



TROJAN TODAY

YOUR SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SOURCE FOR NEWS AND EVENTS | SEPTEMBER 2020

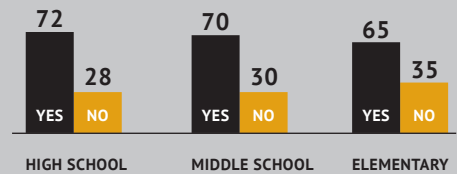
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SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SPECIAL REPORT



BACK TO SCHOOL POLL

As we developed the School Town of Highland reopening plan for the 2020-2021 academic year, we reached out to parents to inform our decision. Do you want your child to return to the classroom for in-person instruction? Here are the results:



Highland students kick off new school year remotely

As the first month of the 2020-21 school year draws to a close, I am happy to report: So far, so good.

We did not take the decision to go all-virtual lightly – and I know our parents didn't either.

As an educator, I will always believe children learn better in the classroom. It's better for them to be in school – academically, socially and emotionally.

Balanced against a spike in positive COVID-19 cases and new Lake County Health Department guidelines, we made the choice to have all our students participate in virtual learning.

Kudos to teachers and staff who changed up lesson plans weeks before school resumed. They report students are doing well in the virtual learning environment. Many teachers are using Google



BACK TO SCHOOL DAY: Johnston elementary students and their parents had the opportunity to meet their teachers, talk about e-learning and gather their iPads, books and workbooks before school started. "It was a great way to ease into the new year," Johnston Elementary School Principal Amy Harrington said. "We were as excited to see them as they were to see us! This helped ensure our teachers – and students – were ready the day school started. Our students are the best!" [Amy Harrington photo]

Meet as a virtual classroom.

We are already looking forward to what happens next.

Students participating in fall sports and conditioning is a great first step. These athletes have pledged to wear masks and steer clear of super-spreader events in Highland. They know their ability to play is directly impacted by how closely they follow the rules.

Next up are our Trojan extracurricular activities that will take place only when we can guarantee safe social distancing.

In the days ahead, we will be monitoring the COVID-19 numbers and accessing when it will be safe to return to the classroom.

Brian Smith
Superintendent
School Town of Highland

SPORTS UPDATE

The Trojans played their first official football game of the season Aug. 28 at home against the Crown Point Bulldogs. They weren't the first Highland fall sports team to begin their competitive season. By the end of August, Girls Varsity Soccer had played three games, heading into September with a 2-1 record. Boys tennis brought home a win, Girls Varsity Volleyball took on Hobart and swept in three games, Girls golf lost to Munster, Boys tennis brought home a win against Andean and freshman football won 13-8 against Portage. Senior cross-country standout Lucas Guerra blew the field away at the LaPorte invitational. Guerra finished nearly a minute faster than anybody else at the meet - a great start to a very interesting year.

EXTRACURRICULARS UPDATE

High School Student Council members began meeting on the football field bleachers in early September. Details are still being worked out for other extracurriculars, such as National Honor Society, robotics, choir, band and chess. The clubs and after-school activities are being revisited to function virtually. "They've been playing chess across the globe for decades," Superintendent Brian Smith said. "I know we can figure out a way for these groups to take part in activities they love and still stay safe."

COUNSELING ASSISTANCE

As COVID-19 restrictions stretch into their sixth month, Guidance Coordinator Kelly Gossman said her teams at the elementary, middle and high schools continue working to meet with students in need.

"Whether it's Google Meet, virtual visits or in-person appointments, our counselors will meet with any student who wants to talk or whose parents see the need," she said. "In some ways, meeting with a school counselor is the closest way to feeling a little bit normal. All a student needs to do is let us know. We'll make it work."



STUDENT MEALS

The food service teams are back at it, providing as many as 7,500 meals every Monday until students return to the classroom.

Fall meals contain fresh fruits and vegetables along with take-and-bake meal kits that come with preparation instructions. Each child in the program is supplied with Monday through Friday breakfasts and lunches.

Food Services Director Lisa Hayes said about 400 of the 750 students signed up for the program picked up meals the first week. Since then, she said the number of participants has been on the rise.

"We are working on a voluminous operation," Hayes said. "After everything is packed out with five days worth of meals, each student receives four to five bags of food."

The program works just like the meals students get in school. Meals are produced at each school, follow the same meal patterns and are charged based on financial eligibility.

QUESTIONS? Call our office at (219) 924-7400.

CENSUS & EDUCATION

U.S. census workers are currently visiting households throughout Lake County that have not responded to the census. **Deadline to respond is Sept. 30.** An accurate count of Highland residents greatly impacts the funding the School Town of Highland receives for programs, such as: school lunches, adult education and special education grants.

INFO: Shape the future of education. Respond today – online at 2020census.gov, by phone at (844) 330-2020 or by mail.