



TROJAN TODAY

YOUR SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SOURCE FOR NEWS AND EVENTS | JUNE-JULY 2022

Back to School

New start & dismissal times

In order to get every student where they need to be – and on time – the district is tweaking start and dismissal times beginning on the first day of the fall semester Aug. 11.

In addition to transporting elementary, middle and high schoolers to and from their schools each morning and afternoon, Superintendent Brian Smith said the new times will help students, who spend part of their day at the Hammond Career Center.

“It’s not a big change, but it’s going to make a big difference,” Smith said. “The new schedule should make it so no student is waiting on a bus.”

High School
Doors open at 7 a.m.
Classes start at 7:30 a.m.
and end at 2:40 p.m.

Middle School
Doors open at 8 a.m.
Classes start at 8:25 a.m.
and end at 3:20 p.m.

Elementary School
Doors open at 7:35 a.m.
Classes start at 7:50 a.m.
and end at 2:20 p.m.

This schedule is five days a week and there is no longer an early Wednesday release.

A yellow alarm clock is shown at the bottom of the graphic, with the time approximately 10:10.



Erdelac named new assistant superintendent

Ryan Erdelac has been named assistant superintendent of the School Town of Highland. He arrived in 2014 as principal at Johnston Elementary and moved to Central Office in 2020, as Director of Human Resources and Elementary School Coordinator.

Superintendent Brian Smith said Erdelac will be a great fit.

“Ryan was instrumental in our response to the pandemic and is ideally suited to address academic gaps that resulted from COVID-19, one of many jobs he will be managing in his new position” Smith said.

Erdelac said Dr. Sherri Mitchell, who retired in May, made the transition easy.

“Sherri tapped into federal and state grants that helped propel – among other things – the implementation and success of the STEM program,” he said. “She left a big piece of her heart with us at the Highland schools and teed me up perfectly to take over where she left off.”

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

Lisa Hayes
Food Service Administrator
lhayes@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

Norbert Schlessler
Transportation Manager
nschless@highland.k12.in.us

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

Justin Fronek
Highland Middle School Principal
jfronek@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

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 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 elementary cafeterias, Main Square Park

In 2019, the USDA's Summer Food Service Program served 141 million meals and snacks to children.

Fast forward just one year and the numbers skyrocketed: Nationally, the program provided 1.3 billion meals and snacks in 2020 at a cost of \$4.1 billion.

The School Town of Highland is one of more than 37,000 sites across the country to participate in the program. Inflation is making it harder for families to provide nutritious meals.

Food Service Administrator Lisa Hayes said there is no underestimating the ongoing need for children to have supplemental food resources.

"We have seen a growing need by our families to tap into the plan," she said.

"We are prepared for what may be an increased demand this year because of the economy," Hayes said. "The STOHS food service department hopes all of our families will take advantage of free meals during the summer."

MEAL LOCATIONS AND TIMES

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

JOHNSTON ELEMENTARY

Breakfast: 7:30-8:45 a.m.

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

- **May 31-June 3** (Tuesday-Friday)
- **June 6-10** (Monday-Friday)
- **June 13-16** (Monday-Thursday)
- **July 18-August 4** (Monday-Thursday)

MERKLEY ELEMENTARY

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

- **June 6-July 28** (Monday-Thursday)

MAIN SQUARE PARK

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

- **June 6-July 28** (Monday-Thursday). No meals at this location June 29-July 4 because of the festival.

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

"From promotions to graduation and everything in between, the School Town Of Highland has so much to celebrate!"

As we welcome Ryan Erdelac as the new assistant superintendent, we bid a fond farewell to his predecessor – retiring Assistant Superintendent Sherri Mitchell. Dr. Mitchell prepped for her retirement in the same way she served the School Town. She was a powerhouse, responsible in no small way for elevating STEM education and finding the money to build the program. We offer our hearty thanks for a job well done and wish her well in this next chapter.

CREDIT RECOVERY

A big thank you to High School Principal John Zack for leading the charge to offer credit recovery for any student who needs a few courses to graduate or get back up to grade level. This year's offerings include English, math, science and social studies. The additional classwork that leads to a high school diploma is no small investment. High school grads can expect to earn \$1.6 million over their lifetimes compared to \$1.2 million for their peers who don't.

TRANSITIONS

A big congratulations to Grant Denvit and Megan Curran who delivered thoughtful, inspiring messages to their fellow graduates from the podium on June 7. Megan and Grant were selected from a field of 10 students based on their message and delivery.

