



inside **HIGHLANDS**

Spring 2021

HIGHLANDS SCHOOL DISTRICT PARENT & COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Back to School!

Students Begin 4 Days In Person March 29

A little over a year since last year's nationwide Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, many Highlands students will begin to experience a sense of normalcy on March 29 as they return to school in person for 4 days a week. Recommended by the Highlands School District Task Force following a parent survey that indicated overwhelming support of increasing in-person days, the Highlands School Board of Directors approved the plan on March 15. Options for full remote learning are still offered for families who do not feel comfortable having their children attend school in person.

Students returning to school in person will attend Monday through Thursday, with Friday remaining a remote learning day for all students. Students and staff will still need to wear a mask and adhere to social distancing guidelines. Due to the increased number of students in classrooms, on buses and in cafeterias and common areas, students will be distanced about 2 feet or more apart, depending on the location.

"I can't put into words how excited I am to have our students return to more in-person learning. This past year has been overwhelming, to say the least. Our students, parents, staff, and community continued to exhibit strength and resiliency throughout the entire situation. It is critical that we return our lives to some sense of normalcy; especially for our students who thrive off structure, routine, and social interactions. School is the place that provides our students with these opportunities. Our administration, faculty and staff are ready to focus on the academic, social, and emotional well-being of our students and provide them with the supports they need to move forward with success!"

~ **Dr. Monique Mawhinney**,
Superintendent



PSSA, Keystone Exam Delayed Until May

Recognizing the challenges the Covid-19 global pandemic is creating for schools, the PA Department of Education is allowing local education agencies to delay the assessments until either later this spring or in the fall. This decision complies with federal law while providing districts the flexibility in administering the assessments. This needed data will help the state to identify areas of learning loss and opportunities for learning acceleration. It will also help determine the inequitable impact of the pandemic on learners, including low-income students, students of color, English learners and students with disabilities.

Highlands students will take the PSSAs and Keystone Exams in May rather than in the fall. "We want to see how our students are doing and what areas we need to focus on going into next year," said Superintendent **Dr. Monique Mawhinney**. "We also plan to address skill deficits by providing relevant and rigorous summer programs."

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

PSSA Testing Dates: HES/HMS

HES ELA Grades 3-4	May 4-6
HES Math Grades 3-4	May 11-12
HES Science Grade 4	May 18-19
HES Make Ups	May 20-21
HMS ELA Grades 5-8	May 4-6
HMS Math Grades 5-8	May 11-12
HMS Science 8/Make Ups	May 18-20
HMS Algebra Keystones/Make Ups	May 25-27

Spring Keystone Testing Dates: HHS

<i>In-Person Students:</i>	
Algebra I	May 17-18
Literature	May 19-20
Biology	May 24-25
<i>HVA/Remote Students:</i>	
Algebra I and Literature	May 21
Biology	May 28
Keystone Make Ups	May 26-27

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724-226-2400

Dr. Monique Mawhinney, Superintendent

www.goldenrams.com



Welcome, New Staff!

Carmen Corna School Attendance Officer



Highlands School District officially welcomed **Mrs. Carmen Corna** as the new School Attendance Officer on March 8, 2021. Mrs. Corna brings over 20 years of experience in the mental health field to the Highlands family.

Mrs. Corna earned her B.S. in Psychology from Clarion University and her Master's in education for School Counseling from Duquesne University. She is a National Certified Counselor with K-12 Certification. Her work experience includes serving as a Bachelor-level direct care worker, contractual child and family adoption profile writer, Master-level substitute teacher, case manager, therapist, Supervisor and Program Manager of School Based Services and Director of Residential Treatment Service.

As the Highlands School District Attendance Officer, Mrs. Corna's primary responsibilities are to implement compulsory school attendance law and ensure educational access for all students. She will work proactively with district families and students regarding the importance of an education toward any future plans and goals. She will also support families in breaking down barriers to student attendance and education.

"I am happy and excited to be working for Highlands," said Mrs. Corna. "I look forward to meeting families and assisting them with any needs as well as seeing students in their respective buildings working toward their futures."

Outside of work, Mrs. Corna enjoys spending time with her husband, their three children and their dog. Although their kids keep them busy with all of their activities, they also find time to enjoy camping, kayaking, boating, fishing and ice skating.

Mrs. Corna may be reached at ccorna@goldenrams.com or 724-226-0600, ext. 3007.

