



# TROJAN TODAY

YOUR SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SOURCE FOR NEWS AND EVENTS | AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2026

## Back to School

The School Town Of Highland will welcome more than 3,000 students **August 13**, the first day of the 2026-2027 academic school year. We're very excited to see our returning students again and to meet all those that will be joining us for the first time! **Here's a look at what's ahead ...**



### Annual Tailgate Party

Join the Highland Athletic Boosters **August 13** at Main Square Park for the Annual Tailgate Party, featuring a DJ, food and vendors. **Details, Page 4**

### Meal Applications

Applications for Free/Reduced-Price Meals are available to complete on **mealttimeapps.com**. We encourage all families to complete the application, as it can affect the Title 1 funding that STOHL may receive. Please check our website for more information.

### Superintendent Search

The School Board expects to announce a new superintendent soon, who will oversee the district's high, middle and four elementary schools. **Details, Page 2**

### New Teachers & Staff

We welcome a bevy of new teachers, administrators and staff to the Trojan family. Please introduce yourself to this talented bunch. **Details, Page 3**

### Electronics Ban

The School Town reminds all Highland students that they are banned from using personal cellphones, tablets, laptops, gaming devices and smartwatches the entire school day – including lunch, passing periods and instruction. **Details, Page 2**

### STOH Mobile App

The School Town of Highland app is a fantastic way to stay up to date with calendars, staff lists, news articles and more. Available on Apple and Google.

## ADMINISTRATION

**Ryan Erdelac**

Interim Superintendent  
rerdelac@highland.k12.in.us

**Kim Fulton**

Chief Financial Officer  
kimfulton@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

**Rusty McWilliams**

Facilities Manager  
rustymcwilliams@highland.k12.in.us

**Dominic Nieblas**

Transportation Director  
dnieblas@highland.k12.in.us

**Travis Anderson**

Highland High School Principal  
travisanderson@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

**Kimberly Hayes**

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

**Christina Davis**

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

## SCHOOL BOARD

**Patrick Krull**, President

**Robert Kuva**, Vice President

**Erica Smith-Gomez**, Secretary

**Victor A. Garcia**, member

**Richard Alyea**, 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](http://highland.k12.in.us) for the latest information, including meeting agendas, school policies, board mission, beliefs and values.



Highland school board members wish Superintendent Brian Smith (center) a fond farewell as he leaves the district to oversee Valparaiso schools. Board members pictured from left: Member Richard Alyea, Secretary Erica Smith-Gomez, President Patrick Krull and Member Victor Garcia. [ Ethan Roberts photo ]

## Board searching for new superintendent

School Board President Pat Krull said there has been a large amount of interest from those seeking to become the next superintendent of schools.

"Things moved quickly after Superintendent Smith announced his resignation July 2," Krull said. "It has been humbling to see both the talent and tenure from a robust list of candidates."

The School Board engaged University Search Team – a consulting firm run by current and retired professors from Ball State, Indiana State and Indiana universities to conduct first interviews, provide a synopsis of each along with a hiring recommendation.

Next up: Board interviews and a final decision that will be followed by a public

hearing, which is expected mid-August.

Krull said the School Board expects to have a new superintendent in place by early September.

"We are looking forward to a smooth transition, thanks in large part to the leadership of our former superintendent," he said. "I will be forever thankful to Brian Smith and his leadership."

Krull credits strong relationships with the board and decisions that focused on always doing what was best for the district's more than 3,000 students.

"He left our schools in a position where we were able to survive the failed referendum and continue without any major impacts to the educational process," Krull said.

## Students return to full electronics ban

The Indiana General Assembly's most restrictive policy yet on the use of personal electronic devices in schools is in full force and effect.

The bell-to-bell ban that went into effect July 1 includes personal cellphones, tablets, laptops, gaming devices and smartwatches. Bell-to-bell encompasses the entire school day, including lunch, passing periods and instruction. Most policies include exceptions for students with documented medical conditions or administrator-approved accommodations that require device access.

