

# Check out the August 2021 Newsletter!

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



**Learning Without Limits**

**Happy midsummer!** We hope you've had a great summer so far. For those of you enrolled in summer school at Vista Virtual, you too can look forward to an August break shortly. As for the rest of you, we hope your summer holiday continues to be restful and recuperating, and we look forward to seeing you back with us soon.

Soon indeed! The fall semester kicks off Wednesday, September 1. And after a truly surreal year and a half of COVID-19, things will be more or less back to normal. Our support staff have returned to our Calgary campus. Diploma exams will, as far as anybody knows, be business as usual. As for in-person field trips and the like, this remains to be seen. COVID may be on the decline, but we're not out of the woods yet as a province, and precautions still need to be taken.

As always, we 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 (including student success stories) here or on our website or social media platforms, please contact [Ben Freeland](#), our communications and marketing specialist.

Have a wonderful remainder of summer. We can't wait to see you all back with us next month!

Sincerely,



Steven Kaplan,  
Principal



Treena Bradbury,  
Associate Principal



Frank McCallum,  
Associate Principal

## New This Month

### Summer School Wrap-up

Our 2021 summer semester is nearly over for another year. All summer semester work must be completed by Friday, August 6. If you have any questions or concerns about summer school at VVS, please contact us at [vsupport@pembinahills.ca](mailto:vsupport@pembinahills.ca).

### Fall Registration

We are at peak processing time for 2021-2022 registrations. As recently noted on the website, our office staff are currently swamped with applications, and as such it is taking longer than normal to respond to inquiries. If you have any questions or concerns about registration, please email us at [vsupport@pembinahills.ca](mailto:vsupport@pembinahills.ca). Your patience is much appreciated.



Fall registrations must be completed prior to September 17 for the school year starting September 1. We encourage everyone to register earlier rather than later.

Key dates for the coming school year are as follows:

- Grades 1-9: September 1, 2021 to June 15, 2022
- Grades 10-12, first semester: September 1, 2021 to January 15, 2022
- Deadline for submitting first semester assignments: January 15, 2022
- Grades 10-12, second semester: February 1 to June 15, 2022
- Deadline for submitting second semester assignments: June 15, 2022
- Summer school: dates TBD
- Open entry for adults and international students

Our online application process has been upgraded from the previous year. Current students who are 18 years old (or their guardians if the student is not yet 18 years old) can submit an automatic application form and simply confirm information instead of entering all the same information over again. This feature will be available on the left-hand side of the parent portal, for which login information was recently provided.

### New Orientation Video

Are you new to Vista Virtual School? If so, you will definitely want to watch this [2021-2022 orientation video](#) hosted by associate principal Frank McCallum. Even if you have previous experience with virtual learning—as many now have thanks to COVID—VVS will invariably be quite different from what you are used to if you are new to the school, and this video will be extremely helpful to you.

Topics covered include: textbook fees and pick-up, what VVS courses are like, teacher correspondence and availability, how to navigate coursework, COMM 1255 (e-learning course), planning your academic year, tips for success in distance learning, important dates, diploma exams, and upcoming Q&A sessions.

## Q&A Sessions for New Students

Are you newly registered for Vista Virtual School this year? Do you have questions that were not covered in the orientation video? If so, you can expect an email in the next week or so inviting you to an online Q&A session. A VVS support staff member will notify you of the date and time of your session, which will be either this month or in early September. Stay tuned for more.

## Grad Video Is Up!

VVS celebrated its first ever fully virtual commencement ceremony in June of this year. Now you can watch the full ceremony online on our website [here](#). Highlights of the ceremony include a farewell address from outgoing principal Mike Loitz, a valedictory speech by Zachary Larsen, and an uplifting musical treat at the end that we think you'll find fitting.



Congratulations again to our graduating class of 2021! If we haven't said it enough, we're all very proud of you—especially given everything you've had to deal with this past year and some!

