

HIGHLANDS SCHOOL DISTRICT ANNUAL NOTICES

2026-2027

The Highlands School District is committed to keeping families and community members informed about important rights, services, policies, and procedures. Each year, the District publishes a series of annual notices that provide information regarding nondiscrimination, student records, special education services, gifted education services, Section 504 protections, Child Find activities, video and audio surveillance, photography and media releases, and other important district operations.

These notices are shared through the district's website, social media platforms, parent communication systems, and other public outreach methods to ensure broad access for all families and community members.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to review these annual notices carefully.

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Highlands School District Child Find Annual Notices

Free & Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Highlands School District provides a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all students, including students with disabilities, in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Chapter 14, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Chapter 15).

FAPE includes the provision of regular education, special education, and related aids, services, and accommodations at no cost to parents/guardians, designed to meet the individual needs of each student.

For students eligible under IDEA, services are provided through an Individualized Education Program (IEP). For students eligible under Section 504, services and accommodations are provided through a Service Agreement.

These services are designed to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to and can participate in educational programs, services, and extracurricular activities to the same extent as their nondisabled peers.

Public Outreach & Awareness System (Child Find)

Highlands School District maintains an ongoing public outreach and awareness system designed to identify, locate, and evaluate all children residing within the district who may be in need of special education services. Highlands School District's Child Find system is designed to identify, locate, and evaluate all children residing within the district who may have disabilities and be in need of special education services. This includes school-age students enrolled in district schools, preschool-aged children, children enrolled by their parents/guardians in private schools, homeless children and youth, children who are wards of the state, students in foster care, migrant children, and other highly mobile students. Child Find activities are conducted for all eligible children regardless of the nature or severity of the suspected disability in accordance with federal and state regulations, including Chapter 14.

Students with disabilities who are enrolled by their parents/guardians in private schools located within Highlands School District boundaries may be eligible for equitable participation services. Child Find activities for these students are conducted in

collaboration with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit in accordance with federal and state regulations.

Information about the district's special education and early intervention programs, as well as the procedures for identification and evaluation, is disseminated through multiple sources, including the district website, student handbooks, district publications and mailings, and other public postings throughout the community. The district also collaborates with community agencies to support these efforts.

This public awareness system includes information regarding potential signs of developmental delay and other risk factors that may indicate a disability. In addition, the district provides ongoing notification to parents of child identification activities and the procedures used to ensure the confidentiality of information, consistent with applicable laws and regulations.

Parents/guardians who believe their child may have a disability and be in need of special education services may request an evaluation at any time by contacting:

Dr. Amber H. Dean
Director of Student Services
Highlands School District
1500 Pacific Avenue
Natrona Heights, PA 15065
Phone: 724-226-2400 ext. 5651

Highlands School District protects the confidentiality of personally identifiable information collected, maintained, or used in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), IDEA, and Pennsylvania regulations. Information regarding the district's confidentiality policies and procedures is available upon request.

Indicators & Risk Factors

Children may be identified for further screening or evaluation when there are concerns related to developmental, academic, adaptive, physical, sensory, or social-emotional functioning. Indicators that may warrant additional review include, but are not limited to:

- Ongoing difficulty with peer interactions or social relationships
- Challenges with communication, including understanding or expressing language
- Difficulty performing academic tasks involving reading, writing, or mathematics
- Vision or hearing concerns that interfere with access to instruction

- Health or attention-related concerns that impact educational performance
- Limited participation in or difficulty engaging in age-appropriate activities
- Difficulty adjusting to changes in routine or environment
- Patterns of social-emotional or behavioral concerns that persist over time and interfere with learning

The presence of one or more of these indicators does not necessarily mean that a child has a disability; however, they may suggest the need for further review through the district's screening and evaluation procedures. If you have questions about your child's development or disability, you may speak with your child's physician/healthcare provider and your child's team at Highlands School District.

Services for Preschool Age Children with Disabilities

Children aged three through the age of beginners are eligible if they have developmental delays and, as a result, need Special Education and related services. Developmental delay is defined as a child who is less than the age of beginners and at least three years of age and is considered to have a developmental delay when one of the following exists: (i) the child's score, on a developmental assessment device, on an assessment instrument which yields a score in months, indicates that the child is delayed by 25% of the child's chronological age in one or more developmental areas, or (ii) The child is delayed in one or more of the developmental areas, as documented by test performance of 1.5 standard deviations below the mean on standardized tests. Developmental areas include cognitive, communicative, physical, social/emotional, and self-help (adaptive). Under the Early Intervention Services System Act (Act 212), eligible young children with developmental delays or disabilities are entitled to receive Early Intervention (EI) services. These services are designed to support the developmental needs of the child and the needs of the family to enhance the child's development.

Early Intervention services are provided through two systems:

Birth to Age 3:

Services are administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services- Alliance for Infants and Toddlers.

Families may contact the Alliance for Infants and Toddlers at:

2801 Custer Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15227

Phone: 412-885-6000

Ages 3 to 5 (Preschool):

Preschool children with developmental delays may qualify for Early Intervention services through the Allegheny Intermediate Unit.

Children may be eligible if they demonstrate a developmental delay of 25% or more in one or more areas (communication, adaptive, cognitive, fine motor, gross motor, or social/emotional), as determined through a multidisciplinary evaluation.

Families may contact the Allegheny Intermediate Unit Preschool Early Intervention Program by phone: 412-394-5904

Screening, Evaluation & Placement Procedures

Highlands School District maintains procedures for the ongoing identification, screening, evaluation, and educational placement of school-age students who may be in need of special education programs and services, in accordance with federal and state regulations, including Chapter 14.

Students receiving special education services are reevaluated at least every three years, or every two years for students with intellectual disability, unless otherwise required by law. Reevaluations may occur more frequently if educational needs warrant or if requested by the parent/guardian or school district.

Screening Procedures

Screening activities are designed to assist in determining whether students are performing at grade-appropriate standards and whether additional educational supports, interventions, or evaluations should be considered. These screenings do not constitute a formal evaluation but are used to determine whether further assessment is warranted.

Screening activities are conducted on an ongoing basis to identify students who may be eligible for special education. Screening activities may include hearing, vision, physical, and speech/language screening; and a review of group-based and individual student data, including cumulative records, health records, report cards, benchmark assessments, and state and local assessment data by the building-level Child Study or Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Team. Information obtained through screenings, classroom performance, parent/guardian input, and outside agencies is documented in the student's educational

record and may be used to guide instructional decisions and determine the need for further evaluation.

Screening activities include, but are not limited to:

- Hearing screenings (Grades K, 1, 2, 3, 7, and 11)
- Vision screenings (Grades K–12)
- Speech and language screenings (Kindergarten and upon teacher referral)
- Ongoing classroom-based assessments of academic, behavioral, social-emotional, and motor development

Confidentiality of Student Information

Highlands School District maintains the confidentiality of student education records in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Highlands School Board Policy 216 (Student Records).

Parents/guardians and eligible students have the right to inspect and review educational records, request the amendment of records believed to be inaccurate or misleading, and provide written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information, except as otherwise permitted by law.

Access to student records is limited to school officials who have a legitimate educational interest. Information may also be disclosed without consent in circumstances permitted by FERPA, including but not limited to disclosures to authorized government agencies, in response to a lawful subpoena, or in connection with a health or safety emergency.

The district maintains appropriate safeguards to ensure the confidentiality and security of student records. Additional information regarding student records and parent rights is available upon request and is outlined in Board Policy 216.

Referral and Evaluation Procedures

If screening and/or progress monitoring data indicate that a student may have a disability and require specially designed instruction, a referral for a multidisciplinary evaluation (MDE) may be initiated by the school team or the parent/guardian.

Parents/guardians may request an evaluation at any time by submitting a written request to the school district. If a request is made orally to a professional employee or administrator,

the district will provide a Permission to Evaluate (PTE) form within 10 calendar days of the request.

A multidisciplinary evaluation will not be conducted without written parental consent. Once the signed Permission to Evaluate is received, the district will complete the evaluation and issue an Evaluation Report (ER) within 60 calendar days, excluding summer break as defined by state regulations.

The evaluation is conducted by a multidisciplinary team and may include, as appropriate:

- Review of existing educational records
- Classroom observations
- Input from parents/guardians and teachers
- Individually administered assessments of academic achievement, cognitive ability, and other relevant areas
- Assessment of social-emotional, behavioral, communication, and functional performance

Parents/guardians are integral members of the evaluation team and will receive a copy of the Evaluation Report prior to any meeting to discuss eligibility or program recommendations, in accordance with state regulations.

Independent Educational Evaluation

Parents/guardians have the right to request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) at public expense if they disagree with an evaluation conducted by the Highlands School District, in accordance with federal and state regulations (34 CFR §300.502).

An IEE is an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the school district.

Upon receipt of a request for an IEE, the District will respond without unnecessary delay and will either:

- Approve the request and provide information regarding procedures and criteria for obtaining the IEE; or
- Initiate a due process hearing to demonstrate that the District's evaluation is appropriate.

Parents/guardians are not required to provide a reason for requesting an IEE.

If approved at public expense, the IEE must meet the same criteria the District uses when conducting its own evaluations, including:

- Qualifications of the evaluator
- Location of the evaluation
- Cost parameters consistent with local rates
- Compliance with applicable evaluation standards

Evaluators must be independent and free from conflicts of interest. When appropriate, the evaluation may include a review of educational records, consultation with school staff, and/or observation of the student in the educational setting.

