

Tanagers' Nest News

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We're Getting Ready to Go! Are You?

by **Jon Frey** on July 29

As the calendar makes its annual rollover from July to August, everybody's attention invariably goes to a "back-to-school" mindset and the changes coming in the year ahead.

The July school board meeting saw two new board members seated and as far as the high school goes, the 2022-23 Student Handbook was approved. The Student Handbook features a couple changes which are explained later in this newsletter.



I mentioned in last month's *inaugural* newsletter that we will be utilizing some new technology in the building this fall both to better improve building security as well improve upon the e-Hall pass format introduced a few years back. The new app and website, "Minga" will help us facilitate those changes as well as further improve student's access to vital school academic and activity information, daily. More on Minga later in this newsletter.

Please take the time to read each section of this month's newsletter. We have done our best to ensure that everything you and your students' need to know regarding the kickoff to the coming school year is included, herein!

We look forward to welcoming your students back to VHS this fall! It's going to be another great year at VHS! As always, Go, Tanagers!

Jon



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Freshman Orientation Details

Freshman Orientation is slated for Friday, August 12th from 9:00 to 12:00 noon. On that morning, the students will get a tour of the high school, spend some time with the principals and counselors, some time with their homeroom or “Tanager Time” teachers and will be able to check out their student laptop device if they bring their laptop fee. The students should plan to be on hand for the entire 3-hour period. Students missing all or part of orientation will be required to sit through a make-up orientation session prior to attending classes the first time.

There is a \$25.00 use fee for the school district provided laptop. A check can be made out to VHS or cash payment is also acceptable. *If your student has an unpaid balance from the previous school year, that balance will need to be settled prior to the student receiving their laptop or arrangements need to be made to bring the account current.* Notifications of existing balances will be sent out prior to orientation.

Lunch money can also be deposited into student lunch accounts at the conclusion of orientation activities. Please include this amount separate from the student laptop amount as they will be entered into different accounts.

Sophomore, Junior & Senior Orientation Details

- Sophomore Orientation will be from 10:30-11:30 am on August 17th.
- Junior Orientation will be from 1:00-2:00 pm on August 17th.
- Senior Orientation will be from 2:30-3:30 pm on August 17th.

All sophomores, juniors and seniors should plan to attend and bring with them a \$25.00 check or cash for Student Device Use, to receive their laptop. Seniors should also bring with them a second check or cash amount for \$20.00 for senior class fees. Both checks can be made out to Vermillion High School.

If your student has an unpaid balance from the previous school year, that balance will need to be settled prior to the student receiving their laptop or arrangements need to be made to bring the account current. Notifications of existing balances will be sent out prior to orientation.

Lunch money can also be deposited into student lunch accounts at the conclusion of orientation activities. Please include this amount separate from the student laptop check/cash or senior class fees as they will each be entered into different accounts.

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Student Cell Phones & Private Spaces



by [Jon Frey](#) & [Jason Huska](#) on July 29

The new school year brings a new class of students into the building while three classes continue on toward the end goal of graduation. As students work through the transition to adulthood, one thing that has been an area of concern in recent years is the cell phone and the teen user.

This year, we are asking teachers building-wide to enforce the expectation that when a student leaves the classroom to use the restroom, that the phone remains in the classroom. We are doing this for a couple of reasons:

- 1) we fully believe it will reduce the amount of time a student is away from the classroom because they will be without the distraction of the phone,
- 2) the restroom/locker room are locations in which there should always be an expectation of privacy and therefore, there should be no phones in the hands of restroom users. Remember, that cell phones are all equipped with cameras, and lastly,
- 3) it eliminates the excuse of requesting a restroom break when in reality the student is just looking to spend time on the phone.

All of this, combined with last year's TikTok challenges and subsequent restroom damage that occurred as a result, have necessitated these limits.

We anticipate that this new expectation will be met with some resistance which is why in the interest of complete transparency, we are sharing with you what will occur when students object and insist upon carrying their phone out the classroom door with them.

In such an instance, the teacher will be expected to refer the student to Mr. Huska or Mr. Frey for failure to follow a reasonable directive (insubordination). The student will then meet with Mr. Huska or Mr. Frey and they



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will explain the expectation again in an attempt to discover why the student feels they cannot comply. Finally, if it becomes clear that the student has mistaken their *privilege* to carry a cell phone at Vermillion High School as an exclusive *right*, the offending student *will lose the privilege* of cell phone possession during the school day in what we expect will be a partnership between administration and the student's parents for a predetermined period of time.

