



# TROJAN TODAY

YOUR SCHOOL TOWN OF HIGHLAND SOURCE FOR NEWS AND EVENTS | JUNE-JULY 2025

## CELL PHONE BAN

**BEGINNING IN 2025-26 SCHOOL YEAR, HIGHLAND STUDENTS MUST PUT AWAY ALL ELECTRONICS**

When cell phone use during the school day was curbed in 2024 to conform with Indiana Senate Enrolled Act 185, the district had hoped communicating the new rules to students as well as parents, which allowed electronic use in hallways, classrooms and cafeteria within reason, would have been sufficient to keep students in compliance.

High School Principal John Zack said that moderate approach has not been successful.

Beginning in August, Zack said Highland will mirror other area schools with a no cell phone policy.

"All electronics, including headphones, Beats, AirPods and cell phones, are to be off and away at all times during the school day," he said. "SEA 185 does describe that time as being instructional

time, meaning any time during the day that we use to count towards our instructional day."

There are a few exceptions, notably the teacher providing permission to use the devices for educational purposes. Other permitted use would be the teacher declaring an emergency use or for a student need to manage their health care.

"We understand this marks a big shift for our students and parents. Everyone needs to understand the proliferation of use has truly exceeded acceptable limits," he said. "Abuse of our leniency compared to other school districts necessitated these changes.

"The educational environment must be maintained for success. This is our best effort to provide that for our children."



### WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

From bell to bell, cell phones, AirPods, Beats and other headphones must be put away.

### WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY ARE NOT?

The electronics will be confiscated for the remainder of the day, and the student will have to pick up their item(s) from the main office after the end of the school day.

### WILL THERE BE DISCIPLINE INVOLVED?

Yes, anywhere from a warning to suspension/expulsion is possible based on student actions, compliance and repeated offenses.

### CAN WE APPEAL THIS RULE?

No. This rule is directly reflective of the law as enacted by the Indiana State Legislature in order to help schools maintain a distraction-free environment.

## Film screening raises nearly \$3,000 to repair band equipment

In 2024, "The Last Repair Shop" won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Short Film. Just a year later, a special screening of the film at Monbeck Auditorium attracted 150 local residents and raised nearly \$3,000 in donations that are being used to repair some very special vintage instruments of our own.

Band Director Amelia Thurman said Highland will be using a majority of the donations to repair the band's timpani. Also known as kettle drums, Thurman

said it is fitting that a documentary about the Los Angeles specialists who repair that school district's musical instruments have provided an opportunity half a country away.

"The cost of repairing our timpani is nearly identical to what the event raised," she said. "This means so much to our musicians. I can't thank the community enough for attending the screening and staying to listen to our band perform one of the songs from the movie."



### Marching Trojan Pride

Be sure to check out the Marching Trojan Pride at this year's local Fourth of July parades – July 3 in Highland and July 4 in Griffith.

## ADMINISTRATION

**Brian Smith**  
Superintendent  
bsmith@highland.k12.in.us

**Ryan Erdelac**  
Assistant 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

**Scheryl Corman**  
Highland Middle School Principal  
scorman@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

**Patrick Krull**, President  
**Robert Kuva**, Vice President  
**Erica Smith-Gomez**, Secretary  
**Victor A. Garcia**, member  
**Richard Alyea**, 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 available at Southridge Elementary cafeteria

The School Town of Highland is serving healthy and delicious lunches again this summer as part of the United States Department of Agriculture's Summer Food Service Program.

The free program is for any child age 18 or younger. The USDA's summer food program provides nutritional meals to more than 5 million children each summer. Southridge Elementary is Highland's nutrition site this summer.

Because Indiana opted out of the USDA's SUN Bucks program for the summer of 2025, the \$120 per month in grocery benefits to low-income families during the months when school is not in session are not available.

Food Service Administrator Britni Luster is excited at the prospect of providing healthy nutritious food to all children in a fun setting. "We look forward to our summer nutrition program as another outreach to the community," she said. "No child should ever be hungry. Our goal is to feed as many kids as possible."

**Please Note:** The School Town of Highland Food Service Department is an equal opportunity provider.



### Locations & Times

The Food Service Department will be serving free lunch from noon-1 p.m. to any child 18 years and under. Meals must be eaten on-site.

### Southridge Elementary

9221 Johnston Street, Highland

- ♦ June 2-5 (Monday-Thursday)
- ♦ June 9-12 (Monday-Thursday)
- ♦ June 16-18 (Monday-Wednesday)
- ♦ June 23-26 (Monday-Thursday)
- ♦ June 30-July 3 (Monday-Thursday)
- ♦ July 7-10 (Monday-Thursday)
- ♦ July 14-17 (Monday-Thursday)
- ♦ July 21-24 (Monday-Thursday)

**Note:** No meal service June 19 in observance of the holiday.

## LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

*"We'll be tackling big issues ahead in the new school year"*

### Budget Cuts

It's going to be a busy summer. At the administrative level we are already processing the impact of Indiana Senate Bill 1, which reduces property tax collections for local units of government, including cities, towns, libraries and schools. We know the cuts are significant. The state has offered schools no option – other than a referendum – to raise dollars for essential costs.

### Total Electronics Ban

For students returning in August, I am asking that you begin weaning yourself from the use of electronic devices and familiarize yourself with new rules. It will make it that much easier when new protocols regarding electronic use go into effect on the first day of school. When compared with other Indiana school districts, Highland was moderate in 2024. That was a good first step, but

didn't go far enough. In 2025-26, we will have zero tolerance for offenders.

