VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL

SCHOLARSHIP. COMMUNITY. GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY.

News & Notes
Vermont Commons School
April 2, 2021

UPCOMING EVENTS

To help combat the winter doldrums, the faculty are continuing to add social/community events to the Community Calendar. Students should contact the hosting faculty member with any questions.

Monday, April 5th

- 7:30pm: **Senior Parent Meeting** (Zoom link here)

Tuesday, April 6th

- 12:15pm - 1pm: **School Photos (9th-12th grades)**

Wednesday, April 7th

- 1pm - 2pm: **Student Election Debate & Assembly** (Zoom link here)
- 2:30pm - 3:30pm: **Alum College Panel** (Zoom link here)

Thursday, April 8th

- 12:15pm - 1pm: **School Photos (6th-8th grades)**

Friday, April 9th

- 9am - 10am: **Parent/Guardian Coffee Social** (Zoom link here)

LOOKING AHEAD

Tuesday, April 13th

- 6:30pm - 7:30pm: **VSAC Financial Aid Planning Meeting for Parents/Guardians**

Friday, April 16th

- 12:10pm: **Early Dismissal/Pick-up for 6th-8th graders** - please plan to pick up your student for Spring Break(!) at this time

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

Senior Parent Meeting

Monday, April 5th

Come share your thoughts as we finalize the Senior Gift! Hosted by Senior Parent Ambassadors Andrea Bergstein and Pauline Tyler. We look forward to seeing everyone!

Photo Day

Tuesday, April 6th, 12:15pm-1pm (High School)
& **Thursday, April 8th, 12:15pm-1pm** (Middle School)

Ambient Photography will be at VCS to take portraits! These photos will also be used in the yearbook. You can also pre-order your packages from Ambient Photography!

Click here to order now.
Event Code: ZSO7M
Must pre-order by: **04/09/2021**

Alumni College Panel

Wednesday, April 7 (after student body president elections)

We'll be welcoming back alumni to give you the skinny on the college application process and the college experience. Juniors and Seniors, bring your questions for Ella Dunkiel '20, Seth Fisher-Olvera '20, Matt Furtsch '19, Sama Mahdi '20, and Mari Rosenbluth '19. Sponsored by **NHS** and hosted by **Rachel Bergstein '21**, **Tess Foley-Cox '22**, and Amber in Development.

Parent/Guardian Coffee

Friday, April 9th, 9am

Please stop by to visit us with us virtually - it's been too long! We'd love to see you. Use this Zoom link to join.

