



TROJAN TODAY

YOUR SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SOURCE FOR NEWS AND EVENTS | DECEMBER 2024 - JANUARY 2025

ADVANCED PLACEMENT

HIGHLAND SEES INCREASE IN STUDENTS TAKING AP COURSES

Highland High School is seeing increases in the number of students enrolled in Advanced Placement classes and those succeeding in the exams measuring their proficiency thanks, in part, to the University of Notre Dame and its Advanced Placement Teacher Investment Program – more commonly known as AP-TIP IN.

Across the country, studies show the number of public high school students who take at least one AP exam have increased by 65 percent over the last decade. Today, 50 percent of students entering four-year colleges start with some credit from AP courses.

Asst. Principal Andrew Locke said Highland High School students are mirroring the national findings.

“We have seen an increase in the percentage of our students that are enrolled in AP classes since we tapped into this program two years ago and a corresponding level of success we measure by the number who achieve a 3, 4 or 5 grade on their exams,” Locke said. “This year, we have already awarded more than 75 stipends to our students because of their academic success.”



PROGRAM RESOURCES

AP-TIP IN offers resources that help teachers and students achieve Advanced Placement success, such as:

1. Summer training sessions preparing instructors to teach AP classes.
2. Remote teacher collaborations for professional development and networking.
3. Teacher stipends based on the success of student exams.
4. Remote collaboration sessions to connect students and share their experiences.
5. Student stipends based on test results.
6. Mock exams in advance of actual exams in April and May.

Senior wall showcases where Highland grads are heading

Highland’s first-ever “Look Who Was Accepted to College” wall is taking on a life of its own, growing daily as Guidance Counselor Jason Quigg posts the names of graduating seniors and colleges where they have been accepted.

Between them, Skylar Zoeteman and Ashley Mako have been accepted by more than a dozen colleges and universities.

With a goal to become a commercial pilot, Zoeteman says getting early acceptance means she can take a deeper look at academic

programs and the opportunity to play softball, “I am looking closely at Christian colleges,” she said. “That’s important to me.”

Mako, who is looking at law enforcement or occupational therapy, said she wants to maximize her college experience.

“These are all great schools. With the hard part done, I’m focusing on where I feel like I belong. I also am looking to get a spot on a collegiate dive team,” she said. “I’m already scheduling visits to help make that important choice.”



[The Idea Factory photo]

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- Christina Davis**
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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 for the latest information, including meeting agendas, school policies, board mission, beliefs and values.

PROJECT LEAD THE WAY



Whether it is kindergartners learning about the human body, fourth-graders studying the brain or fifth-graders working on ecosystems, Johnston Elementary has been taking learning by storm through the Project Lead the Way immersive curriculum. Johnston Principal Amy Harrington said every student in Grades K-5 is working in the hands-on educational initiative with a goal for each grade level to complete four modules throughout the school year. “Students are learning the fundamentals while being taught to think critically,” she said. “They’re working collaboratively, learning vital life lessons while completing their academic modules.” [photos provided]

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

“There’s so much to be proud of as we enter the holidays!”

We are entering mid-year and our students and teachers have already accomplished so much this year. Every student I talk to is excited is about learning. Our extracurriculars and sports are just as robust.

Congratulations to HHS Senior Jalen Stritelmeier, who finished in the Top 20 in the boys cross country state finals. Jalen ran the 5K course in an impressive time of 15.34, making him one of Indiana’s elite runners and one of Highland’s best of all time.

The launch of Girls Wrestling as an IHSAA-sanctioned sport has shined a spotlight on our girls team. Highland has three wrestlers on the nwi.com watch list: Emmalynn

Moore, fourth at 140 lbs.; Aleksandra Bastaic, first at 145 lbs.; and Melody Vazquez, 12th at 155 lbs.

I also want to extend my sincere congratulations to our entire fine arts department with a special shout out to David Markley and Matt Domasica, who have rebuilt the fine arts program hard hit by the pandemic. Hope to see you all at “Frozen Jr.”

The blessings of this holiday season to you and your families.



Brian Smith
Superintendent
School Town of Highland

2024 TEACHER GRANTS

HIGHLAND EDUCATION FOUNDATION AWARDS \$9,800

Highland Education Foundation approved \$9,800 during the 2023-2024 grant cycle, awarding funding for 15 projects that include every school building.

Anthony Belli, assistant principal at Highland Middle School and a member of the HEF board of directors, said the foundation found exactly what they were looking for - innovation and innovative collaboration that spans subjects and grade levels.