### 14 years of Learning

Celebrating the Class of 2025 is a special one for me on both a personal and professional level. This class started kindergarten in 2011, just one year before I began work as superintendent of the School Town of Highland. I think it's fair to say we have done a lot of learning.

I want to wish all of the students my heartiest congratulations for achieving this milestone. Whether you are moving on to another educational experience in the form of college, learning a trade, an apprenticeship or something altogether different, I wish you a path that always includes learning and a life of happiness.



**Brian Smith**  
Superintendent  
School Town of Highland



## Key-ping Wicker Memorial Park Clean



North Township Trustee Adrian A. Santos presents a Certificate of Appreciation to Key Club President Haylie Houchin (left) and Key Club Advisor and HHS English Teacher Jodi Olah.

When North Township Trustee Adrian A. Santos put out the call asking for clean-up assistance on Earth Day at Wicker Memorial Park, the HHS Key Club showed up in force. At 185 members strong, the club has been recognized as one of the largest – and most active – Key Clubs in Indiana. In 2024-2025, the group logged 1,990 service hours and participated in more than 100 events. Key Club President Haylie Houchin is thrilled to see participation in the service club continue to grow. “We band together to help others,” she said. “I think we get back as much as we give. Doing for our community is contagious.” [ photo provided ]

## Sooper Yooper Afternoon



When it comes to the environment, everyone can be a superhero! Environmental superhero Billy Cooper creator Mark Newman visited fourth graders throughout the district to talk about Billy's latest adventures and what they can do to safeguard the Great Lakes – Michigan, Superior, Huron, Erie and Ontario – from environmental hazards, such as zebra mussels that arrived in a ship's ballast water, and protect the largest freshwater system in the world. [ photos provided ]

## Immunization Clinic

If your child still needs one or more immunizations, the School Town, in collaboration with Franciscan Health, offers a one-stop shop.

This year's Immunization Clinic will be held from 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Thursday, August 7 in the Highland High School LGI (enter through Door B). All required vaccinations will be available.

No appointments are necessary and parents do not need to be present. Consent forms are required and must be completed by a parent or guardian. Please bring photo ID and insurance card. If uninsured, vaccines are \$10.

- ✦ Kindergarten students must have all required immunizations prior to the first day of school.
- ✦ Students entering 6th grade are required to have a Tdap and MCV4 (Meningitis) immunization prior to the first day of school.
- ✦ Students entering 12th grade are required to have a 2nd MCV4 (Meningitis) immunization prior to the first day of school.

**QUESTIONS?** Please contact Nurse Andrea Warner at (219) 922-5610 ext. 1021 or [awarner@highland.k12.in.us](mailto:awarner@highland.k12.in.us).



## Kindergarten Reminder

You still have time to register your kindergartner for the 2025-2026 academic year. It's as easy as 1-2-3!

Simply visit the RDS parent access page – <https://rdsappserv.highland.k12.in.us/rdsparentaccess/> – and click Enroll A New Student button.

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.

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, 2025.





## HOOKED ON FISHING

Now in its seventh season, the Johnston Fishing Club proved as popular as ever in 2025 as it was as a start-up in 2018. Club sponsor and second-grade teacher Dan Cochrane said 35 fourth and fifth graders applied for 22 open spots on the club that helps students learn the basics of catch-and-release fishing – including tying a line, the anatomy of a fish, casting, baiting a hook and safety lessons all fishing boys and girls need to know.

“I am so excited because the kids really love this program – and I do, too. I would love to expand it but we just can’t yet,” Cochrane said. “For the first time, we didn’t have to ask for sponsorships. The generosity in years past means we have the poles and gear we need to keep it going. It is gratifying to me that the kids find a love of an activity most didn’t know they could learn. Their enthusiasm makes it all worthwhile. I’m seeing more bikes around town that have a fishing pole attached. It always makes me smile.”

### Catch of the Day

New to the club this year were prizes for outstanding achievement:



**MOST IMPROVED**  
Sophia Schoon



**MOST FISH CAUGHT**  
Hunter Zimmer



**BIGGEST FISH**  
Evie Van Bodegraven

## Athletics Camp

The Athletics Department at Highland High School is offering camps for basketball, football, volleyball, soccer and baseball this summer. All are welcome. Please note age and grade level.

Registration is due one week prior to camp start date and must be completed online at **highland.k12.in.us**. Registration will not be accepted day of camp.

### 🏀 Girls/Boys Basketball Camp

June 9-12

**1st-4th Grade:** 9-11 a.m.

**5th-8th Grade:** Noon-2 p.m.

**Cost:** \$35

**Where:** Main gymnasium

### ⚾ Baseball Camp

June 23-25

**Ages 6-14:** 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

**Cost:** \$50

**Where:** Baseball Field

### 🏈 Football Camp

July 7-10

**1st-5th Grade:** 10-11:15 a.m.

**Cost:** \$35

**Where:** Main Field

### 🏐 Volleyball Camp

July 21-23

**1st-5th Grade:** 9:30-10:45 a.m.

**6th-8th Grade:** 11 a.m.-12:45 p.m.

**Cost:** \$45

**Where:** Main gymnasium

### ⚽ Soccer Camp

July 21-24

**Ages 6-9:** 9-10:30 a.m.

**Ages 10-14:** 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

**Cost:** \$50

**Where:** Main field