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## News & Notes

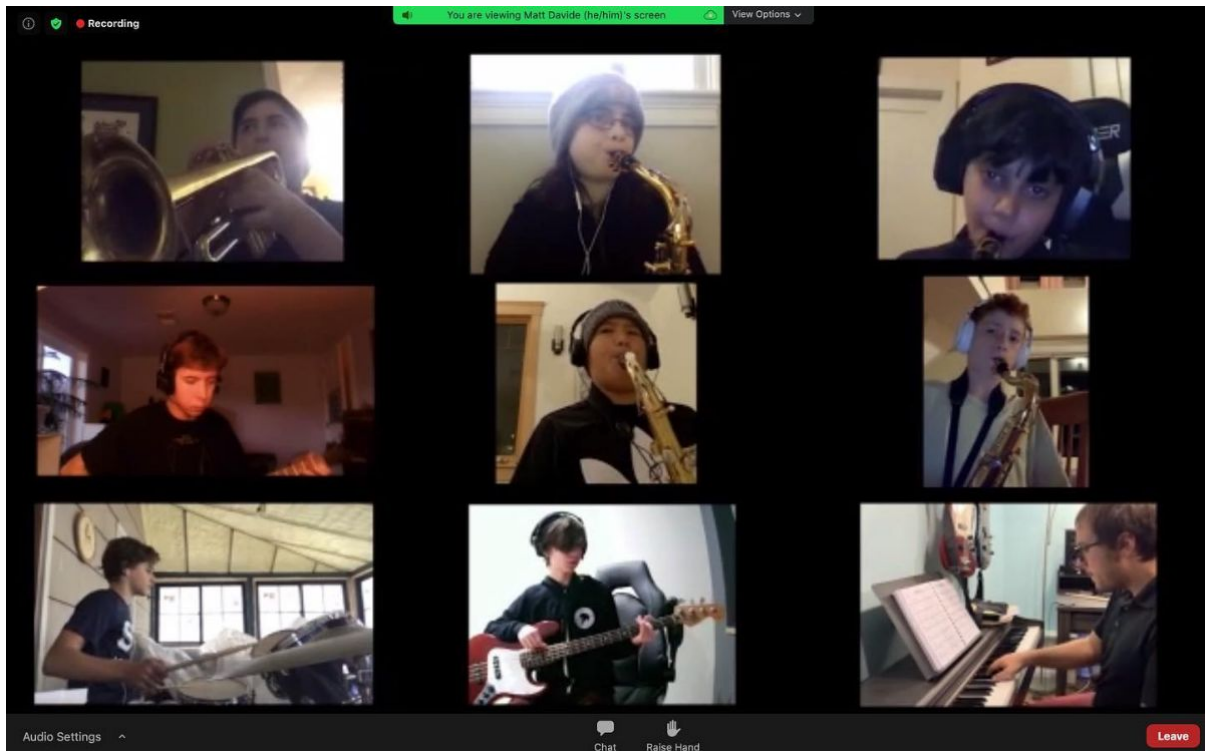
### Vermont Commons School

### December 18, 2020

### Have a wonderful Winter Break!

#### Arts Night 2020

Click on the image below to view our artists' work and performances!



## **EXTENDED UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **Saturday, December 19th - Sunday, January 3rd**

- **Winter Break - VCS CLOSED**

### **Wednesday, January 6th**

- **Inservice Day - NO CLASSES OR ENCOUNTER EXPERIENCES (E-X)**

### **Friday, January 8th**

- **End of First Semester (High School)**

### **Monday, January 11th - Tuesday, January 12th**

- **High School Exam Review Days**

### **Wednesday, January 13th - Friday, January 15th**

- **High School Exams:**
  - **Wednesday:** Math, English
  - **Thursday:** World Languages, Social Studies
  - **Friday:** Science

### **Friday, January 15th**

- **End of First Semester (Middle School)**

## Monday, January 18th

- **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday (VCS CLOSED)**

You can view all of our upcoming events on the [Calendars](#) page of our website, and find updated Zoom links by clicking "**More Details**" under individual events.

Amy's School Counseling Office

[Virtual IT Help Request](#)



## Midterms and End of First Semester

The final day of the first semester for high school students is **Friday January 8th**. The following week there will be two days of review followed by an exam period.

This year the exams will look a bit different. Faculty are invited to create final assessments that fit the flow of their course. Some teachers are giving a unit test (just on some of the material of the semester), while others are doing final projects or presentations, and others still are doing more traditional midterms.

We are hoping that this structure will soften the assessment period as we know this year is different from years past.

For middle school students, the semester ends on **January 15th**.



