

Check out the December 2021 Newsletter!

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



Learning Without Limits

Happy December everyone! We've nearly made it to the end of 2021, the end of Year Two of COVID-19 and our strange new reality. What will 2022 look like? Regardless of what happens next, we hope the new year brings you happiness, success, and good fortune.

Vista Virtual School will be closed for the holidays from Monday, December 20 to Sunday, January 5, with our Calgary campus reopening on Monday, January 6. Teachers will be taking a well-earned break during this time and will not be responding to student or parent emails at this time.

As the holiday season approaches, we encourage you all to seek out opportunities to lend a helping hand in your communities. The holidays are a challenging time for many, challenges made all the more trying by the ongoing pandemic. We've included an article here on COVID-friendly volunteering options for the holiday season. We encourage you to explore these and consider how you might help brighten someone else's season.

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 December!

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:

- December 1 – Second semester course registration opens
- December 20 – Start of winter break
- January 3 – End of winter break
- 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



Important Information on Diploma Exams

As you know, provincial diploma exams are a widely used indicator of student achievement in their courses. We want to update everyone regarding diploma exams as there have been some recent changes.

Unlike last year, diploma exams are mandatory as usual for the 2021-22 school year. However, due to learning disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the weighting of diploma exams will be temporarily reduced to 10% for this school year only. Diploma exams will be offered for every diploma exam course in November, January, April, June, and August administrations.

It is important for students to know that until a diploma exam has been taken, their course mark cannot be finalized with Alberta Education regardless of their overall average. Please refer to Alberta Education's website for more information on [diploma exams](#).

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](#).

Shad2022 Applications Close December 6

Applications for [Shad2022](#) will close on December 6. The nationwide STEAM and entrepreneurship program for grade 10-11 students will take place across 19 university campuses nationwide, including the University of Calgary, from July 3 to 29, 2022. After a year of being entirely online, Shad is back in person for 2022—with all participants required to provide proof of vaccination.



The Shad experience at every campus includes an immersive program of lectures, workshops, projects, and activities that build on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts & math) skills. The program allows participants to experience university campus life (including dorm life), participate in lectures and labs, and take part in a signature “design challenge”. The theme of the 2022 program has yet to be announced.

The Shad program is open to all Canadian high school students currently completing grade 10 or 11 who are community-minded, creative, engaged, curious and want to make an impact in Canada and the world. Criteria such as academic excellence, extracurricular involvement (i.e. volunteerism, part-time work, family care responsibilities), creativity, innovation, and commitment to making the world a better place are taken into consideration.

UNBC Student Information Session on December 8

The University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) is hosting an information session via Zoom for Alberta students on Wednesday, December 8 at 5pm MST. This is an opportunity for students and parents to learn about the university's program options and admission requirements as well as get a taste of student life at UNBC. More information, including registration, is available on the [UNBC website](#).

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 vvsupport@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.

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](#).

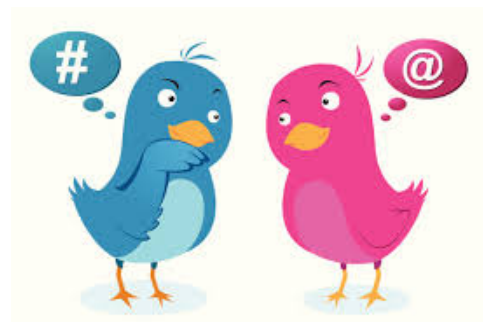
Student Success Stories

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 December

- December 1 – [World AIDS Day](#)
- December 3 – [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- December 6 – [Last Day of Hanukkah](#)
- December 8 – [Feast of the Immaculate Conception](#)
- December 10 – [Human Rights Day](#)
- December 11– [Anniversary of the Statute of Westminster](#)
- December 20 – [VVS Winter Holiday Begins \(Campus Closed\)](#)
- December 21 – [December Solstice](#)
- December 24 – [Christmas Eve](#)
- December 25 – [Christmas Day](#)
- December 26 – [Boxing Day](#)
- December 26 – [Kwanzaa \(First Day\)](#)
- December 31 – [New Year's Eve](#)

Safe Volunteering This Holiday Season

'Tis the season once again to embrace the spirit of volunteerism, and not a moment too soon! It's been another tough year for people around the globe, with many people remaining isolated and facing economic hardships as a result of the pandemic. From increasing homelessness rates in Alberta's major cities to a mounting mental health and loneliness crisis, the need for do-gooders out there in the community has never been higher.



Thankfully, things are more open now than they were last holiday season, and some activities that were no-go's a year ago, like volunteering at food banks or soup kitchens, are options once again. Nevertheless, we're far from out of the woods COVID-wise, and as such it makes sense to choose activities that don't require a lot of in-person mingling.

What, then, is one to do to help people in need this holiday season while also protecting one's own physical safety and that of others? Here are a few ideas you might consider.

1. **Write letters for or have phone/video conversations with seniors.** Many senior citizens struggle with isolation at the best of times, and the ongoing pandemic has exacerbated this type of isolation. Why not contact a senior citizens' home and offer to be a pen-pal for a resident, or to brighten somebody's day with a Zoom conversation?
2. **Sew masks for charities.** Got a sewing machine and a knack for needlework? Why not carve out some time to make masks for people in need. Food banks and other charitable organizations always need masks for their own frontline workers, as do those people on the receiving end of charity. What better way would there be to get into the holiday spirit, 2021-style?
3. **Offer to clear snow for a neighbour.** There is always a need for snow removal and de-icing this time of year, particularly for seniors in your neighbourhood, and unlike many other forms of volunteering, this can be done easily via social distancing. It is also easy to organize.
4. **Donate to your local food bank.** Both the [Edmonton](#) and [Calgary Food Banks](#) are continuing to accept food and monetary donations throughout the holiday season, with extra precautions. Be sure to read up on food banks' drop-off safety protocols on their websites. Financial donations can be made from the safety of your own computer.
5. **Be a virtual tutor.** With all the educational disruptions the year has brought, there has never been a greater need for tutoring and peer support. Are you a high schooler looking for some teaching experience? Why not offer to tutor whatever subject you feel most confident in? The public library systems in [Edmonton](#) or [Calgary](#) are great places to start on this front.
6. **Blog or vlog for a cause.** Are you animated by one or another social cause and want to be an agent of change? If so, all you need is a computer and an Internet connection to get the word out AND hone your writing or videography skills.
7. **Find out where the needs are.** [Volunteer Connector](#) is a great starting point for people who want to contribute their time and talent but don't know where to go. Visit the site to find out about current and urgent needs and what volunteer opportunities are a good match with your skills, resources, location, and time availabilities.

The need for holiday helping hands has never been greater. Fortunately, there is no shortage of safe ways to make the season easier and merrier for a neighbour or a total stranger.

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.