The District may establish reasonable cost limits and require that payment be made directly to the evaluator upon receipt of a complete and compliant evaluation report.

If a parent/guardian obtains an IEE at private expense, the results will be considered by the IEP team in making decisions regarding the student's educational program and the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE), although the District is not required to adopt the evaluator's conclusions or recommendations.

Parents/guardians may request information from the District regarding where an IEE may be obtained.

Evaluation, Eligibility, and IEP Process

When an evaluation is completed, the results are documented in an Evaluation Report (ER), which is shared with the parent/guardian. The ER includes information about the student's strengths and needs and recommendations to support the student's educational program.

If a student is found eligible for special education services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meeting will be scheduled. The IEP team, including the parent/guardian, develops a program designed to meet the student's unique needs.

Following the IEP meeting, the District will issue a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP), which outlines the proposed program and services.

Parents/guardians have the right to:

- Participate in all meetings regarding their child's identification, evaluation, and educational placement
- Agree or disagree with the District's recommendations
- Request mediation or a due process hearing to resolve disputes
- Additional information regarding procedural safeguards is available upon request.

Services for School-Age Students with Disabilities

All students enrolled in the Highlands School District have access to a range of services designed to support their academic, behavioral, health, personal, career, and social development needs. These services may include school counseling, psychological services, health services, social work services, and home and school visitor services.

The provision of special education services is governed by Chapter 14 of the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Highlands School District provides a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all eligible students with disabilities in accordance with these laws.

Eligibility for Special Education - Eligible students with disabilities may receive special education services and supports through Highlands School District until they graduate with a regular high school diploma or until the day before their turn twenty-two (22) years of age whichever occurs first, in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

To be eligible for special education services, a student must:

- Be of school age;
- Meet eligibility criteria for one or more recognized disability categories; and
- Require specially designed instruction to benefit from education.

Disability categories recognized under Pennsylvania regulations include:

- Autism
- Deaf-Blindness
- Deafness
- Developmental Delay (Until the student reaches six years of age.)
- Emotional Disturbance

- Hearing Impairment
- Intellectual Disability
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Multiple Disabilities
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Other Health Impairment
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Visual Impairment, including blindness

Special Education Services and Programs

Special education services are individualized to meet each student's unique needs and may include:

- Development and implementation of an Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Multidisciplinary evaluations and reevaluations
- Specially designed instruction delivered through:
- Support within the general education setting
- Supplemental or resource-level support
- Part-time or full-time special education programs

The type, level, and location of services are determined by the IEP team, which includes the parent/guardian, and are based on the student's identified needs, present levels of performance, and required level of support. Services are provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE) to the maximum extent appropriate.

Beginning no later than the IEP in effect when a student turns 14 years of age, the IEP team considers transition planning and services designed to facilitate movement from school to postsecondary education, employment, and independent living, as appropriate.

Related Services

Related services are supportive services required to assist a student with a disability to benefit from special education. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Assistive Technology

- Counseling services
- Audiology and hearing support services
- Parent counseling and training
- Psychological services
- Physical and occupational therapy
- School health services
- Social work services
- Speech and language services
- Vision services, including Orientation and Mobility
- Transportation

Parent Rights and Procedural Safeguards

Prior to the initiation or change of special education services, parents/guardians are provided with a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP) outlining the proposed program and services.

Parents/guardians have the right to:

- Participate in IEP team meetings and educational decision-making
- Agree or disagree with the District's recommendations
- Request a pre-hearing conference, mediation, and/or a due process hearing to resolve disputes

A copy of the Procedural Safeguards Notice, which explains the rights of parents and students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), is provided to parents at least once each school year and upon:

- Initial referral or parent request for evaluation;
- The first filing of a state complaint during a school year;
- The first due process complaint filed during a school year;
- A disciplinary removal that constitutes a change in placement;
- Receipt of a parent request for a copy of the Procedural Safeguards Notice; and
- Other times as required by federal or state law.

Additional copies of the Procedural Safeguards Notice are available upon request from the District.

Contact Information

For additional information regarding special education services, programs, or parent rights, please contact:

Dr. Amber H. Dean
Director of Student Services
Highlands School District
1500 Pacific Avenue
Natrona Heights, PA 15065
Phone: 724-226-2400 ext. 5651

Equitable Participation and Services for Students in Nonpublic Schools

Parents/guardians of students enrolled in nonpublic schools who suspect that their child may have a disability and may be in need of special education services may request a multidisciplinary evaluation (MDE) by submitting a written request to the Director of Student Services, Highlands School District, 1500 Pacific Avenue, Natrona Heights, PA 15065, or by calling 724-226-2400 ext. 5651.

To receive special education programs and services through the Highlands School District, a student must (1) be determined eligible through a multidisciplinary evaluation demonstrating the presence of a disability and the need for specially designed instruction, and (2) be enrolled in the Highlands School District.

Parents who choose to enroll their child in a private or nonpublic school may be eligible for services through the federal equitable participation provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In Pennsylvania, Intermediate Units are responsible for implementing equitable participation services for eligible parentally placed private school students.

The type and amount of services available are determined through a consultation process between the Intermediate Unit, participating nonpublic schools, and other stakeholders and are funded through a proportionate share of federal IDEA Part B funds. Services provided through equitable participation do not constitute an individual entitlement to a free appropriate public education (FAPE), and eligible students may not receive the same services they would receive if enrolled in a public school.

The Highlands School District, in collaboration with the Intermediate Unit, fulfills its Child Find responsibilities by identifying, locating, and evaluating students with suspected disabilities who attend nonpublic schools within the District's geographic boundaries, in accordance with IDEA and Pennsylvania Chapter 14 regulations.

Protected Handicapped Students (Section 504 / Chapter 15)

Highlands School District provides each protected handicapped student, without discrimination and at no cost to the student or family, the related aids, services, and accommodations necessary to afford the student an equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of school programs and extracurricular activities, consistent with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Chapter 15 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

A student is considered a protected handicapped student if they are of school age and have a physical or mental disability that substantially limits or prohibits participation in, or access to, any aspect of the school program.

Services and protections provided under Section 504 are distinct from those provided under special education programs governed by Chapter 14 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). Eligible students receive accommodations and services through a Section 504 Service Agreement developed by a team, including the parent/guardian.

For additional information regarding evaluation procedures, eligibility, or services for protected handicapped students, please contact:

Dr. Michele Welter
Districtwide Coordinator of Section 504 Service Agreements
Highlands School District
1500 Pacific Avenue
Natrona Heights, PA 15065
Phone: 724-226-2400 ext. 5658

Gifted Education

Highlands School District provides gifted education services in accordance with Chapter 16 of the Pennsylvania School Code for students who are identified as mentally gifted and determined to be in need of specially designed instruction.

Gifted education services are designed to address the unique learning needs of students who demonstrate outstanding intellectual and creative abilities and require educational opportunities beyond those ordinarily provided in the general education program. Gifted services are intended to provide appropriate levels of challenge, enrichment, acceleration, and individualized instruction that foster advanced academic achievement, critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and independent learning skills.

Students identified as mentally gifted may receive a variety of services based on their individual strengths and educational needs, including:

- Specially designed instruction through a Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP);
- Curriculum enrichment and extension activities;
- Advanced and accelerated coursework;
- Flexible grouping opportunities;
- Independent and research-based learning experiences;
- Advanced problem-solving and critical thinking activities;
- Participation in honors, Advanced Placement (AP), College in High School, dual enrollment, and other advanced academic opportunities, when appropriate;
- Consultation and collaboration between gifted support staff and general education teachers; and
- Additional services and supports identified through the GIEP process.

The District utilizes a continuum of gifted services across grade levels to ensure that students have access to educational opportunities that are appropriately challenging and responsive to their individual needs. Gifted services are determined by the student's Gifted Individualized Education Program (GIEP) Team and are based upon the student's present levels of educational performance, strengths, interests, and learning needs.

Students who are identified as both gifted and eligible for special education services ("twice-exceptional" students) receive services through a single individualized educational plan that addresses both their gifted needs and disability-related needs.

Additional information regarding gifted education services may be obtained by contacting the Highlands School District Student Services Department.

Dr. Amber H. Dean
Districtwide Coordinator of Gifted Services
Highlands School District
1500 Pacific Avenue

Natrona Heights, PA 15065
Phone: 724-226-2400 ext. 5651

Screening Procedures

Highlands School District conducts ongoing screening activities as part of its Child Find responsibilities under Chapter 16 to identify students who may be mentally gifted and in need of specially designed instruction. Screening activities are designed to identify students who demonstrate advanced intellectual ability, exceptional academic performance, or other characteristics associated with giftedness and who may benefit from a comprehensive gifted evaluation.

The purpose of screening is to identify students who may require a Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation. Screening is not used to determine gifted eligibility and does not replace a comprehensive evaluation conducted by a certified school psychologist.

Screening activities occur annually and may also be conducted whenever a student is referred by a parent/guardian, teacher, administrator, counselor, or other educational professional. The District utilizes multiple sources of data to ensure equitable access to gifted identification and services.