Finally, it is important to understand that we want students to have access to their phones during the school day. Cell phones, when utilized appropriately, can be a powerful educational and communication tool right along with a laptop or other classroom technology. Learning the responsible and appropriate use of the device is a *critical* step toward becoming a responsible adult. This new expectation will come very easy for well over 90% of the students at VHS. We typically only encounter a few who may misunderstand how far the privilege actually extends. We hope to clarify this upfront, in the hope of creating a more respectful and accepting school environment for all.

Bus Service Need?

The Vermillion School District provides optional bus service for public and private school students in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade. This optional bus service will be provided for students who reside within a five-mile radius of a student's principal school which includes in-town service. The fee for this service will be \$75 per child, per semester. A family with more than two children being transported will not be charged more than \$150 per semester. If the bus pass fee is paid by an established due date, the early payment amount will be \$50 per child per semester with a maximum per family expense of \$100, per semester.



Parents interested in the optional bus service need to complete a registration form and pay the fee prior to utilizing the service. A bus pass will be issued upon completion of the registration form and payment of the fee. **Students who qualify for free lunches may receive a free bus pass upon completion of the registration form.** The bus pass must be available to show the driver each time the student boards the bus.

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Registration for the optional bus service can be done at the Vermillion School District Administrative Offices located at 1001 E. Main Street beginning August 4th and continuing through August 17th, from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm and 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm. The fee for the first semester bus service is due before August 18, 2022. The fee for the second semester bus service is due before January 4, 2023.

Bus service for students who reside beyond the five-mile radius of their attended school will be provided at no charge. If there are any questions, please contact **Lynette Meyers** at the Bus Barn - 605-670-2942.

Minga - VHS's New ID, Hall Pass & Info Platform

At your student's orientation session, we will be introducing them to the Minga app. The students will receive an email message containing everything they need to download the app to their phone (if they choose to do so) and to set it up on their student devices.



The app and website will operate much the same way and will both feature daily content such as relevant building announcements and an events calendar. It will serve as a digital ID for your student when the student needs to leave the building during the day or access the building at times other than the typical morning arrival. The district office staff that supervises our East student entrance will require students to display their ID as they come and go from the building after the beginning of the school day. While it is not our goal to make access to VHS more difficult, it is our goal to do all that we can to ensure the students are safe. By utilizing a digital ID system, it will help ensure that students who require access to the building, gain access while those lacking proper identification do not gain easy access to the building. Unfortunately, this is a necessary step in the world in which we live today.

Lastly, we will utilize this same app and website as our new e-Hall Pass system. The same digital ID that your student displays when leaving for a USD class or an Unplanned Period Pass (UPP) will also display if the student has a pass to use the restroom, visit the nurse's office or even leave with his/her/their sports team for a game during the school day. We think students and staff will appreciate that all of these features will be available from one online application.



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Student Handbook Updates & Changes

by **Jon Frey** on June 28, 2022

For the 2022-23 school year, [the VHS Student Handbook](#) underwent a few changes. Initially, the handbook was reorganized. This was done simply to improve the usability of the handbook and make topics easier to find.

Two areas in which the handbook received wording and policy changes are Dress Code and Responsible Attendance and Academics Policy (RAAP).

Dress Code changes:

I will be the first to admit that the dress code is an area that is challenging to enforce and because of that, often it becomes easier to simply not deal with the headaches it brings about. However, some policy changes were necessary before we could move forward with any meaningful dress code enforcement.

During the past school year, Mr. Huska and I met frequently with a small group of students who were passionate about being involved in discussions relative to dress code. The dialog was beneficial for both sides and what was presented to the Board of Education last month was the result of these conversations. In short, the language of the dress code was adjusted to become more gender-neutral. Rather than having aspects of the policy which seem targeted at particular genders, this revamped policy is designed to be more general in its language. Some specific areas of emphasis remain:

- No hats or hoods are to be worn in the building during the school day. However, greater latitude for hair control items will be made by administration.
- Clothing worn on the upper torso is expected to meet the clothing on the lower half of the body - this applies to all students.
- Visible undergarments continue to not be allowed.
- As before, clothing espousing alcohol or drug use, gang affiliation, vulgarities or intolerance and/or illegal activities will always be forbidden.

Clothing that fails to meet these standards is not to be worn during school hours while attending VHS. Students will be offered a clean clothing item if they are found to be in violation of dress code or will be permitted to call home for something to be brought to school. If the student decides to leave the school to change the offending clothing rather than accept the item offered by administration, the absence will be unexcused.