Although it's only June and days since graduation, the Class of 2022 is already heading into their collective futures. They celebrated with all the Pomp and Circumstance we had hoped would characterize their in-person commencement. This is a class of talented close-knit students who have challenged themselves to change the world. There is every indication they will do just that. Good luck and Godspeed!



Brian Smith
Superintendent
School Town of Highland

The Psychology of Color and Memory • Soccer Growth • Retro Games Today
 Ennui ... A Digital Adventure • "Paws" and Effect • Hoopin' History • Cosmo Camp • Urban's Stand Up
 Global Cuisines • Kristen's Creations • From Arcades to Home • Plants in Motion • The Variety of Art
 USWNT: The Issue of Women's Pay • Anxiety Free Baking • Music and Me • La Comida Mexicana
 Bright Book Buddies • Game Changers • Fashion Leads the Way • Access Your Memory • Video Games



PASSION PROJECT

Imagine being an eighth grader whose passion is fashion design. As part of the Honors English Passion Project, the student creates and sews one-of-a-kind apparel people buy. Fashion Design was just one of the 30 projects that were as unique as Donna Scheidt's Honors English class. "I started the Passion Project 20 years ago as a way to challenge my honors kids," she said. "These are bright, talented individuals who need to be challenged and pushed. In reality, they end up pushing themselves." From a student who built a video game in his basement to the Book Buddy program at the Highland Public Library that pairs teens with elementary school students to improve literacy, this year's Passion Project entries showcased just what students can do to help change their world. "These are kids I fully expect will go on to become entrepreneurs," she said. "They will become the change they want to see." [photos provided]

MERKLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



MISS MARY GALLAGHER
KINDERGARTEN TEACHER

1
PLACE



MRS. LISA VEGA
4TH GRADE TEACHER

2
PLACE



MRS. JOLAN BRYAK
TITLE AIDE

3
PLACE



JILL KREIS
SCHOOL LIBRARIAN

4
PLACE

Survivor game puts fun spin on Teacher Appreciation Week

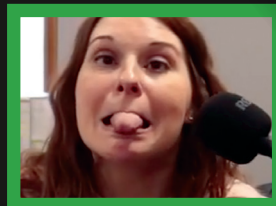
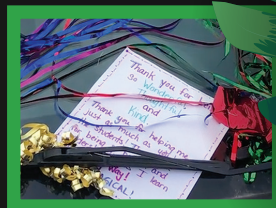
A new spin on appreciating teachers and staff led Merkley Elementary School to a memorable week acting out their very own version of Survivor.

Instead of hanging from a pole until they drop, some of the contestants had to stay off the floor, which had been transformed into lava. Instead of slithering through white-hot sand with hands and feet bound, other contestants showed off their best hippo faces.

School Secretary Patty Torres said more than 35 teachers and staff opted into the event hosted by the Merkley PTC.

“We weren’t sure how everyone was going to take to the competition for top points, but we decided to give it a shot,” she said. “We decked out the front office with a tropical theme. They got to spin a virtual wheel on an iPad that detailed their next adventure. They got the biggest kick out of it. We are definitely doing this again next year.”

Check out our video with WJOB + JEDtv at <https://fb.watch/dfbvr4nVZI/>.



KINDERGARTEN REMINDER

You still have time to register your kindergartner for the 2022-2023 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, 2022.

IMMUNIZATION CLINIC

If your child still needs one or more immunizations to be up-to-date, the School Town of Highland, in collaboration with Franciscan Health, offers a one-stop shop the week before school begins in August.

This year's Immunization Clinic will be held from noon to 7 p.m. Aug. 2 in the Highland High School Library. All childhood and school-required vaccinations will be available. No appointments are necessary: Students are seen on a first-come, first-served basis. Consent forms are required.

INFO: To get your questions answered regarding insurance, what to do if your child is uninsured, or to get a list of state-required vaccinations and a copy of the consent form, please call Health Services at (219) 922-5610 ext. 1021.

FRESHMAN ORIENTATION

Freshman orientation will be held **July 28**. Incoming students will meet based on last names and time slots below:

A-GOM: 9-10:30 a.m.

GON-O: 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

P-Z: 1-2:30 p.m.

Students unable to attend orientation during their scheduled time should contact their counselor.

A-GOM: Amy Vezmar
avezmar@highland.k12.in.us

GON-O: Jason Quigg
jqquigg@highland.k12.in.us

P-Z: Anne Lemon
alemon@highland.k12.in.us