As part of the screening process, the District reviews information that may include:

- Universal academic screening assessments;
- Classroom performance and grades;
- Standards-based report card data;
- State and local assessment results;
- Cognitive screening measures;
- Achievement screening measures;
- Teacher observations and rating scales;
- Parent input; and
- Other educational data relevant to the student's demonstrated abilities and educational needs.

The District utilizes a multi-level screening process to identify students who may require a comprehensive gifted evaluation. Students demonstrating advanced academic performance or indicators of gifted potential may participate in additional screening activities, including cognitive and achievement measures, prior to referral for a Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation (GMDE). Screening decisions are based on multiple criteria and are not made on the basis of a single test score or measure.

Parents/guardians may request a Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation (GMDE) at any time by submitting a written request to the District. Upon receipt of a request, the District will

follow the evaluation procedures and timelines established under Chapter 16 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

Requesting Gifted Screening or Evaluation

Parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, counselors, and other educational professionals may refer a student for consideration of gifted education services if they believe the student demonstrates characteristics of giftedness and may require specially designed instruction.

Parents/guardians who wish to request that the District initiate screening or evaluation activities for gifted education may submit a written request to the student's principal, school counselor, gifted support teacher, school psychologist, or the Director of Student Services.

Participation in the District's screening process is not required before a parent/guardian requests a formal gifted evaluation. A student's participation in screening activities, or the results of those activities, shall not prevent the District from initiating or a parent/guardian from requesting a Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation. Upon receipt of a written request, the District will provide a Permission to Evaluate (Gifted) form and proceed in accordance with the timelines and procedures established under Chapter 16 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

Upon receipt of a referral or written request for a Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation (GMDE), the District will review available educational information and, when appropriate, provide a Permission to Evaluate (Gifted) form within ten (10) calendar days, excluding summer vacation, in accordance with Chapter 16 regulations. The evaluation timeline begins upon the District's receipt of the signed Permission to Evaluate form.

As part of its Child Find responsibilities, Highlands School District also conducts ongoing screening activities to identify students who may be mentally gifted and in need of specially designed instruction. Students may be referred for additional screening or evaluation based on academic performance, assessment data, teacher observations, parent input, or other educational information.

Highlands School District values parent involvement in the gifted education process.

Written parent/guardian consent is required before the District may:

- Conduct an initial Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation (GMDE);
- Initially place a student into gifted education services; or

- Release personally identifiable information when consent is required by state or federal law.

Parents/guardians have the right to review information regarding the proposed action and ask questions before providing consent. Consent is voluntary and may be revoked in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

Questions regarding gifted screening, evaluation procedures, or gifted education services may be directed to the Highlands School District Student Services Department.

Evaluation Procedures

After the initial screenings and with parental consent, the district provides a Permission to Evaluate (Gifted) form within 10 calendar days to formally initiate the evaluation process. Parents must return the signed form to begin the evaluation, and the district has 60 calendar days (excluding summer) from the receipt of signed consent to complete the evaluation.

A multidisciplinary evaluation team (MDT) will conduct a thorough evaluation, including:

- Review of existing/ available records which may include grades, state and local assessment performance, work samples, etc.;
- Cognitive Testing: WPPSI-IV, WISC-V, or WAIS-IV or similar standardized cognitive assessment;
- Achievement Testing: Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT-4) or similar standardized achievement test;
- Teacher Input: Completion of rating scale and narrative input form;
- Parent Input: Completion of rating scale and narrative input form;
- Other relevant information as determined by the GMDT.

The Gifted Multidisciplinary Team (GMDT) will review this quantitative and qualitative input as evidence in determining eligibility. If relevant, the district may also conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) to address any significant behavioral concerns impacting learning.

Gifted Eligibility Determination

The district uses a Gifted Multi-Criteria Matrix to evaluate students based on their performance in cognitive ability, achievement, and teacher/parent input.

- **Matrix Scoring:** Students receive points for their cognitive ability, achievement scores, and rating scales. A student with 9-12 points on the matrix will be considered eligible for gifted support services.
- **Automatic Eligibility:**
A student obtaining a Full Scale IQ or General Ability Index (GAI) score of 130 or higher will be referred for Gifted Support, regardless of the total points earned on the matrix.
- The evaluation team must consider multiple criteria for eligibility and ensure no single criterion, such as IQ, excludes a student from gifted programming if other criteria indicate gifted potential. If a student does not meet standard eligibility criteria, a multidisciplinary team will review additional evidence, including local norms, classroom performance, problem-solving abilities, and qualitative data

GIEP Development

If the student is determined eligible, a Gifted Individualized Education Program (GIEP) is developed within 30 calendar days of the Gifted Written Report (GWR). The GIEP must outline the specially designed instruction (SDI) and any related services the student requires, focusing on their unique strengths and needs as a gifted learner.

Twice exceptional (2e) students, those who are both gifted and eligible for special education under IDEA, will have a single IEP that incorporates both gifted services and special education supports.

Confidentiality of Gifted Student Information

Highlands School District protects the confidentiality of all records and information related to students who are referred for, evaluated for, or identified as mentally gifted. Student records are maintained and protected in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Chapter 16 of the Pennsylvania School Code, and applicable state and federal confidentiality requirements.

Information regarding a student's gifted screening, evaluation, eligibility determination, Gifted Written Report (GWR), Gifted Individualized Education Program (GIEP), educational progress, and related records is maintained in secure educational records and is accessible only to individuals with a legitimate educational interest or as otherwise permitted by law.

Parents/guardians have the right to inspect and review their child's educational records, request amendments to records they believe are inaccurate or misleading and receive notice regarding the disclosure of personally identifiable information. The District will not disclose personally identifiable information from a student's educational records without parental consent except as permitted by state and federal law.

The District maintains appropriate safeguards to protect the privacy and confidentiality of gifted student records and regularly reviews its practices to ensure compliance with applicable confidentiality requirements. Questions regarding the confidentiality of gifted student information may be directed to the Highlands School District Student Services Department.

Independent Educational Evaluations

Parents/guardians have the right to obtain an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) at their own expense. An Independent Educational Evaluation is an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by Highlands School District.

If a parent/guardian obtains an independent evaluation and shares the results with the District, the evaluation findings shall be considered by the District when making decisions regarding the student's gifted identification, educational programming, placement, or services.

Prior Written Notice (NORA)

Parents should be informed that the District provides written notice whenever it proposes or refuses to:

- Conduct an initial gifted evaluation;
- Conduct a gifted reevaluation;
- Identify a student as gifted;
- Change a student's gifted educational placement;
- Make significant changes to a student's GIEP.

Dispute Resolution

Highlands School District encourages parents/guardians and school staff to work collaboratively to resolve concerns regarding a student's gifted education program. Parents/guardians who disagree with the District's decisions regarding gifted

identification, evaluation, educational placement, Gifted Individualized Education Program (GIEP), or the provision of gifted services have the right to request mediation or an impartial due process hearing in accordance with Chapter 16 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

Mediation is a voluntary process that allows parents and the District to work with a neutral mediator to resolve disagreements. Parents also have the right to request an impartial due process hearing, during which an independent hearing officer will review the matter and issue a decision. Information regarding mediation and due process procedures is available through the Pennsylvania Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR).

Parents/guardians who disagree with the District's decisions regarding gifted identification, evaluation, educational placement, gifted services, or Gifted Individualized Education Program (GIEP) recommendations have the right to seek resolution through informal discussions, mediation, and impartial due process hearings in accordance with Chapter 16 regulations.

Information regarding mediation and due process procedures is available through the Pennsylvania Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR). [800-222-3353](tel:800-222-3353) or <https://odr-pa.org/>

Student Placement During Dispute Resolution

If a parent/guardian and the District disagree about a student's gifted identification, evaluation, educational placement, gifted services, or GIEP, the student will generally remain in the current educational placement while the dispute is being resolved, unless the parent/guardian and the District agree to a different arrangement. This protection helps ensure continuity of services and prevents changes to a student's gifted educational program until the matter has been resolved through mediation, due process, or other dispute resolution procedures.

Attendance

Attendance Policy

Good attendance is a habit every student should develop. A student with excessive absenteeism cannot be taught effectively and cannot keep up with the work missed in class. To develop and maintain good attendance habits for all students, Highlands has adopted a strict and effective attendance policy.

New School Laws of Pennsylvania classify all absences as unexcused or illegal except those for the following reasons: illness of the pupil, death in the family, religious, and “exceptionally urgent reasons” such as quarantine, recovery from an accident, required court attendance, approved family educational trips, educational tours, etc.

Highlands will enforce the state’s compulsory attendance laws to eliminate absenteeism. Parents can access their child’s attendance at any time by logging into PowerSchool at www.goldenrams.com.

A doctor’s excuse is required for absences due to illness in excess of ten days, and for each day of absence thereafter. A warning letter will be sent after the eighth day of absence regardless of the reason.

Absence Reporting/ Information

- It is not necessary to call the school when your child is absent. Feel free to communicate with your child’s teachers about absences, but please understand that a phone call will not excuse the absences. Written or email documentation is required for our records.
- A call will be made to all homes/families of students who are marked absent from their homeroom.
- Family educational trips (up to 5 days) must be pre-approved by the building principal. Requests must be submitted at least one week in advance of the trip and should be submitted to the office.
- If an excuse is not provided to the school within 3 days of the student’s absence, the absence(s) will be recorded as an illegal absence. Excuses will not be accepted if they are turned in late.
- If a student has 3 illegal absences, parents will receive a Notice of Truancy in the mail notifying them of the illegal days and encouraging them to participate in an attendance improvement meeting.
- After the 6th illegal absence, a letter will be sent in the mail with a date and time for a Student Attendance Improvement Plan conference. If parents cannot attend due to work, they should contact the school office within 48 hours of the meeting to reschedule. Failure to attend the meeting and/or continued absences may result in a citation with the local magistrate.

