HIGHLANDS SCHOOL DISTRICT
NOVEMBER 2026

Q&A *with*

DR. JENNA MOZZOCIO →



Welcome, Dr. Mozzocio!

MEET HIGHLANDS SCHOOL DISTRICT'S NEW ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Jenna Mozzocio brings more than 20 years of experience in public education, with a distinguished career spanning teaching, instructional technology, special education, curriculum leadership, and district administration.

Prior to joining Highlands in August 2026, Dr. Mozzocio served in several leadership positions with the **McKeesport Area School District**, including *Director of Elementary Curriculum & Federal Programs, Director of Special Education*, and *Title IX Coordinator*. She also completed a *Superintendent Internship* with the **South Fayette Township School District**, gaining valuable executive-level leadership experience.

Earlier in her career, Dr. Mozzocio was an *Administrator* with the **Carlynton School District** and spent more than 17 years with the **New Castle Area School District**, where she served as a *K-12 Integration Specialist* and *classroom teacher* in both elementary reading and upper elementary math and science.

To help our community get to know Dr. Mozzocio, we invited her to share more about her professional journey, family, and personal interests. She also reflected on her first impressions of Highlands, her priorities as the new Assistant Superintendent, the opportunities she hopes to expand for students, and her message to parents and families as she begins this new chapter with the Highlands School District.

Q Can you tell us about your professional journey and what led you to Highlands?

I've had the privilege of experiencing education from so many different perspectives throughout my career. From teaching in the classroom and working as an instructional specialist to serving as a principal and district-level administrator, each role has deepened my understanding of what it takes to help students and schools thrive. One thing I've come to appreciate is that every district has its own identity. Traditions, relationships, and experiences make a community special. The most successful schools recognize those strengths and build upon them, while continuing to look ahead. That's part of what drew me to Highlands. I saw a district with a proud history, a strong sense of community, and an exciting opportunity to build on what's already here. At this point in my career, bringing together everything I've learned to help shape those opportunities for students is incredibly important to me.

Q What attracted you to this position and our community?

I was really drawn to the idea of four communities coming together around one shared commitment to their children. Each community brings its own history and identity, and together they create something unique. I was equally excited by the district's *Reframing the Future* vision. I think there's something powerful about a community that values its traditions while also being willing to imagine what's possible next. And the opportunity to work alongside Dr. Mawhinney and a School Board committed to the future of Highlands made this position especially appealing. When district leadership shares a clear sense of purpose, there's tremendous potential to turn good ideas into opportunities for students.

Q What strengths have you already seen in the district?

I would start with the people. Highlands has educators who care deeply about their students and take real pride in their work. I've also been encouraged by our conversations about curriculum, instruction, and the experiences we're creating for students. There's an openness to looking at what we're doing, considering what the evidence tells us, and exploring ways to make learning even more impactful. That matters because lasting improvement isn't about constantly introducing something new. It's about recognizing what's working, strengthening what needs attention, and making sure our efforts are connected. I see a district with a strong foundation and a lot to be excited about.

Q What do you see as the role of the Assistant Superintendent?

I see the Assistant Superintendent as someone who helps bring the district's vision to life. Working alongside Dr. Mawhinney, my responsibility is to help advance the priorities established by our School Board and ensure that the work we're doing at the district level makes a valuable difference in our classrooms. That requires understanding instruction, supporting our principals and teachers, and making sure our systems and resources are working together rather than in isolation. But just as important, it's about relationships. I want to be a leader who listens, who is accessible, and who people trust to work through challenges and celebrate successes alongside them. When we create the right conditions for our educators to do their best work, our students are the ones who benefit.

Q What have been your first impressions of Highlands students, staff, and families?

I've been genuinely impressed by the pride people have in Highlands. You feel it when you walk into the schools, talk with educators, or attend a community event. I've seen teachers who are passionate about what they're doing and excited to share their students' work. I've met colleagues who are thoughtful, knowledgeable, and eager to collaborate. And I've enjoyed seeing our students engaged in experiences that allow their personalities and interests to shine. What excites me most is the potential that already exists here. There's a great deal of talent and commitment across the district, and I'm looking forward to learning from the people who know Highlands best while bringing my own experiences and ideas to the conversation.



Dr. Mozzocio celebrates a memorable first Highlands Homecoming Parade alongside Superintendent Dr. Mawhinney.

Q What are your top priorities during your first year?

My first priority is to really understand Highlands; our students, our educators, our programs, and the experiences we're providing across the district. I've already had opportunities to visit classrooms, meet with staff, and take a closer look at our curriculum and instructional practices. Those conversations are helping me understand both our strengths and the areas where we can continue to grow. I'm particularly interested in strengthening the connections across grade levels and buildings so students experience a thoughtful, consistent progression in their learning. I also want to ensure our principals and teachers have the resources, professional learning, and support they need. Ultimately, I want us to be thoughtful about where we invest our time and energy. When we focus on the right priorities and work together, we can make a relevant and lasting difference for students.

Q What opportunities are you most interested in expanding for students?

This is one of the things I'm most excited about! I believe every student should have opportunities to discover interests and abilities they may not even know they have yet. Sometimes one experience, one teacher, or one opportunity can completely change how a young person sees their future. I'm especially interested in expanding career exploration and experiences that connect what students are learning in the classroom to the world beyond school. That includes technology, the arts, creative industries, and partnerships with local businesses, colleges, and universities. We're already exploring some exciting possibilities in digital media, animation, and emerging career fields, and I see real potential to build those experiences across grade levels.
I also believe these opportunities should begin early. Imagine students entering high school having already explored different interests, worked alongside community partners, and begun recognizing their own strengths. That's the kind of future I'm excited to help create for every Golden Ram.



Dr. Mozzocio supports the "Workforce Wednesdays" career exploration at the High School.

Q What message would you like to share with Highlands parents and guardians?

I want our families to know that I understand how much trust they place in us every day. As a parent, I've experienced education from both sides. I know what it's like to celebrate a child's success, to worry when something isn't going well, and to hope that the people working with your child truly see and understand them. I want every Highlands family to feel confident that their children are known, valued, challenged, and supported. I also believe parents and guardians bring perspectives that are essential to our work. The strongest relationships between schools and families are built through honest communication, mutual respect, and a willingness to listen. I'm excited to be part of this community, and I want families to know that I will approach this work with both a deep sense of responsibility and genuine optimism for what we can accomplish together.

Q Can you tell us about your family and what you enjoy doing outside of work?

My husband and I have six children, so our lives have always been full of activity, excitement, and plenty of unexpected moments! Being a mother has been one of the most privileged experiences of my life. It's also given me a perspective that has shaped the educator and leader I've become. With six children, you quickly learn that no two children are alike. Each has their own personality, strengths, challenges, and dreams. I've had the opportunity to see education through those different experiences, and it's reinforced something I believe deeply: Every child deserves to be understood as an individual. Our children are at different stages of life now, and it's been wonderful watching them grow into their own interests and pursue their own paths. I'm incredibly proud of the people they're becoming.

Family is a big part of my life, and with having three sons and three daughters, there's never been a shortage of things to do! Over the years, we've spent a lot of time at school activities, sporting events, and family celebrations. Now that some of our children are older and pursuing their own paths, I especially appreciate the opportunities when everyone is home together. I also genuinely enjoy learning new things, exploring ideas, and having conversations with people who bring different perspectives. I've always been curious by nature. And sometimes, after a busy week, nothing beats having everyone around the table, sharing stories, laughing, and enjoying time together.