

Check out the April 2021 Newsletter!

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



Learning Without Limits

Spring has sprung! We hope you had a wonderful and relaxing Easter long weekend and that you are enjoying the warmer weather. The school year is now three quarters of the way through, and summer is just around the corner. I'm sure you're all ready for it—in this of all years!

For our grade 12 students, this time of year means graduation is just around the corner. Our online graduation ceremony will be held on Friday, June 4, 2021. Invitations will be emailed very soon and will include further information on the event. Students will be required to RSVP if they plan to participate. Stay tuned for more updates to come in the [graduation section](#) of the VVS website.

Of course, we are still dealing with a global pandemic, with numbers currently looking ominous here in Alberta, so we encourage you all to remain safe as always. Our Calgary office continues to be open by appointment only, but our support staff will continue to respond to emails and phone messages in a timely fashion.

We always welcome your comments and feedback regarding this newsletter, or anything else. 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, here or on our website or social media platforms, please contact [Ben Freeland](#), our communications and marketing specialist.

Have a wonderful month of April!

Sincerely,



Mike Loitz,
Principal



Treena Bradbury,
Associate Principal



Frank McCallum,
Associate Principal

New This Month

Summer School Registration

Registration for 2020-2021 summer school courses is open, with students able to enrol in a maximum of 10 credits. Specific course format and required materials can be found in our [online course catalogue](#). Please visit our website for updates.



When students register, they will have access to course content and assignments prior to July 1. Many of the courses have self-assessments and practice quizzes which are formative (meant to provide guidance) and that do not have marks associated with them. Students may access these formative assessments to guide their learning prior to July 1. Teachers will be available for clarification questions.

Students may begin to submit assignments for summer semester courses on July 1. Students will still have their transcripts updated by Alberta Education on August 20, well ahead of the new school year. Should you have any further questions about this, please contact the school at vv.main@pembinahills.ca.

Second Semester Dates at a Glance

- April 9 – Deadline to register or withdraw from any second semester courses
- June 15 – All second semester assignments/quizzes due (all grades)
- June 22 – All second semester exams completed (all grades)

Summer Semester Dates at a Glance

- June 15 – Deadline to register for 5-credit summer semester courses
- July 2 – Deadline to withdraw from 5-credit summer semester courses
- July 10 – Deadline to register for or withdraw from 1 or 3-credit summer semester courses
- July 15 – Marks for summer semester courses start being reported, as courses are completed
- August 6 – All summer semester course work completed

Alberta Education Assurance Survey

The Alberta government helps schools and school authorities build transparency and accountability into the education system through its annual Alberta Education Assurance Survey. Students in grades 4, 7, and 10 will receive an individual email message from the school early in the week of April 12-16 with specific instructions and an access code. Parents of students in grades 4, 7, and 10 receive access to the survey from Alberta Education. Teachers are also surveyed every year. The survey is conducted online, and is open until Friday, April 23.

We strongly encourage students in grades 4, 7, and 10 and their parent to participate in it and make your voice heard, as it is an important tool in shaping educational policy in Alberta. For more information on this survey, please visit the Alberta government's [Accountability in Alberta's K to 12](#)

[education system page](#). Questions and/or concerns regarding the survey or difficulty accessing it may be directed to the school administrative team at vwadmin@pembinahills.ca.

WISEST Science Odyssey Week



The University of Alberta's WISEST (Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science, and Technology) group is holding its annual [Science Odyssey Week](#), which, despite the name, is actually two weeks long—from May 1 to 16. This two-week showcase will feature presentations from five women at different stages of their STEM careers, each with their own unique perspective on life as a woman in science, technology, and engineering.

The conference is free for all participants. Student registrants will be entered into a contest to win a STEM-themed prize pack.

VVS Office Closed

All VVS support staff will be working home until further notice. The Calgary campus will remain open for exams and other business, but strictly by appointment. Those wishing to visit are required to book an appointment in advance, follow all Alberta Health Services guidelines, and to wear a mask.

Our phone line (1-855-974-5333 x5317) is being monitored but not answered in person, due to our support staff working from home. All voicemails are being redirected to the VV Support email inbox and are being responded to in the order in which they are received. Our support staff may respond to messages either by phone or email. All other phone numbers and extensions will remain the same unless otherwise noted.

Accessing the Student Information System (SIS)

Parents and guardians who have not yet logged into the VVS Student Information System (SIS) should do so as soon as possible, as this is the best way to monitor your child's progress, review correspondence, keep track of course timelines, and stay up to date with your child's activities and submissions. You should have received an email providing you with login information for your account.



To get started, visit the [school website](#) and select the Course Login quick link button (below the rotational spotlight window) to be directed to the SIS login page. If you have forgotten your username and/or password, you can retrieve them by submitting your email address. You can also contact us at vsupport@pembinahills.ca or by phone at 1-855-974-5333 x5317 if you have any trouble. For ease of access, a new SIS login button will soon be available at the top right of the website, beside the Register Here button.

Adult Learning at Vista Virtual School

Vista Virtual School welcomes applications from adult upgrading students—defined as those aged 20 or

up as of September 1, 2020—throughout the year; adult students can start courses at any time. For more information on our adult program, please visit [our website](#) or email us at vsadults@pembinahills.ca.

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.