- When a student reaches an 8th Excused absence, a Warning Letter will be mailed notifying parents that all absences beyond 10 require a doctor's excuse or the absence will be illegal.
- Truancy is defined as 3 unexcused absences; habitually truant is defined as 6 unexcused absences.
- If a student has 10 days of consecutive non-attendance, they will officially be withdrawn from Highlands School District. Re-enrollment would be required to attend Highlands School District in the future.

Questions or concerns related to the Attendance Policy can be directed to:

Mrs. Carmen Corna
 District Attendance Officer
 Highlands School District
 1500 Pacific Avenue
 Natrona Heights, PA 15065
 Phone: 724-226-2400, ext. 3007

Excuse for Absence

- After an absence, a student MUST provide a written or email excuse to the student's school secretary. The excuse must include the student's full name, date(s) of absence(s), reason(s) for absence(s), the date(s) the excuse was written, and the signature of the parent or guardian. The excuse must be submitted upon return to school, or the absence will be classified as illegal. Attendance contacts by building are:
 - Highlands High School, HHSAttendance@goldenrams.com
Main office 724-226-2400, press 4 and follow the prompts
 - Highlands Middle School, HMSAttendance@goldenrams.com
Main office 724-226-2400, press 3 and follow the prompts
 - Highlands Elementary School, HESAttendance@goldenrams.com
724-226-2400, press 2 and follow the prompts
 - Highlands Early Childhood Center, HECCAttendance@goldenrams.com
724-226-2400, press 1 and follow the prompts
- Excused absences include illness, accidents, death in the family, religious reasons, or impassable roads. All other absences may be judged illegal.

- Parents and students should make every effort to schedule appointments for special services after school. Administrators and teachers discourage the practice of dismissal during school hours, but if it is necessary to be excused during the day, the student must follow this procedure:
 - Submit to the office, a written request from the parent stating the reason and time the student is to be excused. The excuse must be presented to the office one day in advance. (Requests made by phone will not be honored.)
 - After verifying the request, the school will give the child a special excuse on a blue slip.
 - The parent or guardian must report to the office to have the student released.

Absence for Vacation/ Educational Trip

For optimal student(s) success, we request you do not schedule vacations when school is in session. Absences due to family vacations will only be considered legal if the following conditions are met:

- Submit request on required district form (see Appendix), detailing the nature and dates of the vacation to the building principal at least one week in advance of the departure date.
- The length of the vacation does not exceed five (5) school days. Any days exceeding 5 will result in illegal absences.
- If a student will be absent for more than ten (10) school days, the student will be removed as a full-time student. The family will need to reenroll the child upon return.
- Parents will be responsible for making sure that missed schoolwork is completed by the child before returning to school.
- Students referred to the magistrate for attendance issues may not be granted approval. This permission will be at the principal's discretion.

Illness during School Hours

A student's claim of illness does not necessarily justify being excused from class or school. Students who claim to be ill must:

- Ask the teacher's permission to see the nurse, who will determine the degree of illness. If the nurse is not present, the student should report to the office. If a student is sent home from school by the nurse, that day is counted as an attended day of school.
- If necessary, the nurse or member of the office staff (NOT THE STUDENT) will contact the home to arrange for transportation.
- If the parent, near relative or designated person cannot be contacted, the student will remain in school.
- Parents may request the child's homework assignments during an extended absence, and should plan for the work to be picked up, after a 24-hour notice.

Tardiness

Highlands High School (HHS)

A written excuse is required for all tardiness. If an excuse is not provided to the school, the tardy will become illegal.

- Students who arrive between 7:40 AM and 9:30 AM will be marked Tardy.
- Any student arriving between 9:30 AM and 11:00 AM will be marked Absent for a half day.
- Students who arrive after 11:00 AM will be marked Absent for the whole day.
- Students who leave school before 9:30 AM will be marked Absent for the day.
- Students who leave school between 9:30 AM and 11:00 AM will be marked Absent for half a day, and students who leave after 11:00 AM will be given full credit for the day.

Four unexcused tardies to school will be recorded as one unexcused illegal absence. Up to 5 tardies within one month will result in a referral to the Student Assistance Program and the implementation of a Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP).

Tardy to Class

NOTE: Period Attendance (Absent/Tardy) will be taken daily.

The definition of "Tardy" to class is if the student arrives after the class has begun. However, a student will not be considered tardy to class if another staff member has

written a pass for that student (EXCLUDING HALL SWEEPS). For any tardiness over 3, the following consequences will be issued:

- 4th Tardy = After School Detention
- 5th Tardy = After School Detention
- 6th Tardy = 1 Day of In-School Suspension
- 7th Tardy = 3 Days of In-School Suspension

Habitual tardiness will be addressed by the administration.

- Four unexcused class tardies, less than 20 minutes, will be recorded as one absence from that class.
- Tardiness of 20 minutes or more to class will be considered an unexcused class absence.

Highlands Middle School (HMS)

- Students who arrive between 8:10 AM and 10:00 AM will be marked Tardy.
- Any student arriving after 10:00 AM will be marked Absent for a half day.
- Students who arrive after 11:30 AM will be marked Absent for the whole day.
- A request for early dismissal before 11:30 AM will be marked as a half day Absent.

Tardy to class

Students are considered tardy if they arrive after the class has begun, without a pass.

- After three tardies, students will earn an after-school detention and a parent/guardian will be notified.

Teachers will work with parents and students with chronic tardiness concerns.

Highlands Elementary School (HES) and Highlands Early Childhood Center (HECC)

- Students who arrive between 8:55 AM and 10:35 AM will be marked Tardy.
- Any student arriving after 10:35 AM will be marked Absent for a half day.
- Students who arrive after 2:05 PM will be marked Absent for the whole day.
- Students who leave school before 10:35 AM will be marked Absent for a whole day.
- Students who leave school between 10:35 AM and 2:05 PM will be marked Absent for half a day.

After five tardies during a school year at HMS, HES and HECC, a warning letter will be sent to the parent/guardian. After a student has accumulated 10 tardies, he/she is given a half day illegal absence. For every five tardies following the ten tardies, an additional one-half day of illegal absence will be charged against a student's record. After 3 days of illegal absence, a notice will be served to the parent/guardian.

As previously stated, all notices served thereafter during a student's entire period of enrollment in the Highlands School District, shall result in a truancy citation. All truanancies will require the parent/guardian to attend a hearing before the magistrate.

Student Searches

To maintain a safe and secure educational environment, the Highlands School District may conduct searches of students, student belongings, lockers, vehicles, electronic devices, and other possessions in accordance with Board Policy 226, Searches, and applicable law.

School officials may search students or their belongings when there is reasonable suspicion that the search will reveal evidence of a violation of law, Board policy, school rules, or the presence of prohibited or dangerous items. Searches shall be conducted in a manner that is reasonable and related to the purpose of the search.

Under certain circumstances, the District may also conduct general or random searches, including the use of metal detectors or trained detection dogs, to help prevent the presence of weapons, controlled substances, or other dangerous materials on school property or at school-sponsored activities.

Student Lockers

Student lockers are provided as a convenience for the storage of school materials and personal belongings. Lockers remain the property of the Highlands School District and are subject to inspection and search in accordance with Board policy.

Students are responsible for maintaining their lockers and ensuring that prohibited items are not stored in them. Lockers may be inspected for cleanliness, safety, maintenance concerns, or when there is reasonable suspicion that a locker contains prohibited materials.

Vehicles and Electronic Devices

Vehicles parked on school property and electronic devices brought to school may be searched when permitted by law and Board policy.

Questions

Questions regarding student search procedures may be directed to the building principal. Additional information is available in Highlands School District Board Policy 226, Searches, available on the District website.

Nondiscrimination Notice

The Highlands School District is committed to providing all students with equal access to educational programs, activities, and opportunities. The Board declares it to be the policy of the District to provide an equal opportunity for all students to achieve their maximum potential through the programs and activities offered in the schools without discrimination on the basis of race, color, age, religious creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, ancestry, national origin, marital status, pregnancy, or disability.

The District is committed to maintaining a safe, positive learning environment that is free from discrimination. The District provides students admission, course offerings, counseling, assistance, services, athletics, and extracurricular activities without discrimination and in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

The Highlands School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex and prohibits sex discrimination, including Title IX sexual harassment, in any education program or activity that it operates, as required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and its implementing regulations. Inquiries regarding the application of Title IX to the District may be referred to the District's Title IX Coordinator, the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, or both.

The District shall make reasonable accommodations for students with identified disabilities consistent with the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and applicable state laws and regulations.

Any person who believes they have been subjected to discrimination, harassment, or retaliation may report the concern in accordance with Board Policy 103. Retaliation against any individual who reports discrimination or participates in an investigation is strictly prohibited.

Compliance Officer / Title IX Coordinator

 Highlands School District
1500 Pacific Avenue
Natrona Heights, PA 15065
Phone: 724-226-2400

This notice is provided annually to students, parents/guardians, employees, applicants for employment, and other interested parties in accordance with Board Policy 103 and applicable federal and state law.