**From Amber in Development**

This week a parent asked me whether the annual Commons Fund pays for "extras" at VCS or allows us to "keep the doors open at school." You may be surprised to learn that it's the latter, and in most years tuition covers about 95% of our annual budget. When you make a gift to the annual fund, you help fill that gap. This year, however, is anything but normal and we have approximately \$150,000 in additional COVID-related expenses. We're upgrading our HVAC system to ensure safe airflow and buying PPE, as well as improving our technology and increasing cleaning staff, all to prepare our building for students to return safely in the spring semester. Your gift now will make it possible for us to continue to provide our students with an outstanding VCS education, and we hope that VCS will be at the top of your list for giving this year. Thank you for your support and best wishes for the holiday season!

**Give to VCS**

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### Ski Program Update

Session 2, running on **Friday evenings from 3:30-7:30**, will be on **January 8, 15, 22, 29, and February 5**. The cost for the session will be \$105. Each student will need to have a [completed waiver on file](#) with Bolton.

Tim is looking into having us participate in session 3, as well, and will give an update on that possibility after break. The dates for session 3 are likely to be February 9, 16, and March 5, 12, 19. Bolton skips the last full week in February because most schools, including VCS, are not in session that week.

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### Outright VT Groups

Outright VT would like to share that they have three virtual groups for LGBTQ+ Youth:

1. **Drop In Group:** 2:30 to 4:30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays
2. **Trans Group:** 4:30 to 6 every 2nd and 4th Tuesday
3. **Friday Night Group:** Weekly 6:30 to 8pm

Email [info@outrightvt.org](mailto:info@outrightvt.org) for Zoom links

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### Mapping the OEC

On Wednesday, we were lucky to get some time by a local Environmental firm: [Watershed Consulting](#). Margie and Andres Torizzo (of Dylan fame) helped create a lesson plan that Andres presented to our Encounter-X group (Mapping the OEC). We learned about watershed management and were introduced to some cutting-edge modeling tools. We're looking forward to having them demonstrate some of their hardware in the field during the next E-X session. Thanks, Torizzos!!

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### **A Note from Frances**

Hello from your art instructor, Frances Cannon. Given that this is my first semester teaching at VCS, I hadn't known about the generous and considerate tradition of gifts and cards to faculty before winter break. This is so touching, and it made the whole semester worth it; all of the challenges of teaching remotely and getting to know a new curriculum—to hold a pile of handwritten notes and gifts from all of you gave me so much joy today. Thank you as well to Dexter and the admin team for your generosity and kindness as well. Happy solstice, Christmas, New Year's, and all of the other reasons to celebrate this winter break!

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### **Notes From the Head of School**

#### *Unplugged.*

Late in the first summer after my first year as a head of school, I traveled with my family and my in-laws to a camp remote enough that we had no cell phone reception, no wifi or internet, no cable or antenna television, no radio reception. It was one of those rare spots left these days where “getting away from it all” actually still means what it sounds like. It was not a good time for me to be unreachable—the school was in the final weeks of a major renovation and construction project, and details aplenty needed attention immediately. It was amazing.

Of course, in what’s become ubiquitous for us these days—the lesson that we’ve all learned and probably pass on and reinforce ourselves—

is that it's never a good time to be unreachable. Untethered from availability. Freed from expectation that you'll get right back to someone, because they know you got the message, and you know they know.

But isn't the end of the year a good time to take stock, to ask ourselves—on that very notion of reachability—what we're reaching for, by being ever-reachable? Or, more importantly, what we're reaching for overall, in general, in living? What is it we're actually trying to get to, or get at? 2020 sure should be pushing us to ask these questions of ourselves, as should the light at the end of the tunnel that 2021 seems to be showing us.

I don't think being hard-wired into technology all day would actually top anyone's list, even those who built that tech for us all. While we're maximizing being plugged in in many of our lives during this pandemic, reaching for the time when we will reverse that, unplug from the cords and signals and reconnect with the actual and the real necessarily tops the list for the whole of 2021.

So I'm thinking of the next two weeks as a decent taste, a reminder of what we'll—by necessity, intent, and choice—get back to over the coming twelve months. Being online decreasingly and, instead, being mostly offline. Turning screens off and turning pages instead. Quit watching other people doing interesting things on Netflix and get back to doing so ourselves. Making something with our whole hands, not just our finger-tips or thumbs. Getting dirty, up to our elbows perhaps, with the world, the real actual world around us. We've all been making do, and actually doing an incredible job; but my hope is that by unplugging for this nice, long stretch, we're able to wake up a bit, emerge from the fog these current times have shrouded us in and

remember *the before* and *the return to* that 2021 is likely to be filled with.

May you and yours have a peaceful, safe, healthy break, and may 2021 indeed be brighter and live up to all your dreams and wishes.

Warmly,

Dexter P. Mahaffey, Ph.D.

Head of School

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## USEFUL SCHOOL LINKS

[Give to Vermont Commons](#)

[Guide for Students & Families](#)

[2020-2021 Community Calendar](#)

[RenWeb - Parent Login](#)



VCS Website

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