harm and even suicide.

As a distance learning school, Vista Virtual School appeals to many students and parents/guardians for the protection it offers from traditional bullying. However, the amount of time our students spend online makes them especially vulnerable to cyberbullying. Moreover, children may be less inclined to tell their parents that they are being victimized in this way than with traditional bullying, out of fear that their parents will take away their digital devices.

These are ten signs that your child may be the victim of cyberbullying, according to NetNanny.com:

1. Uneasiness about going to school or outside (or in the case of VVS, going online for classwork)
2. Visible jumpiness when texting or using social media
3. Frustration or unease after gaming or being online
4. Unwillingness to share information about online accounts and activity
5. Trouble eating, unexplained weight loss or gain, unexplained headaches or stomach aches
6. Insomnia and/or daytime sleepiness
7. Loss of interest in hobbies or activities normally enjoyed
8. Sudden onset of depression or antisocial attitude
9. Withdrawal from friends and family
10. Passing statements about suicide or making a suicide attempt

While there is no easy fix for cyberbullying, the best strategy for parents is always to broach the subject and make sure your child feels safe opening up to you if it happens to them. Keeping computers in common areas is also a good plan, as it makes supervision easier, and with younger children especially, teach the acronym **STOP**: **S**top using the computer; **T**ell an adult about the situation; wait to get the **O**K to go back online; and **P**lay with children **not** involved in the bullying.

Pembina Hills School Division has a [zero-tolerance policy for bullying](#) of any kind, including that which happens “outside of the school or school hours or in the digital environment.” VVS students are expected to not only refrain from bullying but also report it and call it out when they witness it. The only way to stop cyberbullying is to take a stand. Teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians can only do so much; it is first and foremost up to students to make this behaviour socially unacceptable.

Together we can pull the plug on cyberbullying. VVS should always be a safe place for students to learn and grow as people, and we all have a role to play in keeping it that way.

World Children’s Day

November 20 is World Children’s Day. First observed in 1954, November 20 is also the date when, in 1959, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the [Declaration of the Rights of the Child](#). It is also the anniversary of the adoption of the UN [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) in 1989.



Sadly, a [recent UNICEF report card](#) shows Canada is systematically failing its children. The report ranks Canada at 30 among 38 rich countries in the well-being of children under age 18, placing it well below average in the developed world for child poverty and overall child wellbeing. Particularly alarming statistics include Canada’s high rate of adolescent suicide (35th out of 38) and its poverty rate for First Nations children, which currently stands at one out of two.

The report criticizes Canadian governments for spending less on families and children than most wealthy countries, ranking it 28th out of 38 on this front. While it commends Canada on making progress on child poverty and addressing educational disparities, it also notes that little progress has been made on reducing child mortality, obesity, and bullying. In fact, the only areas in the report where Canada ranks above average in the developed world are for air and water quality, at fourth and 18th place respectively.

The UNICEF report challenges Canada to set aggressive goals for improving child well-being. While some of these are policy based, such as increasing government investment in income benefits, early childcare and education, school nutrition, and parental leave, others are the domain of ordinary Canadians. The report calls for a pan-Canadian dialogue to understand children’s lives, worries, and aspirations and greater involvement of children in decision-making and co-design solutions.

This year on World Children’s Day, we encourage everyone to help our children feel empowered by involving them in decision-making processes. Together we can make our country more child-friendly and empower the next generation!

Contacts

Principal	Mike Loitz		
Associate Principals	Treena Bradbury	Frank McCallum	
Academic Counsellors	Dominick Gallo	Andrea Robin	Christy Filgate (Special Ed.)
Adult Academic Counsellors	vsadults@pembinahills.ca		
School Hours	8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (teachers' working hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.)		
Contact Information	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	
School Email	vsupport@pembinahills.ca		
We're Online	Twitter @VistaVirtualSch	Facebook VistaVirtualSch	Website vvschool.ca
Connect with Us	Please follow us on Facebook and Twitter for updates on events and activities throughout the year. Our website is also a valuable source of information.	Do you have a story to tell (or a typo to report)? Email Ben Freeland .	The newsletter is published monthly and sent to students, parents, and guardians by email.