Reporting Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation

The Highlands School District encourages students, parents/guardians, employees, and community members who believe they have been subjected to discrimination, harassment, Title IX sexual harassment, or retaliation to promptly report such concerns in accordance with Board Policy 103: Nondiscrimination/Discriminatory Harassment Affecting Students and Board Policy 103.1: Nondiscrimination – Qualified Students with Disabilities.

Complaints of discrimination, harassment, Title IX sexual harassment, or retaliation will be reviewed and investigated promptly. When allegations are substantiated, the District will take appropriate corrective action consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and Board policies. The confidentiality of all parties involved will be maintained to the greatest extent possible while allowing the District to fulfill its legal obligations to investigate, respond to, and resolve reported concerns.

Students, parents/guardians, and third parties who believe they or others have been subjected to discrimination, Title IX sexual harassment, or retaliation are encouraged to report such incidents to their building principal and/or the District's Compliance Officer/Title IX Coordinator. Reports should be made promptly, even when some or all of the conduct occurred off school grounds, outside of school hours, or away from school-sponsored activities, if the conduct may affect a student's educational program or school environment.

A person who is not the intended target of discrimination or harassment, but who is adversely affected by the conduct, may also file a report. School employees who become aware of conduct that may constitute discrimination, harassment, Title IX sexual harassment, or retaliation are required to report the information to the building principal and/or the Compliance Officer/Title IX Coordinator in accordance with District policy.

The building principal shall promptly notify the Compliance Officer/Title IX Coordinator of all reports of discrimination, Title IX sexual harassment, and retaliation. Upon receiving a report, the Compliance Officer/Title IX Coordinator will contact the complainant, gather additional information as needed, discuss the availability of supportive measures, and explain the applicable complaint procedures. The District will consider the complainant's wishes regarding supportive measures while taking appropriate steps to ensure equal

access to educational programs and activities and to maintain a safe and supportive learning environment.

For additional information regarding reporting procedures, complaint resolution processes, and student rights, please refer to Highlands School District Board Policies 103 and 103.1, available on the District website.

Compliance Officer /Title IX Coordinator

Highlands School District
1500 Pacific Avenue
Natrona Heights, PA 15065
Phone: 724-226-2400

Section 504 Coordinator

Dr. Michele Welter

Highlands School District
1500 Pacific Avenue
Natrona Heights, PA 15065
Phone: 724-226-2400 ext. 5658

Review of Instructional Materials by Parents/Guardians and Students

The Highlands School District recognizes the right of parents/guardians and students to be informed about the educational programs provided by the District. In accordance with Board Policy 105.1, parents/guardians and students have the right to review information regarding the curriculum, including academic standards, instructional materials, and assessment techniques used in the District's educational programs.

Instructional materials include instructional content provided to students in any format, including printed materials, audiovisual resources, online resources, digital content, and materials accessed through the Internet. Instructional materials do not include academic tests or assessments.

Upon written request, parents/guardians and students may review existing information related to:

- Curriculum and courses of study
- Pennsylvania Academic Standards and learning objectives

- Instructional materials used in the educational program
- Assessment methods and techniques used to measure student progress

Requests to review instructional materials must be submitted in writing to the building principal and should identify the specific materials or information requested. The District will respond within ten (10) school days by arranging a time and location for the review of the requested materials.

To protect instructional resources and maintain the integrity of District materials, the following procedures apply:

- Materials must be reviewed at the designated location identified by the District.
- District personnel may supervise the review of materials.
- Instructional materials may not be removed from District property.
- Materials may not be photocopied, photographed, scanned, or otherwise reproduced.
- Parents/guardians and students may take notes during the review.
- No more than one request per semester may be made by a parent/guardian or student for each enrolled child.

Under federal law, the right to inspect instructional materials transfers to a student when the student reaches eighteen (18) years of age or becomes an emancipated minor. However, under Pennsylvania law, parents/guardians continue to retain their rights to access information about the curriculum and review instructional materials.

Questions regarding curriculum, instructional materials, or requests to review instructional materials should be directed to the appropriate building principal or the Highlands School District Administrative Office.

This notice is provided annually in accordance with Highlands School District Board Policy 105.1, Review of Instructional Materials by Parents/Guardians and Students.

English Learner Services

Highlands School District provides a Language Instruction Educational Program (LIEP) for students whose primary language is not English and who qualify for English Language Development (ELD) services. The District identifies potential English Learners through a Home Language Survey completed at enrollment and provides instruction and supports

designed to help students develop English language proficiency and access the general education curriculum.

Parents of identified English Learners receive individual notification regarding assessment results, recommended program placement, available services, and their right to accept or decline ELD services. Families seeking additional information regarding English Learner services may contact the Highlands School District Student Services Department.

Title 3 Coordinator

Dr. Amber H. Dean

Highlands School District

1500 Pacific Avenue

Natrona Heights, PA 15065

Phone: 724-226-2400 ext. 5651

Enrollment of Students

The Highlands School District enrolls all eligible school-age students residing within the District in accordance with Pennsylvania law, Board policy, and administrative regulations.

Students are eligible to attend Highlands School District schools from the earliest admission age for the District's kindergarten program through graduation or the end of the school term in which the student reaches age twenty-one (21), whichever occurs first.

Students with disabilities who are eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) may continue to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) through the day before their twenty-second (22nd) birthday if they have not graduated with a regular high school diploma and remain eligible for special education services.

To enroll a student, parents/guardians are generally required to provide:

- Proof of the student's age
- Proof of residency within the District
- Immunization records or proof of required immunizations
- A completed Parental Registration Statement

The Highlands School District will immediately enroll students experiencing homelessness, foster care placement, or other forms of educational instability, even when required enrollment documents are not immediately available.

Children of military families may qualify for advanced enrollment and other enrollment protections in accordance with Pennsylvania law and the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

A Home Language Survey is administered to all students enrolling in a Pennsylvania public school for the first time to determine whether language support services may be needed.

The District does not inquire about a student's immigration status as part of the enrollment process.

Families seeking enrollment information on the District website for enrollment procedures and required documentation or contact:

Ms. Michaela Bonnett

Highlands School District

724-226-2400 x5635

Military Family Enrollment Rights

The Highlands School District supports military-connected students and families and complies with the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and Pennsylvania law.

Children of active-duty military members, National Guard members, Reserve members on active-duty orders, members or veterans who are medically discharged or retired for one (1) year, and members who die on active duty may be entitled to enrollment and educational protections designed to reduce educational disruptions caused by military relocation.

Eligible military-connected students may qualify for:

Advance enrollment before establishing residency within the District when official military orders and proof of intent to reside within the District are provided.

Timely enrollment and placement in appropriate courses and educational programs.

Assistance with the transfer of educational records.

Consideration of previous coursework, grade-level placement, and academic program participation.

Support for graduation requirements and transitions between school districts.

Eligibility and participation opportunities in extracurricular activities and athletics, consistent with applicable rules and regulations.

Parents/guardians seeking enrollment under military family provisions should contact the Highlands School District Administrative Office for assistance and information regarding required documentation.

Enrollment Assistance

Ms. Michaela Bonnett

Highlands School District

724-226-2400 x5635

Additional information regarding educational rights and enrollment protections for military-connected students is available through the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and Highlands School District Board Policies.

Homeless Students (McKinney-Vento)

The Highlands School District is committed to ensuring that all children and youth experiencing homelessness have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other students.

In accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and Board Policy 251, children and youth experiencing homelessness are entitled to immediate enrollment in school, even if they lack records normally required for enrollment, including proof of residency, immunization records, birth certificates, school records, or other documentation.

A student experiencing homelessness may:

- Remain in the school of origin (the school attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled), if it is in the student's best interest.

- Enroll immediately in the school serving the area where the student is currently residing.
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin, when required by law.
- Participate fully in all academic programs, extracurricular activities, and school services for which they are eligible.
- Receive assistance in obtaining necessary educational records, immunizations, and other required documentation.

The term "homeless children and youth" includes children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence, including those who are:

- Sharing housing with others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters.
- Abandoned in hospitals.
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
- Migratory children who are living in circumstances described above.
- Unaccompanied youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

The Highlands School District will not segregate, stigmatize, or discriminate against students experiencing homelessness. The District will ensure that homeless students have meaningful opportunities to succeed in school and meet the same academic standards expected of all students.

Parents, guardians, caregivers, and unaccompanied youth who believe they may qualify for services under the McKinney-Vento Act are encouraged to contact the District's Homeless Liaison for assistance with enrollment, transportation, school stability, and access to educational services.

Homeless Liaison

Highlands School District
 Student Services Department
 1500 Pacific Avenue
 Natrona Heights, PA 15065
 Phone: 724-226-2400

Video/ Audio Recording

To promote the safety and security of students, staff, visitors, and District property, the Highlands School District utilizes video surveillance systems in accordance with Board Policy Board Policy 810.2, School Bus Video/Audio Recording.

Video surveillance cameras may be used in school buildings, on school grounds, at District facilities, and on school transportation vehicles. In addition, audio recording equipment may be utilized on District transportation vehicles equipped with such technology.

Students, employees, parents/guardians, visitors, contractors, and all other individuals entering District property or riding District transportation should be aware that their actions and communications may be monitored and recorded through video and/or audio surveillance systems.