"Each year, we see our teachers take learning to the next level," Belli said. "The grants that are consistently getting approved are those that get children active in their learning. We are helping to bring these ideas to life for the benefit of our students. The benefits are huge."

As a member of the HEF board of directors and the mom of an elementary, middle and high school student, Stephanie Turner has seen firsthand the grant projects brought to life.

"As a foundation, we are visiting schools and reaching out to more and more teachers at the building level," Turner said. "We want them to know we are here to help them help their students."



2025 TRIVIA NIGHT – SAVE THE DATE!

Join the Highland Education Foundation **Saturday, February 22** 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. Cost per team (eight people) is \$320. Doors open at 5 p.m. Trivia starts at 6 p.m. **RSVP:** info@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 + PROJECTS

From books and technology to immersions and programs, the Highland Education Foundation awarded 15 grants this year.

Christina Davis
Warren Elementary
Principal
One School, One Book
\$1,000

Amy Wolfe
Eric Miller
Ben Geffert
High School Teachers
Making Fitness Fun
\$1,046.01

Irene Konyar
Warren Technology
Resource Aide
Hands on Technology
\$141.24

Suzanne Rodriguez
Ali Ross
Merkley Elementary
Fifth-Grade Teachers
Book Tasting Cafe and
Book Report
\$353.66

Jodi Olah
High School Teacher
Leadership Support
Funding
\$1,000

Carolyn Anderson
Tricia Pedraza
Meaghan Ehlert
Southridge Elementary
First-Grade Teachers
First Chapter Fridays
\$644.12

Becky Raycroft
Southridge Elementary
Third-Grade Teacher
Tactile Manipulatives
\$390.41

Kelly Geffert
Cheryl Fleming
Merkley Elementary
Third-Grade Teachers
Stem Games
\$274.33

Erica Bizon
Becca Klacik
Southridge Special
Education Teachers
Social, Emotional &
Tactile Learning
\$1,062.88

Lisa Kelly
Johnston Elementary
Kindergarten Teacher
Decodable Readers
\$997.27

Teresa Cox
Jay Turoci
Middle School
Teachers
Experimenting
with Pathfinders
\$517.56

Sandy Smith
Merkley Elementary
Teacher
Tech Lab
\$527.72

Sherri Terrell-Mishler
High School Teacher
Enhancing Visual
Storytelling at Highland
High to Change the Way
You See It
\$786.41

Beth Harwood
Southridge Elementary
Third-Grade Teacher
Stem Bins
\$317.72

Miranda Porter
Kerry Anderson
Carrie Pasko
Southridge Elementary
First-Grade Teachers
The First Grade
Restaurant
\$274.29



HIGHLAND THEATRE COMPANY
AND HIGHLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL PRESENT ...

Disney
FROZEN JR.

**7 PM FRIDAY
JANUARY 17**

**2 PM SATURDAY
JANUARY 18**

Join Anna, Elsa, and all of your favorite characters as they embark on an epic, ice-filled journey of self-discovery, camaraderie, and the real meaning of true love.

Adapted for young performers, this musical includes favorite Frozen songs such as "Love Is an Open Door," "Do You Want to Build a Snowman?," and "Let It Go," as well as wonderful new songs from the Broadway production.

With its empowering message of love and understanding, FROZEN JR. is sure to melt your heart!

MONBECK AUDITORIUM

HIGHLAND HIGH SCHOOL | 9135 ERIE STREET



TICKETS ON SALE NOW!
highlandtheatrecompany.org

New music teachers join elementary staff

As part of the School Town of Highland's commitment to art education, every elementary school child gets 45 minutes of music instruction each week. For students who find a growing love for voice or instrumental music, the curriculum is the leaping-off place for relaxation, creative pursuits or even careers in the field.

Studies show children and teens who study music perform better in school, get higher grades, have improved literacy, and are 24 percent more likely to graduate. Highland's newest music teachers are Erik Paulsen, who you will meet in this issue of Trojan Today, and Sheriann Lovelace-Chandler, who you will meet in the February-March newsletter.



MEET ERIK PAULSEN: In school, Erik Paulsen was always proficient in math and science. When it came time to select a field of study after high school, the Wyoming native decided teaching music should be his profession.

"I had so many positive experiences involving music. I was inspired to sing and started out playing tuba and trombone. I lettered in three sports, but also played in jazz band. I knew I wanted to do the same for the students I now teach at Johnston and Merkle," he said. "My kids learn about reading music, but they also learn about the role it plays in all cultures. Music is unique. It's math. It's history. It involves reading. It is the science of sound. My hope is that I instill a love of music – whether that is listening, writing or performing – they can enjoy for a lifetime."