



## NEW WESTMINSTER SECONDARY SCHOOL

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Dear NWSS IB Students and Parents,

As you are aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on the lives of Canadians, from Stanley Cup hockey played in a bubble to universities such as SFU and UBC moving their entire course offerings online. As we attempt to navigate this unprecedented landscape, what we are used to do is not currently an option despite our shared desire that it were otherwise.

NWSS has moved to a quarter system for Grades 10-12 in an attempt to reconcile the best delivery and widest options for our students while at the same time protecting the health and safety of our school community. Following this system, students will be registered in a morning class and an afternoon class each quarter, for eight possible courses per year. Given our situation, this decision provides some advantages, especially around the issue of maintaining independent cohorts.

At first glance, it seems that the IB program would be an easy one for which to create cohorts – one for grade 11s and one for grade 12s. If all IB students were Diploma candidates, this might work. IB Certificate/Course students, however, would move between cohorts. Some of their classes would be in the regular program and others would be in IB. Their movement between groups would nullify any advantages that cohorts might provide. There would also be scheduling issues.

When we looked at the fit between the quarter system and the IB program, however, it was immediately obvious there were some concerns – IB 12 students; for example, write their exams during the first three weeks of May. They complete their formal classes in the third week of April right around the time quarter four begins. This system would therefore limit the number of courses a Diploma student could take to six. It would also limit the amount of time students have to grasp an entire year's worth of material to ten weeks, something less than ideal, especially in courses involving the acquisition of skills, such as mathematics or languages. The fact that NWSS IB offers its courses over the entire year is deliberate – it provides students with the most time to absorb material, work on lengthy projects, and to hone skills.

We are committed to our IB Program at NWSS and want to support our students to be successful. Weighing all of these factors, we have determined that our IB courses will be offered primarily online with some face-to-face opportunities, like tutorials and labs, scheduled safely for individual students and in smaller groups as needed. Class materials, including assignments and resources will be delivered online, as well as synchronous, real-time lessons and learning with our IB teachers in the Microsoft Teams virtual classroom. Specific details will be shared as they become available.

Thank you for your support and understanding of these changes and of the unique needs that the IB program. We know that our IB students and teachers will work together to maintain the quality and the integrity of our program, even if the course delivery looks different this year.

Best regards,

Murray McLeod  
Principal