Recordings may be reviewed and used by authorized District personnel for purposes including, but not limited to:

- Maintaining a safe and secure educational environment;
- Protecting students, staff, visitors, and District property;
- Investigating accidents, incidents, misconduct, or violations of District policies;
- Supporting student discipline proceedings;
- Assisting law enforcement when appropriate and permitted by law.

The Highlands School District shall maintain and use surveillance recordings in accordance with applicable federal and state laws, regulations, and Board policies regarding student records, confidentiality, and privacy.

Questions regarding the District's use of video or audio surveillance may be directed to the District Administrative Office.

FERPA

The Highlands School District maintains student education records in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), applicable Pennsylvania law, and Board Policy 216 – Student Records. The District is committed to protecting the privacy of student education records while providing parents, eligible students, and authorized individuals access to records as permitted by law.

Parent and Eligible Student Rights

FERPA provides parents and eligible students (students who are 18 years of age or older or who attend a post-secondary institution) with the following rights:

- Inspect and review the student's education records within the time required by law after submitting a written request.
- Request the amendment of education records believed to be inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights.
- Request a hearing if the District denies a request to amend the student's education records.
- Provide written consent before the District discloses personally identifiable information contained in education records, except as authorized by FERPA or other applicable laws.
- Obtain a copy of Board Policy 216 – Student Records and related administrative procedures.
- File a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education, Student Privacy Policy Office, concerning an alleged failure of the District to comply with FERPA.

Directory Information

In accordance with FERPA and Board Policy 216, Highlands School District has designated certain student information as "Directory Information." Unless a parent/guardian or eligible student submits a timely written request prohibiting its disclosure, the District may release Directory Information for purposes permitted by law without obtaining prior written consent.

Highlands School District has designated the following as Directory Information:

- Student name
- Address
- Telephone number
- Email address
- Photograph
- Date and place of birth
- Grade level

- Dates of attendance
- Participation in officially recognized activities and athletics
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams
- Honors, awards, and degrees received
- Most recent educational agency or school attended

Directory Information may be released for purposes including, but not limited to:

- School and District publications
- Honor rolls
- Graduation programs
- Athletic programs and team rosters
- Yearbooks
- News releases
- District websites and social media
- Other school-related purposes permitted by law

Opt-Out of Directory Information

Parents/guardians and eligible students have the right to refuse the disclosure of Directory Information. A written request to withhold Directory Information must be submitted to the student's building principal within the timeframe established annually by the District. Once received, the District will honor the request except where disclosure is otherwise authorized or required by law.

Military Recruiters and Institutions of Higher Education

Federal law requires school districts receiving federal education funds to provide the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of secondary school students to official military recruiters and institutions of higher education upon request, unless a parent/guardian or eligible student has directed the District not to release this information.

A parent/guardian or eligible student may exercise this right by submitting a written request to the student's building principal within the District's established annual timeframe. A request to withhold Directory Information will also prohibit the release of this information

to military recruiters and institutions of higher education unless otherwise specified by the parent/guardian or eligible student.

Student Recruitment Information and Opt-Out Notice

In accordance with federal and state law and Highlands School District Board Policy 250, the District routinely provides the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of secondary students to representatives of post-secondary educational institutions and military recruiters upon request.

Parents/guardians of secondary students, and eligible students who are eighteen (18) years of age or older, have the right to request that this information not be released without prior written consent.

If you do not want Highlands School District to disclose your student's name, address, and telephone number to postsecondary institutions and/or military recruiters, you must submit a written request to the student's school principal no later than September 15th of each school year.

Requests received by the deadline will remain in effect for the current school year unless revoked in writing.

Questions regarding this notice or the opt-out process may be directed to the student's school counselor or building principal.

Access to Student Records

The District may disclose education records without prior consent to school officials who have a legitimate educational interest in the information or in other circumstances authorized by FERPA and applicable law. Legitimate educational interests include responsibilities related to instruction, student services, school safety, discipline, and the operation of the District.

The District maintains appropriate administrative, technical, and physical safeguards to protect the confidentiality and security of student education records.

Additional information regarding student records, confidentiality protections, Directory Information, and procedures for exercising FERPA rights is available in Board Policy 216 – Student Records, which is available on the Highlands School District website or upon request from the District Administrative Office.

Questions or Complaints

Questions regarding student records or FERPA rights may be directed to the student's building principal or:

Highlands School District Administrative Office

1500 Pacific Avenue

Natrona Heights, PA 15065

Phone: 724-226-2400

Parents and eligible students may also file a complaint concerning alleged FERPA violations with:

Student Privacy Policy Office

U.S. Department of Education

400 Maryland Avenue SW

Washington, DC 20202

PPRA

The Highlands School District recognizes the rights of parents/guardians and eligible students regarding participation in surveys, analyses, evaluations, and the collection of personal information in accordance with Board Policy 235.1 and the federal Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA).

Parent/Guardian and Eligible Student Rights

Parents/guardians and eligible students have the right to:

- Inspect any survey created by a third party before it is administered or distributed to students.
- Inspect instructional materials used in connection with surveys, analyses, or evaluations funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education.
- Review materials used to collect personal information from students for marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes.
- Opt their child out of participation in certain surveys, analyses, evaluations, or activities involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing purposes.
- Request that their child be excluded from research studies or surveys conducted by entities other than a school entity without prior written consent.

Protected Information Surveys

Written parental consent is required before students under the age of eighteen (18) participate in any U.S. Department of Education-funded survey, analysis, or evaluation that reveals information concerning:

- Political affiliations or beliefs
- Mental or psychological problems
- Sexual behavior or attitudes
- Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior
- Critical appraisals of family members
- Privileged relationships (such as those with attorneys, physicians, or clergy)
- Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs
- Income information, except as required by law

Collection of Information for Marketing Purposes

The District will notify parents/guardians before any activity involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information from students for marketing, sales, or distribution purposes. Parents/guardians have the right to inspect related materials and opt their child out of participation.

Scheduled Activities

At the time of publication of this notice, Highlands School District does not anticipate conducting surveys subject to PPRA requirements. Should such activities be scheduled during the school year, parents/guardians and eligible students will receive advance notification, including information regarding their rights to inspect materials and opt out of participation.

Additional Information

Requests to inspect surveys or instructional materials, or questions regarding this notice, should be directed to the student's building principal.

Additional information is available in Highlands School District Board Policy 235.1, Surveys, available on the District website.

Integrated Pest Management

Annual Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Notice

The Highlands School District utilizes an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program to manage pests in school buildings and on school grounds. The goal of the District's IPM program is to protect the health and safety of students, staff, and visitors while minimizing potential impacts to people, property, and the environment.

Integrated Pest Management emphasizes prevention, monitoring, sanitation, maintenance, and other non-chemical methods of pest control. Pesticides are used only when necessary and only after consideration of appropriate alternatives.

Parent/Guardian Right to Notification

In accordance with Pennsylvania law and Board Policy 716, parents/guardians may request advance notification of planned pesticide applications made in school buildings or on school grounds.

Parents/guardians who wish to receive notification of pesticide applications may submit a written request to the District. Individuals who have requested notification will receive advance notice of planned pesticide applications as required by law.

Emergency Applications

When an emergency pesticide application is necessary to address an immediate threat to the health and safety of students, staff, or visitors, the District may authorize such application. Parents/guardians who have requested notification will be contacted as required by law.

Pest Management Information

The Highlands School District maintains records of pesticide applications and other pest management activities. Information regarding the District's Integrated Pest Management Plan and pest management activities is available for public review upon request at the District Administrative Offices.

Additional Information

Questions regarding the District's Integrated Pest Management Program or requests to be added to the pesticide notification list should be directed to:

Dr. Stan Whiteman

Director of Buildings and Grounds
Highlands School District
1500 Pacific Avenue
Natrona Heights, PA 15065
Phone: (724) 226-2400

Additional information regarding Board Policy 716 : Integrated Pest Management is available on the Highlands School District website and upon request.

Asbestos Management Plan Availability

In accordance with the federal Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), the Highlands School District annually notifies parents, guardians, employees, and building occupants regarding the management of asbestos-containing materials in district facilities.

The Highlands School District maintains an Asbestos Management Plan for each school building. These plans document inspections, surveillance activities, response actions, and procedures implemented to ensure that any asbestos-containing materials are properly managed and do not pose a health risk to students, staff, or visitors.

Periodic inspections and surveillance are conducted by qualified personnel in accordance with federal and state requirements. Any necessary response actions are completed using approved methods and licensed contractors.

The District's Asbestos Management Plans are available for public review during normal business hours at the District Administrative Offices.

Additional information regarding Board Policy 704 : Asbestos Abatement is available on the Highlands School District website and upon request.

Dr. Stan Whiteman

Director of Buildings and Grounds
Highlands School District
1500 Pacific Avenue
Natrona Heights, PA 15065
Phone: (724) 226-2400

The Highlands School District remains committed to maintaining safe learning and working environments for all students and staff.

School Wellness

The Highlands School District is committed to ensuring that all families are informed annually about available school nutrition programs and the process for accessing free or reduced-price meals. This policy establishes procedures to meet federal and Pennsylvania state requirements for annual food and nutrition notifications.

Highlands School District participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Information regarding additional Child Nutrition Programs, including the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), will be made available to families when applicable.

