



TROJAN TODAY

YOUR SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SOURCE FOR NEWS AND EVENTS | AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2023

GRADUATION RATE TOPS 96 PERCENT

Highland's 2023 graduates made the district proud with a 96.28 graduation rate that places the School Town among the highest in the state.

Indiana boasts nearly 1 million students enrolled in 291 public school districts. There are only about 20 statewide that achieve a 96 percent graduation rate – or higher.

High School Principal John Zack was thrilled with the achievement.

“This is an accomplishment that goes to the heart of what we do – helping students reach their greatest potential,” he said. “I fully expect to see great things from this class.”

The students had one semester in high school before COVID sent them into a new learning environment at home, abruptly ending the typical high school experience.

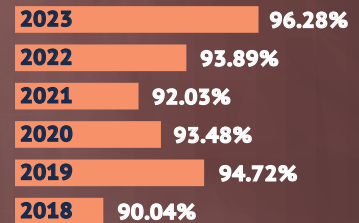
Instructors recognized needs and addressed them immediately.

“I credit the staff, who created and maintained connections with students, as well as our advisory teachers, who met their educational and non-academic needs,” Zack said.

“And I attribute the Class of 2023's many academic successes to the students, who demonstrated unbelievable tenacity during a really difficult time.”

BY THE NUMBERS

Highland's graduation rates have steadily climbed in recent years. Of the 233 students who graduated in May, 81 students or 34.7 percent of Highland seniors graduated with honors, while 152 students or 65.2 percent earned a Core 40 diploma.



Source: Indiana Department of Education



School Town of Highland welcomes 135 out-of-district students

The School Town of Highland is throwing out the welcome mat to welcome approximately 135 new students in grades K-10, who live in zip codes outside of 46322.

Superintendent Brian Smith said the location of these students' homes is the only thing that differentiates them from the rest of the student body.

“These students and their parents made a conscious decision about where their

children would be attending school to get the best education – and they chose Highland,” Smith said. “We are looking forward to getting to know these students – and letting them get to know us.”

A decision to open the district borders to students who live in nearby communities followed a loss at the ballot box for a referendum that would have raised property taxes and earmarked those dollars to shore up a budget shortfall, give teachers raises

to make them competitive with neighboring districts and enhance building security.

Smith said the new state money that will flow to Highland – \$6,800 per student per year, or nearly \$1 million – will not close the financial gap, but will help.

“These new students are allowing us to keep all six of our school buildings operating as they have,” he said. “This won't be all we do, but it is a great step forward.”

ADMINISTRATION

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SCHOOL BOARD

Victor A. Garcia, President
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.

Parents urged to complete free, reduced meal applications before school year begins

The School Town is processing free and reduced-price meal benefit applications for the 2023-2024 school year.

Food Services Director Britni Luster urges parents and guardians to enroll their child now in order to gain approval beginning with the first day of school.

Meal prices will remain the same as last year to assist families as Food Services continues the traditional pricing structure. You do not need to apply if:

- ✓ You receive notification that your child(ren) are directly certified.
- ✓ You know your household does not qualify for meal benefits.

Students who are not approved for free or reduced-price meal benefits before the start of the school year will be classified as paid status. Meal charges will accrue beginning the first day of school. Meal charges in the student's account before the approval of a meal benefit application will be the responsibility of the household.

Nearly 30 million American children – 52 percent of all students – receive a free or reduced priced lunch as participants in the National School Lunch Program funded by United States Department of Agriculture. Annually, the USDA spends \$28.7 billion on the program.



Meal prices for the 2023-2024 school year will remain the same as 2022-2023 to assist families as we continue the normal meal pricing structure.

	Grade School	Middle School	High School
BREAKFAST			
Paid	\$1.50	\$1.50	\$1.50
Reduced	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Free	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
LUNCH			
Paid	\$2.00	\$2.25	\$2.25
Reduced	\$0.40	\$0.40	\$0.40
Free	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Please have money in your child's account on the first day of school.