## Diploma Exams

The past year saw considerable disruption to normal school activities, including diploma exams. Barring any unforeseen setbacks, however, Alberta Education will be overseeing diploma exams as normal for the 2021-2022 school year. Exam dates have yet to be announced but will commence in November. Dates will be posted on [this site](#) once they have been announced.

Diploma exams MUST be written in person. VVS will be overseeing exams at testing centres in both Calgary and Edmonton. If you do not live in either the Calgary or Edmonton areas, you have the option of writing diploma exams at your local school, should they be able to facilitate this and provide supervision. If they cannot, you will have to travel to either Calgary or Edmonton for these exams.

If you have any questions about diploma exams, please contact [vv.main@pembinahills.ca](mailto:vv.main@pembinahills.ca).

## Alberta Education Survey

Do you, like many Albertans, have concerns about the government of Alberta's draft K-6 curriculum? If so, we encourage you to complete the government's [online survey](#) on the draft curriculum, which will remain open until the spring of 2022. You can further make your voice heard by writing a letter to your MLA, the education minister, and/or the premier expressing your concerns about the draft curriculum and other issues facing our educational system amid the pandemic.

## New Warehouse and Textbook Pickup

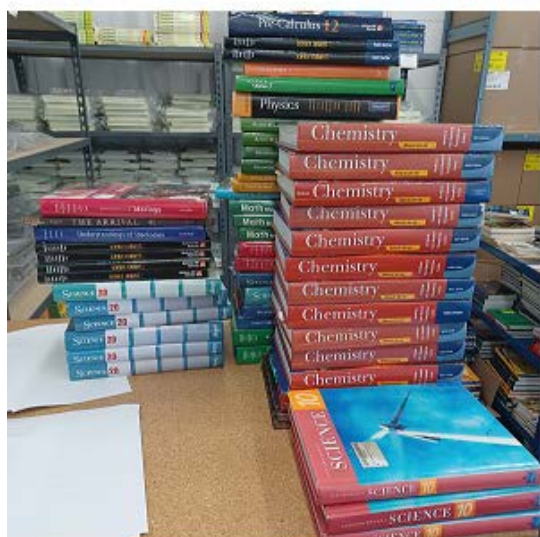
With the closure of ADLC and of our former distribution centre in Barrhead, VVS has a new materials warehouse and distribution centre at our Calgary campus. Considerable work has been put in to get this warehouse up and running, and we are now nearly ready for the 2021-2022 school year. Special thanks are due to all the support staff who assisted with this transition!

See below for images from our new materials hub.

Students and parents will soon be welcome to order and pickup textbooks—you will be notified by our support staff once we're ready. If you live in the greater Calgary area, the expectation is that you pick up your textbooks in person, although we still request that you make an appointment beforehand. We will be mailing textbooks to students who live outside the Calgary region.

We are still accepting textbook returns from the 2020-2021 school year at our Calgary campus. Please note that students/parents are responsible for postage for mailed returns. Please return textbooks and other loaned materials, either by mail or in person (by appointment), to the following address:

Vista Virtual School  
341 58 Avenue SE  
Calgary, AB T2H 0P3



## Calgary Campus

Support staff are now back at VVS' Calgary Campus and will be responding to calls at 1-855-974-5333 x5317. However, we still request that visitors to the campus book appointments in advance, whether it

is for returning textbooks or for any other reason. Those wishing to visit are required to book an appointment in advance, follow all Alberta Health Services guidelines, and—of course—to wear a mask.

## 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.



The screenshot shows the Vista Virtual School website header. On the left is the school logo. To its right is the text "Vista Virtual School Learning Without Limits". Further right are social media icons for Facebook and Twitter, a search icon, and two buttons: "Register Here" and "Student/Guardian Login". Below the header is a navigation menu with links for "Our School", "News & Events", "Grades 1 - 12", "Adult Upgrading", "International Students", and "Current Students". A red arrow points to the "Student/Guardian Login" button. Below the navigation menu are two news banners. The first banner is orange and titled "Vista Virtual School remains open, but by appointment only." with a "More Details" link. The second banner is green and titled "Temporary shift to at-home-learning" with a "More Details" link.