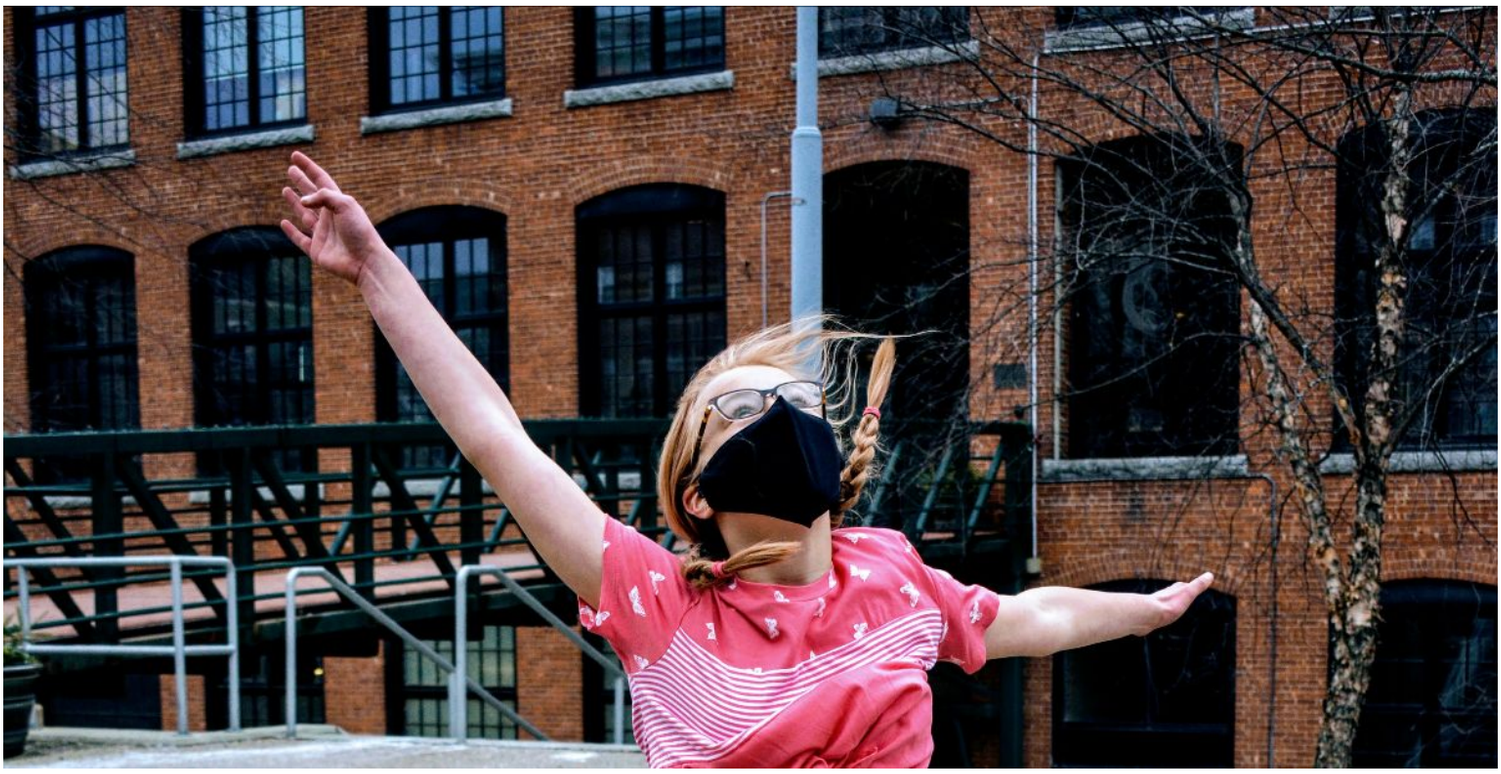
-Dexter and Jill

National Honor Society

Applications for the Vermont Commons chapter of the National Honor Society are currently available to interested 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students who did not apply in the fall of 2020. The submission deadline for the Spring application cycle is **Sunday, May 2nd**.

Membership in the National Honor Society recognizes students for excellence in four central pillars of student life: Scholarship, Leadership, Service, and Character. At VCS, chapter members take on responsibility for a number of service activities within and outside the school, such as peer tutoring, organizing food and clothing drives, and spearheading our Green-Up Day activities. More about NHS can be found at their website: www.nhs.us

Students wishing to apply should contact the NHS Chapter Adviser, Mark Keegan, for application details.



Hannaford Helps Schools Program

The 2021 Hannaford Helps Schools Program will run from March 14 - May 29th this year. Every 4 Hannaford Helps Schools Program earns 3 School Dollars, which can be deposited to help VCS.

Shopping Online with Hannaford To-Go

- Look for the red apple icon to shop more than 1,500 products online and earn money for your school!
- Turn in any School Dollars you collect to the collection tower in-store by **Saturday, May 29th**.

Shopping In-Store

- Look for "**helps schools**" shelf tags on more than 1,500 products in-store and earn money for your school!

