



Nanaimo District Secondary School

355 Wakesiah Avenue, Nanaimo, B.C. V9R 3K5

Tel: (250) 740-2000 ♦ Fax: (250) 740-2020

January 12, 2022

Dear Parents/Guardians of NDSS Students,

I am writing to share information about how we will be monitoring school attendance and the implications of high absenteeism among students and/or staff for our school in the coming months. Public Health, and the Ministry of Education have created new guidelines and processes for us to use to share how the changes will impact the way information about COVID-19 is provided to parents, how we will be monitoring attendance, and how decisions will be made regarding school closures.

Beginning this week, communicating potential school exposures to families will no longer occur. Given the shorter incubation period of the Omicron variant, contact tracing practices in schools are no longer effective. Instead, schools will be monitoring school attendance and will be in close contact with Island Health should staff and/or student attendance dip below a threshold. The Ministry of Education refers to this threshold as a “Potential Activity Signal”, which is defined below:

Potential Activity Signal

A potential activity signal is a threshold that indicates further investigation is warranted by public health to determine if additional actions are required (*e.g., disseminate notification to identified grade or school related to identified increased activity, provide testing guidance and support, implement additional measures, distributing public health information, etc.*)

During a “Potential Activity Signal” our school will work with district staff and Island Health to determine next steps. We have procedures in place that will allow us to keep our school open when absenteeism is high. However, there may come a time when our school will be closed for a minimum of 5 days due to the number of staff or students who are sick. There are three potential types of school closures that could result from an activity signal:

Functional School Closure

A functional closure of a school is a temporary closure determined by a school district or independent school due to a lack of staff to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, support, and/or custodial to ensure the health and safety of students. This would likely be due to a high number of staff or certain employees away who are required for a school to function, and the inability to temporarily replace them.

Transportation Closure

A transportation closure is a lack of staff able to provide the required level of transportation services for students. This would likely be due to bus drivers and/or mechanics being away and the inability to replace those absences.

Public Health Closure

A public health closure is the temporary closing of a school by order of a Medical Health Officer when they determine it is necessary to prevent the excessive transmission of a communicable disease (*e.g., COVID-19*).

At this time, is very important that NDSS maintain accurate attendance record and we need your help!

You can help us by emailing the school as early as possible if your teen will be absent for any reason. We don't need details other than the most vital piece of data which is whether they away because they are:

- SICK** (*illness of any kind*)
- NOT SICK** (*absent for any reason other than sick*)

At this time, our preference is for parents/guardians to [email the general school inbox](#) if their teen(s) will be absent as this is, by far, the most efficient way for us to efficiently track student attendance and monitor illness levels. All members of our NDSS clerical team have access to the general inbox and messages are regularly checked.

As we are anticipating high numbers of student absences, the ability of our clerical staff to quickly input daily absences into MyEd is paramount. As such, please limit the content of your email to four lines:

1. *Your teen's first **and** last name*
2. *Your teen's grade*
3. *Reason for absence: **Sick** or **Not Sick** (*specifics not needed, sick or not sick is sufficient*)*
4. *Number of days they are expected to be away (*specifics as to duration/reason not needed*)*

Please send the four pieces of required information in an email to info.nd@sd68.bc.ca with the subject line message as: **Absence _ Date(s)**

If you are unable to email the school if your teen(s) will be absent, our school voice mail is also "open" 24 hours as an alternative: 250-740-2000, *option 1*. When you leave a message, please keep it brief by only providing the four pieces of information required: Full name, Grade, Reason (**sick** or **not sick**) and Date (s) they will be absent.

We appreciate your help as accurate attendance records are not possible without parent involvement.

Sincerely,



Ms. Liana Appelt
Principal, NDSS