



TROJAN TODAY

YOUR SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SOURCE FOR NEWS AND EVENTS | FEBRUARY-MARCH 2024

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

New FAFSA form expands eligibility for federal student aid, including Pell Grants

Changes at both the federal and state level over financial assistance for college is causing confusion for students – and their parents.

Highland High School Principal John Zack said they've scheduled a FAFSA Night to explain the U.S. Department of Education rule changes for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Changes include a new formula that estimates how much a family can afford and eliminates the break for families who have multiple children in college at the same time.

The situation was made more confusing for Indiana seniors who must complete the FAFSA application or opt out to graduate.

Coupled with a delay in providing the new rules and forms, which are typically posted by Oct. 31, the process has become a source of frustration and anxiety for parents.

FAFSA NIGHT

Do you need assistance with completing your FAFSA? A representative from INvestED will be at the Highland High School Library at 5 p.m. Thursday, February 29 to assist with FAFSA questions and application.

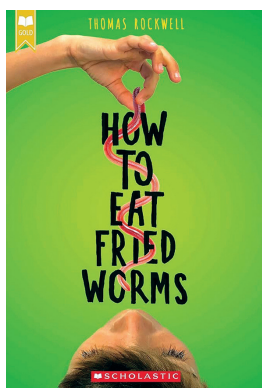
Please make sure to create your FAFSA ID before to the event.

Visit the Highland High School portal at highland.k12.in.us to download the FAFSA checklist and the handout on how to create your Federal Student Aid ID so you know what info you will need for the reps to assist you with the application process.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Learn more about the FAFSA process at investedindiana.org and studentaid.gov.



Warren students learn 'How to Eat Fried Worms'

Imagine being challenged to eat 15 worms in 15 days to get \$50 for a new motorbike. Will ketchup or mustard make eating a worm easier to stomach? Will the risk-taker Billy Forrester figure out that refusing a dare is sometimes better than accepting one? That's what Warren Elementary students will be exploring this term with their next One School, One Book choice, "How to Eat Fried Worms."

As part of the One School, One Book program, every student and staff member receives a copy of the

same book to read with their fellow classmates and at home with friends and family. Students will take part in trivia questions daily to receive pet worms and a chance to win a huge bag of gummy worms.

Created to foster a love of reading, books are selected based on the messages they send. Warren Principal Christina said the novel, which was penned more than 50 years ago, explores issues relevant today, such as the importance of making smart choices and the deeper issues of bullying.

ADMINISTRATION

Brian Smith

Superintendent
bsmith@highland.k12.in.us

Ryan Erdelac

Asst. Superintendent
rerdelac@highland.k12.in.us

Cindy Adams

Chief Financial Officer
cadams@highland.k12.in.us

Britni Luster

Food Service Administrator
bluster@highland.k12.in.us

Andrea Warner

District Nurse Coordinator
awarner@highland.k12.in.us

Kris Besch

Special Education Director
kbesch@highland.k12.in.us

Mike Sukta

Facilities Manager
msukta@highland.k12.in.us

Dominic Nieblas

Transportation Director
dnieblas@highland.k12.in.us

John Zack

Highland High School Principal
jzack@highland.k12.in.us

Scheryl Corman

Highland Middle School Principal
scorman@highland.k12.in.us

Amy Harrington

Johnston Elementary Principal
aharrington@highland.k12.in.us

Eric McMahon

Merkley Elementary Principal
emcmahon@highland.k12.in.us

Kevin Beveridge

Southridge Elementary Principal
kbeverid@highland.k12.in.us

Christina Davis

Warren Elementary Principal
cdavis@highland.k12.in.us

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.

JOHNSTON ELEMENTARY



JOHNSTON C-H-A-M-P-S! Johnston Elementary won big at the Indiana Academic Spell Bowl, placing first in the Red Division at the local competition in Merrillville and ninth in their division in Indiana out of 103 elementary teams from around the state. "We are incredibly proud of this team of students and their coach, April Boyd, who worked hard in preparation for this contest," Johnston Principal Amy Harrington said. [photo provided]

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

"We are so proud of our Highland students' achievements ... and look forward to helping them fulfill their dreams"

8TH GRADE PARENTS NIGHT ...

With more than half of this very successful 2023/2024 school year behind us, plans are in the works for Eighth-Grade Parent Night. Attending this event is one of the most important ways you, as a parent, can help your eighth grader get prepped and ready for a successful high school career.