High School Principal Travis Anderson

said high school students will be provided with secure lockers on the first day of school where all electronics must be stored during the school day.

"Electronic devices have been shown to be a big distraction in our lives – and in the classroom," Anderson said. "We are eager to see the changes – both academically and mentally when our students have eight hours a day without that distraction."

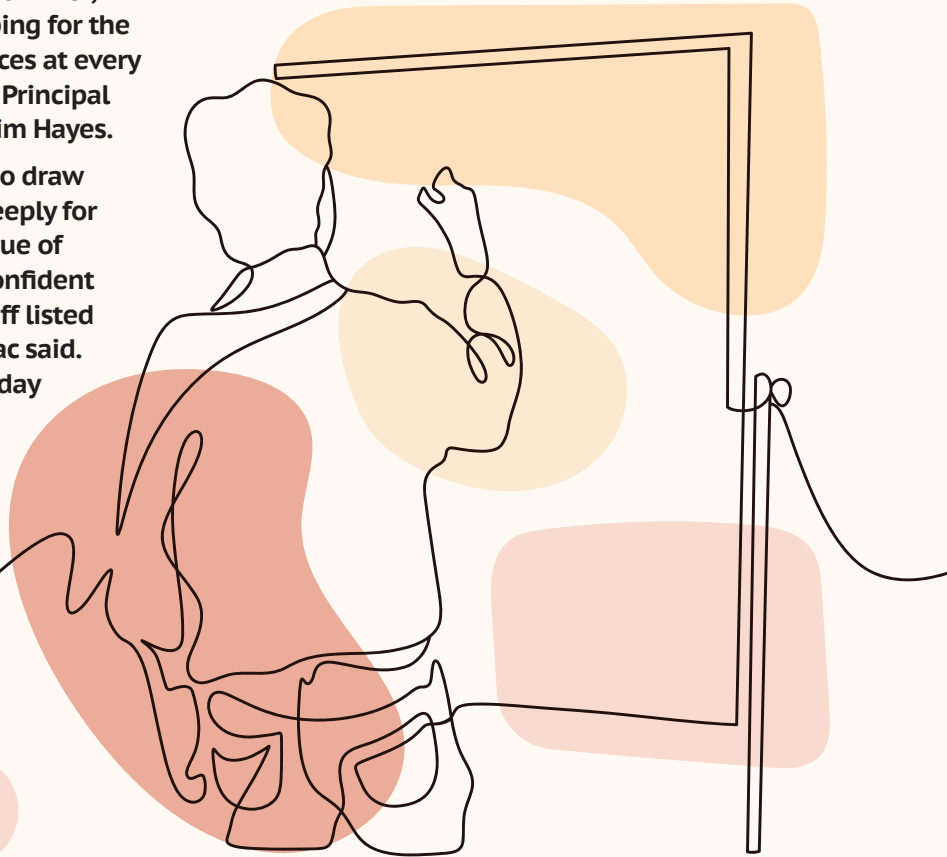
If parents wish to contact their student during the school day, please call your school's main office. Visit [highland.k12.in.us](http://highland.k12.in.us) for more information on this policy.

# Welcome to the Trojan family!

While students bask in the waning days of summer, new principals, teachers and staff are prepping for the 2026-2027 school year. There will be new faces at every school building, including new High School Principal Travis Anderson and Southridge Principal Kim Hayes.

"We are fortunate in Highland to continue to draw good people, with great hearts, who care deeply for the kids and the Town of Highland. This is true of our current leaders and staff, and we feel confident it holds true of our two new leaders and staff listed below," Interim Superintendent Ryan Erdelac said.

"We welcome them all and look forward to day one on August 13 when the 3,000+ reasons we all were called to this profession walk through our doors to kick off the 2026-27 school year."