This policy applies to all schools within the Highlands School District that participate in federally and state-funded Child Nutrition Programs.

Each school year, Highlands School District shall provide annual notifications to parents, guardians, and the public regarding participation in Child Nutrition Programs.

These notifications will ensure equitable access to program information and meal benefits for all students.

School Meal Programs

Highlands School District participates in federally funded child nutrition programs and provides school meals that meet all applicable nutritional standards established by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The District currently participates in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which allows all enrolled students to receive breakfast and lunch at no cost to families, in accordance with federal program requirements.

Highlands School District participates in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Student eligibility for CEP is determined through federally approved direct certification methods that may include participation in programs such as SNAP, TANF, foster care, homeless, migrant, and other qualifying categories.

The District utilizes the Pennsylvania Student Eligibility System (PA-SES) as required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to identify students who may qualify for federally funded meal benefits and other educational programs.

Families seeking information about public assistance benefits may access Pennsylvania's COMPASS system to apply for benefits and review eligibility information. Information is available through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania COMPASS website.

Meal Accommodations

Students with disabilities, food allergies, or other medically documented dietary needs may be eligible for meal modifications or accommodations. Parents/guardians who believe their child requires meal accommodation should contact the Food Services Department and provide appropriate medical documentation.

School Meal Accounts

As a participant in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), Highlands School District provides all enrolled students with breakfast and lunch at no cost for families.

Students may have meal accounts for the purchase of à la carte items, additional food items, beverages, or other approved food service purchases. When applicable, parents/guardians will be notified regarding low or negative account balances and provided information regarding available payment options.

The District is committed to ensuring that no student is publicly identified, stigmatized, or treated differently based on an inability to pay for meals or other food service purchases. All students will be treated with dignity and respect, and meal service will be provided in accordance with federal and state laws and district policy.

Free and Reduced-Price Meal Benefits

Because Highlands School District participates in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), and all enrolled students are eligible to receive breakfast and lunch at no cost to families. As a result, households are not required to submit applications for free or reduced-price meal benefits in order for students to receive school meals.

Families who need information regarding meal programs, educational benefits forms, or other programs that may use household income information are encouraged to contact the Food Services Department for assistance.

Food Safety

The Highlands School District conducts required food safety inspections and maintains food safety procedures in accordance with federal, state, and local requirements. Copies of the most recent food safety inspection reports are available for public review upon request.

Questions or comments can be directed to

Mrs. Stacey Waffensmith

Food Services Director

Highlands School District 724-226-2400, ext. 4180

Non-discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

Mail:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

Fax: (202) 690-7442

Email: program.intake@usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Food Allergy information

Annual Food Allergy Management Notice

The Highlands School District is committed to providing a safe, healthy, and inclusive learning environment for students with severe or life-threatening food allergies. The District recognizes that food allergies may affect a student's health, safety, and ability to fully participate in educational programs and activities.

Food allergies may constitute a disability under applicable federal and state laws, including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The District will provide reasonable accommodations and supports as required by law to ensure equal access to educational programs, services, and activities.

Food Allergy Management

The District maintains procedures designed to:

- Reduce the risk of exposure to food allergens.
- Ensure a rapid and effective response to allergic reactions and emergencies.
- Support the participation of students with food allergies in all school programs and activities, including classroom activities, field trips, transportation, extracurricular activities, and school-sponsored events.
- Promote awareness, prevention, communication, education, and emergency preparedness.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Parents/guardians of students with food allergies are encouraged to notify the school nurse and building administration as soon as possible following enrollment or diagnosis.

To ensure appropriate planning and accommodations, parents/guardians may be asked to provide medical documentation from a licensed healthcare provider. Food allergy information should be reviewed and updated annually and whenever there is a change in the student's medical condition.

Individualized Plans and Accommodations

Based on student needs, the District may develop and implement one or more of the following:

- Individualized Healthcare Plan (IHP)
- Emergency Care Plan (ECP)
- Section 504 Service Agreement
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Students with documented disabling dietary needs may be eligible for meal modifications, accommodations, substitutions, or other supports in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

Emergency Response and Staff Training

District personnel receive training appropriate to their responsibilities regarding:

- Recognition of allergy symptoms and anaphylaxis.
- Prevention and risk-reduction strategies.
- Administration of emergency medications, including epinephrine.
- Emergency response procedures.

The District maintains emergency procedures to ensure prompt response to allergic reactions and medical emergencies.

Prevention and Safety Measures

The District implements reasonable measures to reduce allergen exposure in classrooms, cafeterias, transportation, extracurricular activities, and other school settings. Students are expected to follow school safety guidelines, including restrictions on food sharing and other practices designed to protect students with food allergies.

Confidentiality and Student Protection

The Highlands School District maintains the confidentiality of student medical information and educational records in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and Board policies.

Bullying, harassment, intimidation, or discrimination related to a student's food allergy or medical condition is prohibited and will be addressed in accordance with District policies and procedures.

Additional Information

Questions regarding food allergy management, meal accommodations, individualized health plans, or emergency care procedures may be directed to the school nurse, building principal, or Food Services Department.

Additional information regarding Board Policy 209.1 – Food Allergy Management is available on the Highlands School District website and upon request.

Type 1 Diabetes Parent Education Notice

In accordance with Pennsylvania Act 117 of 2024 (24 P.S. § 14-1414.12), Highlands School District provides parents and guardians with information regarding Type 1 Diabetes. This information is made available to the parent or guardian of a student when the student first enrolls in elementary school and again upon the student's entry into Grade 6.

Type 1 Diabetes is an autoimmune disease in which the pancreas produces little or no insulin. It may develop in children and adolescents and can occur without a family history of the disease. Early recognition of the signs and symptoms may help reduce the risk of serious medical complications.

Parents and guardians should be aware of common signs and symptoms of Type 1 Diabetes, which may include:

- Increased thirst
- Frequent urination
- Increased hunger
- Unexplained weight loss
- Fatigue or weakness
- Blurred vision
- Fruity-smelling breath
- Nausea or vomiting

Parents or guardians who observe these symptoms should contact their child's healthcare provider promptly for evaluation. Diagnosis and treatment of Type 1 Diabetes can only be made by a licensed healthcare professional.

Additional information regarding Type 1 Diabetes, including risk factors, screening, stages of the disease, treatment, and management, is available through the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health's Type 1 Diabetes educational materials may be accessed at:

Pennsylvania Department of Health – Type 1 Diabetes Parent Information:

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/health/programs/school-health/act-117>

Questions regarding this notice may be directed to the School Nurse in your child's building.

Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

Children need regular medical care to stay healthy and ready to learn. Families who do not have health insurance for their children may be eligible for coverage through Pennsylvania's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

CHIP provides comprehensive health insurance coverage for eligible children and teens under age 19, including routine checkups, immunizations, prescriptions, dental care, vision services, emergency care, and other medical services.

Eligibility is based on family size and income, and many families qualify for free or low-cost coverage.

For additional information regarding CHIP or to determine eligibility, families may visit the Pennsylvania CHIP website or call 1-855-445-1920. In addition you may contact the school nurse for assistance and additional resources.

Eating Disorder Awareness and Resources

Highlands School District is committed to supporting the health and well-being of students. Eating disorders are serious health conditions that can affect individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and body types. Early recognition and connection to appropriate professional support can improve outcomes.

Warning Signs

Signs that a student may be experiencing an eating disorder or disordered eating can include:

- Significant changes in eating habits or food intake
- Frequently skipping meals or avoiding eating with others
- Preoccupation with food, weight, calories, dieting, or body image
- Significant or unexplained changes in weight
- Frequent negative comments about body size or appearance
- Excessive or compulsive exercise
- Frequent trips to the bathroom immediately after meals
- Withdrawal from friends, activities, or social situations involving food
- Changes in mood, concentration, energy level, or school performance
- Physical symptoms such as dizziness, weakness, fatigue, or frequently feeling cold

The presence of one or more warning signs does not necessarily indicate an eating disorder. Concerns should be discussed with an appropriately qualified health care professional.

Supporting a Student

Parents and guardians who have concerns about their child are encouraged to contact their child's health care provider. Families may also contact the student's school counselor, school nurse, school psychologist, or administrator for assistance identifying available school and community supports.

Students who are concerned about themselves or a friend should speak with a trusted adult, parent/guardian, school counselor, school nurse, teacher, or administrator.

State and National Resources

Families and students may obtain additional information about eating disorders, warning signs, treatment, and available supports through:

- Pennsylvania Department of Health – Health information and resources
- Pennsylvania Department of Education – Student health, mental health, and wellness resources
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) – Information about eating disorders, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment

- National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) – Eating disorder education and support resources
- National Alliance for Eating Disorders – Education, support groups, and treatment referral resources

Finding Appropriate Support

Families should contact their health insurance provider and individual treatment providers to confirm:

- Services offered and appropriate level of care
- Age requirements
- Provider availability
- Insurance participation and potential costs
- Referral or admission requirements

If there is an immediate concern for a student's health or safety, seek emergency medical assistance.

Athletic Participation Notices (Distributed Annually to Student Athletes and Parents/Guardians)

Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness for Student Athletes

The Highlands School District is committed to the health and safety of student athletes. In accordance with Pennsylvania law and Board Policy 123.2, all student athletes and their parent/guardian must annually review and acknowledge receipt of information regarding the symptoms, warning signs, and risks associated with Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) prior to participation in any athletic activity.

