

Check out the November 2021 Newsletter!

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



Learning Without Limits

Happy November everyone! Wow—we're nearly at the halfway point of the first semester. Where does the time go? Before long it will be time to bid adieu to 2021 and welcome in the year where, hopefully, life starts returning to normal—whatever "normal" will look like in the post-COVID 19 world.

As we move through what we hope will be the final stages of COVID, there are many processes we need to work through. We are currently sourcing out writing spaces for the January diploma exams and will be advising you on our decisions on this front. We appreciate all of your patience as we slowly but surely move back to a normal state of affairs.

A reminder that November, as always, means National Veterans' Week and Remembrance Day. Same as last year, we are providing teachers with online resources courtesy of the Department of National Defence, which are to be used in lieu of in-person Remembrance Day ceremonies. We will also be posting links to this material on our website in the coming week.

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 November!

Sincerely,



Steven Kaplan,
Principal



Treena Bradbury,
Associate Principal



Frank McCallum,
Associate Principal

New This Month

Semester Dates at a Glance

Upcoming key dates for the current semester are as follows:



- November 1 – Deadline to register for January 2022 diploma exams
- November 10 – Deadline to register for or withdraw from first semester courses
- December 1 – Second semester course registration opens
- December 20 – Start of Christmas break
- January 3 – Classes resume
- January 13 – First semester assignment/quiz due date
- January 20 – First semester exam completion deadline
- January 28 – Last day for ESA/NP grade 1-9 registrations

Post-Secondary Open Houses

There are still several post-secondary open house events coming up this month. On Wednesday, November 3, [Medicine Hat College](#) will be holding its fall open house. This will be followed by [MacEwan University](#) and [Red Deer Polytechnic](#) (formerly Red Deer College), which will both hold theirs on Saturday, November 6.

For more information on post-secondary-related events and key dates, follow us on social media.

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

Registration is now open for this year's WISEST SET (Science, Engineering, and Technology) conference, which is being held online on Saturday, November 20. If you are a female or gender-minority student in grade 10 to 12 with an interest in a career in science and technology, you will not want to miss this.

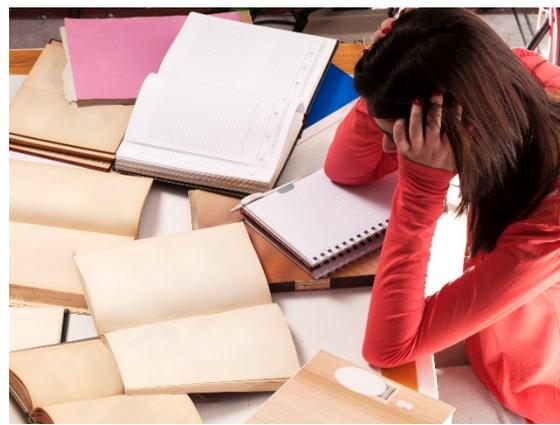
The SET conference is held every year by the University of Alberta organization Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science, and Technology (WISEST). This full-day online conference will feature workshops, role model panels featuring a range of professionals in science, engineering, and technology, and lab tours and activity sessions.



The event will run in two parts: a morning session from 9:00 to 11:45 am and an afternoon session from 12:30 to 3:00 pm, both of which will feature workshops, role model panels, and lab tours and activity sessions. The cost is \$10 for either the morning or afternoon, or \$15 for the entire day. This fee includes access to additional downloadable content.

Homework—And How to Handle It

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.

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.

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.



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Vista Virtual School website. On the left is the school logo, a stylized 'V' in blue and yellow. 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' (with a pencil icon) and 'Student/Guardian Login' (with a key icon). Below the navigation bar is a menu with links: '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 bar is a large orange banner with white text: 'Vista Virtual School remains open, but by appointment only. Currently registered distance education students can continue with their courses without disruption. Vista Virtual School teachers will continue to be available. Students and parents should only come to Vista Virtual School campuses at pre-arranged times. More Details'. Below the orange banner is a green banner with white text: 'Temporary shift to at-home-learning. As directed by the province, students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 have temporarily shifted to at-home-learning for the two-week period starting May 7th and ending May 25th. Read more details in our news article: Q&As - Temporary shift to learning-at-home. More Details'.

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.

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](#).

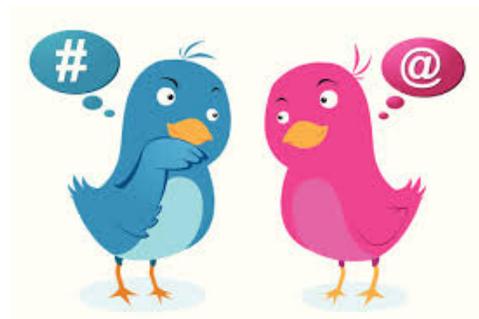
Student Success Stories

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 28 – November 10 – [Provincial Diploma Exams](#)
- November – [Family Violence Prevention Month](#)
- November 1 – [Deadline to register for January 2022 diploma exams](#)
- November 4 – [Diwali](#)
- November 5 – 11 – [National Veterans' Week](#)
- November 7 – [Daylight Savings Time ends \(clocks go back 1 hour\)](#)
- November 10 – [Deadline to withdraw from first semester courses](#)
- November 10 – [World Science Day for Peace and Development](#)
- November 11 – [Remembrance Day](#) (statutory holiday)
- November 13 – [World Kindness Day](#)
- November 15 – 19 – [Bullying Awareness Week](#)
- November 20 – [Transgender Day of Remembrance](#)
- November 20 – [World Children's Day](#)
- November 22 – 28 – [Canada History Week](#)
- November 25 – [International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women](#)
- November 26 – [Holodomor Memorial Day](#)

