



# TROJAN TODAY

YOUR SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SOURCE FOR NEWS AND EVENTS | DECEMBER 2023 - JANUARY 2024

## 2023 TEACHER GRANTS

### EDUCATION FOUNDATION AWARDS RECORD \$18,706

Whether it was LEGO robotics gear, Bocce balls and uniforms to start a high school team, paint brushes for budding artists or special glasses to view the total solar eclipse that will cut a wide swath over Indiana on April 8, Highland teachers dove in with great ideas – and high hopes – for this year’s teacher grants.

Superintendent Brian Smith said the foundation is proud to continue growing the grant effort, thanks in no small part to the hundreds of individuals, businesses and organizations that contribute to the effort to bring programs the schools could not otherwise afford.

Johnston Principal and Foundation member Amy Harrington said the grant program promotes blue-sky thinking among teachers. The result: value-added education for students.

“Enthusiasm is sky-high,” she said. “We had a record-breaking year for submissions and dollars. We are encouraging teachers who weren’t funded this year to resubmit in 2024.”



### 2024 TRIVIA NIGHT – SAVE THE DATE!

Join the Highland Education Foundation **Saturday, February 24** for a night of trivia, silent auction, raffles – and fun for a great cause! All proceeds go to innovative educational teacher grants – like these – to enhance learning and achievement. Tickets are \$280 for teams of eight or \$35 per person.

RSVP: [events@highlandef.org](mailto:events@highlandef.org)

**DONATIONS:** We are seeking sponsorships as well as silent auction and raffle items. If you would like to support Highland teachers and students, please consider donating. Please call (219) 741-5014 today!

### RECIPIENTS + INNOVATIVE PROJECTS

From books and paint brushes to immersions and programs, the Highland Education Foundation awarded 28 grants this year – the most ever!

**Caroline Anderson**  
Southridge Elementary Teacher  
Educational Activities

**David Beckham**  
Johnston/Warren Art Teacher  
Paint Brushes

**Kylie Bugajski**  
Warren Elementary Teacher  
Science of Reading

**Christina Davis**  
Warren Elementary Principal  
One School, One Book

**Kolleen DeRolf**  
Warren Elementary Teacher  
Indoor recess activities

**Kelly Geffert**  
Merkley Elementary Teacher  
Phonics materials

**Julieanne Glenn**  
High School  
Media Center

**Rodney Glenn**  
High School Teacher  
Robotic Competition Set

**Melissa Goad**  
**Abigail Mako**  
Merkley Elementary Teachers  
Café Immersion

**Anne Green**  
Warren Elementary Teacher  
Books

**Ryan Harrington**  
High School Athletic Director  
Bocce Balls + Uniforms

**Amanda Johnsen**  
Warren Elementary Teacher  
Task Cards

**Pete Koulianos**  
High School  
Hex Bars

**Monica Kurz**  
High School  
Coffee Cart

**Lisa Mendoza**  
Middle School Teacher  
Hands on Equations

**Jodi Olah**  
High School  
Leadership Conference

**Rachel Paplomatas**  
Middle School Teacher  
Broadcast equipment

**Annamarie Pizer**  
Warren Elementary Teacher  
Books

**Suzanne Rodriguez**  
Merkley Elementary Teacher  
Books

**Suzanne Rodriguez**  
**Ali Ross**  
Merkley Elementary Teachers  
Camping Activity

**Amanda Schocke**  
Merkley Elementary Teacher  
Decodable Readers

**Deanna Shapiro**  
Southridge Elementary Counselor  
One School, Author

**Laura Tallarico**  
Middle School Teacher  
Eclipse Glasses

**Andrea Warner**  
High School Nurse  
Hygiene program

**Alex Wierzbicki**  
Middle School Teacher  
LEGO robotics

**Jamie Wilson**  
Warren Elementary  
Science of Reading

**Amy Wolfe**  
High School  
Physical Education KanJam

**Kristen Verhoeve**  
Merkley Elementary Counselor  
Counseling Material

ABC



## ADMINISTRATION

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## 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.

## Highland elementary teachers learning more about Science of Reading to help students soar

Highland elementary teachers are tapping into the Science of Reading curriculum for the benefit of all students in grades K-5.

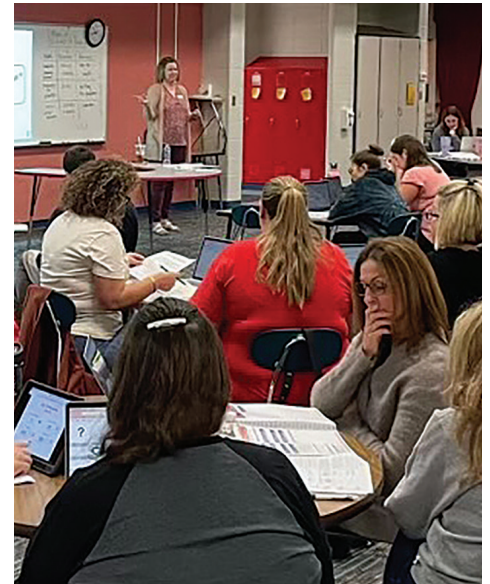
Title I Coordinator LuAnn Keltner said decades of research have revealed why reading comes easier to some children than others.

