

**NSS Council Presents “Ask Adam”
Questions & Answers with Principal Adam Marshall
December 10, 2020**

Student Life

**What is happening with the yearbook for this year? Where will the images come from?
Will graduating students receive any form of a grad photo?**

- There’s always been an NSS yearbook but it’s very Covid-dependent this year. Likely there will be a survey in January to gauge interest before making that decision. Watch the weekly bulletin for more updates.
- Ms McElvey is the staff sponsor and is taking photos around the school.
- At this point, we are not allowed to have photographers in the school to take student photos. We hope to set up photographers after March break, but that will depend on current regulations. Obviously we really want to see grad photos in the yearbook.
- If a vendor is found and we need to meet a deadline, one option is to have the students submit their own photo with a standard NSS background we would provide, using their Student ID #. We used this method for the students from last year’s grad class who were missing grad photos and it worked well.

Most kids are really missing the social side of school. Some people are finding it hard to meet other students in their classes, especially if it is a traditional lecture/note taking format.

- We tried to get kids involved in the United Way virtual CN Tower Climb - the number of participants this year virtually was about the same as the number who participated other years in person.
- Some of the [clubs and associations](#) are up and running virtually, with varying degrees of success because it’s really different to do them this way.
- There have been suggestions about doing more virtual activities but some apps (like Tik Tok or Instagram) are not endorsed by the TDSB (for safety and security) so it’s hard to implement.

When the weather is bad (rain, extreme cold) can the kids wait inside to get scanned?

- Teachers are only required to be present in their classrooms 15 minutes before instruction begins, so to avoid kids loitering or socializing (Covid protocols), we can only open the doors at 8:30 to ensure both requirements are met.

Student Success

How is the school handling the testing of students online versus in class? (Online learners have a distinct advantage when it comes to testing. They have the ability to "find answers" in books/online etc. in a way that in class learners cannot.)

- Teachers were given a document at the start of Q2 that addressed all the ways they can assess learning in their students.
- Teachers are encouraged to use multiple ways (other than tests and quizzes) for students to demonstrate mastery of the course material.
- For tests and quizzes some teachers are having virtual students put their phone in view of the camera to prevent cheating.
- While using a broader range of tools to evaluate students is generally good for students, we know it can be frustrating for Grade 12 students. There is concern about both grade inflation and grade suppression and Admin will be working to ensure every student is treated fairly... but generally we hope to err on the side of positive vs negative for Grade 12 students.

Are a lot more students failing in the quadmester system than in a normal year? Or on average, are students doing better in the quadmester model?

If we look at failure rates the past 3 years:

2018-19

Students	1738
Credits to be obtained (students x 8 credits)	13904
Credit failures	711 courses
Percentage of credits failed	5.11%

2019-20

Students	1745
Credits to be obtained (students x 8 credits)	13960
Credit failures	766 courses
Percentage of credits failed	5.49%

2020-21 Based on Q1 data

In-person students	1522
Credits to be obtained (students x 8 credits)	12176
Q1 credit failures	37
Multiplied x 4 for full year estimate	148
Percentage of credits failed	1.21%

So based on this data, the failure rate is actually way down this year.

- We've asked teachers to be more flexible in terms of late assignments and work, teachers have more time to work with students given this year's quad schedule, and the two credit rescue days at the end of the Q1 really helped as well.
- Credit must also be given to April Vibert, NSS's new Student Success teacher. She works with students at risk of failing, and builds support through extra time with the teacher, or peer tutors, etc. In a regular, non-Covid year we may not have lowered the failure rate quite this much, but her efforts are making a significant difference.

How can students (mainstream, kids with IEPs, LD, or Gifted) get more academic support?

- If your child is struggling and does not have an IEP, start by contacting the teacher or [April Vibert](#), then escalate up to Guidance and/or your VP (see the [school website](#) for names and contact info based on student surname). [Click here](#) to book an interview with Guidance.
- If your student has an LD and/ or an IEP, contact [Jessica Beresford](#), Curriculum Leader, LD program.
- If your child is in Gifted with an IEP, contact [Monique Cipollone](#), Curriculum Leader, Gifted Special Education.
- If your child is in DHH with an IEP, contact [Eric Larocque](#), Curriculum Leader, DHH.

Are Educational Assistants working face to face or remotely?

- They are trying to do as much as possible remotely, to limit contact.
- For DHH students, some face to face time is required.

In Class Systems (cameras, tech)

Can a teacher who is not quarantined themselves be asked to use the camera in the in-class portion for the benefit of a student who is quarantined (whether positive, sibling of someone quarantined, waiting for TPH instructions, test results, or part of another cohort that is quarantined)?

- The easiest solution to keep students up-to-date on classes they are missing is for the teacher to turn on the camera during live instruction.
- It's harder to do this for some courses when only one or two students would be following virtually (e.g. tech, arts, phys ed).
- The bottom line is that the onus is on the teachers to ensure every student is kept up to date but the choice of turning the camera on is ultimately up to the teacher.

