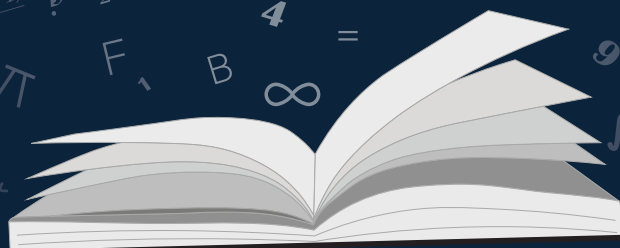




TROJAN TODAY

YOUR SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SOURCE FOR NEWS AND EVENTS | FEBRUARY 2023



REFERENDUM AHEAD

School Town of Highland seeks additional funds for education

For the first time in the history of the School Town of Highland, the locally-elected school board has determined it is in the best interests of students to move forward with a referendum question on the ballot this spring.

The board made it official at a special meeting Jan. 31 when the five members unanimously passed a resolution in full support of the measure.

School Board President Victor Garcia said Highland students deserve no less.

“As a school board member and a STOH parent, I am proud of our district and the outstanding education our 2,983 students receive each school day,” Garcia said. “Now is the time to support investments that will prepare today’s and tomorrow’s students with the education, support and safety they need while increasing the property values of homes in the district. I want to thank the greater Highland community for supporting our schools.”

Highland is not the first Indiana school district to seek additional funds for education through a request of residents to approve a referendum question. It is one of the only remedies provided through Indiana law to increase funding in support of education when state funding falls short.

There have been 253 referendums already attempted in Indiana. Locally, 13 of our 16 neighboring school districts have sought funding through referenda.

The measure will be on the ballot May 2.

There are two reasons the board is taking this step:

- » The School Town has lost \$2.4 million in state support because of declines in enrollment. In Indiana, districts receive a fixed amount of money for every student who attends public school in Highland. Learn more on Page 2.
- » The district has lost an additional \$3.2 million as the result of state-mandated changes relative to property taxes, namely the circuit-breaker.

As a result, funds to operate our schools have been drastically reduced.

“Federal funding for Covid relief allowed the School Town to maintain programming and staffing throughout the tumultuous last three years. Unfortunately, those funds are set to expire at the end of next school year,” Superintendent Brian Smith said. “We believe the time is now for Highland residents to invest in the future of our school and community.”

Smith plans to hold informational meetings over the next several months to help the community understand the necessity of this move.

“We invite you to join us as we discuss vital next steps for our students - and our district,” Smith said. Your input and opinions are valuable to us.”

INFO: More information will be provided in a special edition of Trojan Today, monthly electronic newsletters and the district’s website – www.highland.k12.in.us.

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SCHOOL BOARD

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Patrick Krull, Vice President

Allencia Ballard, Secretary

Robert Kuva, member

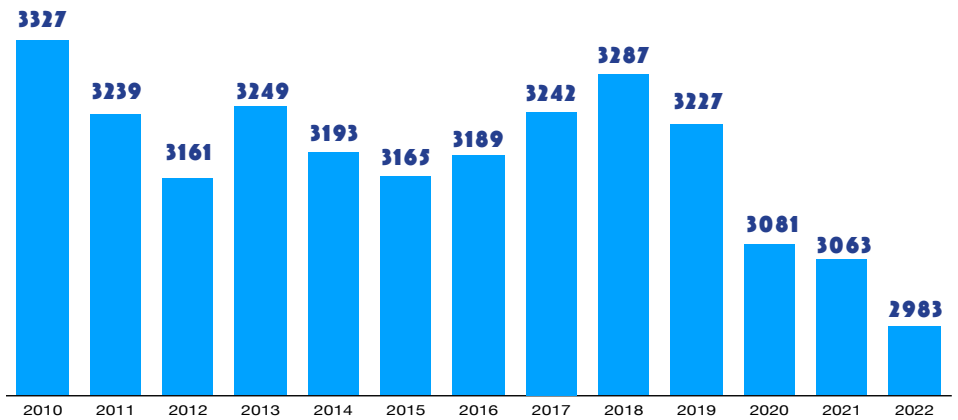
Erica Smith-Gomez, member

The school board meets the third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. in the Administration Building, 9145 Kennedy Avenue, Highland.

INFO: Visit highland.k12.in.us for the latest information, including meeting agendas, school policies, board mission, beliefs and values.

SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Between 2010 and 2022, the School Town of Highland experienced a decline of 344 students. Indiana compensates school districts on a per student basis, paying \$10,256 for each child enrolled in a district school. The decline in enrollment cost the district more than \$2.4 million in state reimbursement – alone.



Declining enrollment costs district millions

At the heart of the Highland School Board pursuit of a referendum question on the May ballot is the need to shore up finances due, in part, to declining enrollment.

“Until this year, we’ve been able to manage the shortfall without cutting programs or opening Highland schools to students outside the district, but we are tapped out and

see no large influx of students in the short term,” Superintendent Brian Smith said.

“Without additional funding through a referendum, we will no longer be able to compete with other school districts when it comes to teacher pay and will not be able to maintain special academic and arts programs that have set Highland apart.”