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RAAP Changes:

The Responsible Attendance and Academics Program (RAAP) has been in place for a significant amount of time at Vermillion High School and was brought about during a school improvement process and study nearly 20 years ago (maybe longer). Those staff with the longevity to advise on the matter shared that the policy in its earlier iterations did have some positive benefit on overall student attendance. However, over the years, enforcement has become more and more difficult and our recent run through a global pandemic has created a difficult situation when you attempt to reward students for excellent attendance while also excusing illness absences with students who may, at times, miss weeks of school. The COVID19 pandemic greatly impacted schools and attendance has suffered, nationwide. VHS, like every other school in South Dakota - and really the United States - is now faced with the task of making attendance a high priority once again and holding firm on consequences for high absenteeism. As a staff and administration, we have come to realize that the RAAP policy has run its course. It was no longer effective in promoting strong attendance and for that reason, we have decided to end it.

While I recognize this change will not be popular with students, it was necessary. RAAP has simply become ineffective in improving attendance and when a policy proves ineffective, it needs to be changed or removed. Last year alone, much of the first and second semester, our attendance ran in the upper 80% range. While many urban schools would love to have attendance that good, it equates to 10-12 students absent per grade, per day or between 40-48 students building-wide. That number is simply too high for a high school and community the size of Vermillion. Our attendance should realistically be closer to 95% (20-25 students total), daily. We can and must, do better.

On page 11 of the [VHS Student Handbook](#), found on the district website, the new policy is set forth. It is based in large part on a policy already utilized in a neighboring district and it aligns with the overall staff belief that students need to take final exams while also offering an avenue for seniors to opt-out of finals, *but only seniors*.

Should I take a Study Hall, UPP or Dual Credit or Another Class?

This year, study halls will be returning to the purview of the classroom teachers. It is our intention to do what we can to help make the study hall more beneficial for students by returning them to a smaller and quieter setting with a classroom teacher. As your student gains access to his/her/their schedule in the coming days, they should carefully consider if

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they want a study hall and would indeed utilize that period for assignments and homework or if they feel taking another class would be a better use of his/her/their time.

Vermillion High School students have access to far greater elective offerings than students at comparable sized schools elsewhere in South Dakota. We would like to see registration numbers in those elective classes grow. Students can enhance their high school experiences by challenging themselves through exploring other areas of study!

An Unscheduled Period Pass (UPP) remains an option for students who qualify as well as a Dual Enrollment course at USD or another institution if that better fits your student's interests! It's always good to have options. Here at VHS, we're pleased to be able to offer a variety of options and opportunities.

Changes Still in the Works!

Unfortunately, not all changes planned for the summer were completed this summer. As such, we will deal with some construction within our building walls this fall. Additional student and faculty restrooms are in the works, but completion of these projects has been pushed back a bit into the school year.



The plan is for an existing restroom in the staff lounge to be expanded to two restrooms and additional private restrooms to be added to an area near the original front doors off the main hallway. It is our hope that the additional stalls should take some of the pressure off the other restrooms in the building. Unfortunately, we will need to be patient a little while longer.



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Important Dates & Information for Fall

- August 10th & 11th - **Registration**
 - 9:00am - 1:00pm - VHS Office - for new district residents enrolling students
- August 12th - **Orientation (Grade 9)**
 - 9:00am - 12:00pm - VHS Auditorium - for all incoming 9th grade students
 - **Student attendance is expected.**
- August 17th, **Orientation (Grades 10-12)**
 - 10:30am - 11:30am - VHS Auditorium - for all incoming 10th grade students
 - 1:00pm - 2:00pm - VHS Auditorium - for all incoming 11th grade students
 - 2:30pm - 3:30pm - VHS Auditorium - for all incoming 12th grade students
 - **Student attendance is expected.**
- August 18th - **First Day of Classes**
 - *Students who did not attend grade-level orientation will do that **prior** to attending classes.*
- September 5th - **No School, Labor Day**
- September 16th - **No School, Teacher Inservice**
- September 19th-23rd - **Homecoming Week**
- September 27th - **Picture Day**
- October 6th & 7th - **Fall Parent-Teacher Conferences**
- October 10th - **No School, Native American Heritage Day**
- October 18th - **End of Term 1**
- November 15th - **Picture Retake Day**

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Summer Activities News

Sportsmanship and High School Activities

by [Jason Huska](#) on July 29, 2022

As we enter the 2022-2023 school year, Vermillion School District would like to remind everyone of our responsibility to exhibit good sportsmanship while attending activities. No one enjoys having fans yell at the officials or other players. Our student athletes deserve positive support and encouragement. There is a major issue with official shortages around the country and South Dakota is no exception. One of the main reasons officials are leaving the profession is due to verbal abuse and on occasion physical abuse.

