



# TROJAN TODAY

YOUR SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SOURCE FOR NEWS AND EVENTS | JUNE-JULY 2023

## 2023-24 ACADEMIC SCHOOL YEAR

# HIGHLAND ACCEPTING OUT-OF-DISTRICT STUDENTS

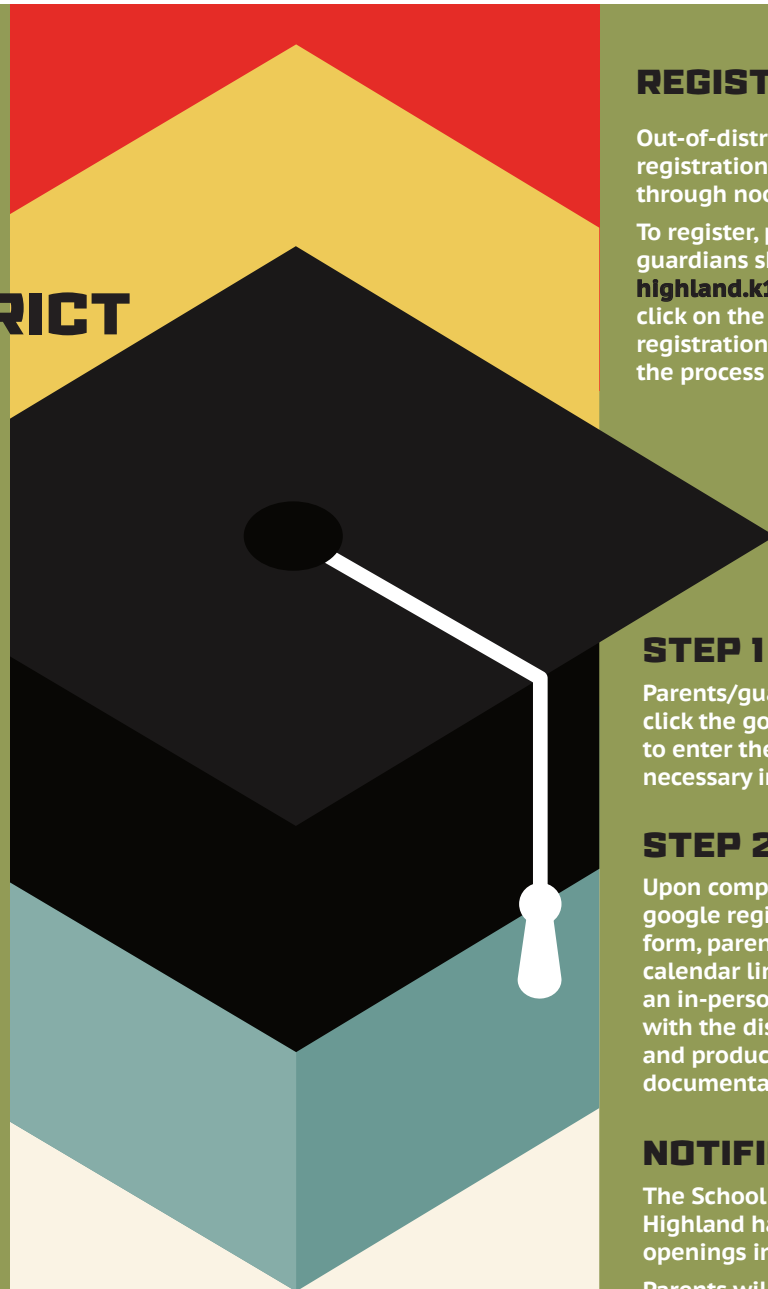
For the first time in Highland school history, the School Board has voted to open its borders to Indiana students who reside outside the district.

Within a week of the vote – and with no advertising – more than 180 parents had already signed their child up to attend a public school in Highland beginning in August. The out-of-district openings include a high of 40 incoming kindergarten and first-grade students to a low of 10 students each in grades 4-8.