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

“There are great things to come for this year’s students”

A huge congrats to the Class of 2023! More of these students graduated – a remarkable 96.28 percent – than have other classes in recent STOH history. It’s worthy of note and, hopefully, a sign of great things to come for this year’s seniors and those who follow. It is a testament to the tenacity of this great group of kids and great education we provide our students.

REBUILDING STAFF ...

The leadership team has spent the summer planning for what’s next for our district – financially and academically. As a result of the referendum that, unfortunately, fell short of our expectations, we have been working to shore up district finances while putting the building blocks in place to rebuild the high school math department.

Six of our nine teachers resigned to work in neighboring districts that pay significantly more than we can afford. Off the table, for now, will be security upgrades, such as a second School Resource Officer, and significant wage increases for teachers while we search for additional revenue streams.

REBUILDING COURTS ...

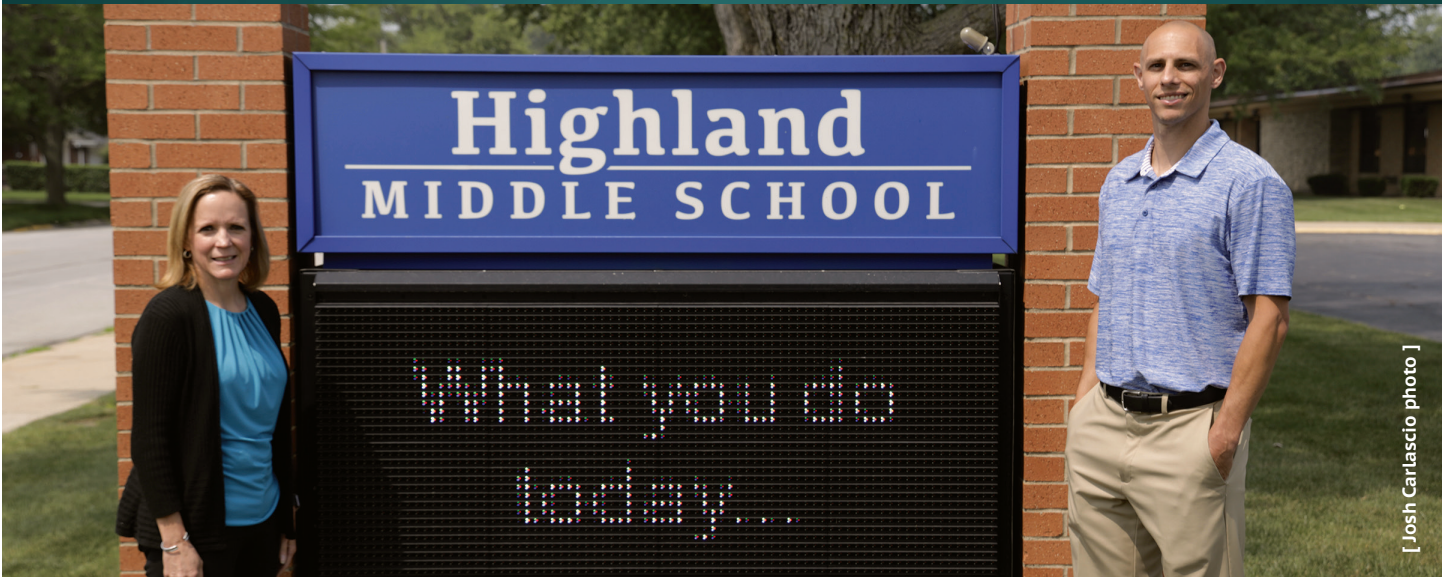
If you haven’t driven by the campus in a while, there are big changes afoot. Construction is underway to replace our tennis courts, which have outlived their useful life. In its place will be a tennis venue that will last for decades to come.



Brian Smith
Superintendent
School Town of Highland

“The middle school is designed to be a great academic adventure for our kids – and it is all that. Our 38 teachers are fantastic at what they do. Our students are facing grown-up issues, like the loss of somebody due to the pandemic or drugs. We help them know, school is a safe place.”

– SCHERYL CORMAN, HIGHLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL



[Josh Carlascio photo]

Welcome to the Trojan family!