“There are a host of neurological specialties studying how our brains learn to read. What they found is that different parts of the brain are responsible for individual pieces of function that combine to allow us to read,” Keltner said. “That knowledge is leading to changes in how universities are teaching teachers and how we, as a district, are approaching reading.”

The one thing that hasn’t changed: Knowledge that early intervention is key to reading proficiency – and that it is never too late to start.

“Our administration has placed a high priority on teaching the Science of Reading to all of our elementary students,” she said.

“Our teachers have participated in learning the basics of the program,” Keltner said. “Instructor Melissa Gill, from the Wabash



Valley Education Center in West Lafayette, will be coming back in January to talk about vocabulary development.”

Highland is part of a grant Gill received to enhance reading education.

“It’s training that our teachers will use to its fullest on behalf of our students.”

## LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

### *“From theatre and cross-country to learning and scheduling, we’re closing out Highland’s first semester on a high note”*

At this critical midpoint of the school year, our students and staff keep reaching higher – and achieving their goals. Here are just a few snippets of what we’ve been up to:

**BRINGING THE CURTAIN DOWN ...**

A shout out to the HHS theatre company. Their production of Agatha Christie’s “Murder on the Orient Express” was outstanding. They brought the stage production to life to the delight of the audience.

**CROSS-COUNTRY KUDOS ...**

Congrats to Junior Jalen Strietelmeir for becoming one of the elite runners in Indiana at the LaVern Gibson Championship Cross Country Course, one of the hilliest in the country. Jalen, who shaved more than 30 seconds off his time since season’s start, is the fourth HHS runner in the last 30 years to place Top 50 in the state.

**HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULING ...**

Parents, please take note: Scheduling for high school classes for 2024/2025 will begin in January with Juniors (1/16), Sophomores (1/26), Freshmen (2/9) and then 8th graders (3/11), which is set for our 8th grade parent night in the Auditorium at 6 p.m.

**BLOCK SCHEDULING ...**

The 2024/2025 school year, the high school will be moving to a Modified Block schedule. More news on that change will be addressed in an upcoming newsletter.

The blessings of the holidays to you and your family!



**Brian Smith**  
Superintendent  
School Town of Highland



**SOUTHRIDGE ELEMENTARY**



**HOOPS FOR HEART:** Seven exercises in 50 minutes made for a block-buster Hoops for the Heart fundraiser at Southridge Elementary. Students shot hoops, jumped, ran, skipped and hopped, working up a sweat for a good cause. Proceeds – a whopping \$12,834.90 overall – have been forwarded to the American Heart Association for vital research into congenital and acquired heart ailments. Second grader Evangeline Kikalos, who raised \$2,144.29, earned the right to be Southridge principal for the day. Mrs. Rebecca Raycroft’s third graders had the highest participation and get an extra 50 minutes of gym time. **Way to go, Southridge!** [ photos provided ]

**HIGHLAND HIGH SCHOOL**



**CROSS COUNTRY:** In three short seasons as an Highland High School cross-country competitor, Jalen Strietelmeir (pictured above in white) has gone from 18:06 on the 3.1 mile course to running a 15:56 and being included as one of the top 50 high school harriers in Indiana. **Congratulations, Jalen!**

**JOHNSTON ELEMENTARY**



**UNDEFEATED CHAMPS!** Congratulations to the Johnston Wildcats Girls Basketball team who went undefeated this season. Coached by Greg Zabrecky, Olivia Okamoto (1), Jayleen Alvarez (3), Beya Rivera (4), Jocelyn Pottorf (5), Evie VanBodegraven (10), Elizabeth Hernandez (11), Sofia Smith (12), Carsynnn Sasek (20), Hannah Miller (23), Maylani Bravo (34) and Lailah Pickett (35) won their season opener and never looked back. Stats for 2023: Warren Wolverines: 1 win/5 losses, Southridge Warriors: 2 wins/4 losses, Merkley Mustangs: 3 wins/3losses, Johnston Wildcats: 6 wins/0 losses.



# Holiday Spectacular

CELEBRATE THE SEASON AT MONBECK AUDITORIUM

FREE  
ADMISSION

6:30 PM DECEMBER 12

This year's Holiday Spectacular will feature the talents of our Middle and High School students in an all-new format.

Our band, choir and orchestra will showcase the best of the season with combined school ensembles and a group finale you will not want to miss!

OPEN TO THE  
PUBLIC