## HIGHLAND HIGH SCHOOL

**Kyle Adams** | English Teacher

**Travis Anderson** | Principal

**Kassandra Brizuela** | English Teacher

**Elaina Henry** | Receptionist (previously at Merkley)

**Brandon Lopez** | PE Teacher

**Elizabeth McNamara** | Science Teacher

**Dennis Scott** | PLTW Teacher

## HIGHLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

**Mark Ashmann** | Instructional Aide

**Polly Brown** | Lifeskills Teacher

**Amber Downing** | NISEC Paraprofessional

**Paul Drapac** | Instructional Aide

**Sophia Filis** | Bookkeeper

**Victoria Hays** | NISEC Paraprofessional

**Julie Homans** | Computer Science Teacher

**Caitlin Kovalan** | Math Teacher

**Ana Luna** | Lifeskills Teacher

**Camden Scheidt** | Math Teacher

**Madison VanderMeer-Erickson** | Math Teacher

## JOHNSTON ELEMENTARY

**Caitlyn McDonald** | Instructional Aide

**Theresa Miller** | NISEC Paraprofessional

**Scott Iczkowski** | Part-time LRE Teacher  
Johnston and Southridge

## MERKLEY ELEMENTARY

**Ashley Henderson** | Technology Resource  
Assistant (previously at Warren)

**Sherry Tokash** | Instructional Aide

## SOUTHRIDGE ELEMENTARY

**Kimberly Hayes** | Principal

**Brittany Ignatowicz** | NISEC Paraprofessional

**Diamond Moore** | NISEC Paraprofessional

**Jayne Sindewald** | LRE Teacher

## WARREN ELEMENTARY

**Kaitlyn Lopez** | 4th Grade Teacher  
(previously at Southridge)





[ R.H. Walker Photography photos ]



## Fall Trojan Sports

Athletic Director Ryan Harrington has announced two coaching changes for the 2026-2027 school year.

**Matt Hartz** is the new Girls Cross Country coach while Coach **Jimmy McCormack** leads the football team as interim head coach.

"We have an abundance of talent within our coaching ranks that continues to grow," Harrington said. "Stability among coaches has created teams that are eager to practice, train and build their skills."

Looking forward, Harrington is eager to see his Trojan teams in action.

"Our football team continues to build. We saw forward movement with the football program last year. I believe that Jimmy McCormack will move this team in the right direction. We are a very young team, which is perfect for developing these players."

One of the big surprises this fall will be the size – and talent – of the girls golf team.

"We went from six girls last year to 15-plus golfers this fall. This is the largest team we've had in at least a dozen years," Harrington said.

"This is a testament to Coach Kundich. The girls really like to play for him. Overall, we're fielding young teams in most sports. It's going to be a great year to watch us grow."

# Annual Tailgate

Join the Highland Athletic Booster Club at 6 p.m. **August 13** for its Annual Tailgate Party at Main Square Park. We'll kick off the season in style with a DJ, food and vendors.

Since the booster club tailgate moved from the high school to Main Square Park five years ago, the event has grown beyond Trojan high school football to become the town's first - and largest - pep rally that includes players of all ages.

Tailgate coordinator Stacy Steele said the event has become the largest back-to-school celebration in Highland.

"Our cheerleaders do a dance routine to kick it off. We introduce

all of the football players - from the varsity team to Pop Warner players as well as athletes from last year. The kids really look forward to it," Steele said.

"All proceeds are donated to athletics."

In addition to food vendors, booths and music, Steele said a new event this year is the mascot race that will include representatives from each school running for top honors with a loop around Main Square Park.

## Football Schedule

The Highland Trojans will host a scrimmage against River Forest **August 14** and begin this year's football season away **August 21** against Griffith. All varsity football games are 7 p.m. Friday.

|       |                  |      |
|-------|------------------|------|
| 08.14 | River Forest     | Home |
| 08.21 | Griffith         | Away |
| 08.28 | Whiting          | Home |
| 09.04 | Hanover Central  | Away |
| 09.11 | Calumet New Tech | Away |
| 09.18 | Lowell           | Home |
| 09.25 | Andrean          | Away |
| 10.02 | Munster          | Home |
| 10.09 | Kankakee Valley  | Away |
| 10.16 | Hobart           | Home |

Sectionals begin **October 23**.