Student athletes who exhibit signs or symptoms of sudden cardiac arrest during participation in an athletic activity will be removed from play and may not return until evaluated and medically cleared in writing by a licensed physician, certified registered nurse practitioner, or cardiologist as required by law.

Information regarding Sudden Cardiac Arrest, including common warning signs, symptoms, risk factors, and information about electrocardiogram (ECG/EKG) testing, is

provided annually as part of the District's athletic participation requirements. Student athletes and parents/guardians are encouraged to review this information carefully and consult with their healthcare provider regarding any concerns.

Concussion Awareness and Management

The Highlands School District is committed to protecting the health and safety of student athletes. In accordance with Pennsylvania law and Board Policy 123.1, all student athletes and their parent/guardian must annually review and acknowledge receipt of information regarding concussions and traumatic brain injuries prior to participation in any athletic activity.

Student athletes who exhibit signs or symptoms of a concussion or traumatic brain injury during participation in an athletic activity will be removed from play and may not return until evaluated and medically cleared in writing by an appropriate medical professional as required by law.

Information regarding concussion awareness, prevention, recognition, and return-to-play requirements is provided annually as part of the District's athletic participation process.

Hazing Prevention

The Highlands School District is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and positive learning environment for all students. Hazing is prohibited in connection with any student activity or organization, regardless of whether the conduct occurs on or off school property or outside of school hours.

Hazing includes any intentional, knowing, or reckless act that endangers the physical or mental health or safety of a student for the purpose of initiating, admitting, affiliating, or maintaining membership in any school-sponsored or recognized organization, team, club, or activity. Student consent does not excuse or permit hazing.

Students, parents/guardians, employees, volunteers, coaches, and sponsors are encouraged to promptly report suspected hazing to a building principal or school administrator. Reports will be investigated promptly, and appropriate disciplinary and corrective action will be taken when warranted. Retaliation against any individual who reports hazing or participates in an investigation is strictly prohibited.

The District's Hazing Policy (Board Policy 247) is available on the Highlands School District website. Additional information regarding prohibited conduct, reporting procedures,

disciplinary consequences, and enforcement is included in the Student Handbook and applicable activity and athletic materials.

The Highlands School District remains committed to fostering a school community where all students are treated with dignity, respect, and safety.

For additional information please contact

Ms. Katie Jo Stobert
Athletic Director
1500 Pacific Avenue
Natrona Heights, PA 15065
724-226-2400, ext. 5670

Interscholastic Athletics – Title IX Athletic Opportunities Report

In accordance with Pennsylvania law, Highlands School District annually reports information regarding interscholastic athletic opportunities and treatment for male and female secondary school students.

The District's Male/Female Athletic Opportunities Disclosure Report is submitted annually to the Pennsylvania Department of Education and is available for public inspection during regular business hours. The report is also posted on the Highlands School District website.

Questions regarding the District's interscholastic athletic programs or Title IX compliance may be directed to the Superintendent's Office or the District's Title IX  Coordinator.

Annual Notice: Maintaining Professional Adult–Student Boundaries

The Highlands School District is committed to providing a safe, supportive, and respectful educational environment for all students. In accordance with Board Policy 824: Maintaining Professional Adult/Student Boundaries, all employees, volunteers, student teachers, independent contractors, and other adults who interact with students are expected to maintain professional, ethical, and appropriate relationships with students at all times.

Professional Expectations

Adults who work with or around students shall maintain relationships that are conducive to a safe and effective learning environment and shall avoid conduct that creates the appearance of impropriety, favoritism, grooming, exploitation, or inappropriate personal involvement with students.

Prohibited Conduct

Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Romantic or sexual relationships with students.
- Inappropriate personal communications with students.
- Sharing personal or confidential information with students.
- Giving personal gifts without approval.
- Being alone with students without a legitimate educational reason.
- Communicating with students through personal social media accounts or personal electronic communication platforms.
- Extending contact with students beyond educational purposes.
- Any conduct that violates District policies, state law, or professional ethical standards.

Electronic Communication

Electronic communication with students shall be for legitimate educational purposes only and shall occur through District-approved communication platforms and systems.

Reporting Concerns

Students, parents/guardians, employees, volunteers, and community members who have concerns regarding an interaction between an adult and a student are encouraged to promptly report those concerns to a building principal, supervisor, or the District's Title IX Coordinator.

The district prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports concerns in good faith or participates in an investigation.

Additional Information

The complete text of Board Policy 824: Maintaining Professional Adult/Student Boundaries is available on the Highlands School District website and upon request through the District Administrative Offices.

Custody and Parent Information Notice

The Highlands School District recognizes the importance of maintaining accurate parent/guardian information and ensuring compliance with court orders and custody agreements affecting students.

The District does not require parents/guardians to provide custody orders as a condition of enrollment. However, parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to provide copies of any applicable custody or court orders at the time of enrollment and whenever circumstances change so the District can comply with court orders and appropriately support the student and family.

Parents/guardians who reside at separate addresses are responsible for notifying their child's school, in writing, of their current address, any secondary parental address, and the effective date of any change in residence. It is also the responsibility of parents/guardians to provide the District with copies of the most current court orders, custody agreements, or other legal documents that affect educational decision-making, student access, or communication rights.

Unless otherwise restricted by a court order or legal document provided to the District, parents/guardians may have rights regarding access to educational records, notices, and participation in educational decision-making.

Parents/guardians who wish the District to communicate with individuals other than a parent/guardian, such as grandparents, stepparents, significant others, or other caregivers, must provide written authorization to the school. District employees may not release student information to individuals who are not authorized in accordance with applicable laws and District policies.

Questions regarding custody-related matters should be directed to the student's building principal or the Student Services Department.

Annual Suicide Awareness, Prevention and Response Notice

The Highlands School District is committed to protecting the health, safety, and well-being of all students. In accordance with Board Policy 819, Suicide Awareness, Prevention and Response, the District provides a comprehensive program of education, training, support, and resources designed to promote student wellness, school connectedness, and suicide prevention.

The District provides age-appropriate suicide awareness and prevention education for students and training for staff in accordance with Pennsylvania law. Students are encouraged to seek help for themselves or others when concerns arise and to identify trusted adults within the school community who can provide support.

Parents/guardians, students, and staff are encouraged to become familiar with the warning signs and risk factors associated with suicide and to immediately report concerns regarding a student's safety to a school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, administrator, or other trusted school employee.

When concerns regarding suicide risk are identified, the District utilizes established procedures for assessment, intervention, parental notification, safety planning, referral to community resources, and follow-up support.

Crisis Resources

- Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call or Text 988
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741
- Emergency: Call 911

Additional information regarding suicide awareness, prevention, intervention, and available behavioral health resources may be obtained by contacting your child's school counselor, school psychologist, building principal, or

Highlands School District Student Services Department.

Dr. Michele Welter

1500 Pacific Avenue

Natrona Heights, PA 15065

Phone: (724) 226-2400

A copy of Board Policy 819 : Suicide Awareness, Prevention and Response is available on the Highlands School District website and upon request.

Annual Title I Parent and Family Engagement Notice

The Highlands School District recognizes that parents, guardians, and family members are important partners in the education of their children. The District is committed to fostering meaningful collaboration between home and school to support student achievement and school success.

In accordance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Highlands School District and its Title I schools provide opportunities for parents and family members to participate in the planning, review, and improvement of Title I programs and services.

Parent and Family Engagement Policies

Highlands School District has developed a District Parent and Family Engagement Policy that establishes expectations and opportunities for meaningful parent and family involvement in Title I programs. Each Title I school also maintains a School Parent and Family Engagement Policy that addresses the unique needs of its students and families.

These policies are developed and reviewed jointly with parents and family members and are updated periodically to reflect the needs of our school communities.

School-Parent Compact

Each Title I school jointly develops a School-Parent Compact with parents and family members. The compact outlines the shared responsibilities of the school, parents, and students for improving academic achievement and describes how schools and families will work together to support student success.

Parent Rights and Opportunities for Involvement

Parents and family members of students participating in Title I programs have the right to:

- Be informed about the District's Title I program and services.
- Participate in the planning, review, and improvement of Title I programs.
- Provide input regarding parent and family engagement activities and services.
- Receive information about their child's academic progress and achievement.
- Request opportunities for regular meetings to provide suggestions and participate in decisions relating to their child's education.
- Access information in a format and language that is understandable and, when practicable, in a language parents can understand.

Annual Title I Meeting

Each Title I school will hold an annual meeting to inform parents and family members about the school's participation in Title I programs, explain the requirements of Title I, and discuss parents' rights to be involved in their child's education.

Access to Policies and Information

Copies of the following documents are available through participating Title I schools and on the Highlands School District website:

- Highlands School District Parent and Family Engagement Policy
- School Parent and Family Engagement Policies
- School-Parent Compacts
- Information regarding Title I programs and services

Parents and family members are encouraged to participate in school activities, family engagement events, advisory meetings, and other opportunities to support student learning and school improvement.

For additional information regarding Title I services or parent and family engagement opportunities, please contact your child's school principal or

Highlands School District Federal Programs Coordinator

Dr. Rebecca Bragan

1500 Pacific Avenue

Natrona Heights, PA 15065

Phone: (724) 226-2400 ext. 3605