



TROJAN TODAY

YOUR SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SOURCE FOR NEWS AND EVENTS | JUNE-JULY 2024

Back to School

Students return to the classroom August 14

Welcome Back!

All freshmen and students new to the district are invited to a 90-minute orientation from 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m. August. 7. Students are grouped by last name. Visit www.highland.k12.in.us for more information. Back-to-school night at the four elementary schools is scheduled for Aug. 13.

New cell phone rules

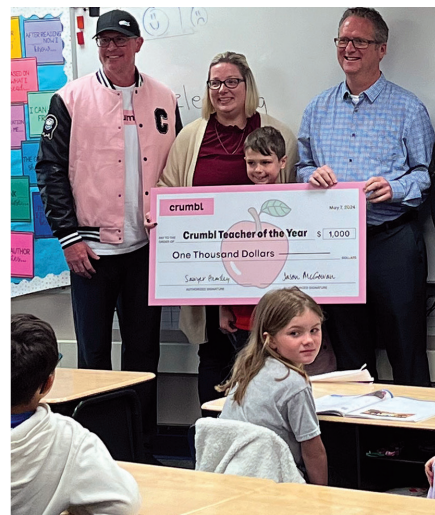
New state legislation restricts cell phone use for most of the school day beginning in August. Students will be allowed to use their devices before and after school, during lunch and for educational purposes in the classroom. "Removing the ability to be occupied by electronics will benefit students," HHS Principal John Zack said.

Out-of-district students

Schools will welcome 120 new K-7 students this fall, all of whom live outside the boundaries of the school town. Parents who submitted applications were invited to meet with school leaders earlier this spring to get their questions answered and applications filled out.

What's in store for 2029?

Highland is asking parents to review changes proposed for high school diplomas beginning in 2029. HHS Principal John Zack is encouraging individuals to make their voices heard before the proposal is ratified. Visit www.slideshare.net/slideshow/indiana-education-officials-propose-new-high-school-diplomas/267051886.



Southridge educator named Crumbl Cookie Teacher of the Year

Southridge 3rd Grade Teacher Rebecca Raycroft was shocked and her students thrilled when Crumbl Cookie reps made a surprise visit to her classroom with news she had been named their Indiana Teacher of the Year.

It was Heather Peterson who saw the notice on social media and knew she had to nominate her son Cade's teacher.

"Mrs. Raycroft noticed Cade struggling. She met with me and laid out an evaluation plan," Peterson said. "We wanted the same thing for Cade – to be happy and feel successful at school. Mrs. Raycroft walked with me through the process. I told Crumbl what she means to us and students at Southridge and the difference she has made in Cade's young life."

The Southridge nomination was one of 2,000 around the state.

"It is heartwarming to know my students and parents would take the time and effort to nominate me," Raycroft said. "This was an amazing moment that will be remembered for a long time."

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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.

Free summer meal program offered in-person at Highland elementary school cafeterias

The School Town of Highland is serving healthy breakfasts and lunches this summer as part of the USDA's Summer Food Service Program.

The free program for any child age 18 or younger provides nutritional meals to more than 5 million children each summer. Johnston and Merkley elementary schools will serve as in-town nutrition sites this summer.

In addition to the school-based program, Indiana is participating in the USDA's SUN Bucks program, which provides a one-time benefit of \$120 per child to help families pay for food when school is not in session. Learn more at www.in.gov/doe/nutrition/indiana-sun-bucks-summer-ebt/.

Food Service Administrator Britni Luster is excited about the meal offerings this summer. "We look forward to serving our community and have added games to boost engagement and make every day a little more fun," she said. "Our goal is to feed as many school-age kids as possible."



MEAL LOCATIONS & TIMES

The Food Service Department will be serving free summer meals to any child 18 years and under. Meals must be eaten on site at the following:

JOHNSTON ELEMENTARY

Breakfast: 7:30-8:30 a.m.

Lunch: 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

- **June 3-7** (Monday-Friday)
- **June 10-27** (Monday-Thursday)
- **July 1-11** (Monday-Thursday)

MERKLEY ELEMENTARY

Lunch: 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

- **June 3-7** (Monday-Friday)
- **June 10-27** (Monday-Thursday)
- **July 8-25** (Monday-Thursday)

Note: No meal service June 19 and July 4 in observance of the holiday.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

"New head football coach, students and teachers gear up for 2024-25 academic year at School Town of Highland"

I want to begin by wishing every family a great summer. It's just enough time to rest and relax before heading back to the classroom. Here is some of what's new for fall.

NEW HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

Please join me in welcoming Ben Geffert as our new head football coach. He takes over for Pete Koulianos, who accepted a head coaching position at Lake Central in April. Prior to his tenure in Highland, Ben was the Offensive Line Coach for the Calumet College of St. Joseph football program and coached at Griffith.

PROJECT LEAD THE WAY

The academic schedule for sixth graders has been tweaked to accommodate Project Lead the Way courses. We are excited about the opportunities this presents and that Highland now provides a full PLTW Stem curriculum to all K-12 students.