WELCOME!

Rose Costellic, CSN - School Nurse, Elementary
Shane Lisowski - IT Support Technician
Kaitlyn Selfridge - Math Teacher, Middle School
Angela Syput - Learning Support Teacher, Middle School

STAFF TRANSITIONS

Kate Hanlon - School Nurse, Early Childhood Center

After-School Tutoring Offered at All Schools

Did you know? ALL Highlands schools offer after-school in-person and Zoom tutoring sessions Monday through Thursday for students in need of extra support with academics. The most effective tutoring programs establish strong relationships with students first, and all Highlands tutoring programs operate with teachers who know and care about our students. An activity bus is also available to take students home after tutoring. HES & HECC students need parent and teacher permission in order to attend.

For more information, please contact your child's school or visit www.goldenrams.com/Page/5775.

High School: 2:40-3:40 pm - Room A107 & Zoom

Middle School: 3:15-4:15 pm - Library & Zoom

Elementary School: 3:50-4:50 pm
Teacher Classrooms & Zoom

Early Childhood Center
3:50-4:50 pm
Teacher Classrooms only



Teachers Learn, Too!

Highlands Grades K-8 Math and English/Language Arts teachers are participating in a three-year professional development series about differentiated instruction with educational leader **Ms. Franny McAleer**, who is an inspirational instructor for students and teachers and a pioneer in promoting creativity in the classroom.

"We have students in our classrooms who struggle academically and others who learn at an advanced level and accelerated pace," said Ms. McAleer. "We can meet the needs of all learners by differentiating instruction."

The training sessions provide an understanding and application of the principles and strategies needed to set up a classroom that provides success and challenges for academically diverse students. The goals of the series are for Highlands teachers to learn strategies for differentiating content, process and product; develop and implement tiered assignments for students as part of their lesson plans; and create a "share the wealth" repository for teachers to share ideas.



Summer Programs

Exciting, new summer programs will be offered for all Highlands K-12 students!
More information coming soon!

In Our Schools...

For MORE school news and photos, visit goldenrams.com and our social media pages!

Early Childhood Center

Perfect Attendance:

In February, 75 Kindergarten and nine Pre-K students had perfect attendance. Students were recognized at school with a certificate and a book. The PBIS team will continue to recognize students with perfect attendance monthly. The PBIS team also provides a RAMS Store for RAMS students to use their points toward prizes twice a month. Items for the RAMS store were donated by the Educational Partnership.



Career Day: HECC is sponsoring a Career Day this spring. Parent volunteers are asked to record a short video explaining what their job entails and what Kindergarten students would be interested in learning. It's never too early to spark a student's interest in careers! Please contact School Counselor **Mrs. Angela Boyer** to share videos or for more info at aboyer@goldenrams.com.

Read Across America Week: HECC celebrated RAA with dressing up for theme-based days, making Cat in Hat hats, reading Dr. Seuss stories, comparing and contrasting characters and other story elements from two different books, and having special prize drawings for RAMS Readers.



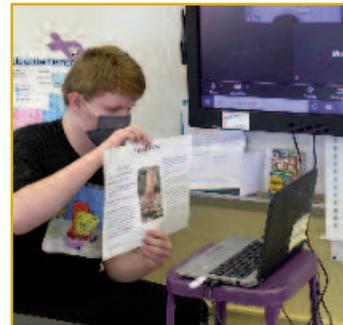
Highlands Elementary

Designated by the state as a school for Targeted Support and Improvement for the 2020-21 school year, Highlands Elementary (HES) has focused on improving school attendance, re-establishing positive behavior interventions and support (PBIS) and increasing achievement on the PSSA.

During the second quarter, all HES students have obtained an average daily attendance of 92.07%, which is above their goal of 86%. Students who have monthly perfect attendance receive an award certificate from the principal. In addition, the homeroom at each grade level

that has the highest number of students with perfect attendance for the month earns an ice cream party, which is graciously sponsored by the Highlands K-4 PTO.

Throughout the first semester, 780 students have received a Golden Rams ticket for following the behavior expectations at HES! At the end of each month, five winners from each homeroom are recognized with an additional prize from the PBIS team. The "Golden Cart" visits the café during the lunch period to reward students in front of their peers. HES also started the Stellar Student Awards this year. Each month, two students are from each grade level are chosen for following RAMS expectations. *Read more about the school's targeted improvement at www.goldenrams.com/hes*



Middle School

Taking the Lead!