Superintendent Brian Smith said the district has slated no openings for high school juniors or seniors based on concerns over the shortened time frame to help incoming students obtain enough credits to graduate on time.

“Because this is our first time, we wanted to get acclimated to this new program and see if there are tweaks that need to be made before adding components,” Smith said. “We are excited to see the level of interest we have in kindergarten through grade 10.”

In all, the district has room for 240 students. If all available spots are filled, the district will receive an additional \$1.3 million from the state for the upcoming school year, enough to ease – but not erase – the budget shortfall.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

We look forward to meeting our newest STOH students. If you have any questions, contact Ryan Erdelac at (219) 924-7400. We also ask that you share this information with anyone who may be interested in our out-of-district program.

## REGISTRATION

Out-of-district student registration continues through noon **June 22**.

To register, parents and guardians should visit [highland.k12.in.us](https://highland.k12.in.us) and click on the out-of-district registration button to get the process started.

### STEP 1

Parents/guardians will click the google form link to enter their student's necessary information.

### STEP 2

Upon completing the google registration form, parents will click a calendar link to schedule an in-person meeting with the district registrar and produce all required documentation.

## NOTIFICATION

The School Town of Highland has limited openings in grades K-10.

Parents will be notified no later than **June 27** of their students' status.

If there are more applications than spots available, a lottery drawing will be held **June 29** at central office and parents notified.

## 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

**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

**Mike Sukta**  
Facilities Manager  
msukta@highland.k12.in.us

**Dominic Nieblas**  
Transportation Director  
dnieblas@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 McMahan**  
Merkley Elementary Principal  
emcmahan@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

**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](http://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 will again serve healthy breakfasts and lunches this summer as part of the USDA's Summer Food Service Program.

The free program provides nutritionally sound meals to more than 5 million children each summer. During the 2021 fiscal year, the program provided 3 billion meals at a cost of \$10.7 billion to children nationwide.

Johnston, Merkley and Southridge elementary schools will serve as nutrition sites this summer in Highland.

Food Service Administrator Britni Luster is excited about the meal offerings this summer.

"It's a great way to ensure your children are receiving nutritionally sound meals," she said. "Our goal is to feed as many school-age kids as possible, maintaining the continuity of regular meals we established during the school year. Last summer we served 5,211 meals to our community."

### 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 on site at the following:

#### JOHNSTON ELEMENTARY

**Breakfast:** 7:30-8:45 a.m.  
**Lunch:** 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

- **May 30-June 2** (Tuesday-Friday)
- **June 5-9** (Monday-Friday)
- **June 12-15** (Monday-Thursday)
- **June 19-22** (Monday-Thursday)
- **July 10-13** (Monday-Thursday)
- **July 17-20** (Monday-Thursday)
- **July 24-27** (Monday-Thursday)

#### MERKLEY ELEMENTARY

**Lunch:** 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.  
Monday-Thursday, **June 5-July 27**

#### SOUTHRIDGE ELEMENTARY

**Breakfast:** 7:30-8:45 a.m.  
Monday-Thursday, **July 10-27**

### LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

#### *"Highland Education Foundation, out-of-district students help supplement our needs, moderate our budget shortfall"*

I want to thank our parents, teachers, administrators and – most of all – our students for an exciting and productive 2022-2023 school year. Our students excelled academically – and so much more. From an outstanding production of Beauty and the Beast to award-winning performances in both voice and instrument competitions and thrilling athletic performances, it was a year our students will long remember.

#### EDUCATION FOUNDATION

A big thank you to everyone who has been supporting the Highland Education Foundation. In addition to funds that are awarded to individual programs – such as the One School. One Book. at Southridge Elementary – the foundation has grown its bottom line and is looking at expanding funding for broader programming. This outpouring of generosity is the answer to many prayers from those who dreamed of a foundation that could supplement educational needs beyond what our budget could provide.

