



TROJAN TODAY

YOUR SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SOURCE FOR NEWS AND EVENTS | AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2021



2021-22 SCHOOL PLAN

The School Town of Highland's return to in-person instruction on Wednesday, August 11, will constitute a return to normal instruction or pre-pandemic instruction, as much as possible. This will be a five-day a week opportunity for all students, fulfilling the 180-day requirement mandated by Indiana law for a full instructional year.

- 1 For the 2021-22 school year, it is highly recommended that staff and students wear masks.
- 2 All employees and students 12 years and older are encouraged to get the COVID vaccination. In order to expedite contact tracing, employees and students may be asked to provide proof of vaccination. Those who show proof of vaccination will not be contact traced out of school unless they are symptomatic.
- 3 Per Federal mandate, students and other passengers are required to wear masks while on school transportation.
- 4 Athletic and other program events will follow any reduced seating guidelines from the state. It is highly recommended that attendees not fully vaccinated wear masks.
- 5 Limited field trips may be allowed if they meet protocol guidelines.
- 6 School facility use by outside groups directly associated with STOH – such as PTO – will be allowed on a limited basis.
- 7 Outside speakers will be limited and may be asked to show proof of vaccination or wear a mask.
- 8 Visitors to schools will be on a limited basis.
- 9 Parents are encouraged to conduct a health screening each morning before sending their child to school or to a school-sponsored event.
- 10 STOH will continue to reduce the number of students in large group settings – assemblies, presentations in the gym, etc. – when possible.
- 11 Fully vaccinated staff and students who have proof of vaccination will not be required to quarantine due to exposure unless symptomatic.

Students return to in-person learning

With proven curriculum-building programs like Project Lead the Way and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math), Highland is welcoming students back to school with a solid plan to bring every child up to grade level.

Studies are emerging, identifying learning gaps that span the country as a result of the pandemic.

The Economic Policy Institute reported in 2020 that both learning and development have been interrupted and disrupted for millions of students.

Closer to home, Asst. Superintendent Dr. Sherri Mitchell and Human Resources Director Ryan Erdelac, who oversees the elementary curriculum, coordinated summer programs to address learning gaps and are preparing to augment the school day with after-school tutoring at least two days a week for the upcoming school year.

"This is a beginning," Mitchell said. "We will continue tweaking what we do to make it work for our students." Helping in the effort is nearly \$4 million in Cares Act funds. Ongoing assessment tools will help measure achievement.

In addition, Warren, Johnston, Merkle and Southridge are qualified buildingwide Title I schools, meaning there are no barriers for students. Every child that needs remediation can receive it.

"The buildingwide designation give us more flexibility in how we use our Title I teams to assist students," Erdelac said. "We are going to look for gaps and address those needs in real time. We will be doing what amounts to academic triage for the betterment of our kids."



SCHOOL SAFEGUARDS

The following safeguards for students and employees will remain in place:

- Hand sanitizer will be available in all classroom and common areas.
- Students and staff will be encouraged to wash their hands frequently.
- Facilities will be cleaned and sanitized regularly. Day shift custodians will prioritize cleaning of all high traffic areas throughout the day.
- Providing students and staff with extra social and emotional support as they return to full in-person instruction is extremely important. The district's Guidance Coordinator will assume the responsibility of SEL and work with our schools' guidance counselors and administrators to help implement related activities and strategies.

The School Town will continue to monitor community spread, but more importantly, spread within our schools.

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SCHOOL BOARD

Robert Kuva, President
Victor A. Garcia, Vice President
Patrick Krull, Secretary
Luanne Jurczak, member
Allencia Ballard, 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 hhs.highland.k12.in.us for the latest information, including meeting agendas, school policies, board mission, beliefs and values.

Food Service Department serves up thousands of nutritious summer meals as they gear up for another free school year

The school's summer meal program was a huge success — serving up more than 31,000 meals this summer.

The School Town of Highland is a participant in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Summer Food Service Program, designed to feed up to 12 million American children who risk going hungry without supplemental meals when schools are not in session.