To get started, visit the [school website](#) and click on the Student/Guardian Login button in the top right hand corner 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](mailto:vsupport@pembinahills.ca) or by phone at 1-855-974-5333 x5317 if you have any trouble.

## 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](mailto: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 Principal [Steven Kaplan](#).

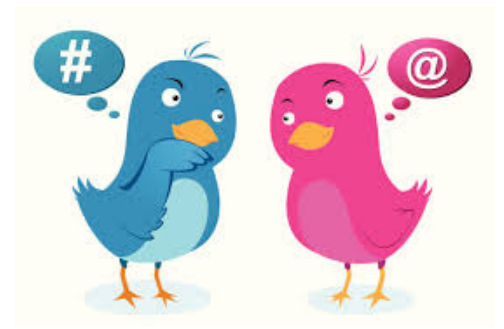
## Student Success Stories

Our VVS student community is always scaling new heights in a myriad pursuits, from athletics to the arts to community citizenship, that it's practically impossible to keep up. Nevertheless, we do love to profile some of our standouts in this newsletter. If you know of a VVS student (or you ARE one) who has recently accomplished something major or is involved in something unique, we would love to hear from you.

Please direct all messages regarding our student success story columns to newsletter editor Ben Freeland at [ben.freeland@pembinahills.ca](mailto:ben.freeland@pembinahills.ca).

## 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 August

- August 2 – [Heritage Day \(Statutory holiday\)](#)
- August 6 – [Summer semester exam completion deadline](#)
- August 8 – [International Cat Day \(really!\)](#)
- August 9 – [International Day of the World's Indigenous People](#)
- August 9 – [Islamic New Year \(begins at sundown\)](#)
- August 12 – [International Youth Day](#)
- August 15 – [Feast of the Assumption](#)
- August 19 – [World Humanitarian Day](#)
- August 23 – [International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition](#)

## Sleep Hygiene for the Summer Months

Let's face it: unless you're an incurable morning person, we all enjoy a good sleep in now and again. And no time of year is this truer than in summer, where, for most children and youths, the pressure to get up early in the morning is off, while in latitudes like ours the allure of warm, sunny evenings keeps many of us awake later than we normally would be during the rest of the year.

For many families, the temptation can be strong to simply move bedtimes and wake-up times back an hour or two. While there is nothing in principle wrong with this (provided people are getting sufficient hours' sleep), this can cause problems when it comes time to readjust to fall schedules. For many teens,



poor sleep habits can result in [Delayed Sleep Phase Syndrome](#), making it virtually impossible to get to sleep until the wee hours of the morning, and making mornings an absolute nightmare.

Of course, Vista Virtual School is, as always, a bit of a different story, and in theory VVS students can operate on whatever schedule they see fit to operate on. Nevertheless, there is no shortage of arguments for keeping to an early-to-bed, early-to-rise schedule. Exposure to sunlight increases the brain's release of serotonin—a hormone closely linked to mental health and cognitive functioning, while vitamin D plays an enormous role in bone health.

That said, getting to sleep early in summer can be easier said than done. On a chemical level, the bright evenings delay the body's release of melatonin, the hormone responsible for making us sleepy. Further, exposure to light late in the day can impact the quality of sleep, decreasing the amount of deep sleep (also known as [slow-wave or delta sleep](#)) we get and increasing night-time wakefulness. In addition, the summer heat can also be detrimental to both falling and staying asleep.

If you live in northern latitudes, some degree of summer impact on your sleep is probably inevitable. Nevertheless, there is much you can do to enhance your sleep hygiene during the summer months. Here are a few tips.