#### OUT-OF-DISTRICT STUDENTS

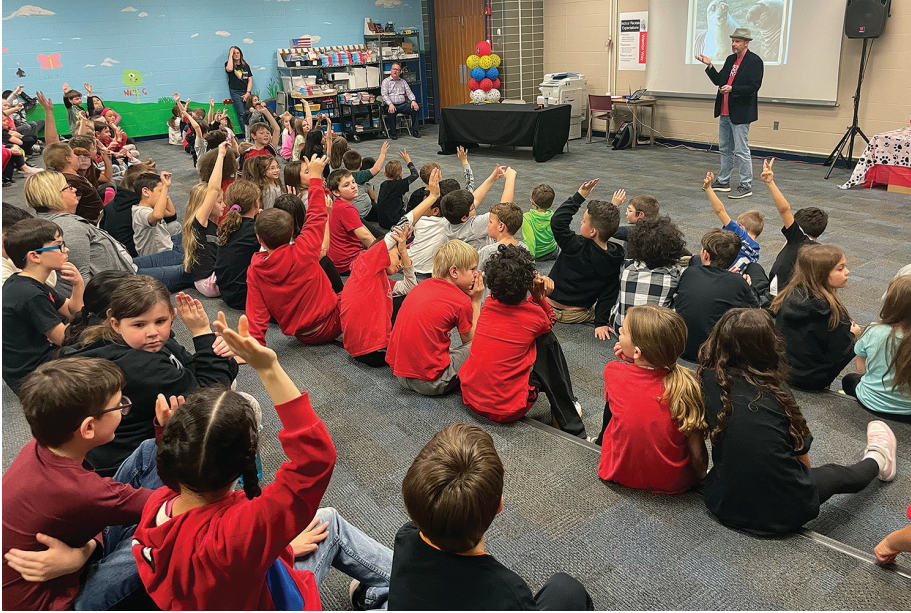
I am excited to announce we will be welcoming as many as 240 new K-10th grade students to Highland schools in August. Within days of the School Board vote to open our borders to students who live in surrounding communities, nearly 200 parents had applied for their child to attend. It is a testament to Highland's reputation as a district that provides high-quality education to all of our students. At the same time, filling every class will allow us to moderate our budget shortfall while allowing the district to continue offering high-end educational programs along with extra-curricular activities that are value-added to the educational experience.

We look forward to a bright and successful 2023-2024 school year. Enjoy your summer!



**Brian Smith**  
Superintendent  
School Town of Highland

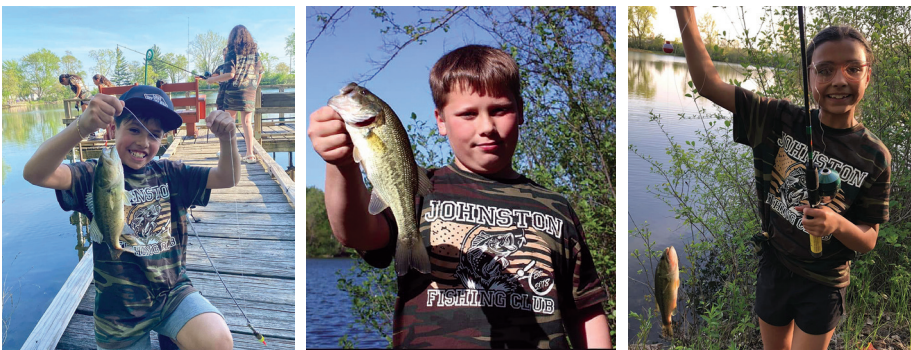
## HIGHLAND EDUCATION FOUNDATION



**ONE SCHOOL. ONE BOOK.** The Southridge Elementary school community – students, teachers and staff – dove into Alan Woodrow’s hilariously funny “The Pet War” with gusto. Thanks to a teacher grant from the Highland Education Foundation, the students got to meet the author while still debating whether a canine companion is preferable to a feline or vice versa. Teacher Beth Harwood, who coordinated the reading project, said students were drawn to the fun banter and the act of persuading their classmates about their choice of pets. “Hannah P. took her work home with her– literally – reading the book with her family each evening,” Harwood said “She liked how the characters worked hard to raise money to get the pet they wanted.”