I know this event was invaluable when my daughters were making the transition from middle school to high school. Members of the guidance department will host a live Q & A session in the high school auditorium. That will be followed by an invitation to visit the commons area to learn about high school clubs, activities and sports along with everything you need to know about pathways to graduation.

All eighth graders and their parents are invited to attend this all-important event at 6 p.m. March 11 at the high school.

UPCOMING EVENTS ...

Check out the back page of Trojan Today to see a full lineup of entertainment our students have planned for the enjoyment of the community. Middle School thespians and members of the high school Theatre Company are combining their talents on the upcoming production of Willie Wonka Jr.

WRESTLING CHAMP ...

I want to offer a giant-sized congratulations to Aleksandra Bastaic for her second girls state wrestling championship title in as many years. Aleks is an exemplary athlete, student and mentor for a growing number of girls who want to follow in her footsteps. We are proud to say she is Highland grown.



Brian Smith
Superintendent
School Town of Highland



It was another first for Highland girls wrestling when Kate Robinson (left) and Aleksandra Bastaic both qualified for the state finals in Kokomo. [photos provided]

WRESTLING CHAMPS

Wrestling phenom Aleksandra Bastaic pinned herself to the short list of elite female wrestlers when she brought home the Indiana High School Girls Wrestling Championship in her weight class – her second title in two years at the state level. And, she's only a sophomore.

Her wrestling career began in first grade with a call-out for elementary students who wanted to learn to wrestle.

"I tried it on a whim," she said. "Weirdly, I fell in love with this all-contact sport and never looked back. It's been all-wrestling – first with the boys because there weren't many girls in the sport.

For now, I wrestle competitively with both boys and girls until girls wrestling is sanctioned by the IHSAA."

Bastaic sees her future through the lens of her sport. She wrestles year-round at meets around the country, working hard on the physical – and mental – aspects of the sport.

"My plan is to wrestle in college," she said. "I see myself pursuing a career in sports medicine – but it's still early. I have more to accomplish while I'm still in high school."



Time to register Highland children for kindergarten

Highland public elementary schools will hold kindergarten registration for the upcoming year in two phases:

PHASE 1: Visit the RDS parent access page at highland.k12.in.us to enroll new students. No code required.

PHASE 2: Parents are urged to bring their children and the items listed below to the school that serves their immediate district. All registrations will be held from 3 to 5:30 p.m. on the dates below:

MONDAY, MARCH 4

Southridge Elementary School
9221 Johnston St. • (219) 922-5650

TUESDAY, MARCH 5

Merkley Elementary School
9340 Fifth St. • (219) 922-5640

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

Warren Elementary School
2901 100th St. • (219) 922-5660

THURSDAY, MARCH 7

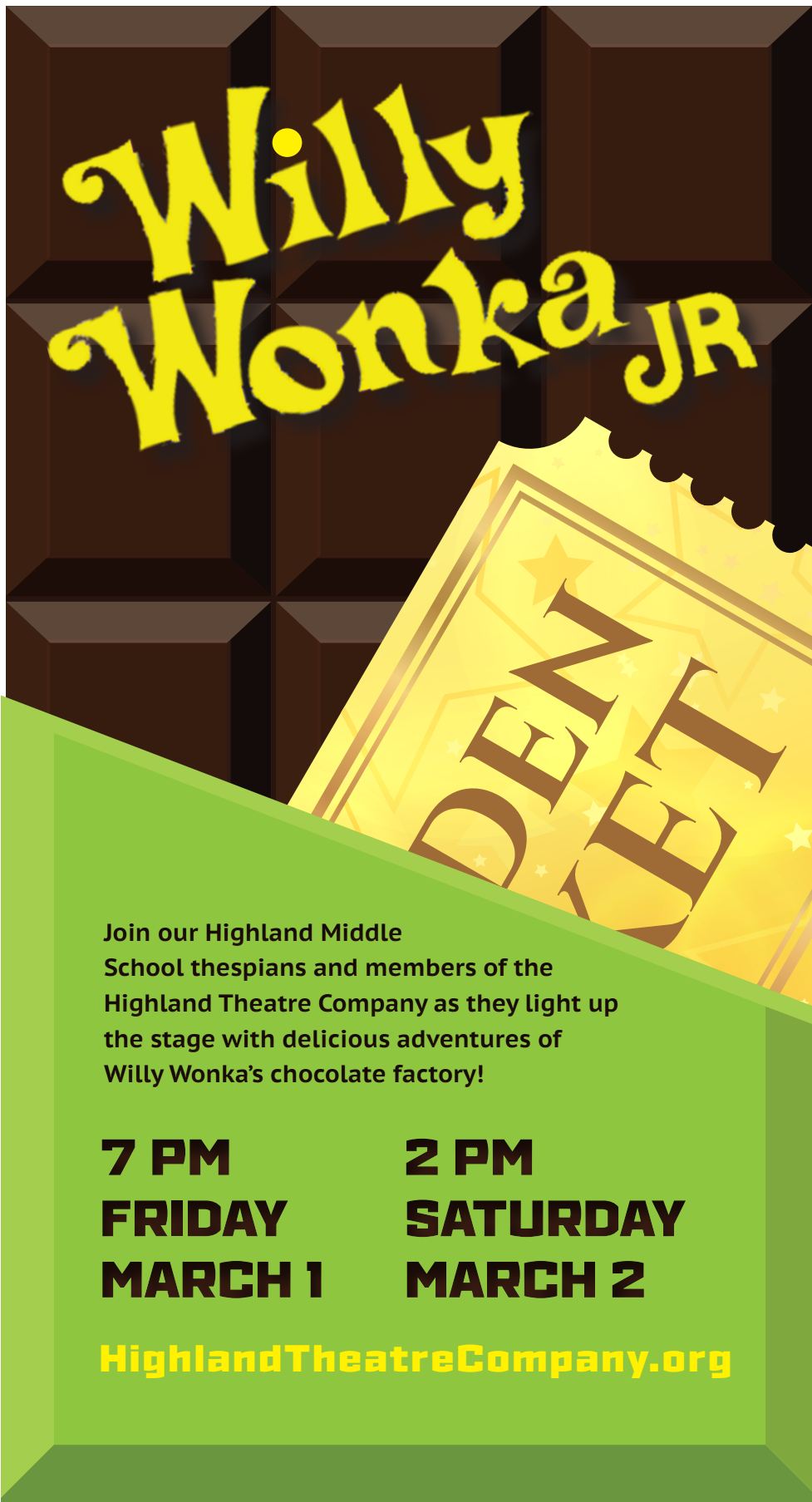
Johnston Elementary School
8220 Fifth St. • (219) 923-2428

AGE REQUIREMENT

Students must be 5 years of age on or before Aug. 1, 2024.

ITEMS FOR REGISTRATION:

- Five proofs of residency**
Two of the following:
NIPSCO, water, phone, cable (utility bills/deposit receipts)
Two of the following: Driver's license/state ID showing current address, vehicle registration, recent paycheck/unemployment check receipt.
One of the following: Lease and rent receipt, mortgage and homeowners insurance documents, notarized letter with three proofs of residency from the homeowner (parent/guardian must provide ID listed above)
- Proof of custody**, if applicable
- Birth certificate**
- Social security number**
- Current immunization records** (name and phone number of pediatrician)



Join our Highland Middle School thespians and members of the Highland Theatre Company as they light up the stage with delicious adventures of Willy Wonka's chocolate factory!

7 PM	2 PM
FRIDAY	SATURDAY
MARCH 1	MARCH 2

HighlandTheatreCompany.org

TRIVIA NIGHT

Join the Highland Education Foundation **Saturday, February 24** for a night of trivia, silent auction, raffles – and fun for a great cause! All proceeds go to innovative teacher grants to enhance learning and achievement. Tickets are \$280 for teams of eight or \$35 per person.

RSVP: events@highlandef.org

UPCOMING CONCERTS

Enjoy performances from our high school and middle school choirs and ensembles.

MS/HS ORCHESTRA CONCERT:
6:30 p.m. **March 5**

MS/HS CHORAL CONCERT:
6:30 p.m. **March 12**

MS/HS BAND CONCERT:
6:30 p.m. **April 16**

WHERE: HHS Monbeck Auditorium, 9135 Erie St.

ADMISSION: Free

INTERESTED IN JOINING?

March is our signup for beginning ensembles – 5th grade families can find out more by visiting JoinBCO.com.

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 2**

WHERE: Highland Middle School, 2941 41st Street

ADMISSION: Free

INFO: highlandbandindiana.craftfair@gmail.com