The Remembrance Day Poppy Turns 100

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Remembrance Day poppy in Canada. Officially recognized as the national symbol of remembrance by the Canadian parliament in 1921, the now ubiquitous poppy pin was the brainchild of Anna Gu erin, a woman from France who was inspired by John McCrae's

iconic poem “In Flanders Field” and sought to promote the poppy as both an act of remembrance and a way to raise funds for World War I veterans in need.

This year the Canadian Legion is selling replicas of the original cloth poppies promoted by Guérin and first sold in 1921. These commemorative items can be purchased online at [The Poppy Store](#).

Following the outbreak of World War I on August 4, 1914, more than 650,000 Canadians and Newfoundlanders (Newfoundland had yet to join Confederation) travelled to Europe to fight alongside the British and Commonwealth forces on the western front. More than 66,000 (roughly ten percent) would never return, while a further 172,000 were injured. Countless others returned home with what medical science now calls post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which, at the time, was referred to as “shell shock” in reference to the sound of exploding armaments.

While the First World War was not Canada’s first involvement in an overseas war (that was the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa in 1899-1902), it was the first time Canadians fought as a distinct military unit, under Canadian leadership. So significant was WWI in the forging of Canada’s national identity that some historians have referred to it as “Canada’s war of independence”, with battles such as the Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge in April 1917 seen as key points in the development of an independent Canadian identity.

That said, World War I will primarily be remembered the world over as a senseless bloodbath that killed 8.5 million combatants and more than 13 million civilians, making it one of the deadliest conflicts in human history. More than anything else the red poppy stands as a symbol of the horrors of war and an embodiment of the words “never again”.

Why a poppy?

The genus *papaver rhoeas*, known variously as the Flanders poppy, corn poppy, red poppy, and corn rose, is a flower native to the Flanders region of northern Belgium—the site of some of the fiercest fighting in World War I. An unusually warm spring in 1915 led to particularly dense growth of the flower in the battle-scarred fields of the region, making their way into a poem by a then-unheard of Canadian army surgeon shortly after the Second Battle of Ypres that spring.

It is said that McCrae was dissatisfied with the poem and discarded it, but it was retrieved by some of his fellow soldiers and eventually published in December 1915 in the British magazine *Punch*. It remains the most widely quoted piece of writing from the war and was instrumental in selling war bonds during the later years of the war. Today the poppy-wearing is prevalent throughout the British Commonwealth countries—and nowhere more so than in McCrae’s country of origin.



The poppy may be a popular symbol in Canada and elsewhere, but it's [not without its controversy](#). Some Canadians are less than comfortable with the ubiquitous pins, as they feel it glorifies war, and in particular a senseless and brutal war fought among colonial powers vying for dominance. Others are uncomfortable with what they feel is nationalistic fervour for a country which, at the time of WWI, was still deeply racist, most notably Indigenous people, many of whom forfeited their treaty rights to fight alongside their fellow Canadians and were systematically neglected upon their return.

For Canada's war veterans, however, the poppy is seen as a sign of respect, an homage to the sacrifices that Canada's military personnel have made—both in the early history of this country and in much more recent times, in Bosnia, in Rwanda, in Afghanistan, and in peacekeeping missions elsewhere around the globe. While there is no denying that Canada's military history is far from perfect, it is equally true that in recent times this country has emerged as an important contributor to global peacekeeping, and that the poppy very much pays homage to this.

For more information on the 100th anniversary of the Remembrance Day poppy, visit the Canadian Legion's [commemorative website](#).

Gold Medal for Colin Fearing

In our [April 2021 newsletter](#) we profiled then grade 10 (now grade 11) student Colin Fearing and his award-winning graphic design and filmmaking work. As of the writing of that article, Colin's involvement in the Skills Alberta competition was not yet finished, as he had submitted an entry in the category of 3D character computer animation, having already won a silver medal for the Edmonton Region round of Skills Alberta in the video production category.

Suffice it to say, Colin's later entry did not disappoint, winning a gold medal. The banners that accompanied this award are now proudly displayed at Vista Virtual School's Calgary campus.



It's been a big year for Colin. This year he also applied for the Schmidt Futures/Rhodes Trust 2021 Worldwide Rise Challenge, a competitive program for teens 15-17 with winners receiving \$500,000 in education benefits. As part of the application, he created seven videos, worked on a project, and completed some online tests.

After all that, he made the list of Rise Global Finalists out of many tens of thousands of submissions and participated in a nerve-wracking but enjoyable series of online interviews and challenges with other finalists. In the end he received \$1,000 in educational benefits, but for Colin by far the best part was meeting other passionate and involved teens from around the world.

Congratulations Colin on your accomplishments! We could not be more proud!

Contacts

Principal	Steven Kaplan		
Associate Principals	Treena Bradbury	Frank McCallum	
Academic Counsellors	Jessica Luciuk	Loya De Clercq	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.