Can teachers be trained/asked to use the cameras (like a fire drill) so that they are ready to pivot in case a need arises (such as a lockdown) so no teaching days are lost?

- Teachers are already getting practice with the online format in their asynchronous teaching times daily. So, there is no need for additional "fire drills".

- In the case of any “pivot” to all-virtual learning (currently in place in some schools where there is an outbreak) the school schedule would remain the same, and in-person class time would become like the synchronous learning already taking place every afternoon.
- In the case of a cohort and teacher being asked to self-isolate, the expectation is that the teacher will be teaching online for the full morning schedule effective immediately.

Is there any way to choose one platform so that students can have consistency in ONE system that they can navigate confidently? Brightspace is very difficult to navigate for some students, especially some who need accommodations for their learning needs. Other students find it very difficult to navigate between Google and Brightspace for different classes and information is getting lost.

- For the fall, some of the TDSB school admins thought it would be preferable to use Brightspace over Google Classroom because of the tools it has for them to monitor teachers, deliver school-wide announcements etc. Google requires more extensive permissions for this type of oversight.
- However, some teachers, after trying Brightspace, have returned to Google because the issues with Brightspace are too frustrating for students.
- The TDSB is the only board in the province using two platforms, and while the choice is up to the teachers, they are responsible for ensuring that their students can use the platform (Brightspace or Google) that they have chosen for their class.

For parents or students looking for help with Brightspace:

- Brightspace offers a 24 hour support line, or youtube videos may be helpful.
- There are links to more tech help on the [NSS Council site](#).
- There is also [this site](#) for parents from the TDSB which walks you through setting up a parent account on Brightspace. This will show you work due, tests and quizzes and send you a weekly summary.

How can workload be more meaningfully assessed and planned for our students so they are being fully challenged?

- It’s a tough year for everyone. Generally speaking, if your normally capable student is working well and is happy, that is good.
- If your normally capable student is working well and is not happy, then that’s a concern. Start by contacting the teachers to see if there is more they can do to help.
- If your student is getting through work easily and wants to do more, ask the teacher for additional things to keep your student engaged.

Looking Ahead

Is there a possibility of having a delayed start after the holiday break for in class instruction- ie. is it possible that we will have virtual classes only for the first couple of weeks after the holidays to reduce peer contact and thus virus transmission?

- As of right now, there is no indication of a delayed start back in January. The TDSB seems to be trying to keep classes open, even as the teacher's unions are requesting delayed starts to allow for holiday Covid numbers to settle.
- It's all very dependent on how the numbers are in early January. Watch numbers in the news to get an indicator of risks; an email announcement from TDSB would go out if there is a change in plans.

Is there any update on if there will be the option to switch from in-person to virtual for Quad 3 yet?

- Nothing official has been announced to date, but we hope to find out more by the start of the winter break. Admins have told the TDSB "we'd like to organize Q3 before we organize next year", so hopefully Q3 planning won't be as last minute as Q2.

Can students in the (big) virtual school move to the virtual school at Northern for Quads 3 and 4?

- Students can only move if there is room available in our classes. We are pretty much full in all classes, so for Q2, we were only able to take two back.

If no additional students switch from in-person to virtual for quad 3 and 4, will students' schedules of classes remain as is currently posted on their TDSB Connects app or will course placements still possibly change? If you are asked to switch more students who are opting for virtual school from in-person for quad 3, what will happen to the existing course placements and selections for in-person and virtual students?

- Virtual learning opt-ins impact the schedules. We don't want to have just 2-3 students in different cohorts, we prefer to have a whole cohort together, virtually.
- Every time someone opts for NSS virtual they may be faced with limits in their timetable, and it is increasingly likely they will not get the courses they chose last Jan or are currently on their timetable.
- Electives in the NSS virtual school are the least likely to be able to be accommodated. NSS virtual students will have more course options if they go back to in-person.
- If nobody further chooses to switch to the NSS virtual school, the current schedules for Q3 and Q4 will likely stay the same. But if people make the switch, it's likely the schedules will change.
- If NSS virtual school students switch back to in-person, it benefits everyone in terms of course selection.

How are co-op courses handled?

- If you are doing virtual, your co-op courses are virtual. If you are doing in-person, we will try to place you face to face.

Miscellaneous

- Teachers will be giving a mid-quad update for all students between Jan 5-8th. At-risk student names are already being shared with April Vibert, Student Success teacher.
- More info is coming soon on selecting courses for 2021-2022.
- Commencement pick-ups for last year's graduates starts next week.
- Our new TDSB Superintendent is Andrew Howard.
- NSS Council will be giving all teachers and staff a small gift next week on behalf of students and their families, but parents are always encouraged to send your student's teachers an email to say thanks and wish them a good holiday.