Van-Far R-I School District
2200 W. US Hwy. 54
Vandalia, MO 63382
573/594-6442

Dr. Natalie Gibson	**Mrs. Amy Newland**	**Mr. Brian Hummel**	**Ms. Jennifer Huff**	**Dr. Tom Roth**
Superintendent	JH/HS Principal	EL Principal	SPED Director	Assistant Principal

The Missouri Department of Public Safety (DPS) is testing wastewater at selected schools this year as an early-warning system for fentanyl and other dangerous synthetic opioids.
Wastewater testing samples sewage leaving a building and checks it for traces of drugs people have used. Public health agencies use the same method to track community trends, such as COVID-19 or opioid use, without testing any individual.

Van-Far R-I Jr./Sr. High School was randomly selected, along with approximately 164 other schools statewide, by the Missouri Department of Public Safety (DPS) for the state's Wastewater Testing for School Safety program. The selection was random. It does not mean state officials identified or suspected a drug-related concern at our school. DPS randomized selections across the nine Missouri State Highway Patrol troops to represent every region of the state. We are one of many schools statewide taking part. We were not selected because of a specific incident, allegation or finding involving our students or staff.

The state and its vendor run the testing at no cost to our district, with minimal involvement from our staff.

- **What is sampled:** wastewater from our building's outside sewer pipe. This is not our drinking water, which is not affected in any way.
- **When:** samples are collected during school hours only, in several rounds between mid-September and mid-May. Our specific dates are: 11/09, 11/16, 11/30, 01/18, 01/25, 02/01, 03/01, 03/08, 04/19, 04/26, and 05/03.
- **What it screens for:** dangerous synthetic opioids, including fentanyl, nitazenes and carfentanil, and other substances.
- **Who handles it:** the state's vendor, Stercus Bioanalytics, handles the site assessment, equipment, sample collection and lab analysis.
- We are sharing school calendars, closures and major events with the vendor so samples reflect normal school operations.

Wastewater testing shows broad trends. It does not test or identify individual students or staff.
A result **cannot** tell us:

- who used a substance
- how many people used it, or how much
- whether it was used on school property or during the school day
- where in the building it entered the wastewater

A single result is one piece of information. It does not show widespread use among students, and it is not a reflection of our school or student body.

A positive result means someone who contributed to the wastewater during sampling hours used a tested substance within the last 24 to 72 hours. That person could be a student, staff member or visitor.

- A positive result will not lead to student investigations, searches or discipline. DPS has said it carries no such expectation.
- We will share the result with our community promptly and in plain language.
- Our focus will be education, prevention and support, not blame.
- Naloxone (Narcan) is available in our buildings, and staff are trained to use it.

Our participation supports what we already do every day: keep students safe and healthy. We already use a health curriculum, and our SRO partnership to prevent substance use and support students. Our response to any result will stay focused on facts, student safety and the wellbeing of our school community. Thank you for staying informed and should you have any further testing questions, please contact Terressa Sherlock, Assistant Deputy Director, Missouri Department of Public Safety. terressa.sherlock@dps.mo.gov.

Thank You,
Natalie Gibson, Ed.D.