"Our summer meal program would not have been a success without so many people being involved," Director of Food Services Lisa Hayes said.

"A huge thank you to our exceptionally dedicated staff who showed up to give out nutritious meals and friendly smiles — rain or shine; our children who participated daily and looked forward to their favorites; our parents who took time out of their busy schedules to come pick up the meals; our devoted community partners who selflessly stepped up and helped us create weekly fun days and excitement; and to the STOH Administration and School Board for their support in our endeavor — whether by helping us spread the word or by coming and helping us deliver meals."



TEXTBOOK ASSISTANCE + P-EBT BENEFITS

While all school meals are FREE FOR ALL STUDENTS REGARDLESS OF INCOME for the 21-22 school year, families that normally qualify for free and reduced meals, should still submit an application to be eligible for other assistance programs, such as textbook assistance and P-EBT benefits.

If your family receives benefits from the state like SNAP or TANF, you automatically qualify for the benefits and there is no need to apply. **Unsure?** Please contact the Food Service Department to check prior to completing an application. Benefits stretch far beyond the cafeteria and impact students in the classroom and at home.

INFO: Applications may be completed online by visiting the school website — highland.k12.in.us — and navigating to the food service page. Paper applications are also available at each school and at Central Office. Questions? Please call the Food Service Department at (219) 924-7400.

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

"We're looking forward to an exciting academic year and seeing the community at upcoming Trojan events"

Celebrate a new school year and the possibilities ahead with all of us here at the School Town of Highland. We have high hopes and great expectations for the 2021-2022 school year.

The district is welcoming 22 new teachers, coaches and staff.

Each of them brings both excitement and eagerness to get into the classroom, on to the playing field and routine of the school day. They join a talented team that consistently excels at each buildings.

Your participation at plays, performances, concerts and sporting events makes a big difference. We need look no further than empty stands at the Olympics and how it impacted athletes to see what it means to have the community behind them.

If you haven't already, please make it a point to attend our school events as you can. Check the School Town of Highland website — highland.k12.in.us — for the latest details, including times and dates.

You can begin this year by attending the **Battle of the Trail at 6 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 19** at Main Square Park. Sponsored by the Highland Athletic Booster Club, this event is a first for us. It will replace the annual tailgate and set the stage for the Friday night football showdown between Highland Trojans and Griffith Panthers.

I hope to see you there!



Brian Smith
Superintendent
School Town of Highland

Welcome to the Trojan family!

A bevy of new teachers are settling into their classrooms – new hires to replace those who have retired, moved to another district or opted out of day-to-day teaching to raise their families. Human Resources Director Ryan Erdelac said the movement of educators can be good for students – and the district. “We consistently see teachers coming to a new school have enthusiasm and excitement that is contagious. They learn from us. We learn from them. What we found in this group of teachers is a genuine desire to be teaching in Highland. We were their first choice – and they are ours.”

HIGHLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Dale Ethan Becker	Biology
Ashli Cooper	English
Vivian Draves	Spanish
Joseph Fabian (JD)	Integrated Chem/Physics
Jordan Galovich	Biology + ICP
Jaime Houchin	Bookkeeper
Abigail Kraupner	Science + Physics
Karie McCorkle	Asst. Girls Basketball Coach
Darian Patton-Straughter	Girls Basketball Coach
Chloe Pridgen-Ashley	JV Girls Basketball Coach
Jason Quigg	Counselor
Jason Singleton	Science + Chemistry
Nicole Van Dyke	Volleyball Coach
Justine Vroom	Volleyball Coach
Cristian Zendejas	Cross Country Track Coach

HIGHLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Kimberly Fabian	6th-Grade English
Matthew Hartz	Social Studies
Jessica Haug	Art
Jacob Klocek	6th grade Science

JOHNSTON ELEMENTARY

Allison Ashbrooks	Instructional Aide
Jessica Bliss	3rd Grade
Michael Jones	Custodian
Morgan Lesich	5th Grade
Tricia Matthews	NISEC employe
Megan Zygłowicz	4th grade

MERKELY ELEMENTARY

Alexa Hogueisson	4th grade
Tracy Olechnowicz	Instructional A
Dawn Reule	Dependent Care
Lisa Vega	4th grade

WARREN ELEMENTARY

Matthew (Jeffery) Bliss	5th Grade
Kylie Bugajski	3rd Grade
Jared Carroll	Custodian
Jimmy Mayer	Custodian



School Town of Highland ramps up guidance program, counseling

Guidance Coordinator Kelly Gossman has new digs and an expanded role this year.