NEW PRINCIPAL, ASSISTANT EAGER TO LEAD HIGHLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Scheryl Corman and Anthony Belli formed a bond this summer leading up to a strong start for the Middle School year.

The School Board named Corman, former assistant principal at the school that focuses exclusively on 6th, 7th and 8th grades, principal while Belli, most recently an assistant principal at the high school, has become the new Middle School Assistant Principal.

“We are looking forward to our most normal year since the pandemic began in 2020,” Corman said. “We are excited to get kids back into the building.”

“Our focus is all about positive reinforcement,” she said. “Our staff is prepped and ready to work on academics as we help our kids navigate emotional issues, such as the loss of a parent or someone close to them due to COVID or opioids.”

Belli said they are focusing on a holistic approach to education.

“I am looking forward to working with younger kids and their families,” he said. “These are kids who had only a short time in a traditional academic setting. For some, there have been lasting effects. Our job is to help them through it.”

NEW HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

- Suraj Alva English
- Caitlyn Anderson Mathematics
- Crisina Campos Asst. Principal
- Rachel Carlassare Business
- Jamie Kruper Mathematics
- Donald Liles Mathematics
- Mark Maldonado Mathematics
- Jessica Meraz Inclusion Teacher
- Michael Zandstra Science

NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS

- Lisa Breitweiser Math Lab
- Tobias Hill English | LA
- Caitlin Mavity Social Studies
- Kati McCorkle Life skills
- Anna Nasinska Reading
- Alex Wierzbicki Science



Construction on the new tennis courts continue as staff get ready for the school year. When complete, the venue will feature 10 new courts, shelters, bleachers, hitting walls and fencing. [Josh Carlascio photo]

Game. Set. Match.

New tennis courts great addition to sports complex

The project to replace the high school tennis venue is underway.

Boys and Girls Tennis Coach Terry Steenson, who has been teaching history at the high school for the last 24 years, hopes the courts will be ready for play yet this year.

Asst. Superintendent Ryan Erdelac expects the project to wrap in September. In the meantime, the boys team will practice at Griffith High School. Until Highland's new complex is complete, the team will play most or all of its 16 matches on the road.

"It's going to be a rough fall for the boys team. It will be well worth it, though, when the project is complete. It is construction that is long overdue," Steenson said.

The 10 new courts will be reinforced, painted concrete. The new shelters and bleachers will be positioned on asphalt. There will also be new hitting walls and fencing. Lights were nixed on the plans because of cost concerns.

"The facility was showing its age," he said. "Twenty years is a long time for tennis courts that are used as much as they are."

What to expect this season ...

High School Tennis Coach Terry Steenson is looking for at least a 500 season for the Boys team that plays this fall and the Girls who play in the spring.

"Some of our best players graduated but we have some coming up through the ranks who show great promise," Steenson said.

Faces to watch:

Kyle Stacy and Alex Smith, who will both be seniors, on the Boys team; Caitlin Smith, who is an incoming freshman, on the Girls team.

DEPENDENT CARE PROGRAM

Register your child for the 2023-2024 Dependent Care Program from 12:30-5:30 p.m. **August 7-9** and from 2-5:30 p.m. **August 10** at Southridge Elementary, 9221 Johnston St.

Children residing in Highland and attending Highland public schools – grades K-5 – are eligible to enroll.

The program is housed in all four elementary schools during the school year

The before- and after-school program is available for elementary students from 6:30-7:45 a.m. at Johnston Elementary School only and immediately after school until 6 p.m. at the child's elementary school on days when class is in session.

We encourage you to register early as available spots tend to fill up quickly.

The fee is determined by the number of hours a child is scheduled to attend.

INFO: Email Lisa Hodge at lishodge@highland.k12.in.us.



FALL CONCERTS

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

MS/HS ORCHESTRA CONCERT

6:30 p.m. **October 3**

MS/HS CHOIR:

6:30 p.m. **October 5**

MS/HS BAND CONCERT

6:30 p.m. **October 10**

WHERE: Monbeck Auditorium at Highland High School, 9135 Erie St.

ADMISSION: Free