1. **Stick to a schedule.** This is probably the single most helpful thing you can do to ensure healthy sleep, regardless of the time of year. Decide on a bedtime, put it in your schedule (making sure to include sufficient wind-down time), and stick to it, regardless of your level of tiredness at that time. Even if this results in a few nights of prolonged wakefulness before falling asleep (and fatigued mornings), your body should eventually adjust.
2. **Decrease your exposure to sunlight in the evening.** Sunlight is wonderful for your mental health, but within limits, and in the evening you want to give your melatonin a chance to kick in. It can help to close curtains and blinds in the evening, even though it's still bright out, in order to give your system a chance to adjust for sleep.
3. **Keep the temperature down in the evening.** The optimal temperature for sleep is believed to be 18.3°C, which can be hard to achieve in summer. In addition to reducing sunlight, you will also want to ensure that your bedroom is a nice cool temperature ahead of going to bed, with the help of open windows, fans, or air conditioning.
4. **Darken your room before bed.** The darker your sleeping environment is, the more likely you are to have a deep, restful sleep. Consider installing blackout curtains in your room. Alternatively, you can opt for a sleep mask.
5. **Use lightweight fabrics.** Are you sleeping with the same bedclothes as you were during winter? You shouldn't be. Heat-wicking fabrics like silk, satin, or bamboo are best for summer sheets, comforter, and pillowcases, as are lightweight pajamas. If the weather is particularly hot, you might even want to try putting your pajamas in the freezer for a few hours before bed.
6. **Turn off your devices 30 minutes before lights out.** This is a good rule of thumb for the whole year, but especially true of summer, where you will want to banish all extraneous light.
7. **Try sleep meditation/self-hypnosis.** You don't even need to subscribe to a service like Headspace, although these are wonderful. YouTube has a plethora of guided meditations and hypnotherapy audio recordings designed to guide you towards a good night's sleep. A comfortable pair of sleep headphones can be a very helpful tool to combine with this.

## Fun Trivia: The Origin of the Word “Vaccine”

These days the word “vaccine” is on everybody’s lips. As of the end of July, a full 86 percent of Canadians have either already received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine or plan to do so as soon as possible. Worryingly, a full [one in five Albertans](#) (22 percent) remain vaccine-hesitant, more than twice the national rate, although this rate is down considerably from the 45 percent of Albertans who were reluctant to get the jab back in the end of January of this year.



While most people have either received or plan to receive the vaccine, it’s safe to say that most of these people are probably unaware of the origin of the word “vaccine” itself, and the fascinating history behind it. Would you be surprised to learn that the word comes from the Latin *vacca*, meaning “cow”? Indeed, it’s very close to the French and Spanish words for cow, *vache* and *vaca* respectively.

So what on earth do vaccines have to do with cattle? Historically, quite a lot, it turns out. The world’s first successful vaccination campaign was against smallpox, a deadly infectious disease that killed more than 300 million people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century before it was successfully eradicated in the late 1970s. The first smallpox vaccine was developed by Dr. Edward Jenner in England in 1796, who demonstrated that deliberately infecting people with the much milder cowpox virus (a virus typically caught by farm workers by milking infected cows) provided protection against smallpox.

While smallpox vaccines evolved considerably over the subsequent centuries, the name stuck—not just for that particular inoculation but for those for all sorts of illnesses. The lesson of the very effective campaign to eradicate what was once the world’s deadliest diseases is also a powerful lesson in policymaking and science communication. Indeed, anti-vaccine paranoia has been with us for nearly as long as vaccines have, and anti-smallpox campaigners had to deal with much of the same skepticism and science denial that today’s health educators have to deal with.

Something to think about as we (hopefully) approach the end of the COVID-19 story.



# Contacts

<b>Principal</b>	<a href="#">Steven Kaplan</a>		
<b>Associate Principals</b>	<a href="#">Treena Bradbury</a>	<a href="#">Frank McCallum</a>	
<b>Academic Counsellors</b>	<a href="#">Dominick Gallo</a>	<a href="#">Christy Filgate</a> (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	VWS Support x5317	
<b>School Email</b>	<a href="mailto:vsupport@pembinahills.ca">vsupport@pembinahills.ca</a>		
<b>We're Online</b>	<b>Twitter</b> <a href="#">@VistaVirtualSch</a>	<b>Facebook</b> <a href="#">VistaVirtualSch</a>	<b>Website</b> <a href="#">vvschool.ca</a>
<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.