You can now find Gossman in the administration building just across the street from her longtime office at the high school.

Superintendent Brian Smith said the district is implementing a plan that has been in-the-works for several years.

“We’ve hired Jason Quigg as a full-time guidance counselor at the high school,”

Smith said. “That will allow Kelly to oversee guidance programs for all six schools as we had intended.”

In all, Highland will have three full-time guidance counselors at the high school, two at the middle school and one at each of the four elementary schools.

As society has gotten more complex, so has the job of school guidance counselor. Once considered a job that dealt with

truancies and next year’s class schedule, guidance counselors are an essential component of the academic team.

“Kids have more needs and obstacles to learning today than they did even a generation ago and COVID-19 just added to the uncertainty they feel,” Smith said.

“We are all excited about this new counseling strategy and what it will mean for our students.”



Athletic Trainer Patrick Ohaver, left, nominated Athletic Director Ryan Harrington for Indiana's Outstanding Athletic Director of the Year.

Congratulations, Ryan Harrington!

Athletic Director of the Year

HHS' very own Ryan Harrington is Indiana's 2021 Outstanding Athletic Director of the Year.

The Indiana Athletic Trainers Association said Harrington exemplifies the goals of the organization "to support athletic training in an exceptional and inspiring way."

Harrington is eager to share his award.

"I could never do this alone," he said. "This award belongs to all of those at Highland High School who support our high school teams and those who show up

every day to coach and mentor these dedicated and gifted students."

Superintendent Brian Smith said Harrington has amplified Highland High School sports by championing all aspects of prep athletics.

"Ryan leads by example. He attracts coaches and staff who are just as excited about helping our athletes excel as he is," Smith said. "He was pivotal in keeping our athletes safe during the pandemic while he continued finding ways they could still compete."

WELCOME NEW COACHES

There are a host of new faces coaching Highland High School prep sports. Athletic Director Ryan Harrington said the new group brings an abundance of energy and enthusiasm to basketball, cross-country, softball and volleyball. Meet the coaches:

- **Chloe Pridgen-Ashley:** JV Girls Basketball
- **Andrea Cunningham:** Girls Cross-Country
- **Joseph Fabian:** Boys Basketball
- **Karie McCorkle:** Girls Basketball
- **Darian Patton-Straughter:** Girls Basketball
- **Nikki VanDyke:** Volleyball
- **Justine Vroom:** Volleyball
- **Christian Zendejas:** Boys Cross-Country

INFO: Visit the Athletic Department on the School Town of Highland website – highland.k12.in.us – to view video introductions from each coach.

BATTLE OF THE TRAIL

The Highland Athletic Booster Club is ditching its annual tailgate party for a more inclusive, communitywide event. Join the boosters and football teams as they kick off the 2021 football season with the Battle of the Trail at Main Square Park. The event will feature food trucks, music, 50/50 raffle, bounce houses and games for the kids – all the night before the Highland Trojans take on the Griffith Panthers. Come out and show your support!

WHEN: 6 p.m. Thursday, August 19

WHERE: Main Square Park

INFO: highlandathleticboosterclub.com

HIGHLAND INVITATIONAL

Hankering to lace up the runners? The athletic department is welcoming all comers to the 20th Annual Highland Invitational Open Cross-Country Race. This 5k race will be run on the HHS Cross Country Course

WHEN: Saturday, September 25 – Registration begins at 7:15 a.m. Race starts promptly at 8 a.m.

WHERE: Highland High School Track

FEE: \$5

INFO: Everyone under age 18 must have a waiver signed by a parent or guardian. Forms may be picked up at the HHS athletic office or at the track the morning of the race.