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

“From rewarding good behavior to funding our schools, students, teachers and board members striving for excellence”

It’s been a whirlwind start to 2023.

HELPING THOSE IN NEED ...

The hearts of KKids at Warren Elementary have been on full display. In January alone, the group organized a fun-hat fundraiser in conjunction with the HHS Spaghetti Dinner for a Highland family in need. Warren students who paid \$1 for the privilege of wearing a hat of their design to school raised \$190. The group also coordinated a food drive, collecting cold-weather foods for local food pantries.

REWARDING BEHAVIOR ...

At Merkley, the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports program is in full swing. This is a program that rewards good behavior. Recognized students have the opportunity of attending fun events like a

dance party with Popsicles or a movie with popcorn. I applaud Principal Eric McMahon and his staff for engaging students in a positive new way.

FUNDING OUR SCHOOLS ...

Over the next several months, you’re going to be hearing about the School Town of Highland’s need to increase funding and the request by the STOH School Board to support the effort. We want everyone to know what we need and why we need it. It all comes down to providing our students with the tools and teachers they need to learn. If you have questions, we will answer them. My door is always open.



Brian Smith
Superintendent
School Town of Highland



Highland High senior jazzed to play in elite honor ensemble

Noah Ostrum has won a coveted spot on the 2023 Jazz Band of America – the only musician from Indiana and one of only 20 in the United States selected to play in the elite honor ensemble for young musicians.

His performance in April may cap his high school tenure as a gifted baritone saxophonist, but it's only the beginning of a career for this Highland High School senior.

"I started playing saxophone in sixth grade. A year later, I switched to baritone sax. I love the natural flow of the instrument," he said.

"I plan to pursue jazz studies and have auditions scheduled at

Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University and School of Music at Western Michigan University."

For the Ostrums, music is a family affair. Mom, Kyla, has been shuttling Noah to Saturday and summer sessions at the Chicago Jazz Philharmonic's Jazz Academy in Chicago for six years.

This jazz band selection has them all, can we say, jazzed?

"I've known about the Jazz Band of America since sixth grade," he said. "As soon as I heard about it, I thought, 'I'm going to play in that one day. Who would have thought that one day would be now?'"

GIRLS WRESTLING

After dominating her freshman season, wrestler Aleksandra Bastaic turned heads in January when she took the girls state wrestling title in the 126-pound weight class.

BOWLING

Freshman Ashlynn Trombetta won sectionals and regionals in singles bowling on the road to semi-state. Other singles semi-state qualifiers were: Anna Holland, Sammie Smolen and Trevor Jacobs. Both Varsity Boys and Girls teams qualified to advance to semi-state by placing second at regionals.

CREATIVITY GRANT

As part of their Indiana Humanities Creativity Grant, HHS teachers Julie Larson and Ashli Cooper will welcome an Indiana author who will spend time with students and provide a mini-workshop to the Art and Diversity University clubs. The goal: to promote the arts and demonstrate how the dream of becoming an author can come true.



[Photo provided]

FOOD DRIVE

More than 40 Warren Elementary 4th and 5th graders coordinated a schoolwide drive in January for cans that can be used to make hearty cold-weather dinners. The Warren Super Bowl initiative resulted in the collection of hundreds of cans of soup and chili, which were distributed to neighborhood food pantries.

Trivia Night

Join the Highland Education Foundation for a night of trivia, silent auction, raffles – and fun – for a great cause! All proceeds go to innovative educational teacher grants to enhance learning and achievement.

SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 25

Doors open at 6 p.m. Trivia starts at 7 p.m.

LINCOLN CENTER BANQUET HALL

TICKETS

\$280 for teams of 8 or \$35 per person

RSVP

highlandedufdn@gmail.com

DONATIONS

We are seeking sponsorships, auction items and raffle prizes. If you would like to support Highland teachers and students, please consider donating. Call (219) 741-5014 today!

THEATRE SHOWCASE

Join us at 7 p.m. **February 24** for the Highland Middle School Theatre Showcase.

WHERE: HHS Monbeck Auditorium, 9135 Erie St.

ADMISSION: Purchase \$5 general admission tickets at htc.booktix.com. Faculty, staff and kids five and under free.

WINTER CONCERTS

Join us as we celebrate winter with performances from our high school and middle school choirs and musical ensembles.

MIDDLE SCHOOL CHOIR:
6:30 p.m. **March 2**

MS/HS BAND CONCERT:
6:30 p.m. **March 7**

MS/HS ORCHESTRA CONCERT:
6:30 p.m. **March 9**

HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR:
6:30 p.m. **March 14**

WHERE: HHS Monbeck Auditorium, 9135 Erie St.

ADMISSION: Free

CRAFT & VENDOR FAIR

Get a jump on your Easter, Mother's Day or graduation gift shopping at the Highland Band Boosters' Spring Craft & Vendor Fair. Help support these talented students. This year's event features an amazing collection of talented artists, crafters and vendors. Join in on the raffle fun and stop by the bake sale table for a sweet treat.

WHEN: 9 a.m.-4 p.m. **March 4**

WHERE: Highland Middle School, 2941 41st Street

ADMISSION: Free

INFO: highlandbandindiana.craftfair@gmail.com