**INFO:** For more information about the teacher grant program, please visit the Highland Education Foundation website at [highlandef.org](http://highlandef.org). [ photo provided ]

## FISHING CLUB



**HOOKED ON FISHING:** Johnston Elementary’s 4th and 5th grade anglers concluded a banner year of catch-and-release fishing with an outing at the Izaak Walton League lake in Griffith that was followed by a pizza party (minus the anchovies). The six-week program teaches the skills of fishing, tying hooks, setting up fishing poles and casting. In addition to the Izaak Walton fishing experience, the club also cast their lines at Meadows Pond. Johnston Principal Amy Harrington said the number of interested students always exceeds the inventory of fishing poles. “Second grade teacher Dan Cochran has gotten students excited about responsible fishing. It is a testament to him and interested parents that our students have this opportunity and they love it.” [ photos provided ]

## KINDERGARTEN REMINDER

You still have time to register your kindergartner for the 2023-2024 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, 2023.

## 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. July 31** 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 **August 2**. Incoming students will meet based on last names and times 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  
jquigg@highland.k12.in.us

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



"Our wonderful janitors – Mike, Ruby and Maria (pictured above) – are preparing the building for our students' return," Warren Principal Christina Davis said. "They work so hard making sure everything is cleaned, waxed, painted (if needed) and put back together." [ photo provided ]

## SMELLS LIKE CLEAN SPIRIT

From being hired as a substitute custodian at Warren Elementary to becoming a full-time custodian that was followed by becoming a foreman and grounds keeper at Highland school properties, Ruby Brown found everything she was looking for in Highland – and more.

Today, the mother of four is back at Warren as a foreman. In that capacity she is one of the first faces staff and students see every morning.

"I absolutely love my job. I open the school and help everyone get their day started," Brown said.

"Our custodial staff takes great pride in making sure the kids have a safe, clean, sanitized place to come and learn every day," she said. "I treat every student like they are my own: I encourage them to make good choices and do their best. When they are having a rough day, they know I'm here for a hug."

In a word, Warren Principal Christina Davis said Brown and her staff are "awesome!"



### WE'RE HIRING

The School Town of Highland is always looking for custodians to join the STOH family.

The custodial staff are an integral part of the school town family.

The position offers room for advancement as well as substitute opportunities.

**INFO:** Visit [highland.k12.in.us](http://highland.k12.in.us) to apply. For more information, call Human Resources at (219) 924-7400.

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

We are always looking for good substitute teachers. This is the perfect job for someone who would like to work a few days a month or work specific days in the week and earn a little extra money. Certified substitute teachers earn \$90 per day; non-certified substitute teachers earn \$80 per day.

**INFO:** For details to register with the district, call Kathy Grzymiski at (219) 924-7400.

### BUS DRIVERS

The School Town of Highland is looking for qualified drivers. We offer competitive pay, benefits, and hours. Out-of-district drivers are welcome to bring their kids to STOH during their employment with us.

**INFO:** Call the transportation department at (219) 924-4730 with any questions or visit [highland.k12.in.us](http://highland.k12.in.us) to apply,

### PARAPROFESSIONALS

Instructional aides and teacher assistants are highly regarded and much in demand at the School Town of Highland. They are the backbone of the classroom for their work in support of student learning.

If you have two years of study of a college or technical school and find joy in helping students excel, please consider applying for a job as an STOH paraprofessional.

**INFO:** Call (219) 924-7400 with any questions or visit [highland.k12.in.us](http://highland.k12.in.us) to apply.