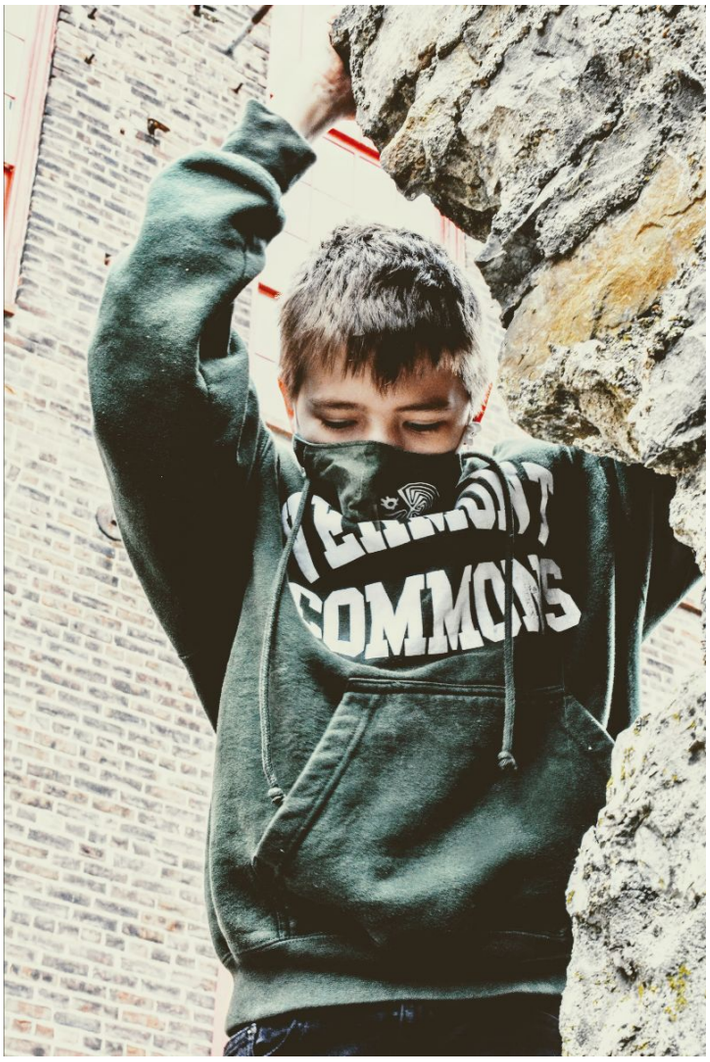
- Collect your School Dollars from an associate at checkout, then deposit your School Dollars in the collection tower in-store marked for Vermont Commons School.

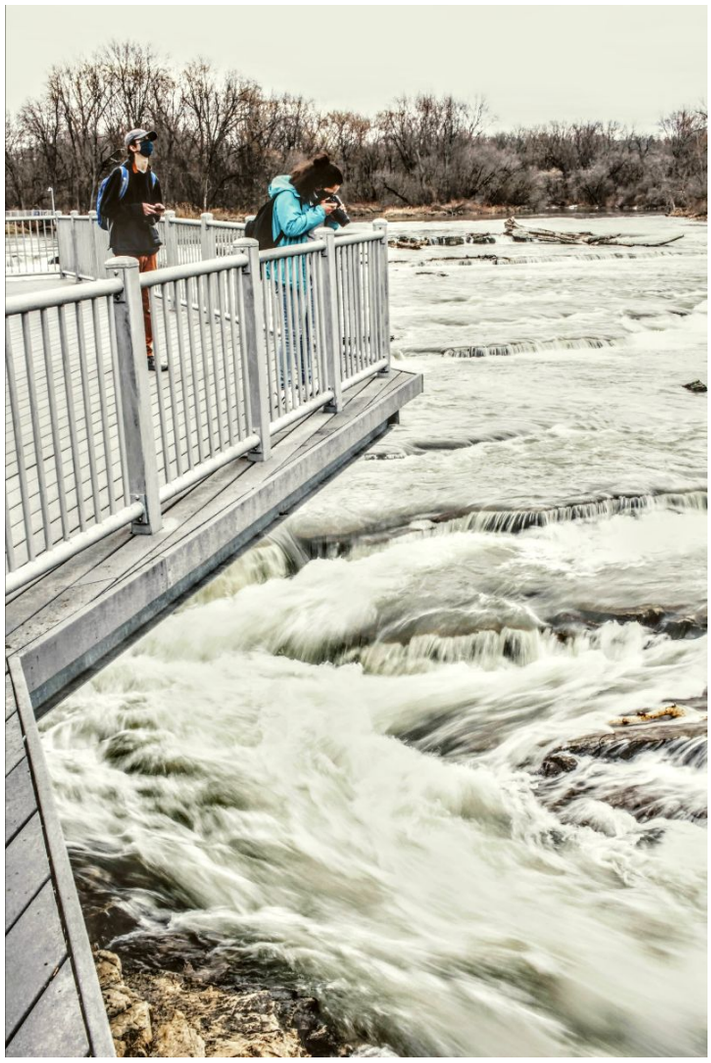
2021 - 2022 Enrollment Reminder

Reminder that the following items are now due:

- Online paperwork for 2021-2022 (includes: medical forms, emergency contacts, photo/video permissions, etc)
- First tuition payment for 2021-2022
- Financial Aid applications & all required forms

If you have any questions, please contact Linda Bursell at lbursell@vermontcommons.org.





