

Check out the October 2021 Newsletter!

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



Learning Without Limits

Happy fall everyone! We hope you've had a smooth month of reentry and a happy beginning to the 2021-2022 school year. For those of you who are joining VVS for the first time, we hope your first month has been a positive experience

For many students, September always feels like it shoots past in an instant and by October the assignments and other demands of school life are starting to pile up. Fortunately, there's still time to get on track if you're feeling disorganized, and while independence and self-drive are the hallmarks of a successful virtual student, everybody needs a bit of help now and again. Our teachers and academic counsellors are always but an email or Zoom call away and are happy to help you deal with overwhelm.

For our grade 12 students, October means it's time to start thinking about post-secondary applications, as well as awards and bursaries, as most of the province's universities, colleges, and polytechnics are now accepting applications for the 2022-2023 academic year. Most of these institutions are holding online open houses either this month or in November, which are a great opportunity to get a sense of what's out there. We've included key dates for these events in this newsletter.

As always, we welcome your comments and feedback. 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 stories you'd like to share, please contact [Ben Freeland](#), our communications and marketing specialist.

Have a wonderful month of October!

Sincerely,



Steven Kaplan,
Principal



Treena Bradbury,
Associate Principal



Frank McCallum,
Associate Principal

New This Month

School Year Timeline



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 2021-2022 registration: September 17
- Deadline for submitting first semester assignments: January 13, 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

Post-Secondary Open Houses

It's October, and that means that the province's post-secondary institutions are now accepting applications for the 2022-2023 school year. Last month, the Educational Liaison Association of Alberta (ELAA) held its annual online post-secondary fair, featuring virtual booths for 28 institutions, allowing students to explore the wide range of programs on offer provincially.

Most of Alberta's universities, colleges, and polytechnics will be holding their own open house events in October and November. Here are the dates currently on the calendar:

- [St. Mary's University: October 2](#)
- [University of Calgary: October 2](#)
- [Portage College: October 5](#)
- [Bow Valley College: October 16](#)
- [Concordia University of Edmonton: October 16](#)
- [The King's University: October 16](#)
- [Olds College: October 16](#)
- [University of Alberta: October 16](#)
- [Burman University: October 20](#)
- [Lakeland College: October 22 and 23](#)
- [NorQuest College: October 23](#)
- [University of Lethbridge: October 23](#)
- [SAIT: October 27](#)
- [Lethbridge College: October 28](#)
- [Mount Royal University: October 30](#)
- [NAIT: October 30](#)
- [Medicine Hat College: November 3](#)
- [MacEwan University: November 6](#)
- [Red Deer Polytechnic: November 6](#)

Follow us on social media for regular updates on post-secondary-related dates and events.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

Tomorrow (September 30) is National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, otherwise known as “Orange Shirt Day”. Last month we featured a long article on why we encourage everyone to wear orange on September 30, and again here we urge you to find something orange to wear tomorrow and to share your orange shirt selfies on social media.



You can read all about the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation [here](#).

RE/MAX Quest for Excellence 2022 Bursary

Are you a grade 12 student and interested in winning one of 16 \$1,000 post-secondary bursaries? How about a trip for two in a hot air balloon?



The RE/MAX Quest for Excellence Bursary Program is once again accepting applications from all grade 12 students attending school between September 2021 and June, 2022 who have not yet participated in graduation commencement ceremonies.

Sixteen students who have a track record for volunteering and making a difference in their communities will be awarded a \$1,000 bursary, among whom one lucky winner will receive a trip for two in RE/MAX’s famous hot air balloon from the major city closest to them.

To read more about this bursary program and to apply, follow [this link](#).

WISEST SET Conference

Are you a female or gender-minority student in grade 10 to 12 with an interest in a career in science and technology? If so, you will definitely want to check out this year’s SET (Science, Engineering, and Technology) Conference organized by the University of Alberta organization Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science, and Technology (WISEST).



This full-day online conference will feature workshops, role model panels featuring a range of professionals in science, engineering, and technology, and lab tours and activity sessions. Participants will be able to explore careers options, meet current students and get a feel for university life, ask questions, and familiarize themselves with academic programs at the U of A, and much more.

Online registration opens Monday, October 18. The cost of attendance is \$10 for the morning or afternoon sessions or \$15 for the entire day. Fee will include access to additional downloadable content. To read more about the conference, follow [this link](#).

AHS Back-to-School Checklist and Immunizations

Ready for back-to-school time? Have you consulted Alberta Health Services' online [back-to-school health checklist](#)? With COVID-19 continuing to dominate health headlines globally, it's easy to forget about all the other health-related to-do's, which include making sure all emergency contact numbers for parents and physicians are kept up to date. This handy checklist makes it easy.



Speaking of routine health matters, AHS is, as always, providing routine immunizations—typically for children in grades 1, 6, and 9. More information is available through [AHS](#) or your local Community Health Centre.

Diploma Exams

The next round of diploma exams will be held between Thursday, October 28 and Wednesday, November 10. The deadline to register for November exams is **October 1 at 3:00 pm**. We cannot accept any late registrations or walk-in students.

Diploma exam registrations are submitted on the [Alberta Education MyPass site](#). If you do not have an account, you can email our support staff at vvsupport@pembinahills.ca to set up an account. Students who are rewriting will be required to submit the Alberta Education rewrite fee on this MyPass site.

We have not set a location for the school to write the exams, as the location will depend on the number of exam writers. We will notify exam writers of the location of exams in mid-October. 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.

The diploma exam schedule for the 2021-2022 school year is available [here](#). If you have any questions about diploma exams, please contact vvsupport@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.