This spring, HMS students and teachers have been looking for ways to have students take the lead in their learning! In science, students are presenting research about erosion and are advocating for renewable energy. Math students have been presenting their problem-solving strategies all year, and are sharing projects about fractions and statistics with their peers. Students have been sharing their research about careers and colleges in presentations to their peers, and continue to share their work in STEM. They look forward to more student-led learning this year, and hope to welcome parents to the building in the future to hear their students share what they have learned!

Creative Student Council: HMS Student Council continues to come up with fun and creative ideas to help students and staff stay connected in the hybrid learning model, including Read Across America dress up days, dress up days for holidays, guessing games and trivia!

RAMS Rocks! The Middle School's PBIS program is helping students exhibit RAMS behavior! To date, 1,100 RAMS tickets have been given to students, and the school had 50 RAMS student drawings and 5 RAMS teachers!

Attendance Matters: With the help of the PBIS team, HMS has celebrated more than 400 students each quarter for being present 95% of the time. In addition, 40 students to date have earned perfect attendance recognition!

COMING SOON!

The Highlands School District Administrative Center and ALL school buildings will have the SAME phone number:

724-226-2400

Building options will be listed on the recording. A staff directory of 4-digit extensions are listed at goldenrams.com/directory



High School

Virtual Town Halls with Legislators:

Highlands High School students had the unique opportunity to participate in virtual Town Hall meetings with PA State Sen. **Lindsey Williams** and State Reps. **Bob Brooks** and **Carrie Lewis DelRosso**. Sponsored by PSBA, the purpose of the meetings was to elevate student voice by giving them the opportunity to ask

specific questions and engage in direct conversations with them about educational topics. Thank you to students **Jacob Allan, Austin Burchell, Tessa Deemer, Emma Howell, Daniel Thimons, Allison Love, Hadley Collins, Fatama Shareef, Kassidy Cambal, Rachael Babinsack, and Eve Johnson!**



Winter Sports

Drew Karpen, Athletic Director
dkarpen@goldenrams.com

highlights



The 2020-21 Highlands Winter Sports teams were able to successfully complete their sport seasons under the Covid guidelines and protocols. Congratulations to all of our student athletes and coaches!

Boys Basketball: The Varsity Boys Basketball Team won its **fourth straight section title**, even after jumping up to Class 5A. They finished the regular season with a 13-4 overall record and 9-1 mark in the section, earning themselves a No. 4 seed in the WPIAL playoffs and opening round bye. Sophomore **Jimmy Kunst** stepped up as the leading scorer at 17.3 points per game. He was named to the Big 56 Conference First-Team All-Section. Head Coach **Tyler Stoczynski** was named the Coach of the Year for leading the team to another section title. Senior **Wahkeem Roman** and junior **Carter Leri** were named to the Second Team, and senior **Antoine McDaniel** and sophomore **Chandler Thimons** received an Honorable Mention. For the first time in school history, the junior varsity team finished the season **undefeated**, going 16-0.

Girls Basketball: The Girls Basketball Team displayed their improvement from last year, finishing the regular season with a 9-12 record and 6-6 mark in the section. They won their last four regular season games. Junior **Maria Fabregas** led the team in scoring in the regular season with 12 points per game. Freshmen **Kalleigh Nerone** and **Jocelyn Bielak** have been two spark plugs in the team's success this season. Nerone averaged 10 points per game and Bielak, 8 points per

game. Junior **Jocelyn Luzier** led the defense with 20 blocks this season. They earned a No. 12 seed in the Class 4A playoffs and faced No. 5 Blackhawk in the first round of the playoffs.

Wrestling: The Wrestling Team was able to compete in eight matches and two dual matches, and was highlighted by junior **Jrake Burford's** postseason run. He finished 2nd place in the individual sectional tournament to advance to the Southwest Regional Tournament.

Swimming: The Boys & Girls Swimming Team had one qualifier each for WPIAL Playoffs. Sophomore **Aidan Ochoa** received WPIAL qualifying times in the 100 fly and 100 backstroke and finished 6th in both. Sophomore **Brenna Bonnett** qualified in the 100 fly and 100 breaststroke and finished 13th in both.

Highlands Athletics: www.goldenramsathletics.org Find us on Facebook & Twitter!

www.goldenrams.com