OUT-OF-DISTRICT STUDENTS

The district will welcome 120 students (K-7) who live outside of Highland and eight-10 new teachers. The additional tuition dollars mean we can offer college-level courses and STEM while maintaining fine arts and music. Offering this caliber of a curriculum is extraordinary for a district our size and allows us to continue meeting the needs of all of our students.

CONGRATS, GRADS!

We wish the wonderful and talented Class of 2024 the best as they begin the next chapter in their young lives. They may be leaving for parts unknown, but will always remain a member of our Trojan family.



Brian Smith
Superintendent
School Town of Highland

"Our goal is to provide the education students need to feel comfortable in their own skin."

Nurse Coordinator Andrea Warner, School Town of Highland



The Highland Education Foundation provided a grant to the Health Services Department to provide each female and male student with a supply of personal hygiene items. [photo provided]

Always Changing and Growing Up

With the assistance of elementary Parent Teacher Councils and a boost from the Highland Education Foundation, School Town of Highland Nurse Coordinator Andrea Warner, RN, has been able to expand what she offers and how she provides information to fourth graders as they learn about their changing bodies.

"The students love to get takeaways," Warner said. "They were so excited this year. Thanks to the PTCs and the foundation, 245 students who participated in the program got personal hygiene kits. This was a first for us."

What makes the program even more successful are the students, who were engaged in

the conversation and eager to participate.

"We provided female students with index cards that allowed them to get questions about difficult issues answered. Without that option, they may have refrained from asking those questions that they need answered," she said. "Thanks to the students, we were able to have an awesome conversation."

Warner will be working to add additional, next-level classes about changing bodies and maturity for middle schoolers.

"Our goal is to provide the education students need to feel comfortable in their own skin," she said. "They are doing great."

IMMUNIZATION CLINIC

If your child still needs one or more immunizations, the School Town of Highland, in collaboration with Franciscan Health, offers a one-stop shop.

This year's Immunization Clinic will be held from **9 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday, July 30** in the Highland High School Library. All required vaccinations will be available.

No appointments are necessary and parents do not need to be present. Consent forms are required and must be completed by a parent or guardian. Please bring your photo ID and insurance card. If uninsured, vaccines are \$10.

- » Kindergarten students must have all required immunizations prior to the first day of school.
- » Students entering 6th grade are required to have a Tdap and MCV4 (Meningitis) immunization prior to the first day of school.
- » Students entering 12th grade are required to have a 2nd MCV4 (Meningitis) immunization prior to the first day of school.

QUESTIONS? Please contact Nurse Andrea Warner at (219) 922-5610 ext. 1021 or awarner@highland.k12.in.us.

KINDERGARTEN REMINDER

You still have time to register your kindergartner for the 2024-2025 academic year. It's as easy as 1-2-3!

1. Simply visit the RDS parent access page – <https://rdsappserv.highland.k12.in.us/rdsparentaccess/> – and click **Enroll A New Student** button.
2. Please complete all required fields and enter any additional information at the bottom of the form. Submit by clicking on the **Save and Finish** button at the bottom of the form.
3. Your information will then be sent to your school of residence, where we'll review your registration and contact you with additional info.

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

FREE POPS CONCERT

Join us for a free pops concert at **4 p.m. Sunday, June 23** at Main Square Park in Highland.

Hosted by the All Music Project, local musicians are coming together for one afternoon to bring fun, family-friendly music to the region! Have a picnic and enjoy some fantastic tunes from some fabulous musicians.



FROM CARPOOL KARAOKE TO THE CHICKEN DANCE, MERKLEY TEACHERS, STAFF ENJOY FUN-FILLED WEEK

Merkley Elementary designated National Teacher Appreciation Week 2024 as “The Amazing Race,” an opportunity to infuse the entire school with a healthy dose of silliness and a commitment to inspire chuckles, belly laughs and mirth.

This year’s Amazing Race, which laid out new routes and challenges every day, was a huge hit.

“Our teachers had so much fun,” said Patty Torres, school secretary, architect of the race and event planner extraordinaire. “I loved how the students cheered on their teachers and enjoyed watching them participate in the challenges.”

None of it would have been possible without our parents and local merchants who provided extras, like gift card rewards for the games, meals and treats.

During Car Pool Karaoke, Torres said Highland Police and Fire jumped into the race and joined in to the fun.

“One day, the challenge was to take a picture of a favorite noun at school and submit it with a caption of what makes it your favorite and upload it to the event journal,” she said.

As part of that day’s detour, staff emailed the titles to the songs being played over the intercom. Third-grade teacher Kelly Geffert and Sherry Skertich, aide in the classroom, were the big winners.

“Being a teacher is one of the toughest jobs there is,” Torres said. “That we can take one week and have the teachers doing the chicken dance and Macarena as fast as they can while they are on the lookout to ‘Beware of purple cows’ makes it all worth it.”