Everyone has a role to play. Coaches should focus on coaching, officials concentrate on calling the game, and parents/fans should be supporting their kids and teams. We all want a good experience for our student-athletes. Sportsmanship should be above winning and losing. We appreciate you helping make 2022-2023 a positive year for everyone.



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Activities Reminders for Fall

by **Jason Huska** on July 1, 2022

The Vermillion High School would like to announce upcoming fall sports/activities meetings and practices:

- **Girls' Soccer** will have practice starting on Monday August 1st from 8:30am -10:30am at the high school practice field.
- **Boys' Soccer** will practice August 1st from 5:30-7:30 pm at the high school practice field.
- **Girls' Tennis** first practice will be August 1st at 8:00 am at the high school courts.
- **Boy's Golf** will have their first practice on August 8th at the Bluffs golf course starting at 4:00 pm. Parent meeting to follow at 6:00 pm.
- **Football** will have a parent meeting on August 3rd 6:30 pm at the football stadium. Practice will begin on August 8th at 8:00am -11:00 am
- **Boys and Girls Cross Country** will have a meeting/practice on August 11th in the high school commons at 9am and practice to follow.
- **Volleyball** will have a parent meeting on August 9th at the high school commons, 7pm. Practice will start on Thursday August 11th at 9am-12:00pm.
- **Pride of Vermillion Band Camp** will be held August 1-5 at VHS.
- **Rhythm in Red Show Choir** retreat will be held on August 8th from 6pm to 10 pm at VHS.

Physical Forms & Activity Tickets

Vermillion Public Schools would also like to remind parents of yearly physical/consent forms required to participate in athletics. Each athlete must complete a physical before participation. Parents and students need to be aware of the Activities/Athletics handbook policy. Each student athlete will have the policy explained to them. Adult and Student activity tickets will be available at the high school, administration building, or at various sporting events. Cost for the activity tickets is \$50.00 for adults and \$25.00 for students. The Vermillion School District is offering a family activity pass for \$120.

If you have any questions, please call Vermillion High School. We look forward to a great 2022-2023 school year and GO, TANAGERS!!

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Girls State Correction!

by **Jon Frey** on July 5, 2022

We regret that we failed to include Ella Simmons as one of the Tanagers Girls State representatives that attended SD Girls State here in Vermillion, last month along with Paige Pederson and Shaelynn Puckett. All three will be seniors this coming school year.



Student Services News

by **Laura Suing & Luke Hayes** on July 29, 2022

Student Class Schedule Changes or Updates

Student schedules will be available August 8, 2022. Please review via Infinite Campus and communicate with your counselor via email – Hayes (A-K), Suing (L-Z) or stop in the Student Services office.

Dual Credit Courses

Students interested in signing up for Dual Credit courses can do so now through the start of the college classes. If you have specific questions please email Mr. Hayes or contact the respective college or university directly. **Registrations need to be turned in by August 22, 2022.**



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VHS to Offer Dual Credit Speech and Pre-Calculus/Calculus

If you are interested in taking care of that freshman speech requirement at the college or university level while still in high school, look to enroll in CMST 101 offered through USD, taught by USD faculty, here at VHS in the spring semester. Additionally, Pre-Calculus and Calculus will also be offered for credit to be signed up for in the spring semester. These math courses will be taught by Mr. Settles. See your counselor for more details.

Student Services Important Date Reminders

ACT Testing

Test Date	Regular Registration Deadline	Standby Deadline - Photo Upload Deadline
September 10, 2022	August 5, 2022	September 2, 2022
October 22, 2022	September 16, 2022	October 14, 2022
December 10, 2022	November 4, 2022	December 2, 2022
February 11, 2023	January 6, 2023	February 3, 2023

FAFSA

What are the deadlines for filling out the FAFSA form?

To be considered for federal student aid for the 2022-23 award year, you can complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form between Oct. 1, 2021, and 11:59 p.m. Central time (CT) on June 30, 2023.

Any FAFSA form corrections or updates must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. CT on Sept. 10, 2023. However, many states and colleges have earlier deadlines for applying for state and institutional financial aid, use Find your state's deadline. Check with your college or career school about its deadlines. Because of the variation in state and college deadlines, it's highly recommended that you fill out the FAFSA form as soon as you can after Oct. 1 to ensure that you don't miss out on available aid.¹

¹ Federal Student Aid Website, Office of Department of Education, Accessed June 28, 2022.



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READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE

Vermillion High School

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