Engage With Us on Social Media

In addition to this newsletter and our regular website news postings, Vista Virtual School is also active on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). We encourage you to follow us for updates on everything from post-secondary orientations to work experience opportunities to news articles and online resources of interest to students and parents, as well as to just say hello and engage with us.



Also, should you come across any interesting virtual learning resources you think we should share via our social media networks, we would love to hear from you. We too are always learning, and we would love to share what you find out there.

Monthly Events Calendar

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

Important Dates in April

April 2 – [Good Friday](#)

April 4 – [Easter](#)

April 5 – [Easter Monday](#)

April 7 – [Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Rwanda Genocide](#)

April 7 – [UN World Health Day](#)

April 9 – [Second semester registration and withdrawal deadline](#)

April 9 – [Vimy Ridge Day](#)

April 13 – [Ramadan begins](#)

April 22 – [Earth Day](#)

Profile of Success – Colin Fearing

In statistics, the term “outlier” refers to a data point that differs markedly from other observations. In recent times, the term has come to refer to individuals whose talent and industriousness put them well outside the norm. At Vista Virtual School, however, outliers are kind of the norm. As a result of VVS’ flexible educational delivery model, the school has long been a magnet for students pursuing high-level trajectories in sports, the arts, and other fields. We are, in truth, a community of outliers.



Colin Fearing is one such outlier. A 15-year-old Canmore resident, Colin is no ordinary grade 10 student. A prolific 3D graphic designer, videographer, visual artist, and inventor, he has already won several awards for his work, most recently a silver medal for the Edmonton Region round of [Skills Alberta 2021](#) in the video production category and a Silver Key in the 2021 [Scholastic Art & Writing Awards](#) (for photography), as well as \$2,000 prize from [Mindfuel.ca](#)'s Tech Futures Challenge Project Pitch Competition & Showcase for the category of Best Project Pitch.

In the video production contest at Skills Alberta, in which he won his silver medal, participants were given seven hours to write, film, and edit a one-minute video based on a specific theme. While the competition was designed for teams of two, Colin represented VVS as a solo participant, meaning he needed to do the work of two.

"I had to film everything on "school grounds", which in this case was my house," Colin explains.

"The intense time pressure made it both stressful and exciting, and I finished with only a few minutes to spare. The theme was: "At this point in your life, what is the most valuable and useful concept, knowledge/idea or skill that you have learned in school, and why?" My response was basically, "[Don't wait to be taught, go learn!](#)"

As of the writing of this article, Colin's Skills Alberta 2021 adventure is not yet over. He has also thrown his hat in the ring in the 3D character animation, which runs on April 15, a domain of animation he concedes he still has a great deal to learn. Not that he is any sort of novice in this area. The young multimedia wizard first stormed onto the Skills Alberta stage last year, winning gold for his submission "[My Dream Summer](#)", a whimsical 30-second 2D/3D computer animation that combines paintings, 3D modelling, cloth simulation, stop-motion, and other effects.

Colin's triumph in this year's Skills Alberta competition comes on the heels of his prize-winning MindFuel.ca project pitch, which was for a machine learning design technique aimed at reimagining the production of metal fasteners (any type of metal fastener) so as to consume less metal. At present he is at work on the second half of this project, which involves refining his designs and 3D-printing some prototypes in metal form.

In his rare moments of down time between school and design projects, the Canmore native enjoys skiing, hiking, mountain biking, and playing video games with his friends. As with many of VVS' outliers, Colin's outsize ambitions and creativity are greatly supported by the flexibility offered by online learning.

"I appreciate the flexible learning schedule at VVS, which allows me concentrated time to focus on interesting side projects in between chunks of schoolwork," he says.

"I wouldn't have been able to enter any of these contests otherwise."

Examples of Colin's handiwork can be found on his [website](#) and on his [YouTube channel](#).

The New K-6 Curriculum—And PHSD’s Response

On March 29, 2021, Alberta Education revealed its much anticipated new draft K-6 curriculum in a news release, entitled [Renewing focus on essential knowledge and skills](#). The announcement drew considerable attention across the province’s educational sector, including teachers and staff of Pembina Hills School Division who were on spring break at this time. Suffice it to say, response in both traditional news media and social media has been energetic to say the least, with some boards in the province stating publicly that they will not be piloting the new curriculum.



What is Pembina Hills School Division (PHSD) planning to do?

Over the next couple of weeks, senior administrators across the division will be analyzing the draft curriculum and will be gathering feedback from PHSD teachers and principals. Our recommendation to the board regarding any immediate action will come after considering these perspectives. Recommendation will be presented to the board at their regular meeting on April 28, 2021.

The draft released last month will be under review for about 12 months. The piloting of the draft by school divisions is completely voluntary. PHSD is committed to a careful examination of the learning outcomes and expectations in the draft curriculum before we are obligated to implement the final version. Parents and the public are invited to provide feedback to the ministry through the survey links on the Alberta Education website.

What can I do?

Alberta Education’s [curriculum development page](#) describes how the process has unfolded and the steps yet to come. The [draft K-6 curriculum \(overview\) page](#) provides the highlights. There are links to the curriculum documents and information on how to have your say.

Pembina Hills will provide an update after the April 28 board meeting.

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	Vs Support x5317	
		<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 vsschool.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.