

Dear Gulf Islands Secondary School Students and Families,

This letter is to describe some of the new plans we have in place and provide all the information you will need as we return to in-class learning on Monday.

Gulf Islands Secondary School Update:

We look forward to welcoming our students back Monday, January 10th. Staff have been busy this week collaborating and preparing for enhanced safety measures and continuity of learning for all students as we face the current Omicron variant wave of COVID-19.

Health and Safety:

At Gulf Islands Secondary, we continue to follow the Provincial COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings. Due to the recent rise in cases of COVID-19 in BC and the emergence of the more transmissible Omicron variant, public health has recommended extra precautions to keep schools safe for students, teachers, and staff. Our updated Communicable Disease Prevention Plan can be viewed in full at: <https://www.giss.sd64.bc.ca/giss-stage-plan-for-stage-2>.

Among the Enhanced Safety Measures, we are:

- Implementing strategies that prevent crowding. For example, we will have staggered release times for classes at block transition times, at lunch and at the end of the day.
- Holding school gatherings and events (e.g., assemblies, etc.) virtually.
- Holding staff-only gatherings (e.g., meetings, professional development activities) virtually.
- Limiting visitors to those who are supporting activities that directly benefit student learning and well-being (e.g., teacher candidates, immunizers, etc.)
- Pausing extracurricular sports tournaments (consistent with the December Provincial Health Officer Order).

We will also be reinforcing Existing Safety Measures, including:

- Using all available spaces to maximize space between people and limit when possible face-to-face seating arrangements. For example, different common space, classroom, and learning environment configurations (e.g., different desk and table formations).
- Everyone able to wear a mask. Proper fit is a key factor in mask effectiveness.
- Doing Daily Health Checks and staying home when sick. K-12 Health Check: <https://www.k12dailycheck.gov.bc.ca/healthcheck?execution=e1s1>
- Cleaning/sanitizing hands regularly.

Continuity of Learning

Staff this week have been collaborating and preparing for potential contingencies that may occur in upcoming weeks and months to ensure that learning may continue. Staff are prepared to provide learning tasks and connection to students who may be absent due to illness and/or self-isolation for multiple days as they follow the 'stay at home when sick' protocol. Staff are also prepared for a situation where they themselves might be absent for one or more days to support staff that will be covering their classes as they follow the "stay at home" order.

Another contingency that staff have been preparing for, that we want families to be aware of, is the potential of a Functional Closure. A Functional Closure may be required if the school or district lacks the staff to provide the required level of instruction, supervision, support, and/or regular sanitization to ensure the health and safety of students. Please see attached letter from the School District Superintendent for more detail on Functional Closures.

Students and families will require technology to access learning and connect with their teachers and support staff in the case of a Functional Closure. Please take some time over this weekend to assess your needs, as we will be sending out a brief survey next week that will help us plan for loaning out devices overnight through our library in the event of a closure.

Once again, we look forward to seeing students on Monday! We understand the impact on all our students, families, and staff related to the delayed start. These are challenging times and things are changing day by day. At this moment, based on the information and direction we have been given, we are confident that the measures we have prepared set us up for the best opportunity to keep our students safe and learning in the weeks and months ahead!

Mr. Ruehlen, Mr. Shugar and Mr. Massey
Gulf Islands Secondary School Admin Team

COVID-19 protocols: All students and staff must complete their daily health check and always wear their mask unless eating/drinking or when outside the building.

Important Dates:

Important dates for January are listed below and as always, you can check the Gulf Islands Secondary School website for Daily Announcements and to use the online Absence Reporting Form <https://www.giss.sd64.bc.ca/>

Reminders and information for the month ahead:

Monday, January 10: Block rotation ABCD

Wednesday - Thursday, January 12 & 13: GISS Dance at ArtSpring

Monday – Thursday, January 24 – 27: Summative Assessment, Exam & Graduation
Assessment week

Monday, January 31: Semester 2 begins / Early dismissal at 12:35 p.m. / Block rotation
ABCD