Textbook Returns

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

Visiting VVS Campus

Support staff are now back at VVS' Calgary Campus and will be responding to calls at 1-855-974-5333 x5317 and emails at vsupport@pembinahills.ca. Visitors to the campus are still requested to book appointments in advance, whether it is for returning textbooks or for any other reason. Those wishing to visit are expected to book an appointment in advance, follow all Alberta Health Services guidelines, and, to everyone safe, we ask visitors 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.

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 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, 2021—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. Please direct your suggestions 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.

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 October

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

October – [Canadian Library Month](#)

October 1 – [Diploma exam registration deadline](#)

October 1 – [International Coffee Day](#)

October 2 – [Gandhi Jayanti \(Gandhi’s birthday\)/International Day of Non-Violence](#)

October 4 – [Feast of St. Francis of Assisi](#)

October 5 – [World Teachers Day](#)

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

October 11 – [Thanksgiving Day \(statutory holiday\)](#)

October 16 – [World Food Day](#)

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

October 19 – [Milad un Nabi \(Mawlid\)](#)

October 24 – [United Nations Day](#)

October 25 to 30 – [Media Literacy Week](#)

October 31 – [Halloween](#)

Kids and Media Literacy (In A World Full of Fake News)

October 25 to 30 is Media Literacy Week, and not a moment too soon! If you're a youth in the developed world, it's highly likely that you get most of your knowledge of what's going on in the world



from social media. A [2018 Pew poll](#) showed that 63 percent of Americans aged 18 to 29 got their news from online sources (as opposed to just two percent who read a print newspaper), of whom more than half (36 percent of the total survey sample) got their news from social media feeds.

Anyone who spends any amount of time on social media platforms has doubtless seen many news items with headlines like "You don't want to miss THIS!" or "Sensational New Breakthrough in X!" or "You Won't BELIEVE What Person Y Did!!!" Suffice it to say, if an article's headline says you "won't believe" something, you're probably right to not believe whatever is being claimed, just as the number of exclamation marks in a headline is generally reversely proportional to its credibility.

Sometimes these pseudo-news articles are harmless. However, when such content makes false claims about the efficacy of vaccines or about the results of democratic elections, fake news harms everybody. While big tech companies like Facebook have stepped in to crack down on the most prolific spreaders of misinformation, the ad revenue model still encourages content creators to provoke people with crazy headlines designed to get you to click on them. As a result, plenty of questionable news content still gets through.

The dangers of fake news hit close to home in August of this year after a Red Deer man's claim to have proved that COVID-19 in a hoax went viral—at the same time that the Alberta government was easing pandemic-related restrictions. The allegation that the man's court case (over a COVID infraction) had proved that the illness wasn't real, and had influenced Dr. Hinshaw's decision-making, spread through the US blogosphere, and grew to such an extent that both [local](#) and [international news outlets](#) felt the need to specifically debunk it.

How to help kids spot fake news

The good news about fake news is that, when you know what to look for and what questions to ask, questionable news stories are usually not that hard to detect. Moreover, dubious news items can easily be turned into teaching points by parents looking to raise media-savvy children.

[Project Look Sharp](#) has developed a set of questions designed to help kids discern fact from fiction on the Internet. These include:

- Who made the story?
- Who is its target audience?
- Who paid for it? Or, who gets paid if you click on this?
- Who might benefit or be harmed by this message?
- What is left out of this message that might be important?
- Is this credible (and what makes you think that)?

Older children with more advanced reading skills also might want to use [Professor Melissa Zimdars' tips](#) for spotting misleading news stories. These tips include:

- Look for suspicious URL suffixes. If the site's URL ends in ".co" rather than ".com" it's probably less than credible, unless of course it's from Colombia (in which case it's probably in Spanish).
- Look to see if the story is being covered on mainstream news sites like CBC or Global. If it's a big story and it's not being reported by the big news outlets, it's probably fake.
- Assess the quality of writing and website design. If the headline uses ALL CAPS or the story is full of spelling mistakes, or the site itself is of poor quality, it's usually a sign that you shouldn't be taking it seriously.
- Ask yourself if the headline or story is designed to make you angry. Clickbait and fake news usually aims to provoke extreme emotions (usually anger).
- If something seems at all unlikely, you can always check Snopes or Wikipedia, or even do a basic Google search and either confirm or dispel the story.

Canada's [MediaSmarts](#) has a wealth of resources for parents and teachers aimed at promoting media literacy, including games, tip sheets, and resources for dealing from everything from media overwhelm to cyberbullying. Many of these, as well as material from other media education organizations, are listed on the Vista Virtual School website's [Student Resources page](#).

VVS Students in the News

September was a great month for Vista Virtual School students in the news. (NOT fake news!) On September 17, grade 11 student Martyna Ostrzygalo became the first Albertan in 25 years to win the U16 Fischer Junior Nationals tennis tournament, defeating Naomi Xu of Québec in two sets (6-2, 6-3). You can read about her triumphant tournament [here](#).



Meanwhile, grade 5 student Payton Williams was also in the news for being an exemplary independent kid. The Athabasca native takes care of the family chickens, sells eggs, buys his own horse feed, and cooks his own meals—independence of a sort that Global News sought to feature him in an article on raising resourceful youths. You can read all about him [here](#).

Congratulations Martyna and Payton! You've done us proud!

Contacts

Principal	Steven Kaplan		
Associate Principals	Treena Bradbury	Frank McCallum	
Academic Counsellors	Jessica Luciuk	Loya De Clercq	Vanessa Mathison (Special Ed.) Christie Borle (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>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.