Notes From the Head of School

Yesterday I wrote an open letter to the student body, which I've posted on my blog. It continues the conversation about violence against Asians living in the U.S. and Asian Americans, and I hope you'll take a look. While the media spotlight--and thus our collective attention--may wax and wane, this is a topic that needs to remain active in our discourse if we are to hope for, and take active part in, improvement.

The other topic this week is Vermont Commons School's upcoming re-accreditation process with our regional accrediting agency, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). We have enjoyed being fully accredited by NEASC for the last decade, and its benefits are not limited to ensuring that we meet their high standards of excellence for independent schools. NEASC's accreditation is what also allows us to be members of the National Association of

Independent Schools (NAIS), our governing body. It allows us to be--if we choose it--an Approved Independent School in the State of Vermont, which means we can receive tuition from school choice towns without middle or high schools in Vermont. It's the reason the Association of Independent Schools of New England granted us instant membership when we applied to join last fall. NEASC accreditation is the benchmark in New England to which all independent schools aspire, and once you've made it, it's what you seek to retain permanently.

That requires ongoing effort, however. Each year we file updates on our data and program. Administrators and Faculty undergo trainings and volunteer our time as members of Visiting Teams--the groups that spend four days visiting a school, assessing its status and making specific recommendations to NEASC regarding its accreditation or re-accreditation. Every five years, we submit a substantial update report on our progress since the last visit. And every ten years, we embark on a year-long self-study process involving all constituents in the school, during which we all collectively examine 14 Standards and numerous Indicators. Through surveys, interviews, discussion, and review by the same number of sub-committees, we generate a large self-study report and set of self-recommendations, which we in turn submit to NEASC in preparation for a Visiting Team that will come to campus over two visits. This Team will be led by a fellow NEASC Head of School and a small group of administrators and teachers, all from different NEASC schools. The Foundation visit for Standards 1 - 6 will happen most likely in April or May of 2022 and will be followed by the Program Standards visit in late October 2022. When the Visiting Team comes, they already will have reviewed our completed self-study and supporting documents, and they will spend their time meeting with a great many of us, especially people who weren't involved in the subcommittees who wrote the sections on any given

Standard. They'll want to speak to other members of the community to determine if our self-study report rings true across our community and then determine if they agree with our recommendations or suggest considerations of other ones. Their report in turn is delivered to NEASC, who advises us on the path they believe the process suggests, which may include remediation (if there are issues or urgent problems) or encouragement to use the process to help shape our next strategic plan and initiatives.

The self-study process is thorough and intentionally seeks involvement and input from a school's entire community, past and present, along the way. As a result, it takes about 14 months start to finish, and this will take the school's spare time during that period. Thankfully NEASC chose to delay this process for school's approaching their self-study cycle by a year as a result of COVID, and so we have the great benefit of not having to delve into this work until now, as the intense management of teaching and working in a school during the era of coronavirus begins to wind down.

The very first step in our self study at Vermont Commons is a distribution of standardized surveys NEASC provides for use by all schools, and it is soon time for us to send those to you. Assistant Head of School Jasmine Easter will chair the self-study process, and so you'll hear more from her throughout, including these surveys coming your way later this month.

Because it can sound like such a huge undertaking, both the notion of maintaining accreditation and a year-long self-study, sometimes people respond nervously at the outset of this process. But we can assure you that it is invigorating and exciting for a school to look at itself, figure out what it can work on to be stronger, and craft a careful plan together of how to get there. It is, in fact, one of the most wonderful experiences of reflection and growth I've had the privilege to be part of at schools. To that end, please know that I am chairing the Visiting Team of another NEASC school seeking re-accreditation and will be entirely out of the office, focused on that effort, April 11-14 and should emerge just in time to take part in the Senior Send-0ff and wish all of you the happiest of Spring Breaks. Between now and then, please know that we relish the joy of being with the students more and more these days--it is wonderous to be around them and their energy and cheer.

USEFUL SCHOOL LINKS

Give to Vermont Commons

Guide for Students & Families

2020-2021 Community Calendar

RenWeb - Parent Login

VCS Website

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mailchimp